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Draft Conclusions – Meeting with the ES Varese “Preparation of the European Bacculaureate 2021”

Meeting on 17 December 2020 – 14.00 am to 15.30 pm – ONLINE

▪ **MEMBERS – ATTENDEES of the CONSULTATION OF INSPECTORS**

FR PRESIDENCY	President of the 2021 European Baccalaureate session	Ms Marie-Danièle CAMPION	Present
Bol Secondary FR PRESIDENCY	Co-President of the Bol secondary Cycle	Mr Emmanuel de TOURNEMIRE	Present
OSGES	Secretary-General of the European Schools	Mr Giancarlo MARCHEGGIANO	Present
OSGES	Deputy Secretary-General of the European Schools	Mr Andreas BECKMANN	Present
OSGES	Head of the European Baccalaureate Unit	Ms Ewa RUDOMINO	Present
ES Varese	Director	Ms Ariane FARINELLE	Present
ES Varese	Deputy Director	Ms Monique MAAS	Present
ES Varese	Pedagogical adviser	Mr Ottmar GERLINGER	Present
ES Varese	Pedagogical adviser	Ms Graziella DIGANGI	Present
ES Varese	Teachers Representatives	Ms Elizabeth Mc DONALD	Present
ES Varese	Teachers Representatives	Mr Simon COOKDALE	Present
ES Varese	AGSEV, President	Mr Osvaldo MATTANA	Excused
ES Varese	AGSEV, Vice-President	Mr Joao BARROSO	Present
ES Varese	AGSEV	Ms Monica GRANDINETTI	Present
ES Varese	AGSEV	Ms Maren KÜNSTERMANN	Present
ES Varese	Pupils Representatives President	Ms Lisa NORDVIK	Present
ES Varese	Pupils Representatives Vice President	Ms Blanka CSERES-GERGELY	Present

**MEETING with all stakeholders of the European School of VARESE
Thursday 17 December 2020, from 14:00 to 15:30.**

The meeting was chaired by Deputy Secretary-General Mr Andreas BECKMANN, with the agreement of Prof. Marie-Danièle CAMPION, President of the European Baccalaureate 2021 session and Director of the ES Varese, Ms Ariane FARINELLE, who thanked the French Presidency and the Office for holding the meeting.

Languages of the meeting: FR and EN.

Mr BECKMANN thanked the school community for letting the Office and the French Presidency know about the current real situation. The present meeting would focus on:

1. Listening to the various representatives of the school community;
2. Trying to answer, as Chair of the TASK FORCE, on the various issues as some were already tackled and approved by the Board of Governors (BoG) and further disclose the plans of the TASK FORCE whose mandate was prolonged for the rest of the school year;
3. Pursuing the discussion with all stakeholders.

Deputy Director Ms MAAS expressed concern mainly for the senior classes, because of the prolonged lockdown. She described the harsh experience that the s7 pupils are going through, upon whom the meeting should focus. Their lockdown has been in place for many months now, since last school year.

From the dialogue with Representatives of pupils, Ms MAAS reported some overburden and overwhelmed feeling in pupils as well as depression and other psychological conditions. Pupils declared being very concerned for the Pre-Baccalaureate and for the final EB examinations. They feared not to be able to cover the complete programs. Similar concerns were raised by Teachers' representatives as well.

Pupils Committee's Co-President, Ms CSERES-GERGELY reminded that Distance Learning has been in place since end of February 2020, with approximatively only 7.5 weeks of presence in situ. Constant internet connection problems occurred all throughout the period. Finally, she also mentioned the difficulty for pupils to have to sit in front of a computer for up to 8 hours per day, 5 days a week only to attend the classes. Time to which one should add an extra computer time to take care of the assignments and the studying.

Pupils Committee President, Ms NORDVIK, explained that an anonymous survey was held with s5 to s7 pupils, the results of which disclosed many health problems both physical and moral / mental (uncertainty, eating disorders, lack of motivation, ...).

Mr BARROSO, Vice-President of the AGSEV, testified that it was already very difficult to even set dates for Pre-Baccalaureate examinations, let alone to organize proper regular Pre-Baccalaureate examinations papers.

He hoped that the goal of the meeting was to reach some kind of commitment and not only a verbal acknowledgment of the current situation of Varese. Parents would propose the following potential solutions:

- 1) School-harmonized approach, not a general one: examinations should be tailor-made for Varese (like Pre-Baccalaureate) and not of general scope (like usual EBacc examinations)
- 2) Deletion of parts of the usual European Baccalaureate scope, acknowledging that the programs won't be covered as foreseen.
- 3) Moderation on the results of specific subjects, taking into account the results obtained for these subjects by the pupils, in the past
- 4) Moderation on the final mark, done on school level.

Mr BECKMANN acknowledged that Pupils and Parents underlined the need for a local approach. He confirmed that it was in line with the decisions from the BoG, as to the Pre-Baccalaureate, the written and the oral examinations. The BoG underlined that it is not compulsory to find the same solution for all realities. A similar approach could be possible. Within equal treatment and fairness, some adaptation to the context could be envisaged. He reminded that all this was also valid for Pre-Baccalaureate. The non-generic harmonization at Pre-Baccalaureate level (only on school level) already allowed a particular approach to the B-examinations.

As to Moderation, he disclosed that the issue was still open. The President of the Baccalaureate may consult the Board of Inspectors (secondary cycle - Bol) if the issue will be raised, at a later stage when all elements are known.

Ms RUDOMINO added that all the decisions would take into consideration the situation of each school. She summarized the decisions already taken by the BoG. For the Pre-Baccalaureate, it would be optimal to pursue the possibility to have the examinations in situ and to mark it in the fairest possible way, given the circumstances. Alternative assessments would also be possible if the first option is not possible. Then, cancellation as a last resort. As to the EB examinations, the goal would be to organize the written examinations, in situ. As to the orals, some cancellation might intervene.

She then explained that an online meeting had been organized on Wednesday 16 December 2020 with the Office, the French Presidency and the Inspectors for Secondary Cycle, to make sure they were aware of all situations and pandemic consequences on teaching and learning. The situation of the School of Varese was properly addressed during the meeting.

Ms CSERES-GERGELY stressed the importance to take the decisions in time and not to be informed at the last minute. This would help relieve the pressure from pupils and families.

Mr BECKMANN confirmed that communication in due time would be a key point to the monitoring of the school year, and that a good balance had to be sought on that point too. It would be important not to rush into a drastic definitive decision too soon, while still not knowing sufficiently all elements (some of them being not foreseeable like the evolution of the pandemic).

Ms MAAS underlined that not only pupils but also teachers had seen their health conditions being affected. Seeing the current circumstances, she explained her plan was to ask the teachers to prepare Pre-Baccalaureate tests or examinations that could easily be reversed as an online assessment, should the in situ come back be impossible.

Representative of the Local Recruited Teachers, Mr Cookdale confirmed that alternative tasks created some stress with teachers. The idea of a window of time for holding the Pre-Baccalaureate was really welcomed by teachers. And he supported the need for greater clarity of future plans for the pupils. He then added that Teachers would look forward to organizing in situ examinations as much as possible.

Ms McDONALD underlined that Teachers would greatly appreciate and welcome the support of Inspectors if some alternative assessment had to be organized.

Ms KUSTERMANN, Parents Representatives for DE section, welcomed all documents prepared and approved by the BoG. Her main question being to know how countries would support or not the in situ teaching as she feared no real change was to be foreseen by the beginning of summer 2021. She pleaded for insecurity to be relieved off the shoulders of the pupils, parents and other members of the School Community. Cooperation with the IT authorities would be essential here.

Mr MARCHEGGIANO explained that the IT Authorities would like to bring back pupils to schools as from beginning of January 2021. Of course, this would be dependent on the evolution of the pandemic, unforeseeable criteria. The main reason for the suspension of on site lessons for the secondary pupils seems to be the risk of contagion on public transport. He did believe the situation of ES Varese is quite different from the national schools. Some further dialogue should be pursued with the local authorities to bring back s7 pupils on site at least for their examinations. He then warned that any plan made could always be changed by new unexpected national or regional prevention measures linked to the evolution of the pandemic. He asked the Community to be ready to always adapt. He reminded harmonization for Pre-Baccalaureate examinations is only at the level of the school, so Teachers could adapt the examinations to the local situation, which constituted already a step as to the requested local solution. He committed to pursue the contact with the Italian authorities, though the current situation might change all over again.

Mr BARROSO reminded that quarantine of teachers has also affected the teaching and learning process, in situ.

Mr BECKMANN explained that the Brussels schools would envisage a rotation of presence of pupils in situ, with priority being given to s7. This flexibility could be requested to the IT authorities. Answering to Mr BARROSO as to a possible commitment, he reminded that

- the Pre-Baccalaureate had already been tackled in all possible ways,
- the moderation was on the table of possible discussions and further decisions,
- the content of the written examinations could not be altered, since this would go beyond what the BoG had decided.
- As from Inspectors, they would support the creation of alternative tasks, where necessary.

He believed that the proposal put forward by Ms MAAS would go in the right direction.

President CAMPION acknowledged all letters received about the conditions of teaching and learning in Varese. She reassured that anticipation was also at the center of the preoccupation of the OSGES, as much as possible. She confirmed hearing and understanding all requests put forward both in the letters in during the meeting.

About the follow-up of the current meeting, Mr BECKMANN proposed to draft conclusions that all present stakeholders could share with their constituencies.

Ms FARINELLE insisted that it won't be possible to overcome this situation if all stakeholders, including the OSGES and the FR Presidency, do not work together. She stressed that the Varese Direction strongly believed in their pupils whom, she knows, will succeed, in their Teachers who are doing all their best, in their Parents who support them, in the OSGES who is working alongside Varese. She pleaded for Inspectors to really support the school's teachers as to alternative tasks.

She then stated that School Management would continue calling on the attention of the IT authorities, Varese being a different system than the Italian one. Derogations would be requested to have the examinations in situ.

Mr BARROSO thanked Mr BECKMANN for his willingness to be transparent, through the conclusions of the current meeting, that could be shared with the stakeholders. He then underlined that, even if the teaching was to be back in situ in January 2021, there would still be 2 months lost, that are difficult to recover. The situation would not be normal for the European Baccalaureate. As to the decisions process, if possible, a decision for the Pre-Baccalaureate before the Christmas break would be welcome, with the IT authorities. Not to leave the decision on the last week.

Ms NORDVISK agreed with Mr BARROSO. She claimed it would not be the "same BAC" as for the other schools'. Pupils would greatly appreciate to be informed as soon as to future plans.

Mr BECKMANN repeated that, though he understood this request, no rush decisions should be taken, as the situation does depend on the evolution of the pandemic and the consequent actions of the local authorities. He insisted that a (premature) decision for the Pre-Baccalaureate could and should not be taken now. If things would remain as they are currently, the examinations could be taken in situ.

He also explained that moderation could take place not only on system level but also with targeted approach, wherever a weakness linked to the pandemic consequences on teaching and learning would be spotted.

Ms NORDVISK pleaded for the past of the Varese school not to be forgotten as a background criterion: this cohort of s7 was also the longest in lockdown.

Ms GRANDINETTI pleaded not forget the psychological aspects of all stakeholders (pupils, families, etc.). She reminded that Universities and further studies were also at the center of preoccupations. Requests to access are supposed to be sent in January 2021 already.

Mr BARROSO understood the necessity not to take a drastic decision too early in time. He insisted though that an agreement with local authorities should be sought, if the idea was to try to have

the pre-baccalaureate in situ as regularly planned, to get an agreement that, whatever happens, the school would be able to organize the examinations in situ, even under particular conditions. He thought that a meeting could be envisaged to have a derogation secured from the IT authorities.

Mr MARCHEGGIANO committed to continue pushing and try to negotiate with IT authorities for a derogation for the Pre-Baccalaureate examinations of the s7 in situ in Varese. He warned that the answer though would remain in the hands of the IT authorities and we cannot reasonably expect to receive it before the start of the holidays.

Ms MAAS confirmed that the teachers will prepare a model of alternative Pre-Baccalaureate as close as in situ examinations as possible. So it would not be so different. She explained that it had been done with the s5 classes and that it had worked very well. The school would be prepared in any case.

Mr BECKMANN agreed on and welcomed this proposal.

He explained that the next meeting with the ES and the representatives of AES Directors was foreseen on 8 January 2021. Ms FARINELLE would then be invited to share the current situation of the school on that occasion as well. If necessary, another meeting in the same composition could be foreseen in consultation with the school management and the FR presidency.

He thanked the FR presidency for taking the initiative of the meeting and all present stakeholders for attending it and sharing their concerns. He reassured that all present and outside share the acknowledgment of the current situation of the school of Varese.

The meeting ended at 15:30.