



ACCREDITED EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

AES CONFERENCE 2026

Unfolding Europe's Future Through Education
The Potential of the AES Schools

23–25 SEPTEMBER 2026

BRUSSELS & WATERLOO

Hosted by the European School Brussels-Argenteuil (EEBA) for the AES network
under the aegis of the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools (OSG)



Official programme

23 Wednesday

Welcome Evening

Château d'Argenteuil · Waterloo

Château d'Argenteuil · 5 Square d'Argenteuil, 1410 Waterloo



Departure from Brussels at 4pm

Bus stop "Science/ Wetenshap"

or

Shuttles between Waterloo Station and the Château every 20 minutes from 6:30pm to 7:30pm
WhatsApp contact : +32 494 49 54 75

From 17:00 ● Arrival of participants

Welcome desk, badges and conference packs

18:00 ● Guided tour of the Château d'Argenteuil and its park

Optional

18:45 ● Words of welcome

Félix de Merode – Host

Tanguy Stuckens – Deputy-President of the Provincial College of Walloon Brabant

19:00 ● Cocktail dinner / Inauguration Party

Dinner and informal networking at the Château

During dinner ● Live music by Europa Band

Smooth jazz and background music

Later ● Europa Band — Live Concert

The evening gradually turns into a concert

22:00 ● End of the evening and back to Brussels

24 Thursday

Conference Day

European Parliament

European Parliament · Rue Wiertz 60, 1047 Brussels · Spinelli 3G3



08:00 ● Arrival

Accreditation and security check at the European Parliament

08:30 ● Welcome Coffee

Informal welcome before the opening session

09:00 ● Opening remarks

Monika van Giet - Belgian Delegation and Félix de Merode - Host

09:15 ● History and origins of the European Schools

Catherine Roba-Rabier · Former Belgian Delegation

10:15 ● Address by the European Commission

Christian Linder - Deputy Director General for Operations DG-HR

10:30 ● The AES Network today

Andreas Beckmann · Secretary General OSG

11:00 ● Coffee Break

11:30 ● Round Table of Stakeholders

Moderated by Tom Nober

12:45 ● Lunch Break

14:00 ● European Opportunities for Education

A shared session with the four speakers on stage: PISA · Erasmus+ · ECIT · eTwinning

15:30 ● Coffee Break

16:00 ● Working Sessions by Category

Directors · Deputy Heads · Teachers · Students · Parents · Delegations & Agencies

17:30 ● End of the conference day

Conference Day

Evening programme

Palais d'Egmont · Place du Petit Sablon 8, 1000 Brussels



19:30 • Walking dinner “Great Belgium”

Participants are invited to wear business attire.

Speakers



Catherine Roba-Rabier

History and origins of the European Schools
Former Belgian Delegation



Tom Nober

Round Table of Stakeholders
Moderator · LLIS Junglinster



Károly Pála

PISA
Executive Coordinator at OSG



Jacqueline Pacaud

Erasmus+
European opportunities



Suzana Carp

ECIT
Citizenship & education



Amy Burnett

eTwinning
European school collaboration



Andreas Beckmann

The AES Network today
Secretary-General of the European Schools (OSG)



Christian Linder

Address by the European Commission
Director – Finance, Legal & Partnerships (HR.F)
Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security (DG HR)
European Commission

25 Friday

Closing Day

Palais d'Egmont · Place du Petit Sablon 8, 1000 Brussels



08:30 ● **Welcome Coffee & Registration**

09:00 ● **Words from the Host**

Félix de Merode · EEBA

09:15 ● **Mixed Stakeholder Working Sessions**

Bringing together participants from different roles and backgrounds to exchange perspectives and develop shared conclusions.

10:30 ● **Coffee Break & Educational Initiatives Fair**

11:00 ● **Working Sessions : Conclusions**

Groups finalise their reflections and prepare the conclusions to be shared in plenary.

11:30 ● **Plenary Session: Working Session Conclusions**

Presentation and shared discussion of the conclusions from each category.

12:30 ● **Handover to Luxembourg**

13:00 ● **Lunch Break & Educational Initiatives Fair**

14:00 ● **End of the Conference**

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Final logistical details for the conference



Access, transport and meals

Access & Security

For access to the European Parliament, participants must bring the same valid ID card or passport submitted during registration. Temporary identity cards are not accepted.

Transport & Shuttles

On Wednesday, dedicated buses will depart from **Square de Meeûs (stop "Science/Wetenshap")** to the Château d'Argenteuil. For Thursday and Friday, participants are invited to make their own way to the venues in central Brussels.

Meals & Catering

Dinner on Wednesday evening, lunch and dinner on Thursday, and lunch on Friday are provided as part of the conference programme.

Thursday dress code : *business attire*
Wednesday & Friday dress code : *casual*

On site

Please wear your conference badge at all times. Wi-Fi details will be available at the welcome desk. Photography and video recordings may take place during the event for communication purposes.

CONTACT DURING THE CONFERENCE

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Welcoming you

A word of welcome



Dear friends and colleagues,

It is with great pleasure and a real sense of anticipation that I welcome you to the AES Conference 2026, hosted here at the École Européenne de Bruxelles-Argenteuil for the wider community of Accredited European Schools.

Our theme, “Unfolding Europe's Future Through Education,” reflects what I believe our network represents at its best: schools that apply the same demanding curriculum and the same European ambition as the historical European Schools, while remaining rooted in their own national systems and communities. That dual identity is our strength, and it is also, still too often, the source of a structural imbalance that this conference sets out to address, constructively and together with our institutional partners.

Over these three days, we move between three places that each say something about Europe's own unfolding story: the Château d'Argenteuil, where EEBA has made its home; the European Parliament, the house of Europe's directly elected voice; and the Palais d'Egmont, a place where the map of Europe has itself been redrawn more than once. This booklet gathers, in one place, everything you should need to find your way between them — the full programme, practical details, a short introduction to the history of each of these places, and a summary of what the AES network is formally asking of the European Schools System.

I am delighted that so many of our institutional partners, delegations, school communities and parent representatives have chosen to make the journey to be with us. My thanks go in advance to all of you for the energy, and the goodwill, that you bring to this conference.

I look forward to welcoming you personally at the Château d'Argenteuil on the evening of 23 September.

Félix de Merode

Director, École Européenne de Bruxelles-Argenteuil (EEBA)

Host, AES Conference 2026

A brief history of the places we gather



Each of the three days of this conference unfolds in a place that carries its own layer of European history. This short introduction is offered simply as context — a few landmarks to recognise as you move between Waterloo and Brussels.

Waterloo and its Battle

Waterloo is a quiet town in Walloon Brabant, some fifteen kilometres south of Brussels, on the edge of the Sonian Forest. It gave its name to European history's most famous single day of fighting: on 18 June 1815, the army of Napoleon Bonaparte was defeated here by the Anglo-allied forces under the Duke of Wellington and a Prussian army under Field Marshal von Blücher, bringing to a close some twenty-three years of almost continuous war between France and the rest of Europe. The battle is widely regarded as one of the true hinges of European history, opening a long period of relative peace among the continent's great powers. Visitors today can still climb the Lion's Mound, an artificial hill raised in 1820 on the spot where the Prince of Orange was said to have been wounded, and visit the nearby Wellington Museum. Waterloo itself has since become a green residential town on Brussels' southern edge — home, among other things, to the Château d'Argenteuil estate where this conference opens.

Belgium and its Monarchy

Belgium declared its independence in 1830 and established itself, the following year, as a hereditary constitutional monarchy. On 21 July 1831, Leopold I — a German prince of the House of Saxe-Coburg — swore the constitutional oath that made him the first King of the Belgians, a title chosen deliberately to signal that the Crown's legitimacy flows from the nation rather than the reverse. Since then, seven monarchs have succeeded to the throne — Leopold I, Leopold II, Albert I, Leopold III, Baudouin, Albert II and, since 2013, King Philippe — each acceding through a civil oath before Parliament rather than a religious coronation. As a constitutional and, since 1993, federal monarchy, the King's role today is chiefly unifying and representative: appointing the government formed by the elected Parliament and embodying continuity across the country's linguistic communities. 21 July, the anniversary of Leopold I's oath, remains Belgium's National Day. The monarchy's own history brushes directly against this conference's opening venue: King Leopold III made the wider Argenteuil estate his home after his abdication, residing there with Princess Lilian from the early 1960s until her death in 2002.

A brief history of the places we gather



The Château d'Argenteuil

The Château d'Argenteuil, this conference's opening venue, sits within a wooded estate that has changed hands, and character, several times over almost two centuries. The domain takes its name from a small stream, the Argentine, that once ran through it. In 1831, Count Ferdinand de Meeûs, a governor of the Société Générale de Belgique, acquired the land; he began building a first château in 1837, only for it to be destroyed by fire in 1847, almost as soon as it was completed. A second château — the one that stands today — was raised on the same site between 1856 and 1858 by the architect Jean-Pierre Cluysenaar, in a French Renaissance style flanked by four square towers. In the twentieth century the wider estate was divided: one part became the Royal Domain of Argenteuil, the residence of King Leopold III described above; the château itself later housed a Scandinavian school, from 1992 to 2020, before becoming home to the European School of Brussels-Argenteuil. It is this building and its park, on the edge of the Sonian Forest, that welcome delegates on the conference's opening evening.

The European Parliament

The European Parliament traces its origins to the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community, and grew, with the creation of the European Economic Community, into the European Parliamentary Assembly that held its first session in Strasbourg on 19 March 1958. Renamed the European Parliament in 1962 and directly elected for the first time in 1979, it has grown from a consultative body of appointed delegates into a directly elected co-legislator that today shares law-making power with the Council of the EU across almost every policy field, including education and youth programmes such as Erasmus+. Following a 1992 decision of the EU's member governments, the Parliament's work is divided across three cities: Strasbourg, where its formal plenary sessions are held; Luxembourg, seat of its administrative secretariat; and Brussels, where committees, political groups and an increasing share of parliamentary business take place. It is in the Parliament's Brussels premises, in the Spinelli building, that Thursday's conference session is held — a fitting setting for a network of schools built, from the outset, on the idea of European cooperation in education.

A brief history of the places we gather



Le Palais d'Egmont

Just off Brussels' Sablon, the Palais d'Egmont has stood, in one form or another, for close to five centuries. The first residence was built from 1548 for Countess Françoise of Luxembourg and her son, Lamoral, Count of Egmont — a nobleman and statesman whose execution in 1568, on the orders of the Duke of Alba, made him an early symbol of resistance to Spanish rule in the Low Countries. The palace stayed within the Egmont family until the eighteenth century, when it passed to the Dukes of Arenberg, who considerably enlarged and remodelled it, adding the Directoire-style library and the white-and-gold ballroom now known as the Hall of Mirrors. A fire in 1892 destroyed part of the building, which was rebuilt in matching style by 1910. The City of Brussels acquired the palace in 1918; a further fire in 1927, and the cost of its upkeep, eventually led the Belgian State to take it over in 1964 and restore it as a venue for diplomacy. It was here, at the Palais d'Egmont, on 22 January 1972, that Denmark, Ireland, Norway and the United Kingdom signed their treaties of accession to the European Communities — the enlargement that first carried the Community beyond its founding six members. Today the palace belongs to Belgium's Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, and continues to host precisely the kind of high-level European gathering that brings this conference to its close.

The AES network - who we are, what we ask



What is an Accredited European School?

An Accredited European School (AES) is a national school authorised by the Board of Governors of the European Schools to deliver the same curriculum — and, in most cases, the same European Baccalaureate — as the fully-fledged European Schools, while remaining legally, administratively and financially under its own Member State's system. The AES concept emerged from a 2005 European Parliament recommendation to widen access to European education beyond the historical Type I Schools. There are currently 26 AES across 14 or more Member States, with several more in accreditation.

Seven Questions on the Table

1. Bridges between AES and the traditional European Schools

AES apply the same curriculum, values and Baccalaureate as the fully-fledged European Schools while remaining inside national legal and administrative systems. Both the 2023 European Parliament CULT report and the OSG's own Action Plan call for closer structural cooperation — joint working groups, shared inspection, mutual representation — rather than symbolic gestures alone.

2. Structural inequalities in governance

AES currently hold no voting rights in the Joint Teaching Committee and no seats in Board of Governors discussions on system architecture, even though they are bound by the same pedagogical standards as the European Schools. The AES network asks for full JTC voting rights and for BoG representation equal to that of the traditional Schools.

3. Languages, pedagogy and the “dual pathway”

AES combine EU multilingual and multicultural standards with national frameworks, and are recognised as agile spaces for piloting digital learning, inclusion and alternative assessment. They also offer a legitimate national off-ramp for pupils who do not continue on to the European Baccalaureate itself.

The AES network - who we are, what we ask



4. The “lighthouse” ambition

Both the Mission and Vision document and the AES network's own texts frame AES-driven innovation as something that should feed back into the wider European Schools System — a testing ground whose results strengthen the whole network, not a parallel track running alongside it.

5. A fairer cost-neutrality model

AES already function, in practice, as a public service financed through their own Member States' education budgets — yet the System's cost-neutrality mechanism layers a second, distinct financial relationship on top of this. Two elements remain unclear to the schools themselves: the basis on which OSG staff time attributed to AES is costed, and what concrete service the per-pupil contribution is intended to cover. The OSG's own Action Plan acknowledges that the cost-sharing arrangement needs review; the AES network's position is that this review should produce a genuinely fairer and more transparent formula.

6. How involved should the institutions be?

The ask is for more clearly defined engagement — JTC votes, BoG seats, Baccalaureate reform working groups — not full legal absorption into the European Schools system. Governance models and legal status differ too widely between Member States for that to be realistic, or indeed desired.

The AES network - who we are, what we ask



7. A widening gap between the Convention's purpose and the System's ambition ?

Article 1 of the 1994 Convention states that the purpose of the Schools is to educate together the children of the staff of the European Communities. It adds that other children may attend “within the limits set by the Board of Governors” — Since 2005, however, the European Parliament has called for European education to be opened well beyond that original population, and the System's own strategic documents now treat that opening as a priority: the Mission and Vision commits to expanding the model across all Member States, and the Multi-Annual Plan makes enlarging the AES family an explicit focus area.

The Board of Governors derives its mandate from a Convention whose purpose clause was written for a different population. If the System intends to grow principally through the AES, the institutional architecture supporting that growth deserves to be examined alongside the ambition itself.

What the AES Network is Formally Asking For

Per the official AES Position Paper (2026), addressed to the governing bodies of the European Schools System:

- Full voting rights for AES in the Joint Teaching Committee (JTC).
- AES representation in Board of Governors (BoG) discussions on system architecture.
- AES experts integrated into European Baccalaureate reform working groups.
- Systematic AES consultation on any organisational or financial change affecting them, including cost neutrality.
- An annual AES Policy & Innovation Forum and a public AES Contribution Report, to make AES achievements visible to ministries and EU institutions.

The full reference documents — the 2023 EP CULT report, the OSG Action Plan, the Mission and Vision of the European Schools, the AES Regulations and the latest AES Data Report — are listed with links in the briefing note prepared for the Thursday round table.