

Frequently Asked Questions on the UK decision not to second any more UK teachers to the European schools

(in preparation for meeting 8th May 2013)

Q. Why has the UK taken this decision?

A. This decision has been on the cards for five or six years. The UK has been pointing out in the Board of Governors (the decision making body of the European Schools that is made up of Member States, Commission, teaching and parents representatives) that it is sending a disproportionately high number of teachers to the European schools compared to other countries. In 2009 the BoG agreed in its non-binding Stockholm reform a formula which determines the number of teachers a Member State should send depending on how many of its citizens are pupils in the European schools. On the basis of this ratio the UK is currently seconding over 100 more teachers to the 14 European schools than it should be.

In 2011-12 the UK held the presidency of the European schools. It made cost-sharing the central theme of that presidency and tried to persuade the 19 member states who “undersecond” to either contribute to the salary costs of the extra UK teachers who are teaching children from other Member States or to second teachers from their own systems to work in the EN sections in the European schools. Most Member States refused to do this and the UK has now taken this step.

Q. Does it just affect EN section pupils?

A. No. This decision is likely to affect almost every European school pupil in all 14 schools as almost 100% of pupils study English as their L1, L2 or L3.

Q. Is the UK likely to change its mind anytime soon?

A. No. For several reasons:

- a) The UK has been raising this issue for five or six years but has not met with a positive response from the other Member States
- b) The political situation in the UK is not conducive to this decision being overturned. The Education minister is a known Euro-sceptic, the UK Independence Party whose major policy is for the UK to leave the EU won 25% of the vote in local elections on 2 May and there is a possibility that there will be a referendum on UK membership of the EU in the next five years. If it were to be held tomorrow, polls indicate that a majority would vote to leave the EU. There are therefore no votes to be had in making life easier for the children of EU officials, be they UK nationals or not.
- c) It is going to be a long time before the UK considers that the number of its teachers matches the number of its pupils in the schools. One reason for this is because fewer and fewer UK nationals are taking up posts as EU officials or contract agents – especially in Luxembourg. Between 2009-12 the number of UK children in all the European schools fell by 9% as UK children graduated from or left the schools for other reasons. There have been no new UK children allocated to some EN primary and secondary classes here in Luxembourg for a number of years now. So we will constantly be playing catch-up to meet the Stockholm ratio and will have to lose most of the UK teachers before we are back to parity as the UK sees it.

- d) The UK will continue taking this action until something significant happens. It believes that by taking this drastic action it will force the other Member States to reconsider their positions and thereby save the schools.

Q. If the UK is no longer seconding teachers, can the remaining teachers be re-allocated to teach only children in the Anglophone section or be used to teach only core subjects e.g. L1, Maths etc. rather than English as an L2 or L3 or History to non-Anglophone section students?

A. Once the UK has sent teachers to the European schools, it is up to the school directors to allocate them to classes and pupils to those classes. The UK government and UK parents cannot insist that UK teachers only teach UK/IRL nationals and/or other Anglophone section children. Nor can they insist that UK teachers stop teaching English as an L2 or L3. This would be completely contrary to the whole ethos of the European schools, which are founded on the principles of equality and multilingualism, and likely illegal under the Treaties and the European schools convention. And it would run the risk that France, Germany and other Member States would quickly start refusing to teach UK children their languages as L2 or L3.

It should also be pointed out that due to the non-replacement of seconded staff since 2008 some non-Anglophone section pupils in Luxembourg are already being taught English as an L2 /L3 and/or history and geography by non-native speakers.

The Stockholm reform allowed for secondment of teachers from other Member States into the EN section provided they met strict standards of linguistic competence in English. In reality Member States have not been enthusiastic about doing this and it has made little difference to the disproportionate allocations. Ireland is also “overseconding” and cannot meet the UK shortfall.

Q. So what happens next?

A. As the UK teachers come to the end of their secondments they will be not be replaced by other UK seconded teachers. This policy has – in fact – already entered into force in Luxembourg. Five seconded teachers have not been replaced since 2008 in Luxembourg I. This process is now going to accelerate as the remaining teachers come to the end of their secondments.

What we don't know is when the UK will decide that the Stockholm ratio is being met for its nationals. For example, if, by 2016 the number of UK seconded teachers in Luxembourg II has fallen below the Stockholm ratio, will the UK restart secondment to Luxembourg II? Or will Luxembourg II have to wait until the Stockholm ratio has been met across the entire European school system before the UK starts resending teachers to individual schools?

Q. Who will replace the seconded teachers?

A. The school will have to look for locally recruited teachers. These so-called local recruits could come from Luxembourg or from the UK/Ireland or elsewhere. However, there is a lot of competition in Luxembourg for qualified, English mother tongue teachers; between the two European schools themselves, the International School, St Georges and now the new Luxembourg state IGCSE/A level programme that has recently opened at the Lycée Technique Marcel Lucius in Limpertsberg. There is also a lot of competition for teachers from the UK, which needs to create 250,000 new primary places in England and Wales by September 2014.

Q. Are the terms and conditions for locally recruited teachers in the European schools attractive?

A. That depends on where potential teachers are being recruited. A lot of teaching professionals say that the terms and conditions for Luxembourg and Brussels are not competitive enough to attract experienced teachers or to make them leave teaching careers in the UK in the numbers needed. A primary teacher here in Luxembourg starts off on point 1 of the scale at €140.74 gross per hour. A secondary teacher on point 1 earns €226.23 gross per hour. A full time post is considered to be 20 hours per week. Luxembourgish tax and social security contributions are payable on these salaries.

However, whilst the most recent posts advertised in Luxembourg I are all full-time, a secondary post for a teacher of English as a second language in Luxembourg II is being advertised at only 17 hours a week. Apart from a lower salary this means that any children of that teacher are not considered to be category I but category III pupils at the European school. This means that (unless their children have another parent who is an official or contract agent) they would have to pay 95% of the category III fees if they want to send their children to Lux I or II (Article 3.2 of the Conditions of recruitment for part-time locally recruited teachers, 2011) The category III fees will range from €3300 in nursery to €6202 per annum in secondary from September 2013.

In addition, the contracts being advertised are only for 12 months with no guarantee of renewal, nor any contribution to relocation costs.

So, for a teacher considering moving from the UK to Luxembourg - or even from another school in Luxembourg - this may not be a financially feasible or professionally attractive package, especially on a less than full-time contract. For more details on comparative salaries nationally see: [Eurydice teaching salaries](#)

Q. So what could and should the UK government be doing to mitigate the adverse impact of its decision on the pupils in the European schools?

A. First of all, it should explain what exactly its decision means for European school pupils. Clarification is needed on how many UK seconded teachers will be leaving the two Luxembourg schools, per year, between now and 2020. A break down of teachers who will be leaving by subject taught should also be given to parents.

The UK should also explain whether it will restart secondment once the Stockholm ratio is met in individual schools or whether everyone has to wait until the ratios are met across the entire European school system.

Secondly, the UK should continue to work with the other Member States to try to resolve the cost-sharing issue. This can be done in the Education Council and in the Board of Governors.

The UK should also engage further with Belgium and other Member States who have twice blocked approval by the BoG of draft regulations for locally recruited staff that would allow schools to offer them better conditions such as five year contracts and career paths and ensure that they were evaluated by the schools on a regular basis.

The UK should also insist that all new locally recruited posts are full time to attract applicants. The requirement for some staff to pay 95% of the category III fees for

their own children to attend the European schools should be abolished and free places guaranteed.

The UK should work with the Commission and schools to ensure that competent seconded teachers who wish to remain for a tenth year are able to do so.

The UK should also ensure – through the BoG and Secretary General's office – that relevant existing rules and guidelines are properly applied and implemented by the school management. These would include:

- Ensuring that only EN mother-tongue and SWALS pupils are admitted to the Anglophone section with immediate effect, except in exceptional circumstances (Article 47e of the General Rules of the European Schools)
- Ensuring a fair balance of SWALS pupils across the EN, FR and DE sections
- Applying the requirements for teaching qualifications and linguistic proficiency to the recruitment of non-English mother tongue staff who are employed as teachers in the Anglophone sections (see document 2008-D-3510-en-5, <http://www.eursec.eu/index.php?id=2>)
- Requiring school directors to establish a rigorous inspection, monitoring and evaluation programme for locally recruited staff in their schools (Article 3.5 of the General Rules of the European Schools 2011)
- Extending the remit of national inspectors to include inspection of locally recruited teachers
- Insisting that the schools effectively implement the rules on in-service training for nursery, primary and secondary teachers ([Inservice training](#)) and ensure that all new teachers are given proper induction training in syllabi, the European Bac and the European schools system (Cambridge report recommendations 3.3.3 and 6.8, [Cambridge Report](#))

Finally, the UK should ensure that it supports the allocation of an appropriate budget for all of these activities to be effectively carried out in the schools.

Q. Where can I get the facts and figures on all of this?

A. For useful facts and figures on the number of seconded staff by school and nationality, the allocation of SWALS pupils to sections by school and changes in overall pupil populations see:

http://www.eursec.eu/fichiers/contenu_fichiers2/1842/2012-10-D-15-en-2.pdf

For other documents see: <http://www.eursec.eu/index.php?id=160&l=2>

Q. What can Anglophone section parents do?

A. SWALS parents should write to their own Education ministries to demand that they contribute to cost-sharing in the European schools. They should also work to ensure that the steps above are undertaken with the UK and other governments.

All Anglophone section parents should work together at local level to ensure that the top down support requested from the Member States is also supported by us. The Member States cannot monitor every single decision taken by the Luxembourg schools management teams. We also have an obligation to ensure that the Directors are doing their jobs and everything they can to mitigate the impact of this decision. There is still lots of room for improvement on this in both Luxembourg schools.

