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DRAFT REPORT

on the System of European Schools: State of play, Challenges and Perspectives
(2022/2149(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Ilana Cicurel

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

**on the System of European Schools: State of play, Challenges and Perspectives
(2022/2149(INI))**

The European Parliament,

COMP 35

Covers amendments 1 (S&D), 2(S&D), 3(S&D), 9(S&D) and 32 (Renew)

N.B: AM 9 falls under CA 25

- having regard to Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools¹,
- having regard to its resolution of 27 September 2011 on the European Schools system²,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 November 2021 on the European Education Area: a shared holistic approach³,
- **having regard to its resolution of 19 May 2022 on establishing the European Education Area by 2025 - micro-credentials, individual learning accounts and learning for a sustainable environment⁴,**
- **having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on Shaping digital education policy (2020/2135(INI)),**
- having regard to the study conducted for its Committee on Culture and Education of 9 June 2022 entitled ‘The European Schools system: State of Play, Challenges and Perspectives’⁵,
- having regard to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report of December 2022 entitled ‘PISA for Schools: How The European Schools Compare Internationally 2022’,

¹ OJ L 212, 17.8.1994, p. 3.

² OJ C 56 E, 26.2.2013, p. 14.

³ OJ C 205, 20.5.2022, p. 17.

⁴ OJ C 479, 16.12.2022, p. 65.

⁵ Study – ‘The European Schools system: State of Play, Challenges and Perspectives’, European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies of the Union, Policy Department B – Structural and Cohesion Policies, 9 June 2022.

- having regard to the 2022 final report of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education entitled ‘External Evaluation of the Implementation of the European Schools’ Action Plan on Educational Support and Inclusive Education’,
- **having regard to its resolution of 7 July 2016 on the implementation of the Union Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with special regards to the Concluding Observations of the UN CRPD Committee⁶,**
- having regard to the European Court of Auditors’ report of 25 November 2022 entitled ‘Report on the annual accounts of the European Schools for the financial year 2021’,
- **having regard to the Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights⁷,**
- having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A9-0000/2023),

COMP 24:

Covers amendments 4(S&D), 8(EPP)

NB AM 4 falls under CA 12,

- A. Whereas the European Schools System (ESS) is a unique system that has demonstrated its strengths and qualities since its creation in the 1950s, as shown, for example, by the recognition of the European Baccalaureate in all Member States and the continuous growth in the number of Accredited European Schools (AES);
- A a Whereas **everyone** should have the opportunity to benefit from an **ESS type of education, and every school system across the European Union must be given the opportunity to benefit from their pedagogical expertise;**

COMP 25:

Covers amendments 9(S&D), 13(S&D), 11(EPP)

- B. Whereas the ESS, in combining the educational systems of Member States – through parallel language sections – with a strong European dimension, **sense of belonging and cultural identity**, multilingual education, and a focus on science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics, as well as pedagogical innovations, represents a laboratory **and source of experience** for educational reform, including for the creation of a European Education Area (EEA);

⁶ OJ C 101, 16.03.2018, p. 138

⁷ OJ C 428, 13.12.2017, p 10.

COMP 26:

Covers amendments 14(S&D), 15(EPP), 23(The Left), 33(S&D)

- B a Whereas the ESS should be fully aligned with the educational policies put forward by the European Union; whereas a central aim of the ESS is to facilitate mobility and transfer to and from all national education systems, while the Member States are required to ensure fair and equal transposition of ESS learning results;

COMP 27:

Covers amendments 18(The Left)

- C. Whereas the governance structure of the ESS has the advantage of maintaining a direct link with the Member States, but requires reform given its clear limitations in terms of decision-making and change management **as well as in the structured exchange of best practices with national education systems;**

COMP 28:

Covers amendments 22(EPP), 63(S&D)

NB AM 63 falls under CA 2

- D. Whereas the **scope and means of the Commission's role** in the ESS **needs to be broadened**, given that its involvement is currently limited to budgetary matters, leaving the equally important educational, **operational and human resources** aspects out of the equation;

COMP 29:

Covers amendments 27(S&D), 50(S&D), ECR(130)

NB AM 50 falls under CA 3 and AM 130 falls under CA 14

- E. Whereas the current system of teacher recruitment in the ESS has serious shortcomings, resulting in a mismatch between the needs on the ground and the actual staff seconded by the Member States, issues with yearly recruitment plans, **finding qualified teachers and staff**, precarious working conditions for locally recruited teachers **and other educational staff, and with continuous professional development**, whereas there is a need to **reinforce the attractiveness of the ESS among the teaching community;**

COMP 30:

Covers amendments 35(S&D), 48(Renew), 49(S&D), 65(EPP), 87(EPP), 139(Renew), 140(S&D), 145(S&D), 146(Renew)

NB: AM 65 falls under CA 12, AM 87 under CA 12, AM 139 under CA 16, AM 140 is identical to AM 139

E a Whereas the ESS has made progress in the inclusion of students with special needs, disabilities or learning differences, there is a lack of psychological support and an increasing need for Intensive Support Assistance, and whereas communication and adequate employment packages are key to ensure that educational and psychological staff provide quality, tailored and continued support to students;

COMP 31:

Covers amendments 12(Renew), 20(EPP), 152(Renew), 156(Renew), 162(Renew), 163(Renew)

NB AMs 152, 156, 162 and 163 fall under CA 18

E b Whereas the ESS is responsible for ensuring that all EU languages, including small ones, are catered for equally and for promoting linguistic and cultural diversity while reinforcing the European dimension of learning, and whereas plans to have all the language sections represented at both primary and secondary cycles in Brussels by 2028 are to be welcomed;

COMP 32

Covers amendments 36(EPP), 37(S&D), 38(S&D), 39(Renew)

NB AM 37 falls under CA 12

F. Whereas parents play a key role in **school life, such as organising** extracurricular activities and providing transport and other services, **and are represented by dedicated parents' associations**;

COMP 33

Covers amendments 43(S&D), 45(S&D)

G. Whereas EU resources account for the bulk of the ESS budget, for which reason Parliament **must** scrutinise the management and running of the ESS **more strictly, and objectives and investment priorities adopted by the EU in the field of education better reflected in the ESS**;

COMP 34:

Covers amendments 34(S&D), 47(EPP), 97(EPP), 112(Greens), 158(The Left)

NB AM 112 falls under CA 12, AM 158 under CA 18

- H. Whereas the lack of accountability of **some** host countries, which are responsible for providing and maintaining school buildings, has led to serious issues, especially in Brussels **where schools face overcrowding**; whereas these issues have had profound repercussions on the standard of education, organisational aspects, safety, security and the well-being of students and staff alike;

State of affairs and vision

COMP 1:

Covers amendments 55(S&D)

1. Stresses the need for a critical, in-depth assessment of all aspects of the ESS, and for reform to future-proof the system, **expand its outreach** and ensure that it serves as a model for the exchange of good practices across educational systems;
2. Calls on the European Schools' Board of Governors (BoG) to update the mission, principles and objectives of the ESS in the form of a new 'ESS Charter', that is fit for the 21st century and provides a reinvigorating vision for the system and realistic objectives against which it can be assessed, **drawing on both internal and external expertise and** to be introduced by the end of 2024;

COMP 2:

Covers amendments 63(S&D)

3. Calls on the Commission to assess the role of the ESS in the establishment of the EEA, including with regard to language learning and a strong European dimension of learning, and in the automatic mutual recognition of diplomas across the EU, based on the established model of the European Baccalaureate;
- 3 a Calls for a more integrated and active role of the Commission, especially in interlinking the ESS and the EEA, expresses Parliament's explicit wish that the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture be strongly involved in the Commission's dealings with the ESS;**

COMP 3:

Covers amendments 50(S&D), 53(EPP), 54(Greens), 70(EPP), 71(S&D), 73(ECR), 74(The LEFT), 125(S&D)

NB AMs 53 and 54 fall under CA 1

4. Calls for increased accountability **and transparency**, tighter parliamentary scrutiny and control, and improved **communication for the** visibility and understanding of the ESS and the European Baccalaureate **at all levels**;
- 4 a Reminds Member States of their obligation to grant and maintain non-discriminatory University admission under the Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools, and to guarantee that a full educational offer and academic progress are ensured also for students without a language section;**

- 4 b **Calls on the BoG and Member States to ensure fair and equal transposition of learning results of the ESS and the European Baccalaureate in their equivalence tables and to make the necessary rectifications in national conversion systems to fully comply with the principle of equal treatment and ensure all students can successfully move to any Member State;**
- 4 c **Calls for a closer relationship between the ESS and local, regional and national educational ecosystems, especially on the exchange of best practices and by collaborating on programmes and activities with partner schools;**

Governance, management and legal issues

COMP 4:

Covers amendments 75(S&D)

5. **Calls on the Commission to perform an in-depth review under an independent chairperson, by the end of 2024, of the governance and management structures across the EES and at each individual school in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools (OSG) and the Member States, and for this review to examine the roles, responsibilities and structures in place at all levels, to assess the independence of functions and potential conflicts of interest, and to identify regulatory issues that hinder the ESS system;**

COMP 5:

Covers amendments 54(Greens), 78(ECR), 79(S&D), 80(EPP), 81(The Left)

6. **Insists on the need to streamline and increase the flexibility of the BoG's decision-making through an alternative voting system and enhanced consultation of ESS stakeholders, to enable the BoG to better respond to the needs of schools; insists also on accurate communication of decisions within the ESS;**
- 6 a **Calls for clear responsibilities, transparent decision-making, biennial performance appraisals, and training and development plans for all management staff, including structured induction, at central and school levels;**

COMP 6:

Covers amendments 72(EPP), 82(ECR)

NB AM 72 falls under CA 3

7. **Requests the OSG and the BoG troika to present a detailed, joint annual ESS report to Parliament as of 2024, resulting from cooperation amongst all ESS stakeholders and allowing Parliament to monitor progress on reforms, objectives, flag critical issues and play an ongoing role in oversight and change management;**

COMP 7:

Covers amendments, 84(ECR), 85(EPP), 86(S&D), 91(S&D), 105(Renew)

8. Calls on the BoG to: a) clarify the applicability of primary and secondary EU legislation to the ESS; **b) assess compliance with health, safety and security standards in the schools; c) ensure that locally recruited teachers' contractual and working conditions are fully in line with EU and Member States' employment laws and principles;** d) amend the staff regulations and the General Rules of the European Schools, to explicitly clarify the competences of the Complaints Board vis-à-vis national courts **ensuring that there is no gap in legal protection;** e) put in place an independent ombudsperson to address complaints about maladministration and mediate in conflicts; **and f) develop a code of administrative good conduct for school management at all levels;**

COMP 8:

Covers amendments 88(S&D), S&D(89)

9. Requests a **review of** the European Court of Auditor's and the Commission's Internal Audit Service's mandate to provide **annual** opinions and recommendations on various aspects of the ESS, **and that these are presented as part of the considerations on the joint annual ESS report to Parliament;**

Resources, infrastructure and staff

COMP 9:

Covers amendments 90(S&D), 103(S&D), 92(Renew), ECR(93), 104(Renew)

10. **Urges** Member States **to** meet their obligations vis-à-vis the ESS in full, particularly with regard to the secondment of qualified teachers **and other educational staff** and the provision of adequate infrastructure (suitable premises, maintenance thereof and upgrades thereto), and calls for a binding system of direct financial contributions to ensure greater flexibility **and security** for both the ESS and the Member States;

COMP 10:

Covers amendment 98(The Left), 100(The Left) + Rapporteur's addition

11. Calls for a dedicated task force to be established by mid-2025, composed of representatives of all budgetary contributors to the ESS and involving relevant pedagogical experts from the OSG, the Commission and the Member States, – **in the light of the envisaged review of the current cost-sharing agreement in the 2025/26 school year** – with a mandate to make concrete suggestions to resolve critical resourcing issues and develop a comprehensive, **adequate** and sustainable cost-sharing model that will allow the ESS to fulfil its mission in line with the new 'ESS Charter';
- 11 a Encourages host Member States to include ESS infrastructures within any national school infrastructure investment plans; asks the Commission and Member States to work together to ensure that the ESS can benefit from the forthcoming disbursements of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) to Member States,**

after consideration of the next evaluations of national plans and taking into account any relevant update, such as those linked to RepowerEU chapters;

COMP 11:

Covers amendments 94(The Left), 102(S&D), 103(S&D), 104(Renew), 105(Renew), 106(ECR), 107(The Left), 108(EPP), 110(ECR)

NB AMs 94, 103 and 104 fall under CA 9 - the latter 2 AMs are identical, AM 105 under CA 7

12. Calls on the BoG to **urgently** resolve ongoing teacher shortages and ensure a stable and fair employment situation for all by retaining staff and reducing turnover, thereby also avoiding brain drain; calls, in this regard, for **additional resources and** a strengthened **and fair** employment package for seconded and locally recruited staff alike, with competitive remuneration, more equal salaries for nursery, primary and secondary teachers, clarity about employment status and stability, **a system of** continuous professional development (CPD) and further career prospects in and beyond the ESS;

COMP 12:

Covers amendments 4(S&D), 36(EPP), 37(S&D), 38(S&D), 39(Renew), 42(S&D), 65(EPP), 76(The Left), 87(EPP), 111(ECR), 113(S&D), 115(The Left), 119(S&D), 120(EPP), 127(ECR)

NB AMs 36, 38 and 39 fall under CA 32, the latter two are identical, AM 76 falls under CA 4

13. Calls for a **greater** degree of autonomy to be ensured for teachers and schools alike, **so they may better respond to specific needs and situations, whilst also ensuring this greater responsibility is accompanied by stronger assessment and accountability mechanisms and so that standards are maintained;**
- 13 a Calls for additional middle management posts focused on high-quality teaching methodologies and curricula to be introduced at schools, and for all **national secondment** procedures to be more transparent and open;
- 13 b **Recognises and encourages the work of the school community, especially parents, in school life, such as in providing extra-curricular activities, insists on the need to monitor activities for good management, pedagogical qualifications, affordability and inclusiveness; recalls that the Convention grants parents a role in the governance of the ESS and asks to ensure that this role is adequately recognised;**
- 13 c Calls, for an urgent **and annual** review of the enrolment **policy** and school fees, **guaranteeing a place for all category one students, broadening the socio-economic mix by opening to more categories of students** and using the full potential of the AES, including to address overcrowding; **emphasises the importance of strictly enforcing the sibling rule and insists that legal fees should not hinder parents or legal**

guardians from appealing decisions by the Central Enrolment Authority that infringe enrolment rules;

- 13 d Calls, furthermore, for the BoG to work on an ambitious and regularly updated ESS mobility plan at all levels for more efficient, affordable, accessible and greener school transportation;

Educational and pedagogical quality

COMP 13:

Covers amendments 59(Left), S&D(121), 124(EPP)

NB AM 59 falls under CA 1

14. Calls on the BoG to strengthen educational and pedagogical standards by: a) creating a task force with relevant pedagogical expertise, **to undertake open, transparent and regular consultations with stakeholders**, to review the quality assurance approach, put in place as part of the 2009 European Schools reform, this by mid-2024 **and from then on to update it periodically, insists on clear indicators, monitoring and evaluation**; b) introducing an enhanced and accountable inspection regime, including **a Quality Assurance Unit at the OSG composed of permanent and seconded inspectors**, subject-specific inspections and follow-up processes that include AES; c) reinforcing the role of the OSG's Pedagogical Development Unit and the Joint Teaching Committee; and d) ensuring ESS participation in EU programmes and initiatives such as the Erasmus+ Teacher Academies and the EEA;

COMP 14:

Covers amendments 129(S&D), 116(EPP), 130(ECR)

NB AM 116 falls under CA 12

15. Calls on the BoG and the OSG to develop a CPD strategy and induction programme for teachers **and other educational staff** throughout the ESS by the end of 2024, and insists on **a broad approach to CPD, including in terms of subjects and methodologies, to widen career opportunities and to build** collective efficacy and formal structures that support teachers in designing, implementing, evaluating and exchanging pedagogical best practices and materials across classrooms and the system as a whole;

COMP 15:

Covers amendments 132(EPP), 133 (S&D)

16. **Calls on Member States to use the full potential of experienced** ESS teachers to become trainers and mentors in national systems, **asks the BoG to establish incentives and guidelines to that purpose, and** emphasises the role that should be played by the

ESS in establishing a European teachers' module, to be included in the initial training of teachers across the EU;

COMP 16:

Covers amendments 17(S&D), 51(The Left), 57 (ECR), 61(Left), 64(Left), 69(Greens), 93(ECR), 112(Greens), 114(ECR), 115(ECR), 123 (ECR), 130(ECR), 136(S&D), 137(S&D), 138 (EPP), 141(ECR), 142(The Left), 143(Renew), 144(The Left), 147(S&D), 148(Renew), 151(EPP), 168(The Left), 177(The Left)

NB AMs 57 and 61 fall under CA 1, AM 64 under CA 2, AM 69 under CA 3, AM 93 under CA 9, AMs 112, 114 and 115 under CA 12, AM 123 under CA 13 and AM 130 under CA 14

17. **Insists that schools draw upon the potential of personalised learning; calls on the BoG to reinforce existing frameworks and implement a coherent, even and systematic inclusion policy across the ESS that provides quality inclusive education and avoids exclusion due to disabilities, ensures reasonable accommodation, adapts teacher-to-students ratios, uses a flexible curriculum, considerably increases the number of qualified educational and psychological support staff and provides orientation and mentoring services; urges for progress towards the recognition of learning outcomes of students with special needs, disabilities or learning differences, by way of certification or an end-of-studies diploma, if they do not sit the European Baccalaureate; encourages the introduction of an Inclusion Index in the ESS;**
- 17 a **Asks the BoG and OSG to foster a safe learning environment in which no form of violence is allowed and to strengthen the fight against bullying and cyber-bullying in the ESS, by developing a harmonised whole-school approach that includes awareness raising, training, guidelines for dealing with off- and online bullying, the promotion of a peer support system, involving active and well-trained teachers and parents, and a clear and enforceable sanctioning system for all levels;**

COMP 17:

Covers amendments 150(S&D)

18. **Asks the BoG and the OSG to assess the inclusion of vocational education and training (VET) modules in the ESS, establish partnerships with VET institutions and explore the possibility of accredited European VET schools across the European Union;**

COMP 18:

Covers amendments 10(S&D), 12(Renew), 20(EPP), 56 (S&D), 67(The Left), 68(The Left), 110(ECR), 126(The Left), 128(The Left), 152(Renew), 153(S&D), 154(EPP), 156(Renew), 157(The Left), 162 (Renew), 163(Renew), 166(Renew), 174(ECR)

NB AMs 12 and 20 fall under CA 31, AM 56 under CA1, AM 110 under CA 11

19. **Insists on the need to deliver a full high-quality educational experience for all students, especially in their mother tongue and_for those without a language section (SWALS) in both primary and secondary cycles; requests the Board of Inspectors (BoI) to consult students, teachers and parents on the impact of reducing the number of**

lessons and subjects or of regrouping different class levels when the student numbers are below the threshold;

- 19 a** Calls on the BoI to review second and third language teaching periodically following the latest pedagogical indications on the introduction of reading and writing in early education, cooperative teaching methods and the opportunity of differentiated learning to ensure young and older students enjoy learning languages;
- 19 b** Calls for increasing student and teacher mobility within the ESS and with other school systems as well as for an update of existing curricula with a view to further strengthening the European dimension, **such as by reviewing the European history syllabus, including the role of minorities, teaching citizenship education as a standalone subject, incorporating ‘European Hours’ at all educational levels, with a focus on the importance of European heritage and values as well as developing entrepreneurship and soft skills; insists on keeping current provisions regarding religious and ethical education;**

COMP 19:

Covers amendments 9(S&D), 16(S&D), 52(The Left), 135(S&D), 153(S&D), 167(Greens)

NB AM 9 falls under CA 25, AM 153 under CA 18

- 19 c** Calls on the BoG to boost environmental learning and digital education in the ESS, including by implementing the European sustainability competence framework and the Digital competence framework, insists on improving green and digital skills teaching and on the ESS to take part in initiatives such as the European Digital Skills Certificate, while still valuing classical learning methods using printed books and fighting digital exclusion;
- 20.** Suggests the creation of an annual celebratory event to share pedagogical best practices, pool knowledge among schools, teachers and students and showcase their work and projects to the broader system, with national education representatives being invited in order to raise awareness of the ESS;

COMP 20:

Covers amendments 164(EPP),

- 21.** Calls for **increased visibility** of a formal ESS alumni community and the collection of data on students’ education paths after graduation, with a mandate for the OSG to collect anonymised information;

Outlook

COMP 21:

CA covers amendments 66(S&D), 88 (S&D), 171(S&D), 172(EPP)

NB AM 88 falls under CA 8

22. Asks for the financial contributions from the EU to the ESS to feature as a separate budget line in future EU budgets, in order to increase transparency, **ensure strategic planning** and facilitate parliamentary scrutiny under the discharge procedure, and requests that the ESS be included in the **further** development of the EEA **and that both become closely interlinked**;

COMP 22:

Covers amendments 60(S&D), 175(S&D), 176(EPP)

NB AM 60 falls under CA 1

23. Expresses its wish that the ESS will become a beacon for high-quality multilingual and multicultural education in Europe and beyond, demonstrating that being ‘united in diversity’ can also be a living reality in the educational sphere; asks for all stakeholders to work towards that aim **as co-creators**, including through enhanced collaboration with the AES, whose inclusion and development are key for the whole system; **calls for a re-evaluation of AES to assess possibilities of extending the scope of the ESS to all Member States by setting in place more flexible procedures and requirements for the accreditation of schools while improving quality assurance and inspection**;

COMP 23:

Covers amendments 179(EPP)

24. **Expresses its wish for the European Parliament to be represented in the BoG**; calls for an independent, external expert body to explore and propose alternative governance models, including a review of the Convention defining the Statute of the European Schools and the possibility of replacing the schools’ intergovernmental legal status with a supranational European model;
25. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

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EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

I. State of Play

The European Schools System (ESS) dates back to the 1950s and the times of the European Coal and Steel Community. The legacy of this system is encapsulated by the words of Marcel Decombis (1916-2003), the then Director of the European School of Luxembourg, and they still resonate in the European Union (EU) of today.

‘[...] 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 born upon them as they mature that they belong together. Without ceasing to look to their own lands with love and pride, they will become Europeans, schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers before them, to bring into being a united and thriving Europe.’

The European institutions, including the European Parliament, have chosen to take this educational model forward. Under an intergovernmental convention, the ESS has founded to date 13 European Schools (ES) in 6 different countries, with a total population of 28 765 in the school year 2022-23, as well as 22 Accredited European Schools (AES).

The 2022 PISA for Schools Report confirms the strengths in the performance of the European Schools, particularly in providing high-quality, multilingual education with a strong European dimension to the children of the European institutions’ personnel, while increasingly opening up to other student categories. The ESS offers a high-performing type of education, which is in its nature profoundly European and that should inspire every education system in the European Union.

We are living a particular momentum with investment in education being high on the European agenda. The successive crises the European Union has been going through have been challenging in many ways, but they have also had positive effects on European integration, its unity and its strategic autonomy. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, has put the European Union on a digital path for ensuring pedagogical continuity, with its strengths and limitations. It has also empowered educational communities to take full advantage of the potential of ICT tools for exchange, education and training beyond their own institutions and across borders. As never before, education and training are central to European resilience and its sovereignty.

In view of the fundamental challenge to fight for a pluralistic society, European decision-makers have collectively set their horizon for the European Union to become an educational power through the establishment of a European Education Area (EEA), and the European Schools need to become an integral part of this initiative. The ESS is a treasure that should not be hidden; it should shine and irrigate our national educational systems. It needs to be considered a safe space for the development of a common pedagogical culture and the genuine exchange of good practices. The European Baccalaureate could be used to permit the mutual recognition of school diplomas. This will support the European Union reach its new educational ambitions, which are evident in the doubling of funds for the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 Programme and the creation of Teachers’ Academies. Students of the ESS will often say that: ‘You find a little Europe in each school.’ Yet, it is for us all, the actors in the field and political decision-makers, to seize the opportunity and fulfil the potential of making this a reality for all schools around the European Union.

II. Assessment by the Rapporteur

The study on the ESS commissioned by the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education¹, as well as the broad consultations of stakeholders² indicate that there are many areas in which the ESS truly excels. However, serious governance, management and financing difficulties persist, hampering the system's potential with negative consequences for the entire school community. These difficulties touch upon legal issues, resources, infrastructures, staff recruitment and elements of educational and pedagogical quality, thereby underscoring a profound need for reform.

The governance framework of the ESS, which is ruled by an intergovernmental convention, has its merits. It has created quality education of a high standard, driven by the values and the principles of the European Union. Yet over the years, it has become the victim of rapid development and the expansion of the ESS. The ESS governance system has reached its limits in solving problems and providing adequate change. This is due to the structures and mechanisms under governmental control that require more pedagogical supervision, adequate European Commission involvement and stronger scrutiny by the European Parliament.

Stakeholders unanimously expressed their pride in the uniqueness of the educational model that brings European unity, diversity and identity in one place of action, but they also rang the alarm. This acknowledges that the ESS could do much better. According to most stakeholders, the intergovernmental convention is not fit for purpose anymore. The unanimity requirement hampers change and there is a clear lack of accountability and scrutiny. Moreover, Member States are failing to second teachers at the appropriate level, the Brussels schools are overcrowded, and the Commission should act more as a co-owner of the ESS. The System often misses a strong pedagogical perspective and the focus should be on teaching and learning, in addition to budgetary considerations. The ESS should be brought into the modern world with its curricula adapting to current global and geopolitical challenges, realities and transitions more swiftly. Some of the stakeholders acknowledge that they have been heard, but this has not necessarily resulted in action unless they have exercised a huge amount of pressure. There are working groups that function well and generate novel ideas, but then the means to develop practicable proposals leading to tangible outcomes are lacking.

The last time that the European Parliament had reported on the ESS was in 2011. Already then, that report had touched upon the main issues, but time has shown that there are clear limitations to the ability of the ESS to implement those recommendations. The Rapporteur is therefore convinced that the European Parliament should help the emergence of a new vision for the future of the ESS. For this unique educational model to improve there needs to be more accountability, governance innovation and the political will to drive pedagogical excellence. That is why this report, nourished by the collective vision that emerged from the consultations, does not primarily aim to provide answers, but gives the actors of the ESS the orientations and instruments to create their own solutions. The Rapporteur aims to establish more flexibility and provide concrete means to act so that the ESS becomes the engine of its own development.

In terms of pedagogy, the Rapporteur has observed that years of investment have led to a rich

¹ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU\(2022\)699647](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU(2022)699647).

² The Rapporteur visited the European School Brussels II (Woluwe) and met with the following stakeholders: the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General of the European Schools System, the Irish Presidency's representatives on the Board of Governors and the Board of Inspectors, Directors and Deputy Directors of the traditional and accredited European Schools, the Inter-School Teaching Committee, Interparents and CoSup.

System, but that additional efforts are needed to reap benefits even for those who are investing. At the moment, the continuous professional development and the exchange of best pedagogical practices within and beyond the ESS is not central enough. It depends too much on good will, when instead it should be institutionalised and placed at the very core of the Schools' identity. In the perspective of the EEA, the Rapporteur asks for a clear reinforcement of pedagogical development and the establishment of formal structures for the exchange of best practices that include teachers and inspectors. The ESS must harness the experience teachers gain during their time in these schools by offering them the chance to become trainers in their own countries later on. The distinctive feature of the European Schools' teachers is their exposure to different educational approaches leading to reflective practice. This is exactly what they should transmit to their national colleagues. Moreover, it is only by systematising the contribution of the ESS to the flow of exchanges between the 27 national educational systems that it will truly become a driver for educational change in the European Union. The ESS could for instance, be a key player for establishing a European teachers' module, to be included in the initial training of teachers across the European Union. It would only take a minimal additional investment to make the System more legitimate, attractive, useful and visible throughout Europe.

The Rapporteur emphasises that the European Union has actually created an astonishing and living 'laboratory': one with high-quality multilingual education and highly performing students, one that produces truly European staff, teachers and inspectors that are the pedagogical force of the System. It is a place of national identity and a strong sense of European belonging, based on a curriculum that respects national systems, while at the same time it is the product of educational exchanges from across Europe. Finally, the ESS is a community willing to take on the mission of enriching national systems with its European pedagogical culture, innovative practices and strong language learning.

The Rapporteur pleads for the ESS to undergo a Copernican Revolution so that it can continue to flourish over time. This means radically transforming its philosophical underpinning, to enhance its attractiveness and to enlarge the number of beneficiaries of the System, by extending its benefits to Europe's youth, even if they do not attend one of these schools, and to the European Union at large. In the mid and long term, the ESS might have to trade its current governance model for a European community-style system. Clearly, an investment in the traditional European Schools, as much as in the Accredited European Schools, is an investment in the European Union as a whole.

The Rapporteur wishes to express a message of support to the educational community of the ESS, especially to the stakeholders met during the consultations, and to those women and men that try to make the schools a better place through their daily work. In this way, they contribute to making Europe an educational power at the service of the future of our children.