

Brussels, 23 January 2012

Dear parents of Bruxelles IV,

We wish you the best for the New Year full of health and joy for you and your families. We are writing you because we all signed the petition to keep the Berkendael School open in 2012-2013. The reason for this are clear enough for all those 200 parents who signed the petition kindly prepared by Eva Schriever and Claudia Hahn: the well-being of our children.

The refusal to table a discussion on this point in the Agenda of the General Assembly on 31 January 2012 is the latest in a line of set-backs for those of us that do not want our kids to travel to Laeken. We simply want a school where we can rely on objective consideration of the alternatives and a dispassionate discussion about how to resolve issues – particularly as regards the future of our school. It is not enough to complain in the draft resolution that there are too many parents that would prefer to send their kids to another school! It is not just about geography – important as it is - but the combative attitude that makes the school doubly unappealing. We frankly expected more from the current President of the APEEE Mr. Horst Nickels, whose letter to the petitioners was overly harsh. He may not share our concerns but APEEE must have the capacity to defend the interests of ALL its parents. We ask our children to problem-solve, empathise with others and take a conciliatory approach and in return we tell them to expect a fair hearing and for all concerned to work in good faith towards an equitable solution. It may sound idealistic but it is a worthy goal to strive for.

The only short-term solution is to present ourselves as candidates of the APEEE BRU IV at the General Assembly. Our main ambition is to change the tone and act in the interests of all parents – those that do not want to go to Laeken and also those who do. The point is to have an APEEE where all issues can be raised and dealt with effectively and constructively without individuals and groups of parents feeling isolated. After all, a primary purpose of APEEE is to act as a supportive interface for all families (kids and parents) with the school and guide them through any procedures as necessary. It is unfortunate that so many places in the board are vacant – it seems to us a sign of a general malaise at the school and therefore unwillingness by parents to engage. We completely understand the reasons that prevent people from stepping forward. However, if we don't participate actively, we have only ourselves to blame when others take decisions for us that we do not like.

We are calling on ALL parents to consider what contribution they could to school life. Taking a role in APEEE to make it an association that represents the community of parents more effectively is an option open to us now. Like you, we are busy people but we are ready to stand for the board and we are asking you to consider doing the same. If the board runs at full capacity, supported by the team of paid personnel (including a manager) to ensure the everyday functioning of the Association, we have a chance of making a great school. We definitely need full parental support if we are asking for a two-site school. With the best will in the world, the organisational consequences of keeping Berkendael open would be formidable. It would not be impossible, though, with enough people with an enthusiastic approach and the requisite leadership/management skills. We remind you that any board member working in the European institutions would be entitled to special compensations for the time invested in this task.

We would like to reassure you that we want to see adequate dialogue on keeping Berkendael open and objective consideration of the options. We would like this to take place in a consensual manner but we may consider legal action if this does not succeed. We simply cannot accept selection criteria that condemns children to sit in expensive and polluting busses in rush-hour traffic for an average of one hour per trip just because intelligent and resourceful adults do not wish to talk together to find a more equitable solution.

We would like to thank Eva and Claudia once again for the impressive energy and efforts deploy so far and we hope they will stand for a vacant place or at least remain as engaged as before. We welcome any other candidates who share our views. If you are considering standing for election, please reply to this mail before Friday 27th at 12:00. There are 12 vacant positions so please give it serious thought. For candidates that would like to work together with us, we will meet on Saturday 28th afternoon from 16:00. Assuming sufficient parents support our initiative, we will write to you with the list of candidates and a bullet point list of their platform. Please lend your support by asking your class representative to attend and vote for these candidates at the General Assembly and if they cannot attend, ask them to confer their precious vote to another supportive representative.

Looking forward to meeting you,

S. Ramírez

F. and D. Terruso

L. Cernat