

MAROŠ ŠEFČOVIČ

VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 26 JUL. 2012
Ares (2012)

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your note of 5 July 2012 that you sent as president of the Association of Independent Officials (TAO-AFI) concerning the Commissions' follow-up of the decision of the European Ombudsman and the recommendation of the Cavada report with regard to the organization of a global independent external evaluation of the European schools system.

The European Schools (ES) are managed through intergovernmental cooperation between the Member States and the European Commission (representing the European Institutions). The deciding body of the European Schools System (ESS) is the Board of Governors (BoG). In this forum the Commission has one vote and each Member State has one vote. As a result, the Commission cannot be held sole responsible for all decisions taken with regard to the management of the ESS as indeed they are subject to a vote involving all the 27 Member States as well.

The decision of the Ombudsman considering that the Commission failed to respond properly to the request for an organization of an independent external audit of the ES and that this constitutes an instance of maladministration is not taking the intergovernmental decision making structure into consideration and does not consider the real powers of decision that the Commission has in this field.

However, the Commission is aware that the wish for an external evaluation is an important issue to TAO-AFI and I would like to put forward the Commissions reflections on this point.

A distinction needs to be made between pedagogical evaluation on one hand and the financial and managerial evaluation on the other hand.

As to the latter it is the Commission's Internal Audit Service (IAS) that performs the auditing function in the ES. Final reports with recommendations and actions plans are presented to the BoG and the Secretary General takes care of their implementation at schools' level. The Commission will ask the Secretary general of the ES to present the state of play regarding the implementation of the IAS recommendations during the next BoG.

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Concerning the pedagogical evaluation, the BoG as well as the Commission consider that the participation of all ES in the PISA study would allow a global external evaluation of the competence level reached by pupils including a comparison with the results of national education systems as well as a comparison within the ESS (comparison between the different sections, between the different schools, etc.).

In this context, the SG also contacted another organisation that carries out studies in this field – the "International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement". This organisation submitted a first proposal for two studies to be carried, giving a rough estimation of the costs (340000€/year).

At its meeting in April 2012, the BoG took note of this offer and asked the SG to continue negotiations with these two organisations, taking into consideration that OCDE is in a pilot phase for a new study to be carried out in English speaking countries, to which the ES in Culham is associated.

In addition to that, the Commission considers that the inspectors, who are part of the national educational systems, also carry out a permanent monitoring of the performances of the ES. The European curriculum is elaborated by these inspectors who dispose of the knowledge of the national curricula and are the real experts in this field.

Evaluation by the inspectors also responds to the demand of the Cavada report who asks for an external evaluation of the school programmes without causing any additional costs.

It is in any case preferable to use the expertise within the ESS or of specialized experienced organisations instead of relying on an external consultant.

Furthermore, the Commission has been in contact with the SG related to the difficulties encountered at the BAC exams 2012, following the introduction of a new syllabus for mathematics. The Commission is aware of the measures taken by the SG and will follow this issue closely.

The ESS is of primordial importance for the Commission and it will ask the SG to put the topic of the BAC 2012 and the lessons to be learned as well as the issue of the external evaluation on the agenda of the Joint Teaching Committee in October 2012.

Yours sincerely,

