

To:

Mr Piotr Serafin

Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration

Cc:

Secretary-General of the European Schools

Directors of the European Schools in Brussels (EEB I, EEB II, EEB III, EEB IV)

Permanent Representation of Spain to the European Union

Request for revision of the 2026–2027 school calendar of the European Schools in Brussels to ensure effective respect for Member States' cultural traditions

Dear Madam, Dear Sir,

The undersigned Members of the European Parliament, from different Member States and political groups, wish to express their serious concern regarding the proposed 2026–2027 school calendar for the European Schools in Brussels and to formally request its revision before its final adoption.

The current proposal foresees the resumption of classes on 4 January 2027, making 4, 5 and 6 January school days. This decision has a particularly significant impact on Spanish families, for whom Epiphany Day, celebrated on 6 January, represents one of the most important cultural and family events of the year, especially for children.

This Three Kings' Day is deeply rooted in Europe's Christian heritage, reflecting the historical, cultural, and spiritual foundations that have shaped European societies and continue to inform shared values, traditions, and collective identity. It is not a marginal or symbolic tradition, but a central element of social and family life, comparable in relevance to other major festivities that are fully respected within the European school context.

The European Schools are founded on the principles of cultural diversity and equality between Member States. These principles must be reflected not only in general statements, but also in concrete decisions that directly affect the daily lives of pupils and their families. A school calendar that requires children to attend school on Three Kings' Day fails to meet this commitment to the effective respect of cultural diversity.

It is equally concerning that this proposal would apply exclusively to the European Schools in Brussels, while other European Schools within the same system (such as Alicante, Munich or Karlsruhe) foresee holidays until 7 January 2027. This unequal treatment is difficult to justify and creates a sense of unfairness among families who are part of the same European educational framework.

Organisational complexity, even in a context as specific as the European Schools in Brussels, cannot serve as a valid justification for disregarding national traditions of such importance, particularly when clear precedents within the system demonstrate that balanced solutions are possible. The school calendar applied in the 2020–2021 academic year, which included Christmas holidays until 6 January with a return to classes on 7 January, ensured educational continuity while fully respecting cultural traditions, without any negative impact on academic coherence.

Furthermore, confining the recognition of national traditions to the private sphere or to symbolic classroom activities represents an overly restrictive understanding of cultural diversity. Major family celebrations are not preserved merely through educational references, but by allowing families to experience them fully, without being forced to choose between respecting their traditions and complying with compulsory school attendance.

Decisions on the school calendar are not purely technical. They have a clear political dimension, as they directly affect family life, children's well-being and the perception of fairness and respect within a system that is meant to embody the values of the European project. Failing to take these aspects into account risks undermining families' trust in the European Schools and in the institutions that oversee them.

Furthermore, there is no evidence that the appropriate dialogue process was followed between the schools and the various participatory bodies for a decision of such magnitude. Certainly, the opinions of the families in the Spanish section were not taken into account, and we know that many of them are expressing their discontent and announcing protests in January.

For these reasons, we urge you, within the scope of your respective competences, to actively promote a revision of the proposed 2026–2027 school calendar for the European Schools in Brussels, in order to:

- effectively recognize the special relevance of Three Kings Day for Spanish families, which includes the celebration of the arrival of the Three Wise Men on January 5th, and Epiphany on the 6th. This holiday is fundamental for celebrating as a family in Spain,
- ensure equal treatment across all European Schools,
- and adopt a solution consistent with the founding principles of cultural diversity and mutual respect between Member States.

Respect for cultural diversity cannot be selective, nor can it be systematically subordinated to organisational considerations. It is precisely through concrete decisions such as this that the European Union demonstrates its capacity to respect and integrate the different national realities that form part of its common project.

We look forward to a reconsideration of this proposal and to a response that reflects the values on which the European Union is built.

Yours sincerely,

MONTSERRAT, DOLORS
CRESPO, CARMEN
EZCURRA, ALMA
GONZALEZ PONS, ESTEBAN
NAVARRETE, FERNANDO
ZARZALEJOS, JAVIER
ESTARÁS, ROSA
MILLÁN MON, FRANCISCO

DEL CASTILLO, PILAR
VÁZQUEZ LÁZARA, ADRIÁN
MATO, GABRIEL
DE LA HOZ, RAÚL
HERRANZ, ESTHER
ZOIDO, JUAN IGNACIO
SOLÍS, SUSANA
ARIAS, PABLO
LÓPEZ-ISTÚRIZ, ANTONIO
BENJUMEA, ISABEL
GIMÉNEZ LARRAZ, BORJA
NEVADO DEL CAMPO, ELENA
PASCUAL DE LA PARTE, NICOLÁS
ABADÍA, MARAVILLAS
KEMP, MARTINE
STANĚK, ANTONÍN
SAUDARGAS, PAULIUS
CASPARY, DANIEL
JALLOUL MURO, HANA
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GAHLER, MICHAEL
GOMART, CHRISOPHE
HADJIPANTELA, MICHAEL
SOUSA SILVA, HELDER
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AGIUS, PETER
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