

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Rethinking Citizenship Education in European Migration Societies Political Strategies - Social Changes - Educational Concepts

Opening Remarks

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Dear Professor Süssmuth, dear Speakers and Moderators, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is both, an honour and a pleasure to be able to welcome you here in Lisbon. I would like to thank all of you for coming, both in the name of the German Federal Agency for Civic Education and in the name of the many partners that helped make this conference possible: the Goethe-Institute in Lisbon and its director Ronald Grätz provided extensive support here throughout the process, opening many doors in the city – including those to this beautiful conference centre in Belem.

Since its founding in 2001, the German Foundation 'Remembrance, Responsibility and Future' has gathered experience in the areas of European understanding and communication, particularly among young people. Their help was a key to identifying and inviting many young experts for citizenship education from eastern and south-eastern Europe to this conference. I'm happy that so many of you responded to our invitation, and I'd like to wish you all a warm welcome. In one of the oldest of the western European cities, let us never lose sight of the diversity of the new, expanded Europe. With help from the Hilfelder Foundation and other partners, we hope to hold a follow-up conference next year in one of Europe's 'new-old' eastern metropolises.

In Portugal, we would like to thank for the generous support provided by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and its president Emilio Rui Vilar, as well as for the assistance provided by the University of Lisbon's Institute for Social Sciences.

For many years, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture has been part of our European Network for Civic Education. I would like to take this chance to thank Sigrid Steininger for her perseverance and persistence in helping us to expand the NECE network, traits also shown by the good people at the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute in Vienna. We also can't express sufficiently our appreciation to the Center for Citizenship Education in Warsaw. Last but not least, many thanks to the IFRI in Paris and the French embassy here in Lisbon, both of which helped in many ways to make this conference possible.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, we have an ambitious agenda at this conference. Our goal here is nothing less than to determine as precisely as we can, what effects and consequences worldwide migration processes are going to have on the future of citizenship education. The results we achieve and the answers we find in the next few days will lay the groundwork for our approach to citizenship education in Europe in the years and decades to come.

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Allow me to expand what I mean with examples -- just two questions among the many we will strive to answer:

What new tests and challenges, for instance, will our field face now that it has become clear that the number of young Muslim students will continue to rise in European schools and education centres?

Or how will we deal with the young people in our midst that come from extra-European societies, torn between two cultures, feeling neither at home in their countries of origin nor here, apparently unable to escape a deep-seated sense of 'otherness'?

"I am a stranger in Turkey and also in Germany", says Turkish 18-year-old Öztürk in Berlin. "I am trapped in a hole between two cultures." This quote from study conducted by the New York Times in 2006 is just one of 50 similar expressions of frustration from youths in cities as widespread as Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, London, Madrid and Rome. And let us not forget that the discovery of identity and self-assertion in these cities is often heavily influenced by high unemployment rates, lack of education, and fear of 'terrorism' and 'extremism' in the respective majority populations.

This Europe-wide litany – and we have just scratched the surface – underlines the fact that a purely national debate is no longer able to address or find solutions to these problems. It is my firm view, and this view is shared by many of my colleagues and other institutes throughout Europe, that we therefore desperately need to create a new European, post-national framework for citizenship education. Our NECE network is an instrument for accomplishing that goal.

Even a cursory glance into the theory and practice of the international and European debate on integrating immigrants supports three observations.

1. First, conflicts and crises involving the integration of immigrants in France, Britain, Spain and Italy have shown us in Germany that not a single European nation has yet found truly convincing answers to the problems that integration presents. France's integrative model has failed. The 'live and let live' policy in the Netherlands and the UK has failed. 'National identity' is discussed everywhere, without anyone being quite sure any longer precisely what it is or means. A general sense of unease is nothing out of the ordinary – indeed, it is a normal, even an unavoidable corollary circumstance in an age of globalisation. Even so, it is impossible to ignore the populist and xenophobic movements in both western and eastern Europe that would like nothing more than to roll back the wheel of history. For some, an understanding of a 'nation' as a political unit rather than an ethnically homogenous and compulsory body is still far from self-evident. Immigrants as citizens -- irrespective of skin colour, extraction, and religion – possessing all of the rights, but also accepting all of the responsibilities. To me, this seems a good starting point for reducing – not preserving -- the 'otherness of others' over the long term.
2. The second point that quickly becomes clear is that the problems are not only to be found in Europe. There is also a lack of convincing models, able to strike a balance between integration and immigration, beyond our borders. Even in the US, which has more than two centuries of 'experience' as a 'country of immigration', the tension surrounding identity and migration is unmistakable. Tempers are particularly short in the battle surrounding the 'Hispanisation' taking place in some parts of the country, the fires fed by more than 11 million illegal immigrants and fears in a post-9/11 world.
3. In short, both Europe and the US are in the midst of a global contest to set out the guidelines for an integration and immigration model that will allow us to cope with the mobility of the entire world. And let's be candid: that is something that is beyond our ability to imagine. The situation poses new and unusual questions. Could for example the patriotic and excessive "visibility of citizenship", as Francis Fukuyama calls it, provide an answer to the new challenges we face as Europeans in our interactions with immigrants? Could we -- or should we -- assume this ideal? What consequences would that have for post-ethnic citizenship education that is oriented on Europe? I am very eager to hear your answers to questions like these.

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Ladies and gentlemen, migration is changing our world, often more rapidly than we would like. It is very easy to understand the fears and emotions on both sides of the divide. The need for regulated relations, for the demarcation of boundaries, and clear sets of rules in your immediate environment is both universal and reasonable – and that applies to all parties, both immigrants and the societies to which they migrate. Mutual denunciation won't get us anywhere, nor will abstract appeals to cosmopolitan virtues. A situation that makes new proposals and approaches to citizenship education is even more important. These approaches have to give immigrants a new sense of belonging to a 'nation' in its post-ethnic sense. To quote Fukuyama again: "a sense of attachment to a place and a history should not be rubbed out, but should be made as open as possible to new citizens." In other words, the dialogue surrounding 20th-century European history -- as well as the lessons that we have learned from the catastrophes of European history in general -- must be conducted a new with the immigrants, who bring along histories of their own.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a packed programme in front of us. Lisbon, the site of our conference, is the city from which Europe began expanding in the 15th century, initially towards Africa and Asia. It is therefore no gross exaggeration to say that the origins of the 20th and 21st century migration movements lie in this city. I'm certain that a place as suitable as this one will help all of us to find creative answers to the questions we will be addressing in the coming days.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I introduce our first keynote speaker today. As many of you know, Professor Rita Süßmuth was not only the President of the German Parliament, the Bundestag, from 1988 to 1998 – extremely important years in our country's history. She is also an active and committed expert in the fields of migration and integration. Ms. Süßmuth once held the post of Director of the Independent Commission on Migration to Germany, which helped define the guidelines for its new immigration laws. Her most recent post is as a member of the Global Commission of International Migration, which in October of 2005 published a report on the topic "Migration in an Interconnected world: New Directions for Action". Ms. Süßmuth, thank you very much for joining us.