

4838/J XXV. GP

Eingelangt am 29.04.2015

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Anfrage

der Abgeordneten Dr. Harald Walser, Freundinnen und Freunde an den Bundesminister für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft betreffend Förderungen an die Vienna International School - neuer Vertrag Liegenschaft

BEGRÜNDUNG

In der Anfragebeantwortung von Außenminister Sebastian Kurz vom 11.2.2015 (3147/AB) bezüglich der Förderungen seitens der Republik an die Vienna International School (VIS) wurde angegeben, dass es zukünftig keinen weiteren Fördervertrag mit der Schule geben würde: „Es wird kein weiterer Fördervertrag der Republik Österreich mit dem Verein ‚Vienna International School‘ in Aussicht genommen. Vielmehr soll in einem völkerrechtlichen Abkommen mit den vier im Wiener Internationalen Zentrum ansässigen internationalen Organisationen die Leistung eines jährlichen Bildungsbeitrages an diese Organisationen zur Gewährleistung eines angemessenen Schulplatzes für Kinder ihrer Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter vorgesehen werden.“

Dies wurde von der Zeitung *Die Presse* vom folgendermaßen kommentiert: „Möglicherweise ist diese einseitige staatliche Förderung auch tatsächlich rechtlich schwierig. Sie könnte gegen das EU-Beihilfenrecht verstößen. Denn aus staatlichen Mitteln gewährte Beihilfen, die bestimmte Unternehmen begünstigen, sind laut diesem verboten. Das könnte unter Umständen auch auf diesen Fall zutreffen“, sagt Europarechtler Walter Obwexer zur „Presse“. Die Schule könnte hier als Unternehmen gesehen werden. Immerhin handle es sich um eine kostenpflichtige Privatschule, es gebe Konkurrenz und damit die Gefahr einer Verzerrung des Marktes, sagt Obwexer. Vermutlich deshalb hat sich das Außenministerium, dessen Beamte noch verhandeln, eine durchaus geschickte Lösung einfallen lassen.“¹

¹ http://diepresse.com/home/bildung/schule/4670932/Geld-vom-Bund_UNSchule-profitiert-von-Trick?from=suche.intern.portal

Wenn die bisherige Praxis einer Förderung direkt an die VIS gegen das EU-Beihilferecht verstößen könnte, wie es der Europa- und Völkerrechtler Walter Obwexer in den Raum stellt, wäre demzufolge auch zu hinterfragen, ob eine kostenlose Überlassung von Grundstück und Schulgebäude, wie Sie es in Ihrer Anfragebeantwortung vom 10.2.2015 (3128/AB) in Aussicht gestellt hatten, mit dem oben angesprochenen EU-Beihilferecht konform geht.

Die VIS hat gleichzeitig ihre Schulgebühren empfindlich erhöht bzw. wird diese erhöhen. Das hat inzwischen auch Unruhe bei betroffenen Eltern ausgelöst. Uns liegt ein Schreiben von Eltern aus der Internationalen Atomenergie-Organisation vor, in dem diese die Erhöhung der Schulgelder kritisch kommentieren: „In addition, neither the American International School (AIS) or the Danube International School (DIS) are subsidised by the Austrian Government, so it brings in question why would the school fees go up so drastically and to similar levels of AIS or the DIS if the VIS still continues to receive a subsidy of €4.0 million.“ (siehe Beilage!)

Aus diesem Schreiben gehen die Schulgebühren an der VIS ab dem Schuljahr 2015/16 wie folgt hervor:

„For example the costs of a child joining 6th Grade could go as high as €29,000 of which the International Organizations would cover only €13,680 (75% of the maximum admissible level of €18,240 for Vienna). Even the continuing students would be well above the maximum admissible level (further detail in table below).“

Beträge in Euro	Neue/r SchülerIn	Wiederkehrende/r SchülerIn
Anmeldegebühr	450	
Kapitalgebühr	2.500	
Zulassungsgebühr	4.118	
Einlage	370	
Jahresschulgebühr	18.524	18.524
Mahlzeiten	850	850
Transport	1.900	1.900
Bücher und Lernmittel	400	
Summe	29.112	21.274

Die unterfertigenden Abgeordneten stellen daher folgende

ANFRAGE

- 1) Sind die in Ihrer Anfragebeantwortung vom 10.2.2015 (3128/AB) angesprochenen rechtlichen Rahmenbedingungen, die eine unentgeltliche Nutzung der im Eigentum der Republik stehenden Liegenschaften durch die VIS vorsehen, inzwischen geklärt worden?
Falls ja: Wie sehen diese konkret aus?
- 2) Ihr Ministerium war (oder ist) in die Verhandlungen rund um eine neue Lösung eingebunden. Wenn rechtliche Bedenken zu der von BM Sebastian Kurz avisierten neuen Lösung - ein völkerrechtliches Abkommen mit den vier im Wiener Internationalen Zentrum ansässigen internationalen Organisationen - geführt haben, wie ist die kostenlose Überlassung der Liegenschaften mit dem Art. 107 des Vertrages über die Arbeitsweise der Europäischen Union (AEUV) in Einklang zu bringen?
- 3) Ist Ihnen das beigelegte Schreiben von MitarbeiterInnen der IAO bekannt?
Falls ja: Haben Sie darauf reagiert und wenn ja, in welcher Form?
Falls nein: Werden Sie darauf reagieren?
- 4) Wurde seitens von Eltern, deren Kinder die VIS besuchen und die nicht MitarbeiterInnen von einer der internationalen Organisationen sind, bei Ihnen bzw. in Ihrem Ministerium zugunsten der VIS interveniert?

The proposal for the 2015-2016 Budget for the Vienna International School

- The negotiations with the Austrian Government on the subsidy to the Vienna International School (*for the school year 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 they were at the level of €5.39 and €5.34 million respectively*) have been ongoing for a couple of years now and are likely to conclude with the following scenario:
 - o Reduction of subsidies to €4.0million in 2014/2015 and 2015/2016
 - o Reduction of subsidies to €3.0million in 2016/2017
 - o Reduction of subsidies to €3.0million in 2017/2018 and onwards
- In addition, the question of the rental of premises is still outstanding, even though the representative of the Austrian Government at the last VIS General Assembly meeting indicated that the provision for rent would be negotiated on a cost free basis for the next 10-years.
- The current proposal for 2015-2016 that most of you have received from the VIS, and the corresponding schedule of tuition fees for 2015-2016 is based on the reduced subsidies and the inclusion of a provision of approximately €1.0 million for rental of premises.
- The current proposal for 2015/2016 thus envisages an increase of the VIS budget for operating expenses by €1.8 million (6.7%) and a decrease of the subsidies by 1.2 million (-21.7%) that is practically in full offset by revenues generated from the tuition fees (increase in tuition fees of €2.8million or 13.4%).
- **Apart from the budget for 2015-2016 that is purely based on shifting the costs to the parents, there is no strategic outlook for a sustainable financial model above the next school year. In the next two years, there will be further reductions of €2million. If these are covered by the same means envisaged in the 2015/2016 budget, the VIS will become more expensive and less competitive than other international schools. This may lead to an outflow of students to other schools, further decreasing tuition generated revenue which will push tuition fees further up.**
- The current proposal for the 2015-16 budget seems to rely purely on increasing the tuition fees, without any effort to look at the overall global financial situation and other solutions prior to increasing the fees, such as:
 - o Cost savings (e.g. increasing the replacement schedule for PCs from 3 to 4 years; standardizing IT platforms as opposed to using different applications where there may be no need, looking at further streamlining and more efficient management of resources)
 - o Other means of funding
- The current outlook for the salaries of professional staff of Vienna-based International Organizations, that generate 50% of the tuition revenue for the VIS, does not seem positive and there is no expectation for any increases in the near future (The salaries have remained unchanged from May 2013), thus increases in school fees to date have been absorbed within existing resources of these people. The propose increase of 9% (even though it is in actual

terms 17% for parents of children in Grades 6, 7 and 8) is thus a considerable strain on the home budgets of these parents.

- Even worse, the ceiling set by the ICSC for the education grant would not cover the costs of secondary school. Even the pure tuition fee would not be covered, not to mention:
 - o recurring costs (meals, transport, mother tongue lessons);
 - o one-time fees (enrolment fee, school aids);

All of these additional costs would need to be fully covered by the parents.

For example the costs of a child joining 6th Grade could go as high as €29,000 of which the International Organizations would cover only €13,680 (75% of the maximum admissible level of €18,240 for Vienna). Even the continuing students would be well above the maximum admissible level (further detail in table below)

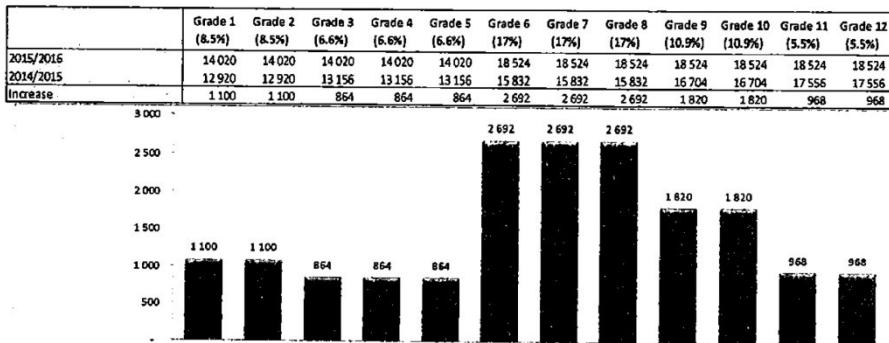
	New joiner	Continuing Student
Application Fee	450	
Capital Fee	2 500	
Admissions Fee	4 118	
Deposit	370	
Annual Tuition Fee	18 524	18 524
Meals	850	850
Transport	1 900	1 900
Books and other learning aids	400	
	29 112	21 274

On the same example as above, for the new joiner case the costs for the parent that works for one of the international organizations (*after taking into account the maximum admissible fee*) would increase from the current €9,932 to €15,432 (this represents an increase of €5,500 or 55.3%), while in the case of a continuing student the costs would increase from €4,902 to €7,594 (this represents an increase of €2,692 or 54.9%).

- Parents of students in grades 6, 7 and 8 would be the most affected by the increase whereas the average increase of 9% would mean an increase of 17% for them.
- An analysis of the additional burden for a staff member that has a child that already attends VIS and is in receipt of the education grant reveals that their out of pocket expense may go up by 58%. Due to the change in the distribution, the shift from Grade 5 to Grade 6 becomes extremely large, where some parents may be shocked with the increase that could range up to €4,768 (110%). The details by grade and category of costs is provided on the following page:

Proposed Increase by Grade

The increase ranges from 5.5% in Grades 11 and 12 to 17% in Grades 6, 7 and 8

Simulation of out-of-pocket expense of employees of Vienna Based Organization (VBOs)

As of Grade 6, the education grant will not cover even the basic tuition fee, so meals, transport, mother tongue and learning aids will have to be fully covered by the parents. This could go up to EUR 4,500

Maximum Admissible Level (MAL) for Education Grant for Vienna	18 240
Maximum reimbursement (75% of MAL)	13 680

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Tuition Fee	14 020	14 020	14 020	14 020	14 020	18 524	18 524	18 524	18 524	18 524	18 524	18 524
Level of Reimbursement of Education Costs stops at grade 6	4 220	4 220	4 220	4 220	4 220	(284)	(284)	(284)	(284)	(284)	(284)	(284)
Out of Pocket Payment in 15/16	3 505	3 505	3 505	3 505	3 505	4 915	4 915	4 915	4 915	4 915	4 915	4 915
What are you paying now (14/15)	3 230	3 230	3 289	3 289	3 289	3 958	3 958	3 958	4 176	4 176	4 389	4 389
How much more will you be paying	275	275	216	216	216	957	957	957	739	739	526	526
How much more will you be paying (%)	8.5%	8.5%	6.6%	6.6%	6.6%	24.2%	24.2%	24.2%	17.7%	17.7%	12.0%	12.0%
Tuition with Meals	14 770	14 770	14 770	14 770	14 770	19 374	19 374	19 374	19 374	19 374	19 374	19 374
Out of Pocket Payment in 15/16	3 693	3 693	3 693	3 693	3 693	5 694	5 694	5 694	5 694	5 694	5 694	5 694
What are you paying now (14/15)	3 418	3 418	3 477	3 477	3 477	4 146	4 146	4 146	4 364	4 364	4 626	4 626
How much more will you be paying	275	275	216	216	216	1 549	1 549	1 549	1 331	1 331	1 068	1 068
How much more will you be paying (%)	8.0%	8.0%	6.2%	6.2%	6.2%	37.4%	37.4%	37.4%	30.5%	30.5%	23.1%	23.1%
Tuition with Meals & Transport	16 670	16 670	16 670	16 670	16 670	21 274	21 274	21 274	21 274	21 274	21 274	21 274
Out of Pocket Payment in 15/16	4 168	4 168	4 168	4 168	4 168	7 594	7 594	7 594	7 594	7 594	7 594	7 594
What are you paying now (14/15)	3 893	3 893	3 952	3 952	3 952	4 802	4 802	4 802	5 674	5 674	6 526	6 526
How much more will you be paying	275	275	216	216	216	2 792	2 792	2 792	1 920	1 920	1 068	1 068
How much more will you be paying (%)	7.1%	7.1%	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	58.1%	58.1%	58.1%	33.8%	33.8%	16.4%	16.4%
Tuition with Meals, Transport and Mother Tongue	18 170	18 170	18 170	18 170	18 170	22 774	22 774	22 774	22 774	22 774	22 774	22 774
Out of Pocket Payment in 15/16	4 543	4 543	4 543	4 543	4 543	9 094	9 094	9 094	9 094	9 094	9 094	9 094
What are you paying now (14/15)	4 268	4 268	4 327	4 327	4 327	6 302	6 302	6 302	7 174	7 174	8 026	8 026
How much more will you be paying	275	275	216	216	216	2 792	2 792	2 792	1 920	1 920	1 068	1 068
How much more will you be paying (%)	6.4%	6.4%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	44.3%	44.3%	44.3%	26.8%	26.8%	13.3%	13.3%

With the additional Capital Fees and the revised application and registration fee, the VIS becomes the most expensive school to enrol your child in Vienna (total application cost of 7,438 Euros as compared to 4,400 in the Danube International School and 5,535 in the American International School).

In addition, neither the American International School (AIS) or the Danube International School (DIS) are subsidised by the Austrian Government, so it brings in question why would the school fees go up so drastically and to similar levels of AIS or the DIS if the VIS still continues to receive a subsidy of €4.0 million.

The link to the schools is based on the website of the International Baccalaureate® (IB) which is a non-profit educational foundation (<http://www.ibo.org/en/programmes/find-an-ib-school/>). The filtering criteria that used included only a) Private School Types and b) English Language of Instructions.

Approach in International Organizations

As most of you are aware, in the last couple of years there has been a strong push for austerity measures in the Governments of many States, which has trickled to International Organizations. This resulted in zero-growth budgets or budgets with negative growth. At the same time, the demands on international organizations have not been decreasing. On the contrary, there are more demands than ever before and international organizations had to apply cost-cutting measures, efficiencies and re-prioritization of activities, in order to be able to cope with the demands increasing at faster levels than budgets.

In the IAEA, the overarching consideration in the budget process has been the global financial situation, so the process had to ensure that we have done our due diligence in finding resources internally prior to asking for additional resources. This was done through a two-stage process that initially involved setting a budget target at 95% of the previous year, with the aim of identifying and implementing efficiencies wherever possible and discontinuing activities that are not of the highest priority. In the second stage, when a final target was established, the difference between the 95% and the final target was used to incorporate activities with the highest priorities. This process, ensured that sufficient efforts were made within the organization to capture cost cuts, efficiencies and re-prioritization of activities, in that way ensuring that the demands from the IAEAs stakeholders are taken care of without significant increases to the budget.

In today's environment, in international organizations, an increase of 9% would be absolutely indefensible to their stakeholders (their Member States) and it would mean going back to the "drawing board" to either find innovative ways of funding or reduce the budget to a level that is acceptable.

It is an example that should be applied within the VIS too.

Other Schools

In addition to this paper, attached is an analysis of fees for other comparable international schools (*however the comparison take the 2015/2016 fees for the VIS as compared to the current 2014/2015 fees for all other schools as new rates are not yet available*)

The VIS would become very similar to American International School (AIS) and Danube International School (DIS) with the proposed fee increase and Vienna would become one of the more expensive duty stations among the UN duty stations in Europe (the red highlight indicates when the tuition fee exceeds the maximum admissible level in the attached file).

Of the 5 duty stations:

- 2 duty stations fully cover the tuition fees within the maximum admissible level (Bonn and Geneva)
- The Hague becomes more costly from Grade 10
- Copenhagen becomes more costly from Grade 9
- Vienna becomes more costly already from Grade 6

This leads to having to look more closely into:

- Reducing the costs of the school
 - o A closer look at personnel expenses – The proposal for the 2015-16 budget assumes an increase of 3.8% (or €0.83 million) for personnel expenses. Where there does not seem to be a potential to increase the income of the largest group of parents (Vienna based International Organizations), there may be a need to sustain from any increase in this category of expenses, specifically through looking at the administrative staff category that has been increasing in the last couple of years.
 - o It is difficult to make any meaningful analysis, based on the level of detail provided in the budget for 2015-2016, where the increase of approximately €1.0 million (29.2%) in “Depreciation” and “Other Operating Expenses” is not substantiated. However, it would call for a more stringent approach to the nature of costs under these categories and exploring possibilities for reducing such costs. Thing that could potentially be looked into are:
 - Increasing the replacement schedules for equipment and decreasing the level of equipment or potentially looking into different solutions for PCs, such as potential for leasing equipment or working on subsidy schemes for personal devices rather than purchasing them by the school.
 - Standardizing IT platforms and applications in search for reduced licencing and maintenance costs.
 - Reducing administrative costs. It seems that the staffing increases are mainly related to administrative as opposed to teacher costs.
- New means of funding
 - o Donations from e.g. private companies, foundations
- Spreading the “pain”:
 - o Working with the VIS, International Civil Service Commission and the Vienna-based International Organizations and the Government of Austria to ensure an approach that has a transitional effect, e.g. go with a staged increase approach by using the existing reserves of the VIS to decrease the effect in the initial years (as of 31 July 2014, the General Reserve contained €2.3million, the Operating Fund contained 1.0million and the Fixed Asset Fund contained €1.6 million)