

Brussels, April 5 2025

## Why Locally Recruited Teachers are striking and what are their demands

It may have come to your attention that the Locally Recruited Teachers (LRTs) of all four Brussels-based European Schools (including all six sites) staged several actions over the past several weeks. About half of the LRTs took part in the action of March 19th while many supported the action. The demands formulated by the LRTs enjoy near-unanimous support, and these employees have demonstrated a willingness to take action in order to get their demands known and respected.

The two principal demands of the LRTs and their supporters are:

- 1) The right to install a Trade Union Delegation in their schools ;
- 2) The improvement of job security for LRTs

Up to today, more than 500 staff members of the European Schools in Brussels have signed the demand for the installation of a union delegation in their school.

The demands also enjoy support from parents' associations, student representatives, and have been explained and argued to the Secretary General of the ES, Mr. Andreas Beckmann, who communicated on March 25 to ISTC several commitments on these two demands.

As such, we decided to postpone the announced action of April 1st to offer the Board of Governors and the European Commission the possibility to formulate their reaction to the demands of the staff of the European Schools. More specifically, we would like to ask the BOG and EC :

- Confirmation to ISTC and to our labour union ACV/CSC that OSG has the mandate to establish a proposal for a legal framework for the establishment and the functioning of a Trade Union Delegation together with a working group and together with labour unions (amongst which ACV/CSC)
- the commitment to vote on the elaborated proposal for a legal framework for a Trade Union Delegation no later than the BOG of December 2025, so that Trade Union Delegations can be established in January 2026
- The commitment to further pursue the improvement of job security and working conditions of EURSC employees, LRT in particular.

We hope that we can receive the position of the BOG and EC on these demands before April 14th, 2025, as this would offer us the possibility to study this reply and formulate our position together with our affiliates.

To better understand the demands made by the LRTs, here is a factual description of the current working of the school system from a teacher's perspective, as contrasted with the current framework of the System as articulated in the Statute and the Service Regulations of LRTs, and the impact this has on the LRT:

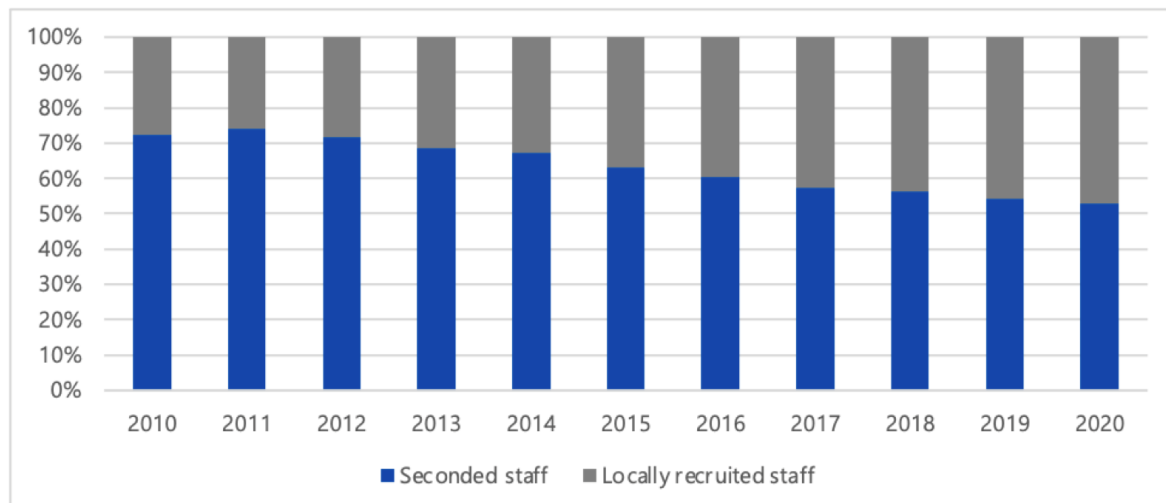
# The “state of play” of the European School System from the Perspective of Locally Recruited Teachers

According to the Statute of our school system (CONVENTION DEFINING THE STATUTE OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS of 1994),

2. Instruction shall be provided by teachers seconded or assigned by the Member States in accordance with decisions taken by the Board of Governors [...]

It is obvious that this does not reflect the current functioning of the European School system. By now, nearly 50% of lessons are taught by Locally Recruited Teachers (LRTs), in some schools even more than that. The evolution of the ratio of Seconded Teachers to LRTs (taken as full-time equivalent positions) from 2010 to 2020, taken from the Cult Committee Report from 2022:

**Figure 18: Share of seconded teachers as opposed to locally recruited staff across traditional ES (2010-2020).**



Source: Visionary Analytics (2021). Based on reports and statistical data by OSG.

For the 2024/2025 school year, we observe that for the Belgian Schools, Seconded teachers compose of 55% in FTE, but only 45% of the teaching staff members (746 ST, 896 LRT).

These raw numbers tell only half the story: LRTs are often the longest-tenured colleagues with the most institutional knowledge. Many positions with extra responsibilities (cycle coordination, orientation, etc.) are filled by LRTs. LRTs are class teachers, subject coordinators, scheduling experts, etc., and they often perform the extra duties. LRTs form a highly qualified, experienced, and dedicated workforce and are the backbone of teaching in the European School system.

*We must always be at our best, and thus take on extra work. The risk of losing our job or losing hours (and salary) is always present in my mind.*  
5-year LRT

*On our pedagogical day in November, my art colleagues and I had to organize and animate an art workshop (purely recreational/occupational) for our colleagues. On our pedagogical day, we had to work!*  
9-year LRT

Yet, despite their essential, indispensable role in the proper functioning of our school system, LRTs enjoy nearly no formal job security. Even on a nominally “permanent” contract, LRTs’ teaching hours (and corresponding remuneration) are subject to fluctuation from year to year, according to the needs of the school.

*“ They publish vacancies for 21 hours and, after the interviews, they offer much fewer hours. The newly recruited LRTs are not aware of the 18-hour rule and the secondment, and in this way, they use the 21 hours as a “bait” for newly recruited LRTs.”*  
3 year LRT

*“ The school cut my hours in half, meaning 11 periods because the school needed to offer a biology teacher a full-time position. After my complaint, I received an email stating that my hours for the next academic year will be zero. Thus, I moved to primary where I became subject coordinator. “*  
11-year LRT

*“ After 8 years of service, being the subject coordinator for the majority of time, being class teacher nearly every year, teaching several Bac classes every single year, being among the teachers responsible for subject choice workshops and career and study advice, I was promised 20 teaching periods in June. In September, two periods were suddenly taken away. They were given to fill the schedule of a newly arrived Seconded teacher.”*  
8-year LRT

LRTs face the loss of periods at any time and, with it, a loss of income. It is also a situation that would be illegal in any public or private school system in the EU.

*“ Seconded teachers can arrive any day. All year long, I have to overcome this fact and manage those feelings, defend my position, work hard anyway, commit, and feel gratitude seeing my students thrive. But it is mainly a strategy of survival to stay positive and practice good work ethics for my own well-being. There are times I get discouraged and see that there is systematically no commitment from the European School System towards me and my work. It does not even come close to matching mine. This feels like I am disposable garbage, not valued or considered enough. These are working conditions that are constantly draining my resources and motivation.”*  
9-year LRT

*“Last year, my department lost an enormous amount of periods. Five LRTs were supposed to share the remains. The situation escalated between us, causing a thriving department to be shattered into pieces. We still struggle this year to get along very well, and this causes constant stress, lack of communication and misunderstandings. Our team is hurt and deals with distrust on a daily basis since then. Nothing is put in place to remediate or avoid it from happening again. Personally, I was very badly affected by this situation. It caused me sleepless nights for over three months, waking up crying heavily, shaking, almost to the point of a breakdown. I had to pay for a professional psychological counselor to get over this and still have to live with this struggle.”*  
Anonymous LRT

*“MAY 2024 = it was established that I was P4 IT class teacher (full time primary) and a seconded a Support teacher with full time of course.*

*JUNE 2024 = I was noticed I will get a part-time Support with 15 hours. The support position was divided in two part times to keep another LRT on board after she has lost hours to a seconded teacher.*

*July and August are pretty useless to find other positions to add other hours in my timetable as, of course, in the summer everything is already settled.*

*SEPTEMBER 2024 = find out I'll have 12 HOURS instead. This means my salary would have been 1000€ less than last school year. I am living in Brussels all by myself, I am alone in here. After a long search, I found 9 hours private lessons per week that I needed for living.*

*February 2025 = management gave hours of a colleague who had a difficult time/ So from then on I have 19,5 hours.*

*Then I was also told I was fired for the next school year due to the arrival of a seconded. Also the other colleague received the same notification. She is sick since then. I have 27 hours now to cover the whole support hours for our section as she probably won't return anymore.*

*I feel used, frustrated, sad, useless and hopeless. I have sleepless nights thinking about how I am treated in that school where parents are sending every year beautiful mails about my job, to say thank you to my dedication and passion and caring to the children. And yet, I am fired.”*  
5-year LRT

## How to address this situation ?

On the question of how to address this situation, one would normally point to the staff representation that exists in the European Schools. Unfortunately, We observe several weak points in the current system that result in the inability of the representation system to address this crucial issue (and other issues) for the LRTs, and this despite the democratic character this system has.

First, we observe that for each specific group of teachers, only 1 representative (+ potentially 1 replacement) is elected per school, and that this person has up to 4 periods per week to perform their duties: prepare and attend meetings, study documents that are provided, defend colleagues who are convened by the direction, ... but also safeguard the democratic process of informing and consulting their colleagues in order to be able to correctly represent the people who have appointed them as spokespersons. It is simply impossible for these representatives to correctly represent their colleagues in the 4 periods provided. This feeling causes not only frustration, as these employees have no impact on their own working conditions, but also creates stress and fear among LRTs, as they all risk losing their employment (partly) without any possibility to prevent this.

The result is that many colleagues have confirmed the feeling of not being correctly represented in the current system, and thus of not being heard when it comes to their working conditions.

But also for the representatives, it is an ungrateful situation: In the Laeken School, the last four representatives for the LRT secondary have each been forced to resign as representatives (or as teachers entirely) due to total physical and mental exhaustion or even burnout. This only after 2 years of representation work. These issues are certainly not limited to the school in this example.

Not only is this situation problematic for the individual representative, but it also causes the impossibility of constructing a correct representation in the long run: every new representative must start from scratch and has to learn the regulations and how the system works.

Second, we observe that the European Schools have no functional framework that allows a democratic process of representation. It is not only the limited number of representatives with a limited number of periods available for their representation duties, but also the elaborated framework that restricts the information and consultation of staff members. For example, documents for ISTC are handed out too late. Representatives receive up to 100+ pages of text to process only one or several days in advance. This way, it is impossible to inform and consult the colleagues they represent. This way, the position taken risks being a personal position and not the position of the colleagues they represent. Also, there exists no functional framework on how colleagues can be consulted during working time<sup>1</sup>, ...

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<sup>1</sup> This became clear once again when the representatives of the school in Brussels organized information meetings on the postponement of the action of April 1st, for which teachers attending were deducted these hours from their monthly pay.

The current representation system via Staff Representatives who function as delegates on the ISTC is absolutely insufficient for LRTs to effectively engage in genuine social dialogue: Staff representatives' terms are too short (one year), they do not have sufficient time off from their teaching duties, and they lack the training and facilities (training, legal counsel, etc.) to fulfill their duties of representing LRTs effectively.

Without question, valuable work is performed by Staff Representatives in the ISTC and the working groups, but the means of representation fall far short of what is needed, especially in the face of the permanently precarious status of LRTs.

To add to the problems, LRTs do not enjoy the right to union representation. Despite this being a basic element of social dialogue as defined by the European Parliament, European Commission, and the Council of Europe, the Charter that applies to LRTs, as acknowledged in the Service Regulations, as stated at the outset:

“THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

...  
intending to ensure that the rules applicable to locally recruited teachers are in line with fundamental rights as laid down in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,

HAS ADOPTED THESE SERVICE REGULATIONS:”

The Service Regulations do state that LRTs have a right to be members of a union and even “hold office”:

“Locally recruited teachers shall be entitled to exercise the right of association; they may in particular be members of trade unions or professional associations and may hold office.”

However, no definition of “hold office” is spelled out, and no framework is offered. The schools do not recognize professional labor unions as representatives of the LRTs, and there is currently no regulation that would specify the rights and competencies of such a delegation. Without a clear framework that specifies the mandate of and procedure to install them, it is simply impossible to establish Trade Union Delegations and to hold office. Without the respect of the direction for the union appointed by staff to represent them and the representatives appointed by this union, there is no right for collective bargaining as defined by §28 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU.

To sum up: While LRTs form the backbone of the European School system, teaching nearly half the lessons and being the primary bearers of institutional knowledge, they do not enjoy crucial and indispensable social rights (union representation and collective bargaining) and are working under Service Regulations that leave them in perpetual economic and psychological insecurity.



We believe that the right to stable working conditions that must provide employees with a respectful and stable livelihood is essential and a fundamental employment right. We observe that the European Schools are unable to provide the Locally Recruited Teachers with stable working conditions. This undermines not only the livelihood of these teachers but also the well-functioning of the European Schools and teaching in the schools, as it has a negative impact on the well-being and motivation of teachers, and also prevents the recruitment and retention of competent teachers in the medium and long term.

As evidenced by the recent strike actions taken by the LRTs of the Brussels European Schools, there is now a broadening consensus among the LRTs working in the system that this situation cannot continue. The rules and regulations governing employment conditions in the European School System in no way do justice to the factual working of the school system, to the legitimate rights, and to the reasonable needs of the LRTs. LRTs across European Schools have become sufficiently convinced that it is time for the European Schools to evolve towards a social dialogue of the 21st century and apply the European values and rights that Europe believes are essential in a respectful employment relationship.

## What are LRTs concrete demands for the meeting of the Board of Governors in April?

The first demand of LRTs is the installation of Trade Union Delegations in the schools. This TUD must provide staff with the possibility to better inform themselves, to study the regulations, and to seek clarification when necessary, without being obliged to do so after working hours. The TUD must provide the possibility to organize a discussion/consultation among staff so that a clear and motivated collective position can be taken on topics that concern LRTs.

The Secretary General, Mr. Beckmann, has promised Staff Representatives and delegates of the organizing committee of the strike actions that he would propose to the Board of Governors the elaboration of a system of syndical representation at the European Schools.

We ask and strongly urge the BOG to provide the Office of the Secretary General with the mandate to elaborate a proposal for a system of syndical representation. We demand that this proposal for a legal framework is elaborated in collaboration with the ISTC and trade unions (amongst which ACV/CSC), and that this proposal will be voted on at the meeting of the Board of Governors in December of this year, to be implemented at the beginning of 2026.

As mentioned above, union representation is a basic social right enshrined in §28 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. Denying it would not only force the LRTs to take further social action but would also certainly trigger LRTs to launch a formal complaint with the Complaints Board.

The second demand is to take serious further steps in the direction of proper, formal job security for LRTs that go well beyond the proposals that are currently under discussion, and of which we, of course, hope that they will be approved by the Board of Governors.

While LRTs appreciate that these proposals are a step in the right direction and are warmly welcomed as such, they are still a far cry from what is needed. The way the system currently works is to deprive LRTs of job security for the sake of maintaining maximum flexibility for potential secondments. This is not an acceptable arrangement for LRTs, for all the reasons elaborated above.

We want to make it very clear that this is not an arrangement LRTs are willing to work under any longer. Needless to say, we do not question the legitimacy of the institution of secondments in general, or of having two different statutes for seconded teachers and LRTs. However, we do question the legitimacy and practicality of the current system, in which LRTs are deprived of job security and basic rights despite their indispensable role within the functioning of the system.

We want to stress that we regard these demands as the absolute minimum that we can accept to discontinue the series of social actions initiated in February and March of this year. The locally recruited teachers love working in the European Schools. We are dedicated to and take pride in providing an excellent multilingual education for our students that advances European values while preserving national languages and identities. We demand that we ourselves are treated according to the very values we convey to our students. We demand conditions that are appropriate for teachers who form an integral part of the European School system.

We strongly hope that you will take our demands and the reasons for them into consideration at the upcoming meeting of the Board of Governors.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.

**HOLVOET Tom**

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