

Luxembourg, 29th September 2020

**Mr Calot Escobar**  
**Court of Justice**  
**College of Heads of Administration**  
**President of the College**

Dear Mr Escobar,

The COVID-19 crisis this spring saw education facilities across Europe shutting their doors and moving rapidly to distance teaching. Within weeks, the education landscape in Europe was fundamentally changed. Pupils and their families had to adapt and keep learning going, showing sheer determination and resilience, and hoping for a better future.

The new school year has finally started in a „new normal” situation in the European Schools, which most children of EU staff attend. Shortly before the start of the school year, parents received an email requiring them to buy a laptop for each child and bring it to school (attached). For many members of staff of the institutions this is a challenge. Many cannot afford it, also because of costs already borne, like books, that they need to buy themselves without any financial help so widely available in many Member States. With the recent changes in the purchasing power of EU staff many families are under enormous pressure and struggle to ensure equal learning opportunities to their children.

In these difficult times, no one must be left alone. No one can make it alone. We need to support each other, and we must not forget about values that bring us together, values which we as EU staff are committed to and work for every day. Values such as equal opportunities, solidarity, and care for most vulnerable ones, which include children.

Now it is also time for innovation and change. Our children need to gain new digital skills and improve computerised thinking to be ready for their future jobs. Making education of the next generation more modern, more inclusive and more skills oriented is one of EU priorities outlined in the Digital Education Action Plan. Good quality, digitalised education must be available to all children, not only to those whose parents can afford expensive equipment for each child in the family.

The school year has just started. If teachers or students will need to be quarantined, or if the whole school will have to be closed, we will end up with distance learning for good. According to WHO, we are expecting the second wave of the pandemic. The European School 1 has already informed parents that “if it is the case that the pandemic situation continues to necessitate the continued use of distance learning, the school management will evaluate the possibility of extending the recommendation to have a laptop computer in school for educational purposes to all students of the secondary”. Then it will become essential for each pupil to have an electronic device at home, regardless of the family situation or financial status of his or her parents. In the Member States, parents receive aid from public authorities, often with the financial support from the European

Union. In Luxembourg, the government provides for electronic devices against a moderate payment. In our case, the only public authorities we can count on are the EU institutions.

Therefore, we would like you to consider the following:

- interpret the rules on education allowance in a way that it will cover the costs of buying an electronic device (laptop, iPad or desktop) for each child in secondary school.

Should you need further details, we remain at your disposal. Given the urgency of the situation, the very short notice given by the school and due to the unpredictable nature of the pandemic, please consider this as an emergency issue.

We are aware the world has changed since the provisions on education allowance were adopted. In case you conclude that, despite your good will, current legal situation does not allow for such an interpretation, , we would appreciate if you could kindly consider other solutions to modernise framework for supporting children in modern teaching.

Looking forward to your answer

Kind regards,

for the Association of Parents of the European School Luxembourg 1

**John Coughlan**  
President

**Annette Mai**  
**Aleksandra Goraj**  
Co-vice presidents for Secondary School