

General Consultative Committee

# Document for the General Consultative Committee

Document number	GCC/DOC 10/2025
Meeting Date	02/06/2025
Title	<b>ECR guidelines (application of education and childcare reform)</b>
Classification	For consultation
Date submitted	16/05/2025

## Principal Directorate 4.3

### NOTE TO THE GCC

#### Refinements to the education benefits system

The education and childcare benefits reform was introduced on 29 June 2021 and has now been operational for several years. The new system has brought fairness and simplification, as more staff are entitled to education benefits and those benefits are more evenly distributed than before. In addition, staff have the opportunity to manage their own reimbursement claims through the specially designed education allowance portal.

There have been some discussions with the staff representation, and concerns raised by staff, about the categorisation of direct and indirect education costs, leading to a set of management reviews and internal appeals. The discussions concerned a range of fees, including those for school trips, exams and administration.

Following recent recommendations by the Appeals Committee, and a review of the implementation of the reform since its introduction, the Office has decided to implement further refinements to the system. The Office has established that there are some compulsory fees that can be reclassified as direct education costs, as of the 2025/2026 academic year, namely compulsory exam fees and compulsory administration fees. Regarding school trips, the Office maintains its position that these are indirect education costs, towards which the Office makes a contribution in the form of a monthly lump sum.

In addition, it has become clear that further guidance on the difference between direct and indirect education costs, and the classification of different fees, would be welcomed by staff. To this end, the Office will now provide guidelines on the intranet that explain the difference between direct and indirect costs. They provide an overview of the categorisation of fees to be reimbursed as direct costs and the fees to be treated as indirect costs. These guidelines will be published as revisions to the existing education allowance intranet page.

With this overview, the Office aims to assist staff in their claims for education benefits by offering a high level of transparency.

The announcement of these changes, and a link to the revised education allowance intranet page with the new guidelines will be communicated on the EPO intranet and the EPO pensioners' website.

## Comparative table Education benefits – proposed amendments to intranet page including new guidelines

Section	Old version	New version
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>If your children are four years old or older, you can choose between free education at a European School in Munich, The Hague or Brussels or any other international or national school for which the Office will reimburse <b>100%</b> of the direct education costs (i.e., enrolment, capital and tuition fees that exceed € 500 per academic year), up to an annual maximum ceiling (see table below).</p> <p>The Office will also pay you a monthly lump sum for indirect education costs (e.g., books, daily travel, school trips, exam fees, after-school care).</p> <p>Parents of children up to the age of 26 who are enrolled in full-time post-secondary education are eligible to receive reimbursement from the Office of up to <b>70%</b> of direct education costs (see table below). The Office will also pay a monthly lump sum towards indirect education costs.</p>	<p>If your children are four years old or older, you can choose <b>between education at a European School in Munich, The Hague or Brussels or any other international or national school. If you choose a European School located at your place of employment, the Office will pay the direct education costs (enrolment, tuition and capital fees) directly to the school. For all other schools, the Office will reimburse 100% of the direct education costs that exceed EUR 500 per academic year, up to an annual maximum ceiling set out in Annex IV of the ServRegs.</b></p> <p>The Office will also pay you a monthly lump sum <b>to contribute to indirect education costs. This is payable regardless of the type of school you choose for your child.</b></p> <p>Parents of children up to the age of 26 who are enrolled in full-time post-secondary education are eligible to receive reimbursement from the Office of up to <b>70%</b> of direct education costs. The Office will also pay a monthly lump sum towards indirect education costs.</p>
<b>School children aged 4+ and post-secondary (up to 26 years of age)</b>	<p><b>Insert: table with ceilings and amounts</b></p> <p>As from January 2025</p> <p>For indirect education costs (such as books, daily travel, school trips, exam fees, after-school care, etc.), the Office pays for each child a monthly lump-sum of € 131 starting in the month your child turns four and continuing as long as your child is not yet 18.</p> <p>When your child turns 18, if s/he is still enrolled at secondary school, his/her right to this lump sum payment may be extended until the completion of secondary schooling.</p>	<p><b>Insert: table with ceilings and amounts</b></p> <p>As from January 2025</p> <p>For indirect education costs (such as books, daily travel, school trips, after-school care, etc.), the Office pays for each child a monthly lump-sum of € 131 starting in the month your child turns four and continuing as long as your child is not yet 18.</p> <p>When your child turns 18, if s/he is still enrolled at secondary school, your right to this lump sum payment may be extended until the completion of secondary schooling.</p> <p>The monthly lump sum towards indirect post-secondary education costs is € 175 for children living at home or € 612 for children not living at home.</p>

	<p>The monthly lump sum towards indirect post-secondary education costs is € 175 for children living at home or € 612 for children not living at home.</p> <p>No deduction of like allowances with regard to Art. 71 will be made for children in pre-school, primary or secondary education.</p> <p>All requests for education allowance can be done through the education allowance portal. In the link above, there is a step-by-step guide on how to use the portal.</p>	<p>No deduction of like allowances with regard to Art. 71 will be made for children in pre-school, primary or secondary education.</p> <p>All requests for education allowance can be done through the education allowance portal. In the link above, there is a step-by-step guide on how to use the portal.</p>
<p><b>New section: direct and indirect costs</b></p>	<p>How are different costs currently treated?</p> <p>What is new as from 2025/2026 academic year?</p>	<p>The Office considers the following costs as direct education costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Enrolment fees which you are required to pay for the initial enrolment of your child in an educational institution, or to secure a child's continued enrolment for a new semester or new academic year.</li> <li>· Tuition fees which you are required to pay by an educational institution as necessary for ongoing attendance at the institution, and which relate directly to the provision of education.</li> <li>· Capital fees which are levied by educational institutions to fund the construction, refurbishment and maintenance of buildings.</li> </ul> <p>The Office considers the following costs as indirect education costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Any compulsory costs which cannot be categorised as enrolment, tuition or capital fees.</li> <li>· All costs for optional extra services and all costs payable on a voluntary basis, including pre- and after-school care, extra-curricular activities, school transport and learning support.</li> </ul> <p>As from the 2025/2026 academic year, the Office will reimburse the following fees as direct education costs for all eligible staff:</p>

		<p>· Compulsory exam fees as tuition fees.</p> <p>· Compulsory administration fees: either as enrolment fees (if payable as part of the initial, or continued, enrolment at an educational institution), or as tuition fees (if directly related to the provision of education).</p> <p>Further guidance on the categorisation of education costs as either direct or indirect is contained in the table below. The table lists how the most common types of fees are categorised, based on the Office experience so far.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1160 544 2063 1139"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="1160 544 1579 612">Direct education costs</th> <th data-bbox="1579 544 2063 612">Indirect education costs</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="1160 612 1579 652">Enrolment fees</td> <td data-bbox="1579 612 2063 652">School trips</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1160 652 1579 721">Tuition fees</td> <td data-bbox="1579 652 2063 721">Transport</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1160 721 1579 761">Capital fees</td> <td data-bbox="1579 721 2063 761">Lunchtime supervision</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1160 761 1579 801"><i>As part of tuition fees: exam fees*</i></td> <td data-bbox="1579 761 2063 801">School materials</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1160 801 1579 869"><i>As part of enrolment or tuition fees: administration fees*</i></td> <td data-bbox="1579 801 2063 869">Board and lodging</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1160 869 1579 909"></td> <td data-bbox="1579 869 2063 909">Afterschool supervision</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1160 909 1579 949"></td> <td data-bbox="1579 909 2063 949">Extra-curricular activities</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1160 949 1579 989"></td> <td data-bbox="1579 949 2063 989">Voluntary parental contribution</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1160 989 1579 1139"></td> <td data-bbox="1579 989 2063 1139">Any tax or fee levied through school fees for indirect purposes, such as student services and campus life fees (CVEC: Contribution Vie Etudiante et de Campus)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1160 1139 1579 1273">*These fees will be reimbursed as direct education costs as from the 2025/2026 academic year on the basis set out above.</td> <td data-bbox="1579 1139 2063 1273"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Direct education costs	Indirect education costs	Enrolment fees	School trips	Tuition fees	Transport	Capital fees	Lunchtime supervision	<i>As part of tuition fees: exam fees*</i>	School materials	<i>As part of enrolment or tuition fees: administration fees*</i>	Board and lodging		Afterschool supervision		Extra-curricular activities		Voluntary parental contribution		Any tax or fee levied through school fees for indirect purposes, such as student services and campus life fees (CVEC: Contribution Vie Etudiante et de Campus)	*These fees will be reimbursed as direct education costs as from the 2025/2026 academic year on the basis set out above.	
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<b>Who is entitled?</b>	Each dependent child who is registered full-time and regularly attending school is eligible for the education allowance	Each dependent child who is registered full-time and regularly attending school is eligible for the education allowance																						

<b>Definition of "educational Establishment"</b>	All schools, including vocational schools, research universities, universities of applied sciences and other post-secondary institutions are considered educational establishments.	All schools, including vocational schools, research universities, universities of applied sciences and other post-secondary institutions are considered educational establishments.
<b>What does "regular attendance on a full-time basis" mean?</b>	<p>Regular full-time attendance at an educational establishment corresponds to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pre-school: at least 20 hours attendance per week;</li> <li>• primary and secondary education: receiving an education that fulfils the compulsory educational requirements of the country where the school is attended;</li> <li>• post-secondary education: the equivalent of 60 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) per academic year in a programme leading to a diploma or other officially recognised qualification. Proof of full-time attendance is required, such as a copy of the study transcript or a declaration from the educational establishment, even if 60 ECTS are not obtained (because of failed exams or other reasons).</li> </ul> <p>The education allowance is continued during an internship, traineeship, apprenticeship, or other similar arrangements undertaken during a course of study, provided that the educational establishment certifies that it is a compulsory part of the full-time curriculum.</p> <p>Attendance can be physical or remote. However, the following educational options are not permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- education as an unregistered student;</li> <li>- short-term schooling lasting less than three months; and</li> <li>- training that does not lead to a diploma or certificate officially recognised by the local public authorities responsible for education.</li> </ul>	<p>Regular full-time attendance at an educational establishment corresponds to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pre-school: at least 20 hours attendance per week;</li> <li>• primary and secondary education: receiving an education that fulfils the compulsory educational requirements of the country where the school is attended;</li> <li>• post-secondary education: the equivalent of 60 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) per academic year in a programme leading to a diploma or other officially recognised qualification. Proof of full-time attendance is required, such as a copy of the study transcript or a declaration from the educational establishment, even if 60 ECTS are not obtained (because of failed exams or other reasons).</li> </ul> <p>The education allowance is continued during an internship, traineeship, apprenticeship, or other similar arrangements undertaken during a course of study, provided that the educational establishment certifies that it is a compulsory part of the full-time curriculum.</p> <p>Attendance can be physical or remote. However, the following educational options are not permitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- education as an unregistered student;</li> <li>- short-term schooling lasting less than three months; and</li> <li>- training that does not lead to a diploma or certificate officially recognised by the local public authorities responsible for education.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Start/finish date</b></p>	<p>The allowance is payable on the first day of the month that your child (of at least four years old) begins full-time education.</p> <p>The right to the allowance expires at the end of the month in which your child ceases to be in full-time education or the entitlement to dependant's allowance expires (e.g., your child turns 26 or earns an income above a certain amount).</p> <p>Full-time studies are considered discontinued or completed at the end of the month in which formal studies end or the official diploma is issued, whichever comes first.</p> <p>Payment of the allowance will continue during the holiday period if your child's education is scheduled to continue after the summer break (in the following school/academic year).</p>	<p>The allowance is payable on the first day of the month that your child (of at least four years old) begins full-time education.</p> <p>The right to the allowance expires at the end of the month in which your child ceases to be in full-time education or the entitlement to dependant's allowance expires (e.g., your child turns 26 or earns an income above a certain amount).</p> <p>Full-time studies are considered discontinued or completed at the end of the month in which formal studies end or the official diploma is issued, whichever comes first.</p> <p>Payment of the allowance will continue during the holiday period if your child's education is scheduled to continue after the summer break (in the following school/academic year).</p>
<p><b>European Schools</b></p>	<p>For more information on the European schools, please see <a href="#">European Schools</a></p>	<p>For more information on the European schools, please see <a href="#">European Schools</a></p>
<p><b>What we need from you</b></p>	<p>For <i>international, national and boarding schools</i>, you can request the reimbursement of direct education costs via the education allowance portal. Please attach to your claim all relevant invoices. Subject to certain requirements, you may also request advance payments.</p> <p>For children aged four to 18, a monthly lump sum for indirect education allowance is automatically paid.</p> <p>For your child <i>in full-time post-secondary education</i>, you can request the reimbursement of direct education costs via the education allowance portal. Please attach to your claim all relevant invoices.</p> <p>You have to use the education allowance portal to claim the monthly lump sum for the indirect education allowance for your child in post-</p>	<p>For <i>international, national and boarding schools</i>, you can request the reimbursement of direct education costs via the education allowance portal. Please attach to your claim all relevant invoices. Subject to certain requirements, you may also request advance payments.</p> <p>For children aged four to 18, a monthly lump sum for indirect education allowance is automatically paid.</p> <p>For your child <i>in full-time post-secondary education</i>, you can request the reimbursement of direct education costs via the education allowance portal. Please attach to your claim all relevant invoices.</p> <p>You have to use the education allowance portal to claim the monthly lump sum for the indirect education allowance for your child in post-secondary education. To claim the</p>

	secondary education. To claim the monthly allowance, you need to provide the details of your child's educational establishment and provide evidence of enrolment in full-time education. Your child is entitled to a higher monthly lump sum if living away from home.	monthly allowance, you need to provide the details of your child's educational establishment and provide evidence of enrolment in full-time education. Your child is entitled to a higher monthly lump sum if living away from home.
<b>When to apply</b>	You should request reimbursement of direct education costs during the academic year in which the costs are incurred, and no later than three months after the end of the relevant academic year.	You should request reimbursement of direct education costs during the academic year in which the costs are incurred, and no later than three months after the end of the relevant academic year.
<b>Important notes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You should inform HR Services of any changes of circumstances that may affect your entitlement to the education allowance.</li> <li>For applying the reimbursement ceilings, the cycle structure (the distinction between primary and secondary) is relevant. When in doubt which cycle structure is applicable, the cycle structure of the country where the school is located applies.</li> <li>For the purpose of applying the ceiling for secondary education, the cycle structure (distinction between primary and secondary education) of the relevant educational establishment is to be considered. In case of doubt, the cycle structure of the country where the school is located applies.</li> <li>If your child's attendance at school or university is interrupted or ceases altogether in the course of the academic year, the amounts and ceilings of the allowance are reduced on a pro rata basis. (Art. 71(3) ServRegs).</li> <li>For the benefit of your child's education, allowances paid from other sources, (e.g., university scholarship, study grant from national authority) will not be deducted from the total amount of the education allowance.</li> <li>To determine the applicable monthly lump sum for indirect education costs paid for a child in post-secondary education, a child is considered to be living at home when s/he lives with one or both parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You should inform HR Services of any changes of circumstances that may affect your entitlement to the education allowance.</li> <li>For applying the reimbursement ceilings, the cycle structure (the distinction between primary and secondary) is relevant. When in doubt which cycle structure is applicable, the cycle structure of the country where the school is located applies.</li> <li>For the purpose of applying the ceiling for secondary education, the cycle structure (distinction between primary and secondary education) of the relevant educational establishment is to be considered. In case of doubt, the cycle structure of the country where the school is located applies.</li> <li>If your child's attendance at school or university is interrupted or ceases altogether in the course of the academic year, the amounts and ceilings of the allowance are reduced on a pro rata basis. (Art. 71(3) ServRegs).</li> <li>For the benefit of your child's education, allowances paid from other sources, (e.g., university scholarship, study grant from national authority) will not be deducted from the total amount of the education allowance.</li> <li>To determine the applicable monthly lump sum for indirect education costs paid for a child in post-secondary education, a child is considered to be living at home when s/he lives with one or both parents.</li> <li>The education allowance will continue to be granted during periods of parental or family leave.</li> </ul>

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[Links to the summaries](#) of the ApC Opinions from 15.05.2025 on ECR