

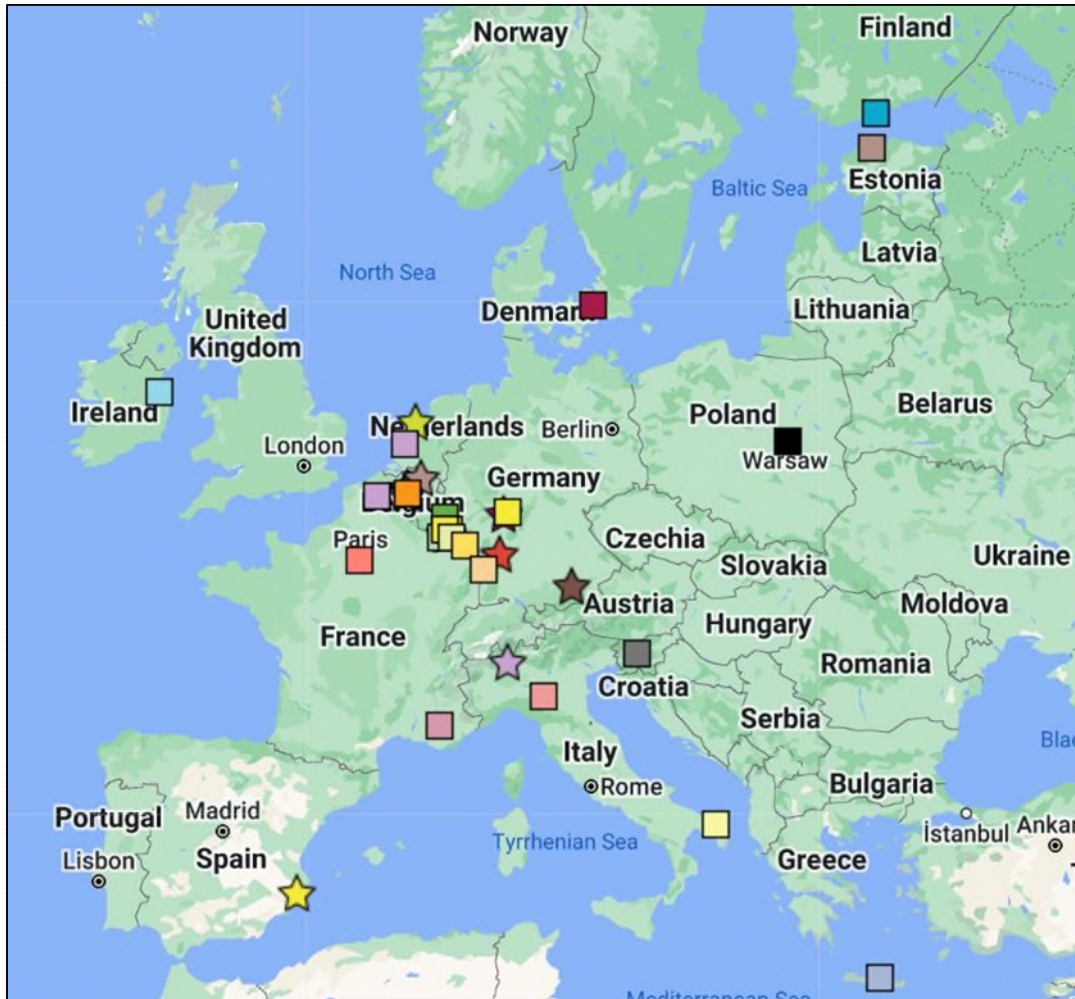


Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Priorities for Ireland's Presidency of the European Schools' System 2022 - 2023



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The European Schools

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Background

European Schools (ES) are educational institutions set up in European Union (EU) Member States to provide education to the children of employees of the Commission and EU institutions and agencies. Established in 1957, the ES operate under an intergovernmental protocol. *The Convention Defining the Statute of the European Schools* was enforced in October 2002 and has been signed by all members of the EU.

The ES system provides children with a multilingual and multicultural education in the nursery cycle for two years, the primary cycle for five years, and the secondary cycle for seven years. The schools follow a specific curriculum and young people sit the European Baccalaureate at the end of secondary education following two years of study.

Currently, there are 13 traditional European Schools (ES) in six countries, as follows:

- Belgium [Brussels I (Uccle & Berkendael); Brussels II (Woluwé & Evere); Brussels III (Ixelles); Brussels IV (Laeken); Mol
- Netherlands (Bergen)
- Luxembourg (Luxembourg I; Luxembourg II)
- Germany (Frankfurt am Main; Karlsruhe; Munich)
- Italy (Varese)
- Spain (Alicante)

In 2022, there were almost 40,000 children and young people across the whole ES system. There are approximately 28,765 pupils enrolled across the three cycles of the 13 traditional European Schools (as at 14/10/22), of whom 539 pupils approximately are Irish nationals. In the 2022 - 2023 school year, Ireland has 59 seconded teachers (nine-year secondments) in the ES system (29 primary teachers at nursery/primary level and 30 at secondary level), including four deputy directors and six assistant deputy directors (ADDs)¹.

The traditional European Schools offer a European education that meets the pedagogical requirements laid down for the ES system. In addition to the 13 traditional European Schools, there are 22 Accredited European Schools across 13 Member States, including one Accredited Centre for European Schooling (CES) in Dunshaughlin, County Meath, Ireland, which was established in 2002. There are approximately 13,215 children and young people enrolled in the

¹ The teacher secondments currently include: 2 primary deputy directors and 2 post-primary deputy directors with non-teaching duties; 1 primary assistant deputy director (ADD) and 1 post-primary ADD with non-teaching duties; and 4 ADDs with 50% teaching duties.

Accredited European Schools, of whom approximately 64 children and young people are Irish nationals².

All Accredited European Schools are linked to the ES system by an Accreditation Agreement. These schools offer a European education that meets the pedagogical requirements laid down by the European Schools but within the framework of the national school networks of the Member States. The administration and the funding of an Accredited European School are the responsibility of the school's host Member State. As a result, Accredited European Schools are outside the legal, administrative and financial framework, which are compulsory for the traditional European Schools.

The CES in Dunshaughlin, County Meath was the first Accredited European School established in the ES system. Currently, there are 48 pupils enrolled in Dunshaughlin CES (29 pupils in primary and 19 students in secondary), and 18 teachers are employed. The CES is under the patronage of the Louth and Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB).

The Board of Governors is the decision-making body for the European Schools and is composed of representatives of the Ministries of Education of each of the EU countries, a representative of the European Commission, and a representative of the European Patent Office. There are also representatives of the European Central Bank (ECB), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO). The mandate of the Board of Governors covers educational, administrative and financial matters. When it is not in session, its powers are exercised by its officially appointed Secretary-General.

Ireland's delegation to the ES system includes a Head of Delegation from the Inspectorate who represents Ireland on the Board of Governors, and two inspectors, one of whom is assigned to the nursery/primary cycle and the other inspector is assigned to the secondary cycle. The role of inspectors includes the evaluation of teachers, management and schools; teacher recruitment; membership of a range of committees and working groups and involvement in the European Baccaureate (secondary inspector). The Education and Skills Attaché to the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union (EU) is also a member of the delegation representing Ireland on the budgetary committee. Ireland's engagement with the ES system is overseen by the Department of Education (International Cooperation Unit) from a policy and budgetary perspective. In addition, the Department provides support for the administration of Ireland's European Schools' teacher recruitment process, orientation days and familiarisation visits.

The Office of the Secretary-General performs executive management duties and provides the schools with advice and assistance in pedagogical, administrative, financial, legal and human resources' issues. The Office also provides administrative assistance and services to the

² Survey carried out by the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools (90% return – responses received from 19 out of 22 Accredited Schools).

different working groups and organs of the system, such as the Boards of Inspectors, the Joint Teaching Committee, the Budgetary Committee and the Board of Governors.

Context for the Presidency of European Schools

Each academic year, a Member State assumes the Presidency of the European Schools. Ireland officially became part of the Troika from 1 August 2021 and has assumed the Presidency of the European Schools from Croatia in 2022-23. In line with Presidency procedures, Ireland's delegation to the European Schools has been expanded to include the President/Chair of the Board of Governors of the ES system.

A critically important function in the ES system is overseeing the European Baccalaureate examinations in all European Schools including the Accredited European Schools at the end of secondary education. Ireland has also provided a President/Chairperson of the European Baccalaureate for the duration of its Presidency.

A Presidency of the European Schools' Handover Meeting was convened in Ireland's Ministry of Education in Dublin on 17 June 2022. The Secretary-General of the European Schools, the Deputy Secretary-General of the European Schools, the Executive Coordinator of the Office of the Secretary-General, the Croatian and Italian delegations, and Ireland's delegation to the European Schools, were present at this meeting. Draft priority areas for Ireland's Presidency of the European Schools were presented for discussion by Ireland's Head of Delegation. The status of the current priorities of the Croatian presidency, and budgetary and operational matters were also discussed during the meeting.

During the Presidency of the ES system, countries have the option to identify possible areas for development within the system. These areas are identified on the basis of their relevance to the Member State and to current developments within the ES system. The areas identified inform the selection of priorities, which usually have a pedagogical, ethical and administrative dimension. In addition to the selected priorities, the Presidency also advances the work already undertaken by previous Presidencies through the multi-annual plan for the ES system.

Priorities for Ireland's Presidency of the European Schools' System

This section identifies four priorities for Ireland's Presidency of the ES system. An overview of the work already in train in the 2019-2021 multi-annual plan of the ES is provided in Annex 3. This work will continue during Ireland's Presidency of the ES system.

Ireland's pedagogical and ethical priorities for the Presidency of the ES system are centred on the concept of *Reflection for Action* for teachers and young people. The priority for teachers will cultivate individual and collective reflective practice as the foundation for rich learning experiences within classrooms and schools. The priority for young people will cultivate personal growth and development through an active citizenship programme anchored in the eight key competences for lifelong learning.³

Ireland has identified two priorities for the ES system in the administrative area. The first priority relates to the Accredited European Schools and their further integration into the ES System, particularly in relation to their visibility, access to support, and communication approaches. This will build on their involvement in the representative, consultative and governance structures of the ES system. The second priority will aim to continue the work initiated by the French Presidency in advancing the simplification of administrative processes within the ES system.

PRIORITY 1: Cultivating individual and collective reflective practice among teachers in the European Schools' system

The concept of multi-annual planning was introduced on a system level during the French Presidency of the ES system. This multi-annual plan guides the work of the ES system by identifying the range of actions currently prioritised within the ES system. Central to the achievement of these actions are teachers and their pedagogical knowledge, skills and expertise. Cultivating individual and collective reflective practice is integral to the evolution of teachers' thinking processes and the development of their knowledge, skills and expertise. Such a process underpins the capacity, readiness and motivation of teachers to meet the evolving needs of children and young people to provide quality teaching and learning experiences in classrooms.

³ European Commission. (2018). Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning. Brussels. [Online]. Available: <https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/recommendation-key-competences-lifelonglearning.pdf> [Accessed on 30 May 2022]

Summary: A series of webinars on the theme of being a teacher will be developed and made available to the ES system during the 2022/2023 year of Ireland's Presidency of the ES system.

RATIONALE FOR PRIORITISING THE CULTIVATION OF INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AMONG TEACHERS

Teachers are integral to any school system. On a daily basis, teachers aim to advance the learning journey of children and young people. Continuing professional development (CPD) provides teachers with the necessary tools and skills to steer their learning journeys.

CPD for teachers in the ES system is typically linked to implementing changes in subject syllabi, assessment, and cross-curricular teaching approaches and competences. In this context, CPD seeks to familiarise teachers with the changes to curriculum being introduced and provide them with guidance to support their effective implementation. To complement this approach to CPD, this priority will aim to promote individual and collective reflective practice among teachers to optimise the impact of CPD on teaching and learning in the ES system. This priority places the teacher and what it means to be a teacher at the heart of the CPD process. This means that attention is given to the values, attitudes and dispositions of teachers and their capacity, readiness and motivation to facilitate the provision of rich teaching and learning experiences for children and young people. This includes the need for teachers to adapt their practice and teaching approaches through periods of change.

The COVID crisis, for example, illustrated the significance of adaptive expertise (Timperley, 2015)⁴ when school leaders and teachers had to quickly adjust their practice and develop innovative ways of teaching and learning to facilitate distance and online learning. Faced with this challenge, many school leaders and teachers acquired the necessary skills to ensure the best possible teaching and learning experiences for children and young people. Similarly, school leaders and teachers had the tenacity to continue to reflect upon and refine their practice according to changing circumstances, expectations and possibilities.

Cultivating individual and collective reflective practice as a pedagogical priority is in line with the Department of Education *Statement of Strategy 2021-2023* in Ireland, which emphasises that 'people are at the centre of our school system' (p.2) whereby

every child and young person feels valued and is actively supported and nurtured to reach their full potential (p.6).

⁴ Timperley, H. 'Professional Conversations and Improvement-focused Feedback. A Review of the Research Literature and the impact on practice and student outcomes'. *Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership* (2015). (Teaching Council).

In order to realise this vision, there is a need to support and nurture the holistic development of teachers to reach their own full potential as educators. This need to support teachers is highlighted in the Department of Education Statement of Strategy in Ireland:

It remains crucial that teachers, school leaders, and all of the education workforce are supported in their professional practice.....continuing teacher education programmes need to reflect the skills and experience which teachers and school leaders require, as well as acknowledging and celebrating the diversity which they meet in classrooms today (p. 12).

Teacher reflection and collaborative learning are also integral to the achievement of EU actions to improve the quality and performance of school education. EU actions in school education create opportunities among teachers to exchange and share knowledge, skills, ideas, experiences and practice (Maastricht Treaty, Article 126). Making the most of these opportunities is dependent on teachers' capacity to engage in individual and collective reflective practice.

POSSIBLE APPROACH AND ACTIONS TO CULTIVATE INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AMONG TEACHERS

A series of pre-recorded online webinars will be developed to support individual and collective reflective practice among teachers. These webinars will be of 45 minutes duration and will be made available for teachers on the ES dedicated SharePoint virtual platform. The themes identified for the webinars will be based on aspects of teacher professional development that have emerged from a meta-analysis of research (ibid).

These themes include:

- being a reflective practitioner
- the moral imperative of improving a range of valued outcomes for children and young people
- taking agency for the continued development of teachers' own knowledge and skills through self- and co-regulated learning, as new evidence and new challenges come to light
- creating self-awareness in terms of existing assumptions and when they might be helpful or unhelpful, and in this way supporting metacognitive development.

SELECTION OF ONLINE WEBINAR DEVELOPERS AND PRESENTERS

In line with the priority of making the ES system more visible in EU Member States, Ireland's Head of Delegation contacted third-level Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in June 2022 to explore possibilities in relation to the development and delivery of a series of research-informed cross-sectoral webinars on one or more of the selected areas. Each HEI was invited to submit an Expression of Interest and to nominate a representative who might be interested in developing and presenting a webinar on one of the selected themes.

Four Higher Education Institutions (Dublin City University, Marino Institute of Education, Mary Immaculate College of Education and University of Limerick) expressed an interest in the project and agreed to develop and deliver the series of pre-recorded webinars on reflective practice. Each webinar will present academic research, reflect on its applicability, and prompt teachers to reflect on the theme and its relationship to their classroom practice.

The overarching aim of the webinars will be to cultivate individual and collective reflective practice among teachers to optimise the learning experiences of children and young people.

The objectives of the webinars will be:

- to enter the realm of disruptive thinking⁵ and deliberate botheredness⁶ in order to prompt reflective practice
- to encourage school leaders and teachers to reflect on the key learnings from the webinars and their application to the classroom and school life
- to consider how the learnings from the webinars have been applied in teachers' practice.

The Inter-School Teaching Staff Committee (ISTC), the group representing teachers in the ES, will be consulted in relation to focus points that might be addressed within the areas identified and on how the webinars might gain the most interest and engagement from teachers.

While the pre-recorded asynchronous webinars will be delivered in English, subtitles will be included in the vehicular languages, French and German. The HEIs identified to develop and deliver the webinars will be informed of the need to ensure that the webinars are suitable for non-native speakers of English.

⁵ Sheninger, Eric (2021). *Disruptive Thinking in our Classrooms: Preparing Learners for Their Future*, ConnectEdd.

⁶ Dix, Paul (2017). *When the Adults Change Everything Changes: Seismic Shift in School Behaviour*, Crown House Publishing Ltd.

IMPLEMENTATION OF REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AMONG TEACHERS DURING THE TERM OF IRELAND'S PRESIDENCY OF THE ES SYSTEM

The areas identified for the webinars were presented to the Board of Inspectors' meetings and the Joint Teaching Committee (JTC) in Brussels during the week of 10 October, 2022. The webinars will be launched online at different stages during Ireland's Presidency in 2023. A Guide to support teachers' engagement with the webinars will also be developed in collaboration with the HEIs. Teachers in the ES system will be encouraged to engage with the webinars in their undirected professional time. Existing online professional learning communities provide a forum in which teachers in the ES can share their observations and ideas on the webinars as new themes are launched.

School management will be requested to find time during the school meetings to allow teachers to share and discuss their observations arising from the webinars and what implications this might have for teaching and learning in their class level, section and cycle in the school. This means that this pedagogical priority can be discussed both in smaller groups (e.g. class-level or subject groups) and in larger groups at whole-school level. School management will be provided with prompts to guide these reflective discussions, which they may choose to use. Taking school contexts into account, school management in the ES system may align the webinar themes to support the implementation of relevant actions in their annual pedagogical plan during the 2022/23 school year.

A working group was established during the Presidency to oversee the implementation of actions for cultivating individual and collective reflective practice among teachers in the ES system. The group will be co-chaired by inspectors and will include representatives of school management (directors/deputy directors etc.) and teachers from both the traditional European Schools and the Accredited European Schools.

The working group will consider:

- how the webinars might gain traction and buy in from teachers
- how the learnings from the webinars can be considered during school meetings
- how the learnings from the webinars can be transferred to classroom practice
- how implementation of the learnings from the webinars can be monitored
- how reflective practice can continue to be fostered in the ES system.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR THE REFLECTIVE PRACTICE PRIORITY DURING IRELAND'S PRESIDENCY OF THE ES SYSTEM

- Teachers will be provided with the opportunity to reflect on what it means to be a teacher, which will encourage and motivate teachers to develop their practice further.

- Discussions among teachers and between teachers and school leaders arising from the webinars will influence decision making in relation to the sharing and implementation of innovative teaching and learning practices.
- Professional dialogue will be promoted and enhanced through existing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and the virtual platform.
- Teachers will be given an opportunity to engage in professional dialogue in relation to their learning from these webinars. This can be facilitated during their teacher contract (seconded and locally recruited) review evaluations and during focus group conversations in whole-school inspections.
- The working group will produce a report on the impact of the webinars on individual and collective reflective practice among teachers and its impact on classroom and school life in the ES system. The report will also include proposals for the further development of teacher reflective practice in the ES system.

PRIORITY 2: Nurturing and celebrating active citizenship among young people in the secondary cycle in the European Schools' system

The European Commission (2018) highlights the need to encourage the development of key competences for lifelong learning and encourages Member States

to better prepare people for changing labour markets and active citizenship in more diverse, mobile, digital and global societies, and to develop learning at all stages of life (p.4).

The Council of the European Union adopted a recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning in May 2018. The recommendation identifies eight key competences, which are “essential to citizens for personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion” (European Commission p. 6)⁷. Work is ongoing within the ES to support the implementation of essential values, knowledge, skills and attitudes, which underpin the key competences of the curriculum.

In line with different member states, substantial work has been undertaken across Europe to develop young people's understanding of sustainable development. For example, Ireland has

⁷ European Commission (2019). Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning.

published its *2nd National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development – ESD to 2030*, which includes actions to promote volunteering, and links between schools and local communities.

Substantial work has also been done in the ES system to develop young people's understanding of education for sustainable development (ESD). In Ireland, the Ministry of Education produces a quarterly newsletter on sustainable development, which can feature and publicise ESD projects and initiatives underway in the ES system, during its Presidency.

RATIONALE FOR PRIORITISING THE NURTURING AND CELEBRATION OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE SECONDARY CYCLE IN THE ES SYSTEM

European Schools provide education for young people from many different countries and place a strong emphasis on fostering links and understandings between different language sections within the ES system. This priority of nurturing and celebrating active citizenship among young people builds upon and extends outwards the concept of shared connections and understandings to foster linkages and build solidarity between young people and their local communities.

An active citizen promotes the quality of life in a community through the development of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to work to make a difference in society and improve the quality of life of others. The participation and involvement of young people in active citizenship in their local community is the foundation stone for all of our futures.

Following the resumption of in situ school life after the COVID pandemic, it is opportune to expand the European schools' engagement with the key competences by revisiting the priority of the Spanish Presidency to cultivate the civic competence of young people. Therefore, during Ireland's Presidency, a *Citizenship Actions for All Programme (CAAP)* will be initiated, which will focus on the cultivation of civic competences among young people in the secondary cycle in the ES system.

POSSIBLE APPROACH AND ACTIONS TO NURTURE AND CELEBRATE ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE SECONDARY CYCLE IN THE ES SYSTEM

Young people in the ES system will be encouraged to support their local community through acts of service and participation in a range of concrete activities. Young people will engage in activities such as volunteering in local community groups, supporting the work of local charities, engaging in environmental work or assisting with groups to support children and adults with special educational needs and/or physical disabilities. Young people will be encouraged to use their initiative to identify other possible areas for involvement in their local communities.

Young people in the ES system will select one community activity in collaboration with the ES and in consultation with their parents/guardians. These activities for young people in S4 or S5 (generally aged 14-15 years) will take place outside of school hours for one hour per week over a defined period of 10 weeks.

Each ES will request a teacher/teachers to volunteer to co-ordinate the *Citizenship Actions for All Programme (CAAP)* in their school.

IMPLEMENTATION DURING THE TERM OF IRELAND'S PRESIDENCY OF THE ES SYSTEM

A working group will be established during Ireland's Presidency in 2022/2023 to oversee the implementation of the *Citizenship Actions for All Programme (CAAP)* for the ES system. A specific mandate and terms of reference for this group will be developed in collaboration with the Office of Secretary-General. The group will be chaired by Ireland's Inspectorate and will include representatives of school management (Directors/Deputy Directors etc.), coordinating teachers, young people and their parents, from both the traditional ES and the Accredited ES.

The working group will:

- identify key criteria for young people's successful engagement with the *Citizenship Actions for All Programme*
- agree on how best to celebrate and highlight the achievements of young people in individual schools
- invite each school to nominate a coordinating teacher to lead the implementation of the *Citizenship Actions for All Programme* in each school
- liaise with and support the coordinating teachers in each participating school via the establishment of a professional learning community (PLC) through the TEAMS SharePoint virtual platform
- support coordinating teachers through online continuing professional development support and access to other relevant resources
- identify child protection, health and safety, and data protection requirements
- create and disseminate relevant documentation to assist schools in meeting relevant requirements.

The main responsibilities of the coordination teacher will be to:

- inform young people and their parents about the *Citizenship Actions for All Programme* and on how young people can become involved in the programme activities
- liaise with young people on the possible community activities identified by young people and support them in selecting the most appropriate and worthwhile activity
- ensure that young people maintain a record of participation of all activities completed

- support young people's ongoing participating and provide advice as necessary
- organise the celebration and recognition of young people's achievements
- liaise with other coordinating teachers in the ES system through participating in a professional learning community (PLC) and through the TEAMS SharePoint virtual platform.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR THE ETHICAL PRIORITY DURING IRELAND'S PRESIDENCY OF THE ES SYSTEM

- It is envisaged that the learning gained and skills developed from participation in the *Citizenship Actions for All Programme* will become a valued and established element of the student experience in the ES system.
- The autonomy and civic competence of young people in the ES system will be developed through active participation in their local communities.
- The involvement of the coordinating teachers in implementing the *Citizenship Actions for All Programme* will harness and enhance their leadership skills and experience in the ES system.
- The working group will produce a report on the implementation and impact of the *Citizenship Actions for All Programme* during the term of the Presidency and on proposals for its further development in the ES system.

PRIORITY 3: Progressing the meaningful integration of the Accredited European Schools into the European Schools' system

The Accredited ES are of interest to Ireland during its Presidency given that the first Accredited School was established in Dunshaughlin, County Meath and the numbers of Accredited ES in the ES system continues to grow. For these reasons, Ireland in its Presidency will prioritise the further integration of the Accredited ES into the European Schools' system.

Summary: Ireland will prioritise the Accredited ES and will support and further their integration into the ES system by considering areas such as visibility, access to support, communication and other relevant areas identified. This will be followed up by existing working groups. However, the creation of a new Working Group might be considered.

RATIONALE FOR PROGRESSING THE MEANINGFUL INTEGRATION OF THE ACCREDITED EUROPEAN SCHOOLS INTO THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS' SYSTEM

The Accredited ES are an important strategic growth area for the ES system. Since the first Accredited European School was established in Dunshaughlin, County Meath in 2002, the

number of Accredited ES has grown considerably. In the period from 2016 to June 2022, the number of children and young people enrolled in Accredited ES has almost doubled. Four further candidate schools are currently under consideration for accreditation. It is anticipated that the number of children and young people attending the Accredited European Schools will continue to grow. This will reflect a steadily increasing proportion of the overall population of children and young people in the ES system over the coming years. This evolving context provides new opportunities for the ES system.

Due to the recent and anticipated growth in Accredited ES, the relationship between these schools and the rest of the ES system continues to evolve. Given their strategic importance to the overall development of the ES system, it is important that their connection to the overall ES system is strengthened so that their needs, visibility and supports provided are considered in a future-focused integrated manner.

By identifying the Accredited ES as a priority area for Ireland's Presidency, their place in the ES system can be fully considered, and a road map for their future development and integration into the system chartered.

POSSIBLE APPROACH AND ACTIONS TO PROGRESS THE MEANINGFUL INTEGRATION OF THE ACCREDITED EUROPEAN SCHOOLS INTO THE ES SYSTEM DURING THE TERM OF IRELAND'S PRESIDENCY

An existing working group will be reactivated during the Presidency to explore the needs, required supports and further integration of the Accredited European Schools into the ES system for the coming years. A specific mandate and terms of reference for this group will be developed in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary-General. The group will be chaired by an official from the Office of the Secretary-General and will include inspectors and representatives of school management (directors/deputy directors etc.), three heads of delegation representing the troika, and one or two representatives of the directors of the Accredited European Schools.

The working group will consider:

- the visibility of Accredited European Schools in the overall European Schools' system
- the connection with and integration of an expanded number of Accredited European Schools in the ES system
- the enhanced structures that will be required by the Accredited European Schools, given the growth in their numbers, to ensure that they appropriately supported by the ES system over the coming years
- the provision of enhanced access for Accredited European Schools to the full range of resources and supports, including digital supports, which are currently provided for the 13 traditional European Schools

- the potential for reciprocal learning across the ES system to enhance the teaching and learning experiences for children and young people.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES IN PROGRESSING THE MEANINGFUL INTEGRATION OF THE ACCREDITED EUROPEAN SCHOOLS INTO THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS' SYSTEM DURING THE TERM OF IRELAND'S PRESIDENCY

- The working group will produce a future-focused report that presents recommendations and suggested actions for the Board of Governors to promote the further integration of the Accredited European Schools into the ES system during the term of Ireland's Presidency.
- Agreed actions will be implemented to progress the integration and involvement of the Accredited European Schools into the ES system through the provision of supports over the coming years.
- Actions will be implemented and monitored by nominated personnel through the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools.

PRIORITY 4: Furthering the work on simplification in the European Schools' system

During Ireland's Presidency of the ES system, this priority will progress the work initiated by the French Presidency on the simplification of processes within the ES system.

In April 2021, the Board of Governors set up a dedicated working group to identify areas in the ES system that were unnecessarily complex and time-consuming causing inefficiencies, and to improve these areas through seeking concrete measures, simplification and rationalisation.

The Simplification Working Group identified the following six key strands of work and established one sub-working group for each:

- Human Resources (HR)
- Budget
- Digitalisation
- Organisation of meetings
- Documents
- Pedagogical topics

Following its first meetings, the Pedagogical Topics Sub-Working Group identified some areas of concern and put forward recommendations regarding educational support and the

organisation of studies. Since these areas are covered by other working groups or units at the Office of the Secretary-General, the sub-working group concluded its work.⁸

While the mandate originally envisaged that the final report and recommendations of the Simplification Working Group would be submitted by spring 2022, the Board of Governors authorised a prolongation of the working group's mandate to the end of 2022, so that the issues in HR, Budget and Digitisation strands of work could be considered more comprehensively. The two other sub-groups finalised their recommendations, which were reported to the Board of Governors in April 2022.⁹

A final report, to include recommendations for the remaining three strands of work, accompanied by all the legal, financial and organisational implications, will be presented during Ireland's Presidency at the December 2022 meeting of the Board of Governors. Thereafter, during the second half of Ireland's Presidency in 2023, the recommendations in the final report will be prioritised and an implementation plan developed to guide the work in the ES system over the coming years.

Summary: Ireland will lead on the prioritisation of the recommendations arising from the final report of the Simplification Working Group approved by the Board of Governors (December 2022) and will oversee the development of an implementation plan to guide the simplification of processes in the ES system. During Ireland's Presidency of the European Schools, the outcomes and recommendations of the Simplification Working Group will be fully considered.

While acknowledging that the simplification process primarily applies to the processes and structures within the ES system, it may also present an opportunity for individual member states to reflect on their own engagement with the system, and simplify or streamline some of their own processes or services to support students.

For example, following an internal review of the guidance support service (education and career guidance) provided by Ireland, to the children of Irish citizens in the European Schools, a number of areas for simplification and streamlining were identified. During the 2022/23 school year, steps will be taken to reduce the complexity and time-consuming nature of the previous provision. The co-ordination of the service will be centralised in Ireland's Ministry of Education, using an online platform. The new service will be completely online. It will be more user-friendly, flexible and efficient and will ensure a service that is of higher quality for the students that access it.

⁸See Interim Report of the Simplification Working Group (2021-10-D-33-en-2).

⁹ 2022-01-D-61-en-4 Simplification WG - Proposals Organisation Meetings - Documents sub-WG

RATIONALE TO PROGRESS WORK ON THE SIMPLIFICATION OF PROCESSES IN THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS' SYSTEM

Over time, the working methods, approaches and processes of the ES system have evolved. In many instances, these processes have become overly complex and burdensome. This has resulted in poor efficiencies and the duplication of activities, resulting in additional costs across the ES system. These additional costs have a direct consequence for the overall budget of the ES system, and ultimately, on the overall cost to each of the Member States that fund the ES system, both directly and indirectly.

There has been ongoing discussion for many years about the need for simplification in the Board of Governors and in other bodies of the governance structures in the ES system. The decision by the Board of Governors in 2021, under the French Presidency, to establish the Working Group on Simplification, has been an important step forward in this regard.

The sub-groups established for each of the six key strands of work identified by the Simplification Working Group have led to the identification of a broad range of processes and procedures to advance the simplification process in the ES system. An interim report was provided to the Budgetary Committee and Board of Governors in late 2021 that met very strong approval. The Board of Governors provided a prolongation to the mandate of the Simplification Working Group.

The Final Report was presented to the Budgetary Committee in November 2022 and to the Board of Governors in December 2022. This final report of the Simplification Working Group presented to the Board of Governors for approval will be a significant milestone to support the simplification of administrative procedures for the ES system. This report has the potential to deliver many efficiencies, both from a fiscal and human resourcing perspective. However, it is essential that the recommendations in the report are fully considered and that an implementation plan is developed.

POSSIBLE APPROACH AND ACTIONS TO PROGRESS WORK ON THE SIMPLIFICATION OF PROCESSES IN THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS' SYSTEM

The work on the simplification of processes in the ES system is already included in the 2021/2022 multi-annual plan for the ES system. Identifying the simplification of processes in the ES system as a key priority during Ireland's Presidency in 2022/2023 has the potential to give momentum to this work for the benefit of the ES system.

The recommendations of the final report of the Simplification Working Group will be prioritised in consultation with the national delegations of Member States. An implementation plan on the simplification of processes in the ES system will be developed to set targets to guide the implementation of the prioritised recommendations in the ES system over the coming years.

This implementation plan will identify roles and responsibilities and an appropriate timeframe to support its implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

This implementation plan will be considered by the ES Budgetary Committee and at the meeting of the Board of Governors in April 2023. Taking into account the recommendations of the Budgetary Committee and the Board of Governors, implementation of the processes and procedures developed will commence during Ireland's Presidency in the areas of HR, budget, digitalisation, organisation of meetings and documents to support the simplification of administrative processes in the ES system.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES TO PROGRESS WORK ON THE SIMPLIFICATION OF PROCESSES IN THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS' SYSTEM

The recommendations of the final report of the Simplification Working Group relating to administrative processes and procedures in the ES system will be progressed during Ireland's Presidency through the identification of targets in an implementation plan to support the delivery and monitoring of actions to implement the prioritised recommendations in the ES system over the coming years.

The work completed during Ireland's Presidency of the ES will be further advanced as part of the ongoing multi-annual planning process for the ES system. Progressing work on the simplification of processes in the ES system will enhance the capacity, efficiencies and cost savings of the ES system to respond effectively to the evolving needs of an expanding ES system.

APPENDIX 1: Previous Pedagogical Priorities for Presidencies of the European Schools' system (2017/18 – 2021/22)

2017/18: ESTONIA

The Estonian Presidency focused on the following:

- developing the governance of the ES (revision of recruitment procedures for leadership positions in the ES and OSG); pedagogical reinforcement of the management in the OSG and in the ES; clarification of terms and conditions for the accreditation and audit of the accredited ES; implementation of new financial governance.
- progressing the pedagogical development of the ES; continuation of the implementation of the teaching standards; following up on the additional measures relating to the implementation of the new marking scales; continuation of the reform of the European Schools' curriculum; clarification of the role and responsibilities of the inspectors in the ES; analysis of the implementation of the Education Support Policy and Provision
- developing the pedagogical use of ICT; the creation of a coherent ICT strategy for the ES; revising the present ICT curriculum.

2018/19: GREECE

- The Greek Presidency had set a pedagogical priority to continue to contribute to the work developed in the area relating to Educational Support Policy in general and in the area of Inclusive Education in the European Schools in particular.

2019/20: SPAIN

- The Spanish Presidency had two sets of priorities: one dealing with the structures of the ES system, the other with CPD on the new marking scale, key competences for life-long learning, language policy, roles and duties of inspectors, ICT and ED support; also civic competence and the European dimension.

2020/21: FRANCE

- The French Presidency priorities included: (1) Education for sustainable development (ethical area); (2) excellence of BAC (pedagogy) and (3) the simplification of governance (administration).

2021/22: CROATIA

- The Croatian Presidency priorities related to the pedagogical area, the monitoring of the quality of the organisation of teaching in the school year 2021/2022 continued as well as the organisation of the BAC, especially in circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Equally, special emphasis was placed on the revision of the document *Language Policy of the European Schools*, bearing in mind the organisation of teaching L2 and the formation of groups taking into account different language abilities of young people.
- The Presidency also sought to make sustainable development visible in primary and secondary pedagogical documents as well as local initiatives at school level.



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