

What does Brexit mean for the European Schools? An INTERPARENTS perspective

On Wednesday 29th of March, the UK invoked article 50 of the EU Treaty, formally signalling its intention to leave the EU. What does this mean for the European Schools? How does it affect you? What can we do, as parents?

To start with, exit of the UK from the schools is not automatic: the Schools Convention is separate from the EU Treaty. It could be to everyone's advantage if the UK decides **not** to leave the schools as well as the EU. Nonetheless, it is not yet clear whether this is legally possible. If the UK does decide to leave, the terms of exit are a mere full school year from notification of intention to withdraw from the Convention. Therefore, can we really be sure that the UK will still be in the Convention on 1 September 2018, the start of the school year in which the UK is due to leave the EU? Given all this uncertainty, INTERPARENTS is continuing to urge that risk assessment and contingency planning be done now, pending the beginning of talks. Consider the following ramifications...

The role of English in the European Schools - The exit of the UK from the EU inevitably puts the onus on the European School system to consider its situation. Should this necessity be seen as an opportunity for the system to review the role of English in the Schools? Let us start by remembering that practically **ALL pupils in the system encounter English** in the classroom (as well as through their informal interactions with their peers) at some point in their schooling. This is either because they are **EN section pupils**, or because they are **studying English as an L2**, and subsequently **studying other subjects taught in L2** – from European Hours to Ethics, History, Geography, and Economics, or perhaps because they are **studying English as an L3**. There is no reason to believe that this demand will change. How can we therefore safeguard the expertise and resourcing to meet this demand, as well as the contribution of Anglophone pupils to the immersive cultural-linguistic school learning environment?

Funding and teacher resourcing - The EU budget will shrink post Brexit irrespective of what happens to UK involvement in the schools but unlike some other consequences of the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the needs of the schools and the size of its population will not diminish. So, even before considering the UK's direct contributions to the schools, we should begin the long-needed re-appraisal of the schools' **funding model** which has proven unfit for purpose in high-demand languages, especially with respect to recruiting and retaining **high quality teachers**. This will take time. So how can we maintain, for as long as needed, the level and profile of support currently provided by the UK? How can we alleviate a squeeze on the schools' budget and avoid any sudden loss of key expertise?

Access to UK universities - Did you know, typically 40% of all European School leavers apply to universities in the UK? Your child might be one of those for whom the **continued opportunity to study in the UK** is important, either as a personal choice or because of grade equivalence problems or other restrictions in your country. Therefore it is important that the **European Baccalaureate continues to be recognised** in the UK, that the official **table of grade equivalence** still stands and we at least retain accredited **UK UCAS Coordinators** in order to assist pupils in navigating the process of choosing and applying to university. All these school leavers currently rely heavily on a plethora of experienced UK teachers throughout this process, right up to providing well-tailored references and specific UK university interview practice. How do we avoid limiting the horizons of our current and future pupils?

Inspectors for quality control plus... As our dependence on locally hired teachers has increased, so has the importance of the inspectors' duties to **check professional qualifications of applicants** and **oversee the evaluation of teachers across the board**. Moreover, we all feel the benefit of the work of the UK inspectors in relation to their responsibility for the **vast majority of the EN elements of both the curriculum and of the Baccalaureate**, (although it's the EN native-speaking teachers again who are responsible for **translating written questions** for subjects into good, technical English.) What solutions can we envisage to secure the continuity of all these various functions, including teaching quality assurance for all members of staff who teach in English?

INTERPARENTS has raised all these issues and others, with the leadership team of the Office of the Secretary General and with various other stakeholders. The Board of Governors is being asked this April to create a '**Brexit Working Group**', for which the importance of the parent perspective is already recognised with the inclusion of INTERPARENTS in the proposed group. Meanwhile, please help INTERPARENTS and your Parent Association spread the message that **Brexit is a whole school issue affecting all sections, all nationalities ... which needs all our attention**, so that together we can work to mitigate the risks and find opportunities too. **Your insights are very much wanted for this.** Please send your feedback!