

Brussels Thursday, 3rd October 2024

Online Administrative Board meeting via Teams: 12:30-14:49

Present: Johanna Alkhafaji, Rachel Aviotti, Marzia Brofferio, Pavlina Canova, Marianna Cosco, Angela Guarino, Noémie Hangya-Lachmann, Dan Nicolae, Jane Okafor, Stefan Petrovski, Dana Adriana Puia Morel, Ionut-Adrian Sandu, Marius Serbeniuc, Adja Awa Sissoko, Iordan Toujarov, Pénélope Vlandas.

Absent: Alexandre Grigorescu-Negri, Josephine Norris, Tzvetomir Penev.

Proxy: Rachel Aviotti to Johanna Alkhafaji from 1:55 pm, Stefan Petrovski to Adja Awa Sissoko from 2:27 pm, Iordan Toujarov to Pavlina Canova from 1:24 pm, Pénélope Vlandas to Adja Awa Sissoko from 1:28 pm.

Guest: Beatriz Soler Navarro, the Director of the APEEE of Brussels IV, Manuela Pamio, secretariat of the APEEE of Brussels IV.

Minutes 3.10.2024

The quorum is reached. Dan Nicolae, the President, chairs the Board meeting and briefly reports a transport incident for information.

1. Adoption of the Agenda.

Adopted without any remarks.

2. Adoption of the Minutes of 5/09/2024 and of 6/06/2024.

Adopted without any remarks.

3. HR - Open Board positions.

• **Responsible Transport - candidate.**

Iordan Toujarov, who is a member of the Legal Working Group and the Well-being Working Group, has agreed to put forward his candidature for the position of transport responsible on the Board.

The Board unanimously approves the appointment of Mr Toujarov as transport responsible and thanks him for volunteering for this position.

The President points out that the transport responsible should be in charge of the Together School application, as it is still in the development phase. Mr Nicolae will be happy to offer any assistance needed to ensure a smooth transition. All Board members with key functions are asked to check or note the tasks related to their functions on Wiki to ensure the transition. Ms Guarino informs the board that there is a Transport Working Group made up of Board members responsible for each service, and we could continue to work this way and help him with this important challenge.

• **Vice-President for Community Affairs.**

Ms Alkhafaji explains that she currently holds the position of Vice-President for Community Affairs and Vice-President Communication. She will be leaving the Board next year, so it is important to find other Board members to take over these roles.



The Board secretary reminds the Board of the vacancies to be filled: the Vice-President for Communication, the Vice-President for Community Affairs, and at least one additional member for the Social Fund Committee.

- **Members of the Social Fund and Community Fund Committees.**

The President explains that additional non-board members could join the Community Fund Committee. A call for volunteers could be made to the section representatives.

4. Somerfesto.

Ms Okafor gives a quick update on Somerfesto's financial results and the distribution of funds.

She informs the Board that the invoice for the canteen service as well as the invoices for the majority of suppliers have been paid, and a part of the budget will be used to pay the last invoices. Ms Okafor is also a member of the Social Fund Committee along with Marianna Cosco. She thinks that it would be good to have a third person on the Social Fund Committee so that we can share our discussions and deal with requests submitted by parents. She explains that last year we received many funding applications for UA pupils and this year a lot of applications for financial assistance were rejected. In her view, the Social Fund Committee could continue to finance the UA pupils if we receive money from Somerfesto. Ms Guarino proposes to launch a donation campaign during the next Somerfesto edition to assist UA families. The President clarifies that we are not using all the funds of the Social Fund to assist UA pupils, but we could transfer €5.000 to the Social Fund and keep the rest of the money for the next Somerfesto. Ms Okafor refers that it is really important to identify what is critical and what is not. In her view, we could give more funds to families who need assistance with mandatory school trips, mandatory equipment and school fees rather than funding the school canteen or extracurricular activities. She explains that there are internal guidelines for the Social Fund and applicants have to send a series of sensitive documents to Social Fund members, which are subject to strict confidentiality. After analysis, the Social Fund Committee decides on applications for financial assistance for specific activities, up to 20 % or 50 or a maximum of 100% of the cost of the expenditure. She thinks that the application form published on the APEEE website should be modified. She proposes to write on the application form that the total application processing time may take up to two or four weeks and the funding applications must be sent on time.

The APEEE President outlines that the Somerfesto is a community event, and profits need to get back to the community and not used to solve budgetary problems or to be put on other APEEE accounts. He would like to have a vote on how the Somerfesto benefits are distributed.

Ms Cosco explains that we have made an inventory of all documents to consolidate them, and revisions will be submitted to the Board for approval. According to the Social Fund Rules, funds for the Social Fund shall be made available from APEEE end of year reserves and/or from income generated through other activities. In case of an APEEE negative revenue, no funds can be made available from APEEE reserves for the Social Fund.

The Treasurer, Stefan Petrovski, clarifies that in the event of a good forecast, we could transfer some funds to the Social Fund in advance, but all funding requests need to be submitted on time. He adds that there are other expenses to be made in the future such as: staff salaries' increase, purchase of equipment (computers) for the APEEE staff etc.

5. Finances.

- **Finances - Quarterly reports - 2023-2024.**

Mr Petrovski announces that the last quarterly report (from June to August 2024) will be published on Wiki as soon as we have all the information. He explains that there are some delays in the accounting,



data entry, and preparation of accounts, but the APEEE Director and the APEEE accountant are working to clean up the accounts and prepare everything. Ms Soler Navarro explains that she is also in charge of Human Resources so Ms Ghota can be focused on finances only. She announces that the financial situation is getting better. The priority is to find the gap in last year's audit report and make sure that the annual accounts are published and registered, as it is mandatory for an AISBL. She announces that she is preparing the draft budget for 2024-2025 together with the service managers and she will prepare the last quarterly report together with the APEEE accountant.

- **Vote: presentation of the vote by Ms Sissoko.**

The APEEE Treasurer proposed to the Board to have a vote on the special conditions offered by the APEEE after the Board meeting. He explains that there are 8 questions submitted to the Board's vote to ease the answers and the comprehension of what we want to define or not.

Ms Sissoko gives an overview of some points submitted to the Board for approval and explains the main issues. She informs the Board that school deputy director of finance and administration asked the parents' association to apply a discount on the price of canteen meals to the EEBIV school staff (except management) and come back to a previous situation where we were financing their lunches. She points out that it is important to have a Board decision on this issue. In her point of view, there is no chance to provide a discount to the EEBIV staff/teachers compared to pupils because the canteen is still in deficit and the current price of the meal is at break-even. Ms Vlandas explains that in the past the General Assembly approved the increase of canteen prices for pupils, but the increase was not applied to adults eating in the Resto profs. She adds that last year the canteen service reviewed these prices to rectify this situation because it is not financially sustainable to allow adults to pay less.

The treasurer, Stefan Petrovski, announces that the total losses for the canteen are approximately 837 K euro in the last five years and we will do our best not to increase the price of meals but to reduce the costs. Another issue discussed is the replacement of plastic water bottles for school outings.

It seems that the EEBIV has decided that the canteen should not provide plastic bottles for pupils. The importance of having clear communication from the school on this issue is stressed, as we need to understand exactly how to implement it. The Vice-President for Administrative Affairs points out that this school's decision affects a contract between the parents and the APEEE and has an impact on the way we provide a service. Ms Alkhafaji suggests using the plastic bottle stock for the next outings and replace the water bottle with another product as the administrative costs for reimbursing parents would be more than 90 cents per family (reimbursement of a water bottle). She will be happy to improve the communication with the school on this matter.

Finally, the Board members quickly discussed the question of providing APEEE staff members with canteen meals or ticket restaurants, in line with Belgian Law. The President informed the Board that the Executive Committee members had already decided on this issue. As proposed by the Treasurer, it is agreed that the text will be formulated as follows: do you agree that the canteen service should continue to prepare (and re-invoice internally to each service) lunch meals for the APEEE staff members (within the framework of their employment contract) with a price equal to the pupil's meal + proportion for adult. The idea is to put on paper the current practice for the majority of staff members and to distribute these costs, which are now in charge of the canteen, among the specific services (general affairs, extra-curricular activities, transport).

The President points out that the role of the Board is to make strategic decisions and develop policies, but that day-to-day operations, such as managing the water bottle stock, are the responsibility of the staff and services.



- **Information point: Recruitment Process of the Chef de Cuisine.**

Ms Cosco gives a brief update on the recruitment process for the Chef de Cuisine. She explains that the selection panel has been formed and the job interviews are ongoing. All supporting documents (the vacancy, the financial statement, etc.) are available to the Executive Committee members, and the selection panel will come back to the Board with a short list of selected candidates once the interviews are over. Everything will be available for all board members once the complete file is sent out for the nomination of the selected new "chef de cuisine."

6. Request to participate to a conference for teachers and parents.

The conference is organised by EEB1 with Dr Pelai (a psychotherapist). The subject is based on screen addiction. On 2nd October he will be in Luxembourg to give a speech for the parents of the European School located in that city. The fee for a conference in presence is 1700 euros plus expenses. While if you want a conference by remote the fee will be 750 euros (a hybrid conference will be the best).

In case BXL's APEEEs are interested in having the conference in presence within this school year the only dates available are October the 30th and December the 12th. In 2025 much more dates are available.

Ms Brofferio submits to the Board a request from other European Schools in Brussels to participate and share the costs of a conference based on screen addiction. She clarifies that not all European Schools in Brussels use BYOD, nor have they banned the use of smartphones at school. The speaker, who is an Italian therapist, will be in Luxembourg to give a speech to the parents of the European School located in that city.

Ms Brofferio explains that the fee for a one-day conference in presence is €1.700 plus expenses. Otherwise, the fee for an online conference is €750. This conference fee could be shared with the other European Schools in Brussels and the European of School of Mol.

If the Brussels APEEEs are interested in attending this conference in-person, the only dates available during this academic year are October 30th and December 12th. It is explained that last year the school launched a survey on the use of smartphones at school, and parents were more or less 50% in favour and 50% against it. Ms Puia Morel refers to the fact that we were supposed to have an event at school for parents in the Well-being Group in October, but the date was postponed because we were not sure that the parents would show up.

She points out that organising events is a time-consuming task and we have to better calculate the costs and attendance. Last year, there was a physical event at school, financed by the CFC, attended only by 50 parents. Many parents registered but didn't show up. The Vice-President for Communication thinks that we should not support this event because our school has already made a decision about this issue, and we need to support the school in executing the decision.

7. APEEE Board priorities for 2024/2025.

Ms Canova, the Board secretary, introduced this point for discussion. She points out that we, as a Board, should think strategically and take time to set our priorities. Ms Cosco, the Vice President for Administrative Affairs, thanks Ms Pavlina for raising this issue, she thinks that it is useful to have newcomers on the Board who have a new perspective and boost our energy. She explains that this year we tried to rationalise what we have and improve our management, our priority is to solve the financial accounting issue. Ms Puia Morel explains that a few years ago, the Board had a team building day with the APEEE staff members, and this was a good opportunity to get to know each other, work together, and fix the APEEE priorities. She thinks that it would be nice to organise a team building day with the APEEE staff and the Board members to define our priorities. She informs the Board that once a year the Ped Team Group meets and conducts a two-hour workshop in the EEBIV to define priorities. The



Pedagogical Team's priorities are also the APEEE's priorities because the Pedagogical Team is the pedagogical part of the APEEE.

8. External Collaboration Agreement with financial experts.

The President introduces this topic by explaining that he is in favour of hiring an external financial company to unblock the situation we have.

The APEEE Director informs the Board that the supporting documents for the vote are published on Wiki (EN & FR versions) and are available to all Board members. This week, the APEEE Director and the accountant had an online meeting with an external financial company to discuss a possible collaboration. The Director's feedback from this meeting is positive. Ms Soler Navarro explains that we need to check our annual accounts and ensure we are following the correct rules and procedures regarding the financial documents. These financial experts are chartered accountants with specialization in AISBL. They are in charge of checking the deadlines, submitting the appropriate documents, and providing support for the audit's report. She outlines that it is very important to have this external view to help us fill the gap.

Action: The Board secretary will be in contact with the APEEE Director, the President and the Treasurer of the APEEE and then she will launch the vote on Wiki.

9. Update from the Pedagogical Team.

Ms Puia Morel informs the Board that the Pedagogical Team meets monthly to discuss important issues. It seems that the important discussions of this month are about ski trips, how ICT is taught in our school, and the absence of teachers.

She will present a brief update on pedagogical issues at each Board meeting, as not all Board members are part of the Pedagogical Team. She points out that the pedagogical part is the pillar of the APEEE.

The Board meeting ends at 2:49 pm.