

**Letter from Mr. Francois Normant, President of FAPEE
to Mr. Olivier Brochet, Director of AEFÉ**

English Translation for information

Paris, 6th April 2020,

Dear Sir,

The network of French schools abroad not only has the mission of educating French children living outside France but is also the flagship of French cultural diplomacy and international influence, as almost two thirds of enrolled students are foreign nationals.

At a time when the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs' Center for Analysis, Forecast and Strategy (CAPS) anticipates the possible collapse of foreign states, this ship will not be spared from the current storm and the risk of capsizing is great. The families, who finance 80% of the network are badly affected, some ruined, by the economic crisis linked to the global health crisis and can no longer assume alone this financial support, let alone contribute more. This is why last week the FAPEE asked the French government for an emergency plan and the payment of exceptional aid to the Agency for French Education Abroad, in order to give you the means to take the necessary measures to avoid the network's collapse.

When the Agency experienced difficult times, such as budget cuts 3 years ago, schools and families had to respond to the challenge to support the network. Today, the Agency, these schools and these same families are facing a crisis of a completely different magnitude and will not be able to face it alone. The risk of many families deserting the network and the bankruptcy of schools is at present very real. Without families there are no students, and without students there are no schools.

Mr. Brochet, Sir, it is your responsibility today to assess the amount of emergency aid needed to avoid the loss of families and thus school closures, and to urgently appeal to your authorities, as the FAPEE did, in order to save the EFE network.

Strategic management and this aid should allow you in priority to:

- Reduce school fees during the distance education period so that families can cope with the additional expenses this entails (absence from work to supervise children, purchase of computer equipment, use of tutors, etc.);
- Reduce school fees for nursery school classes for which educational continuity is particularly difficult to establish;

- Permit schools suffering from loss of income to cope and preserve their financial health so that they can weather the crisis;
- Control tuition fees over a three-year period;
- Implement solidarity measures for all families;
- Mobilize resources to help students who have had difficulty following remote teaching (non-French students, EBEP/students with exceptional needs, families without internet access, etc.);
- Avoid destroying the bond of trust that links families to our educational model.

We believe it is essential to adopt the following measures. These points were developed in collaboration with our members whom we urgently consulted on this matter, both traditional parent associations and those associations who financially manage their schools.

- **Ensure a strong and effective management of educational continuity and remote teaching**, which today is too heterogeneous and suffers from a contrasted global image, despite the involvement of management teams and teachers that we salute for their implication in its complex implementation. In addition, allophone families' needs and expectations are not always sufficiently taken into account in its development. Beyond the financial distress which some families are now experiencing, the level of satisfaction with distance education, which we know will never replace classroom learning, will be an inevitable measure of families' acceptance and a prerequisite for the payment of tuition fees for the third term and for their children's re-enrollment for the next school year. We emphasize that these families made the choice of our educational system and, today, the competition is proving to be ever more efficient.
- **Ensure that Extraordinary Conseils d'Etablissements (School Councils) are held.** We ask you to require the headmasters of schools managed directly by the AEFÉ (EGD) and those of schools under contract with the AEFÉ (conventionnés) to hold an extraordinary school council, which is the competent body for all matters relating to pedagogical and educational matters and brings together elected officials from the school community so that all decisions may be discussed. Communication and total transparency are essential for maintaining families' confidence in our educational network!
- **Support schools as they implement cost reduction measures.** We ask that you require the financial and administrative directors (DAF) of EGDs and encourage the managing Boards of schools to take measures to reduce expense burdens in their institutions by using all means available and in particular the social safety nets of host countries, where they exist, for personnel unable to work. Our institutions have as great a social responsibility regarding their staff members as families do who enroll their children in our schools.

- **Increase the grant envelope devoted to scholarships for French students in accordance with the increased number of requests and extend the extraordinary appeal procedure** put in place for French families in China and Vietnam to all countries in the network. In addition, the first months of year N (and not only year N-1) must be taken into account in the examination of scholarship applications starting from the CCB1, thus permitting families who have already deposited their applications to amend them.
- **Supply emergency aid to schools in the form of strong and essential measures that will make it possible to lighten the burden of all families, taking into consideration the imperatives of the local context of each school.**

This includes but is not limited to:

- A partial or total postponement of the PRR (contribution to residents' salary) for EGDs and schools under contract with the AEFÉ;
- A reduction of the PFC (contribution based on school fees) rate and a calculation of the PFC on the actual and not the estimated turnover for EGDs and schools under contract;
- The withdrawal from the PFC base of the amounts corresponding to property and renovation investments;
- An operating subsidy granted to partner schools, according to criteria as yet to be defined;
- The reimbursement of contributions made regarding continuing professional training within the network, for the first semester and for all types of schools;
- The creation of a solidarity fund for the benefit of all families.

According to the diverse needs of schools within the network, these measures can be accompanied by:

- Temporarily increasing the financial autonomy of EGDs to allow them to adapt to their local context and adopt amended budgets;
 - Providing expertise to the most fragile structures in their search for solutions to survive;
- **Preserving the working capital funds of EGDs.** We ask you not to make the tempting choice, which will certainly be proposed by some, to drain again the working capital of EGDs, funds collected through increases in tuition fees for investments (property, renovation and educational investments). These funds will be the only element of EGD resilience when the crisis is over and these investments, which are essential to remain attractive, will be more necessary than ever. Otherwise, the families' incomprehension and the feeling of injustice will be strong and will weaken the famous backbone of our network.
 - **And finally, we ask you to establish a crisis management and monitoring committee** with the various concerned parties, including of course parent representatives, in order to implement the necessary ad-hoc measures in the

short term and to analyse subsequently in detail the medium-term consequences of this crisis and the additional measures to be adopted.

The survival of the EFE network depends on the ability to keep all families and to prevent the closure of any school. The French State and the AEFÉ have a moral duty towards the 370,000 students and their families who have chosen the network of French education abroad, so that they can complete their education in our school system.

Will the instrument of France's influence abroad also benefit from a reinvestment by the State "whatever the cost" ?

Knowing that we can count on your full commitment, we ask you to accept, Sir, the assurance of our perfect consideration.