



ECNAIS

European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools

To

email:

date : 12 May 2015
conc : Nat. legislation threatens Greek Private Schools
(attachment last page)

Dear ,

The European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools (ECNAIS) is deeply shocked by the recent governmental proposals, sent to Parliament already, which directly threatens the independent private schools in Greece in their continuity and even in their mere existence.

ECNAIS is a non-political, non-confessional, international association for collaboration between national associations of independent schools in European countries. ECNAIS is founded in 1988 and shares experience, information and knowledge about best practices of independent schools in Europe and lobbies for the interests of independent schools on a European level.

ECNAIS is deeply concerned about the proposals of the Greek government for new legislation which restricts to a very large extent the core freedom of independent schools in Greece. We are recently informed in detail about these governmental measures against the whole private schools sector by our member organization in Greece, The Hellenic Private Schools Association, which asked us for immediate help.

Diverse and quality education is a pillar stone of Europe and promotes inclusion. Please help in the struggle to safe independent private schools in Greece.

We summarize the essence of these legislation proposals and the Ministerial Decree in an attached overview (att.).

These proposals are in direct conflict with the underlying ideas of the EU, ECB and IMF in their attempts to support Greece to overcome the financial crisis by encouraging the Greek government to strengthen the private sector in Greece, to which the Greek private schools already belong for decades.

The refusal of the Greek government to consult the Hellenic Private Schools Association is a violation of the declaration on "Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education" of the meeting of the EU Education Ministers in Paris, 17 March 2015".

In this declaration the Ministers of Education agreed to strengthen their actions at national, regional and local level in the field of education by encouraging dialogue and cooperation among all education stakeholders.

Simon J. Steen
Chairman

VBS
Bezuidenhoutseweg 251-253
2594 AM Den Haag
The Netherlands

Tel.: +31 6 533 178 94
chairman@ecnaeis.org

Sofia Reis
Secretary-General

AEEP
Av. Defensores de Chaves, 32 – 1.º esq.
1000-119 Lisboa
Portugal

Tel.: +351 92 798 67 88
sr@aEEP.pt

Per Kristensen
Treasurer

DCICIS
Pinusparken 10
DK-3200 Helsingør
Denmark

Tel.: +45 40347178
perk.dir@gmail.com

Lexia Hulst
Secretariat

VBS
Bezuidenhoutseweg 251-253
2594 AM Den Haag
The Netherlands

Tel.: +31 70 331 52 11
lhulst@vbs.nl



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Finally we want to underline the meaning of article 14 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (since the treaty of Lisbon included in the EU treaty) in which are guaranteed:

- The freedom to found educational establishments with due respect for democratic principles
- The right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions.

The above mentioned Greek proposals for legislation and ministerial measures for the independent schools are undermining the right to education as mentioned in art. 14 of the EU Charter.

We urgently ask you to use your authority and competences to safeguard that the new legislation proposals will not pass the Greek Parliament before they have been openly discussed with the relevant educational stakeholders and representatives of the Greek Civil Society such as The Hellenic Private Schools Association.

The continuity and existence of the Private Schools in Greece are at stake when the above mentioned legislation proposals and Ministerial Decree will come into power.

Yours sincerely

Simon Steen
chairman ECNAIS

(attachment next page)

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Chairman

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The Netherlands

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ATTACHMENT

LETTER DATED 12 MAY 2015

CONCERNING: NAT. LEGISLATION THREATENS GREEK PRIVATE SCHOOLS

ESSENCE OF RECENT LEGISLATION AGAINST GREEK PRIVATE SCHOOLS

- All internal tutorial classes and foreign language classes offered up to now by private schools to their students, in excess of the formal program, are forbidden.
- Hence forth a private school is not free to decide on the duration of the contract it enters into with each teacher.
- Private schools in practice can no longer dismiss a teacher with an open ended contract. In short the unions and the Ministry of Education will have the power to veto any decision of the schoolboard to dismiss an employee of the independent school.
- Private school teachers are henceforth allowed to enter into collective bargaining with private schools to attain better salaries and improved conditions compared to those valid for public school teachers. Free collective bargaining is no longer possible between private schools and private school teachers. The fully assembly of the Supreme Court ruled that such a demand is unconstitutional. Despite this ruling, the government decided to satisfy this demand made by the teachers' union. Private schools in Greece are not against collective bargaining with the teachers' union. Their view is that the union should decide whether they wish to stick with law and the guarantees it offers or opt for free collective bargaining without the guarantees of the law.

ESSENCE OF MINISTERIAL DECREE

By Ministerial Decree, which has already been put in force, the range and scope of the educational services offered by private schools are very much curtailed and also made much more expensive. This decree stipulates:

- All extra educational services will no longer be decided or even proposed by the school board or the school owner. They will be proposed by the school's teachers association and the board or the owner will be obliged to fund them.
- All personnel involved in such services must have the precise qualifications that would give it access to a public school teaching position. This creates huge problems because for trainers of many educational classes, such as dance classes, photography classes, ballet classes and so on, there are no approved qualifications for public schools positions. Thus all these can no longer be carried out in private schools.
- All personnel involved in these extra educational services must be paid for the weekly time employed for 12 months (that is 14 salaries). The problem is, that several such services have limited duration. For example the preparation for a Christmas Performance, usually starts in October and ends in December. Now the teachers involved will have to be paid for this extra duty year round. As you understand many such actions will slowly cease to exist.
- All these extra educational, artistic, athletic etc actions must be declared by each private school to the ministry of education, prior to the beginning of the school classes (in Greece September 11). There are a lot of actions however that are not known by September 11. For example many students competitions are announced during the school year, many of them by the ministry itself. Private schools will no longer be able to participate. This takes away a great deal of flexibility, which is needed by a private school.

All these organizational, economic and time restrictions applied on private schools by the said ministerial decree, do not apply to public schools. In public schools the teachers can decide to implement almost any action they wish. What's more in public schools the parents association can employ trainers, teachers etc. to implement such extra actions in school after school hours. Private schools are from now on denied of all these freedoms.

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Chairman

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