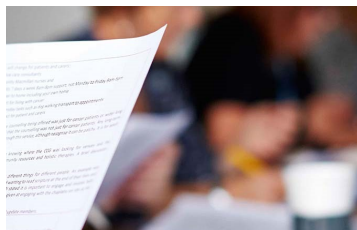
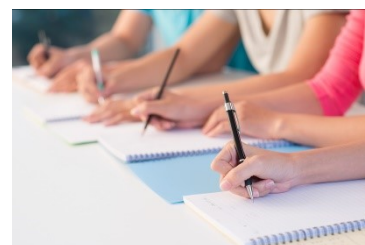
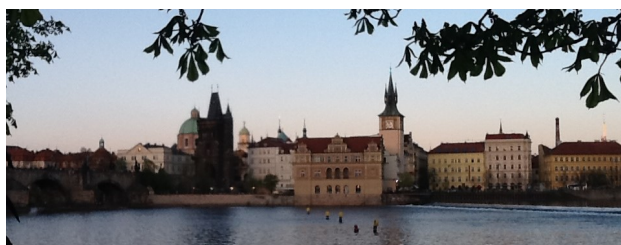
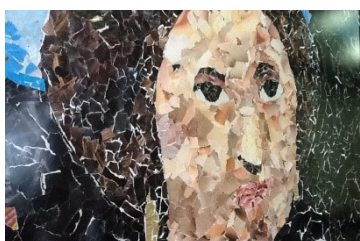


# INTERPARENTS

ALICANTE BERGEN BRUXELLES I, II, III, IV CULHAM FRANKFURT KARLSRUHE  
LUXEMBURG I, II MOL MÜNCHEN VARESE



## Annual Review 2015



In its role as legal representative of the Parent Associations of the European Schools, INTERPARENTS (IP) has continued throughout 2015 to engage constructively with the Board of Governors, its committees and Working Groups, Central Office, the European School Inspectors, The European Commission, the European Parliament, Local and Central Staff Committees and various stakeholder groups.

## When & Where ?

INTERPARENTS has come together for five plenary meetings (kindly hosted by the schools and Parent Associations (PAs) of:

- **Brussels II-Woluwe** in February,
- **Munich** in April,
- The **Borschette European Commission Building in Brussels**, hosted by Brussels IV in September (an extraordinary meeting convened to review the Final IoE Report when we successfully trialled participation by video conference for one association - Varese, see later),
- **Brussels I-Uccle** in October,
- **Luxembourg II** in November

In between, there have been numerous meetings and skype conferences of IP's internal working groups as well as the constant ad-hoc exchange of information and experiences between the associations on all manner of topics.

The President and Vice President of INTERPARENTS represented the Parent Associations in two meetings of the Board of Governors (BoG): Prague in April and Brussels in December, having covered between them also the two major preparatory committees alongside INTERPARENTS colleagues. This following of proposals through the committee stages was beneficial when it came to final discussion and voting in the Board of Governors. The association's greater participation in Working Groups this year has also paid dividends in terms of our greater understanding of issues and increased opportunities to influence the development of proposals in line with the concerns of our membership.

In order to follow all the European School dossiers in sufficient detail and contribute across the range of issues, IP set up a system of **internal specialist groups, so-called IPGs**. In 2015 these worked with varying degrees of success. Essential to their effective running is a commitment by their members to follow their dossiers proactively, involve local PA 'expert' colleagues as necessary, to prepare draft positions for the BoG and its committees and to share these in good time with the wider IP group. Their smooth and transparent functioning would also be enhanced by a **shared workspace**.

Having experimented with Google and Microsoft products during the year, IP decided in October to use the 'circabc' platform available through the European Commission to external groups and a subgroup is in the process of establishing the document structure for this platform. This workspace and archive is part of a wider project begun by the IP bureau to increase the **'resiliency' of the association** by more systematically creating suppléant or deputy positions to shadow key functions and thereby to facilitate continuity. The lawyer retained by IP was consulted several times throughout the year, including in relation to the Baccalaureate, the legal protection working group, the procedures followed by Central Office in relation to enrolment and internal IP matters.



## What ?

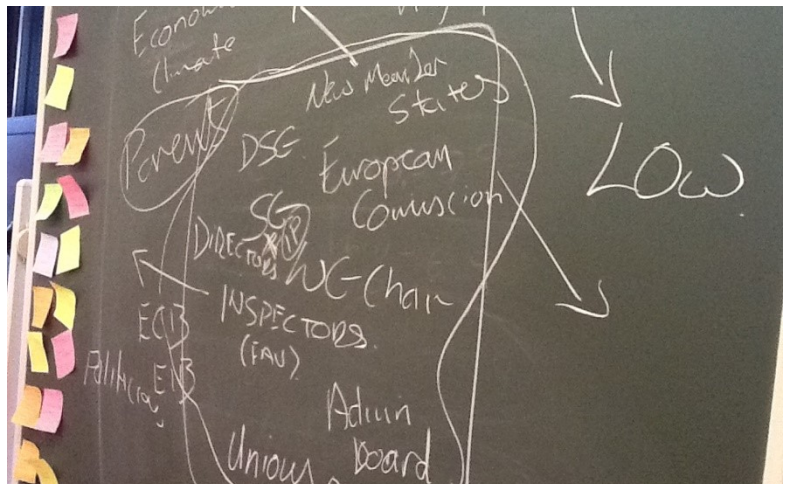
Many issues of interest and importance to parents were monitored and addressed formally through the governance structure by INTERPARENTS in 2015.

**Security:** 2015 was the year when the safety and security of our children at school rose suddenly to the top of the agenda following tragic events in Paris, the subsequent high alert in Brussels and 'ripples' all across Europe. In addition to communication occurring at the level of the individual school/PA, IP represented the whole system in meetings with the European Commission and Secretary General in Brussels to ensure that the situations and needs of all the schools were considered and monitored as the situation developed.

## General & Financial Governance

Progress was evident in 2015 in a number of areas which are critical to the good functioning of the schools (e.g. on **use of IT**, overhaul of the **schools' financial processes** and reviewing the **schools' legal framework**) although IP shared the European Commission's wish for the system to "enhance momentum" on addressing the remaining recommendations of the last Internal Audit.

Pupil numbers continued to rise and **'cost per pupil' continued to decline** and there was little good news on negotiations over **additional external sources of funding** in spite of the efforts made by INTERPARENTS to keep burden-sharing high on the agenda. In December, there were finally **two developments on funding**: an agreement concluded between Luxembourg and the European Schools to fund secondment of teachers for additional CAT III places and another agreement which will be signed by the European Schools and the EIB & EIF on contributions that this 'EIB group' will make to the Commission's part of the school budget. However, neither of these are 'cost-sharing' in the sense of the agreement reached in June 2014 between Member States (MS) which was intended to provide a mechanism for paying for teachers from certain MS for whom demand outstrips supply ('supply' as defined by the quota broadly based on the proportion of nationals of each MS within the pupil population.) INTERPARENTS is no longer alone in expressing the view that that the original cost-sharing mechanism is not working (still no money is coming in from MS to fund



'cost-sharing posts'.) However, it would be this mechanism which would enable the UK and Ireland to be reimbursed for the new EN state-subsidised posts to be created in Luxembourg this year.

The second major and related theme of the year was **resourcing**: by school teaching staff (INTERPARENTS is now joined in its calls for a comprehensive paper on how the system deploys teachers including the local hires, and the associated challenges and needs) and also in Central Office (capabilities and division of responsibilities.) The issue of proper resourcing to meet the system's responsibilities and objectives (which IP has consistently been raising over the last two years as a matter of highest priority) is hopefully the 'hot topic' going into the Spring cycle culminating in the April BoG. Interestingly, the question of the 'nine-year' rule on teacher secondment has also opened up again.



As per normal, IP participated in the review and analysis of numerous syllabuses, initiatives, revision of rules, new proposals and statistical reports throughout the year. A lot of the

## Pedagogical issues

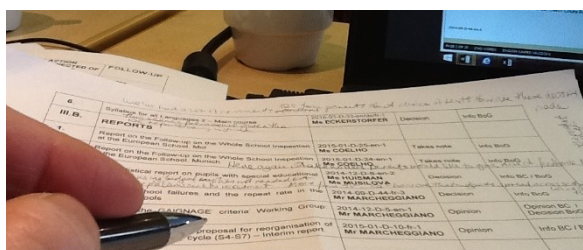
work of the European Schools governance continues to be delivered through Working Groups. IP had made a strategic decision to participate as much as possible in Working Groups

so as to voice the opinions of parents as early as possible in the process and to contribute constructively to the development of proposals. In 2015, these included:

- **Assessment in Secondary** (see 'marking scale' below)
- **Educational Support** (see below)
- **Careers/Orientation** (which has extended its programme into S2-3 and Work Experience for S5. Internships [in a company or NGO etc.] should also extend to S6 [and S7])
- **Languages** (which looked into the possible use of Host Country Language as an additional L2 and the language needs of SWALS)
- **Organisation of Secondary Studies** (see below)
- **Student Exchanges** (a Working Group which has introduced more elaborate administrative procedures, induction and evaluation in 2015 to facilitate the process and is overseeing some changes to the programme – which year groups are eligible to go to another school and for how long)
- **'Gaignage'** (creation and discontinuation of Sections) a Working Group which concluded its mandate with a proposal to bring together a series of issues into a new Working Group focused on developing a strategy for the next 15-20 years of the European School
- **Translation of key documents** so as to increase accessibility and reliability of information largely for parents and pupils but also for external bodies such as universities wishing to check syllabuses for example.

The school year 2014-15 ended, as it did last year, with close liaison between IP and the Baccalaureate and Pedagogical Units during the Bac season to communicate concerns of the parent community about exams in which there were problems and to ensure action was taken and lessons learned. Concerned about long debates in successive JTC meetings about the details of the Baccalaureate rules

to be updated, IP has continued to push for a standing group to be established to monitor the Baccalaureate and to come up with a stakeholder consensus on changes to the rules. Such a working group was finally approved by the Board of Governors in December 2015.



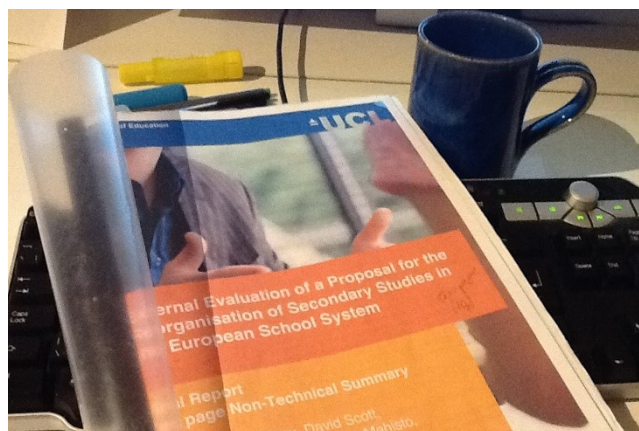


# Highlights ?

## Secondary Studies

Secondary Studies remained the subject of particularly intense and prolonged effort throughout the year. IP worked closely with the external team commissioned to evaluate the proposals to reorganise Secondary Studies S4-7, (including producing a detailed description of the current curriculum and the proposals which was used extensively by the evaluators.) We highlighted the importance of safeguarding access to university courses right across the EU and issues of particular relevance to the diverse and mobile population of our membership such as use of languages including consideration of ONL and SWALS provision, maths, and educational support.

We had insisted upon a clear comparison of the proposals against the status quo and the report did finally contain the unequivocal statement that the proposed reorganisation would not improve on the current system. Moreover, the evaluators have recommended wholesale 'reform' rather than mere 'reorganisation' (calling for an overhaul of curriculum structure, drawing attention to the critical importance of teaching and training, highlighting the need for a language policy and proposing a broader programme which would more systematically cover the '8 key competences' underlying the current curriculum.) The reform process will take some years overall and IP will stay closely involved, inputting formally to the newly created 'pedagogical reform' working group as stakeholders but also contributing through our participation in related working groups.



## Marking Scale in Secondary

The **Marking Scale** used in **Secondary** has been set to change for some years to address some weaknesses of the current scale (especially in relation to harmonisation across subjects, sections and teachers) and problems of grade interpretation experienced by pupils applying to university in several Member States. Although a decision had been taken back in 2011 to move from a ten-point to a seven-point scale (with now five of these marks being 'positive'), the new scale was only finally approved in April 2015 and work has begun on defining new descriptors for all the grades across all subjects. Along with other stakeholders, IP recognised that teacher-training, harmonisation and regular standardisation are critical success factors. After IP reminded the Board of Governors that S6 grades are often requested for university applications in certain countries, it was decided that the launch phase (scheduled for September 2017) should extend only S1-S5 to allow any necessary troubleshooting and time to communicate fully the changes to universities (the first Bac with the new scale now due in July 2020.) IP remains closely involved in the process as we have residual concerns about some details of the scale and their possible impact on European School pupils being able to compete successfully for tertiary education courses.



## Educational Support

**Educational Support** has been another key area of focus.

The BoG approved in April 2015 a proposal to support the implementation of educational support in a way that is more

child-friendly and flexible. This involves a change in how the budget for coordination of the support is managed. IP sought, and got, reassurance that provision for intensive support would remain needs-based and thus safe-guarded. Noting that some underspend of budget might be linked to support policies not being fully implemented in all schools and sections, we also asked for the BoG to be provided a review this coming year of follow-through at a school level to ensure that provision foreseen at a system level is realised 'on the ground.' This is ongoing work for IP.



## School Infrastructure

**The need for additional infrastructure for European Schooling to meet 'host country' obligations** is a con-

stant issue for IP with inadequate facilities in Germany, Italy and Belgium. In 2015, the debate was dominated by Brussels (where the pressing need for a fifth school was highlighted by the BoG back in 2010) and Frankfurt (where the urgency for a new school has increased since 2014 with the creation of the Single Supervisory Mechanism in the ECB). Unfortunately, the Belgian authorities responsible have so far still only provided the small campus of Berkendael (maximum capacity 1000) on a rolling basis, initially as temporary site for EEBIV and currently for EEBI due to an ongoing renovation at the school in Uccle.

The BoG in December 2014 had rejected the proposed use of Berkendael as a new European school from September 2015 for a variety of reasons (voiced by several delegations) including the lack of demand for places in existing sections e.g. DE and EN which would be placed there, lack of proper resourcing to build up such a new school from the bottom up and lack of planning for the long future of the pupils at Secondary level (which would be essential to gain the necessary support of families. In a highly charged BoG meeting in December 2015, the decision was taken ultimately to open Berkendael as a temporary annex to Uccle pending delivery of the promised 5<sup>th</sup> school. It was decided pupils would be enrolled into the newly created Slovak and Latvian sections and a French section.

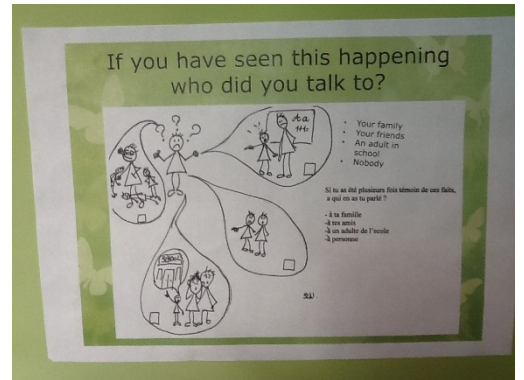


While there has been little or no progress on the Frankfurt situation, both the City of Frankfurt and the German Federal Authorities in Berlin agree on the need for a new school, but neither have been able to provide / identify a suitable plot of land in the city of Frankfurt for the new school.



## Legal Protection

Finally, developments in 2014-15 on **Legal Protection** are worth highlighting as sometimes things go wrong and parents need to make a complaint. In April the BoG endorsed a proposal to introduce a second ('referral') stage within the Complaints Procedure as a measure designed to increase the legal protection offered to litigants such as parents. IP voiced concerns that such an additional step -- even if serving as an internal 'appeal' -- would increase the duration and potential cost of the process, thus possibly deterring some parents from launching a procedure (for whom the speed of a definitive decision might be important and for whom any costs would continue to be payable personally, unlike those of an institution.) The registrar of the Complaints Board was keen to reassure parents that the Complaints Board alone determines the extent of costs payable and urged parents to get in touch with the registrar or her colleague if they have any questions of a specific nature, which are not already answered by the dedicated website: <http://schola-europaea.eu/cree/index.php>. The possibility of capping any legal costs will be pursued by IP as follow-up along with more proposals scheduled for 2016.



## Outlook ?

For the European School System to modernise and refine its practices in the ways envisioned above and thereby to equip its pupils to compete on the world stage, progress must be made in 2016 on a number of major, interlinked issues. These basically come down to sustainable funding and proper resourcing. Specific tasks include delivery of the staffing paper promised a year ago for the meeting of the Board of Governors in December, a new and improved 'local' contract and increased in-service training plus induction of teachers. IP will continue to press for financial and intellectual investment in the system.



In the pipeline this year are new maths and science syllabuses - piloting a development process using external expertise, online marking of the Bac and a possible proposal to introduce L2 at Maternelle. To pick up on some specifics for the short-term...

## Pedagogical Reform

**Secondary Studies** – Following the external evaluation report recommendations, the BoG mandated in December a new 'Pedagogical Reform Group' (internal to the system but with external specialists contributing in selected areas) to devise a workable implementation proposal for the whole of Secondary Studies. IP will continue to voice parents' concerns and objectives throughout the process, with the aim that pupils currently in the system will benefit in some way as well as generations to come.





## Repeat Rates & Failures

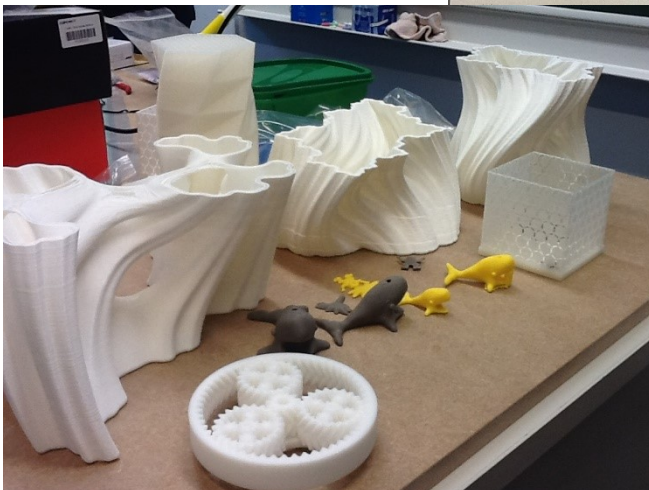
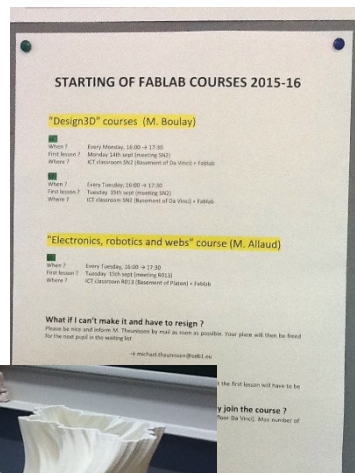
its implementation.) This key working group has met already this year, with two or three more sessions to follow.

-not only analysing patterns in the data but also examining underlying factors including harmonisation of assessment (a 'hot' topic in itself due to a variety of problems associated with

## New! IT, Bacc & ESD

created in 2015 by the Board of Governors were: **IT strategy in education** (still to have its first meeting) and the **Baccalaureate Observatory standing group** mentioned above. In Spring 2016 a mandate will be sought for another Working Group on ESD—**Education for Sustainable Development** following a productive workshop on this important topic in January.

## New Working Groups with IP involvement



## Internal Matters

On **internal matters**, the IP management committee/bureau will continue to work on resiliency planning, internal procedures and developing the 'shared online workspace'. The public-facing IP website will also finally get a new look and content, provided the IP membership supports the project. Having trialled PA participation by video-conference and Skype at two different IP meetings in 2015, more requests have been positively received to use this facility when travel by one delegation to the meeting venue is really not possible. IP has however consistently maintained the position that such instances should remain exceptional because the opportunities of face-to-face time and visits to each other's schools for our four standard meetings annually are key contributors to building mutual understanding.





# Thanks!

On behalf of all of INTERPARENTS, the IP management committee would like to record thanks to all our meeting hosts this year, to all members who give so generously of their time to contribute to online discussions and meetings of all kinds, to our new committee members and finally to those to whom we must say 'good bye' – firstly Geraldina Santandrea who had to step down as secretary when she began a new full-time job.



Second, anticipating that we will also lose some other long-standing stalwarts of INTERPARENTS before the next Annual General Meeting, we would also like to thank and salute the work of Jutta Weber, Joanna Charlat and Sandra Vella who are now in the 'transition phase' out of INTERPARENTS and on to new challenges.

With thanks for your support,

Sarah Conyers Barber, on behalf of the IP management committee:

**Sarah Conyers Barber** – President

**Helen Valentine** – Vice President

**Gala Gonçalves** – Secretary

**Ann-Charlotte Boström** – Treasurer

