

*This document is for the only use of members of the Association du Lycée Français René Cassin d'Oslo*

1. The amount of money gained in the previous years is above the lost this year and last year. How could that not compensate at least for now?

It is correct that the school has a certain financial reserve, but it is not enough to start spending given the very uncertain period ahead of us. We need a buffer to protect us from unexpected costs or demand changes.

2. Why has there been a deliberate recruitment of new students while this contributed to bring the school in the red today? When was it decided to increase the number of students beyond sustainable economy? What has been the logic behind the increase of number of students while decreasing the tuition fees?

This strategy was decided by previous boards and administrations. What is important now is for us to focus on the next steps and on what is right for the school for the future.

3. Are the school financials from which the excel graph was taken (the green and red bars) publicly available?

Yes, the financial results of LFO are accessible at the Brønnøysund Central Organization Register ([www.brreg.no](http://www.brreg.no)) and [www.proff.no](http://www.proff.no)

4. if we had increased fees as per inflation adjusted rate how much of the shortfall would be covered?

The inflation was approximately 5% higher than the tuition fee increases in the 2018-22 period. It constitutes an income loss of more than 1 million NOK.

5. On connait la situation en 2021, pourquoi ne réagir que maintenant ?

The administration and board have carried several organizational and other initiatives to improve the situation since 2021, leading for example to the closure of a class in primary school, together with a common dugnad (collective effort) to keep costs down: increase of tuition fees with 10%, reduction of employee rebate from 30% to 15%, postponing of non necessary cost items... Many initiatives require formal processes that take time or can only be carried out between two school years.

6. Quel est le plan d'actions ?

The first priority is to restore balance and financial health, so as to restore confidence, both within our community and with our partners, to be able to face the real estate challenges ahead. A strategy commission has been put in place in the board and has planned regular workshops early 2023. The commission will seek to address the longer term and address alternatives for a viable future-state of the LFO.

7. Could you elaborate on the increase of staff costs? Have pensions something to do with it? Where are we in terms of benchmark with other AEFÉ schools? What is the non-teacher staff per pupil ratio?

The pension cost increases on a regular basis. The pension is part of our Collective Agreement and changes cannot be done unilaterally. We have started a process with the unions. We believe that we have lean organization but will carry out a benchmarking when time permits. About 12% of the staff members are not working directly with the children.

8. Quel est le nombre optimal d'élèves avec les coûts actuels ? Et combien y en a t'il aujourd'hui ? What is the target number of students per level Maternelle, Primaire, College, Lycee? Reduction to ease the budget?

Our primary objective is to accompany pupils educationally but also to meet the needs expressed by parents when they apply for schooling. Setting an optimal number of pupils is a difficult task that depends on several aspects, including the school premises capacity. The numbers need to be high enough to allow for a good and effective learning environment, and still classes should not be too crowded to ensure they are safe and harmonious.

That being said, if we have the means to keep our pupils on 1 or 2 sites, it would be important to increase numbers of pupils in Première and Terminale, in order to strengthen our offering in terms of specialities. Regarding primary school, the priority is to ensure schooling continuity from one level to another without interruption.

9. Quelle est la stratégie maintenant, à part le lobbying auprès de l'Etat norvégien?

The main strategy is to secure a viable school to buy time and be perceived as a professional organization that they can/want to support. We will at the same time lobby with key decision makers centrally in Norway and France as well as in Oslo kommune.

10. Is this an interim increase before we understand the longer term model and get [or dont get] political / budget settlement?]

We cannot at this stage inform on evolution of the school fees and cannot exclude other significant increases depending on how the situation evolves, including inflation.

11. what are we needing on fees on a worst case basis?

The fees must close to double if we do not get increased state funding, must pay market rent, and maintain the current pupils numbers. Alternatively, we need to divide the state subsidies on a lot less pupils.

12. Est ce que la capacité de vulkan est optimisée? Est ce que vulkan n'est pas trop grand pour le nombre d'élèves qu'on a?

Space per pupil is currently at Vulkan of approx. 9 sqm./pupil, slightly under what is regular practice.

13. How difficult is it to change models?

It is a complicated and time consuming legal, pedagogical and practical process. It requires political involvement at high level.

14. Is the only solution to go through some lobbying to change the law or couldn't we change our model which prevent us to be considered as friskoleloven?

National curriculums, like ours, are not included in the friskoleloven. Either the law must be amended or LFO must change its curriculum. Both are very time consuming and require political intervention at high level that takes time. Furthermore, as a consequence, it will not solve our financial challenge in the short term. Friskoleloven, in its current grant model, may not solve our financial issue as total revenues are capped.

15. With today's practice/budget, we will be in the red by many millions. That's without thinking about relocating for those years to another location. We might be close/slightly in the red because we have cheap rent. How is the CG thinking to cover that gap?

We combine both cost optimization and increase of revenues we have direct control over, namely tuition fees. This works to a certain extent, but not when rent will become impossible to bear. To this purpose, we work both on lobbying, locally, and nationally, both in Norway and in France. The alternative would be to either reduce number of pupils drastically or increase tuition fees, drastically. The strategy commission has as its core mandate to look into this. (pls. see question 6)

16. Lobbying, who are we talking to? How many politicians are we in contact with (both in Oslo and Stortinget)?

We have a long list of political representatives at national and local level that we are in contact with. It is not fit to be shared on this public forum. We have regular meetings with key people across the political landscape.

We held an internal meeting with focus on our lobbying effort with all LFO members who had expressed their interest to help, no later than late November 2022.

17. Are we talking with politicians who had children in school before or alumni who are in politics/parlament? It's being talked vaguely about it, yet none of the earlier supporters (Krf/V) have been contacted, yet pushed away by the board, ergo many members of CG have resigned the last 12 months. Using old alumni who are in politics is a unique possibility and a way into the parlament/budget

We all are united by our interest in the school and desire to see it succeed. We cannot recognise this description as we find the information on members of the board being pushed away to be inaccurate. To our knowledge, some members have decided to move away from their board involvement. All are always welcome to contribute to the common effort.

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Regarding who are the current conversation partners: we talk with a large number of politicians across the political landscape. Please communicate your thoughts and contacts to [knut.sorlie@lfo.no](mailto:knut.sorlie@lfo.no). As previously stated, it is important that the lobbying effort is channeled through Knut and the financing team, for alignment purposes.

18. Are we getting support / discussing with our depute representants des francais en Norvege? A Holroyd?

Yes, Alexandre Holroyd has been following our situation since his first election in 2017, meeting with French as well as Norwegian representatives over the years. The president of the Board had a meeting with him in Oslo latest in June 2022. Veronique Revoy, his substitute is tightly involved in school affairs through her participation at Conseil d'établissement since 2020, and is in regular contact with the Board. Véronique Revoy has been participating to the general meeting this 13 December and sharing some perspectives on the history of the LFO, since she has been LFO parent since 2006 and knows the school and its history very well.

19. Avez-vous pensé à lever des fonds privés : dons et partenariats entreprises, comme c'est le cas pour d'autres lycées français ?

A foundation was set up a few years ago to potentially collect such contributions. The idea is attractive and absolutely on the radar. However, specialists indicate that unlike Anglo-Saxon countries, the practice of patronage or sponsorship is not rooted locally in Norway.

20. Avez-vous imaginé une approche différente auprès des sociétés du type mecenat/sponsoring? Avez vous considéré des sponsors eventuels parmi les sociétés francaises ? par exemple les membres de la chambre de commerce ? Est ce que vous envisagez des evenement pour collecter des fonds comme en.france avec les tombola, vente de gateau pour les classes de nature?

We have had a meeting with the French-Norwegian chamber of commerce. Our understanding is that there is no tradition/willingness for sponsoring of private schools in Norway and among international companies. Size of our challenge is such that we cannot depend on voluntary gifts/donations.

21. If both French and German schools operate under the same educational act, section 2-12 or Ch. 3 of the education act, then why are they treated differently?

Being recognised under 2-12 or chapt. 3 only gives you the right to operate. Then the terms and conditions are decided in a separate, specific agreement. The German-Norwegian school is based on an agreement between Germany and Norway, where they negotiated specific terms and conditions. The French school is based on an agreement between France and Norway, where we negotiated ours.

22. Pourquoi l'école Allemande reçoit-elle plus de fond du gouvernement Norvégien ? Pose autrement, que devons-nous faire pour être traités comme l'école Allemande? From a financial standpoint, would being recognised in same way as german school solve the issue? if so, what is the hurdle to be recognised as such?

To our knowledge, what is sometimes referred to as "the German school" is the German-Norwegian school based on a bilateral agreement from 2009. According to this agreement, the school gets:

- 54.4% of the subsidy per pupil granted to schools registered under the Independent Schools act
- Dedicated financing of its real estate costs (not in initial agreement)

Requirements set in the bilateral agreement stipulate amongst other things:

- German and Norwegian high school diploma
- School's subjects and schedule determined by the Norwegian and German authorities
- German and Norwegian are compulsory subjects in the 1st to 12th grades. Norwegian and social studies teach Norwegian according to Norwegian curricula. For the 12th grade, a separate curriculum is drawn up in social sciences.
- Students are taught ethics or religion

The German-Norwegian (GN) model is interesting, and we are analysing it in depth to understand the opportunities and risks. Their model seems to be financially viable as the school is believed to receive significant support from the German in the form of teachers free of charge.

It will, however, clearly imply a different educational offering than ours. And 1) our educational offering has proven to be attractive so far, so we don't want to break what works and the balance we have created 2) no signal is received from authorities on any need to align or prerequisite to change our offering/model in order to get financing. France and Germany both have their own bilateral agreements with both their levers and opportunities.

Two things are currently sure:

- Increased local anchoring serves us, if not for authorities, for our pupils and families.
- The indexation on pupils **may** be relevant but not necessarily (it is indexation on private school rates that are currently challenged) but the real estate support is surely attractive for us.

Hence we need to look into what is feasible in terms of local anchoring, display how well integrated we are, assess opportunity to take bigger steps. Some steps, such as a "double curriculum" come with a practical cost (for example additional teaching capacity), hence the need to identify the appetite for such within our community and among our financiers.

We also aim to push to get a fair treatment from authorities regarding other schools. GN school gets 90TNok per pupil where we get under 60. Independently from the technicalities of our respective bilateral agreements, we argue for this gap to be normalized.

It is indeed worth analysing more in details the GN approach, to the same extent as we are analysing the French-Danish school approach in Copenhagen (our sister AEFÉ school in Copenhagen delivers double curriculum and receives high state subsidies for the pupils engaged in these curricula).

Offering new curricula requires modifying the bilateral Franco-Norwegian agreement. If this solution is possible or even desired after serious work and market research within our school, it will require the examination by our general inspectors of the equivalences offered in connection with Norwegian teachings, as well as a political agreement. Timewise, this may need more time than what our emergencies give us. This path is nevertheless interesting and will be worked on.

23. Jusqu'où va la ligne des services qui sont uniquement réservés aux enfants/élèves de NATIONALITE FRANCAISE et non aux reste des autres de nationalite norvegienne ou autre, mais qui justement paient les frais scolaire en totalite? Assistance/solidarité sociale est finalement préservée aux enfants de nationalite francaise (un exemple), et pas aux autres qui ne sont pas de nationalité francaise. Avec augmentation de frais d'ecolage, on fait tjrs la difference entre services (sociales) donnees au enfants francais et pas aux autres?

The school and its staff provide the same service to all pupils. The pedagogical differentiation that some pupils require is taken care of by each teacher. We also make requests for exam adjustments to the French authorities and accompany children and their parents throughout the year regardless of their nationality. Independently from LFO, French citizens have access to some types of financing on the basis of their citizenship. This is not LFO-provided financing but financing provided by the French state.

24. Who decides to increase number of students?

The LFO management presents the figures at the end of the registration processes. This information is often stabilized at the end of the school year, sometimes leading to uncertainties very late. The number of pupils, classes, specialties is examined by the Board, as a part of the budgetary process. Hence it is in fine the Board to decide on increase of number of pupils.

25. Is the number of pupils going to be the same next year? What about NON French students who are already enrolled in the school? I had the impression that the place for the following year was more or less guaranteed. Is this going to change?

It is too early to say but a certain decrease is expected within kindergarten and middle school. As already said, this is conditioned by the real estate issue and the norms of security that we must respect within the buildings. Furthermore, high number of departures following the increase in tuition fees could lead to difficult decisions which could go as far as closing classes for an insufficient number of students. We will be attentive.

26. Oslo kommune just bought veterinærhøgskole, have this also been taken into consideration? Its close from today's location, big campus.

We have had a meeting with Oslo kommune Utdanningsetaten (section for schools) and have asked them on the possibilities lying for us in the veterinary school: We have not heard back unfortunately. What we know is that the rezoning of the area is expected to take some time, possibly up to 10 years. We will keep having this item on our radar in our discussion with the municipality. Our understanding is that the municipality will use all or most of the area for themselves.

27. Quelles sont les pistes de réductions de couts pour 2023

We are working on optimization of operational costs.. We will not renew our computer equipment and rely on existing items. We are working to reduce our kindergarten enrolment so that we do not take the risk of having to separate from children within the school continuum, provided the numbers of pupils remains constant. We will carry out FTE (Full-Time Equivalents) reductions by taking care not to degrade the educational offering.

28. How much of the red in 2021 and 2022 is due to Covid plus war? Or is it structural?

We believe it is mostly due to structural challenges, two sites, exceptional electricity cost and tuition increase backlog.