Madrid Statement

At the end of the ECNAIS seminar in Madrid, with 125 participants from European independent schools, representing 14 countries, we issue the following statement.

Considering that:

a) Article 14 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union recognises the right to education, and affirms that “the freedom to found educational establishments with due respect for democratic principles and the right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions shall be respected, in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of such freedom and right”.

b) The European Parliament Resolution of 12 June 2018 on Modernisation of Education “encourages, with regard to increasing inclusiveness and ensuring freedom of educational choice, the provision of adequate financial support for schools of all categories and levels, both state schools and not-for-profit private schools, provided the curriculum offered is based on the principles enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and complies with the legal systems and rules and regulations regarding the quality of education and the use of such funds in force in the Member State concerned” (76).

It is crucial that:

1. Parents can exercise their right to choose the school they find best for their children from a variety of schools that reflects the given diversity within our European societies;

2. National governments respect the fundamental right to establish independent schools on a religious, philosophical or pedagogical basis.

And we bring the public authorities’ attention to the following facts:

i. Freedom of education will only be effective in the long run if independent schools have fair access to public funding;

ii. Independent schools have since decades taken initiatives for pedagogical renewing in education and for innovative school practices, contributing to the improvement of education and adding value to the European society;

iii. Independent schools are completing and enriching the different national school systems in Europe and contribute to the social and economic development.

iv. Education should not be subject to the continuous ups and downs of political parties it requires a climate of stability resulting from a basic consensus.

ECNAIS is a non confessional, non political association, founded in 1988 by educators from the independent school sector who wanted to learn more about the challenges and the vision of each other for independent education in Europe. ECNAIS, with headquarters in Helsinki, unites national associations of independent schools from all countries of Europe. Our vision is to promote dialogue within countries and to promote the freedom of education for parents and for educators. Independent schools educate over 18% of European Students (around 20 million)

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Spanish members of ECNAIS: