

NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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

Conference Paper

Key Note:

**Citizenship and Immigration in a Globalised World:
European Perspectives**

**Prof. Rita Süßmuth,
Former President of the German Parliament/
Member of the Global Commission on International Migration,
Berlin**

Lisbon, Portugal, April, 26-28, 2007

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Dear Colleague President Krüger, dear participants.

Thank you first of all for your welcoming words.

I am very happy to join you this morning in Lisbon and speak about a very important topic – citizenship of migrants. What does citizenship mean not only for migrants, but also for those who live with migrants – what does it mean for our societies? I think it is a wonderful choice you have made by going to Lisbon. Why? Because the next EU-presidency will be with Portugal and the main topic will be: Citizenship. I think my friend Antonio Vitorino - the former Portuguese EU-commissioner – who is among us this

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morning has stressed the importance of citizenship on the European agenda. Let me stress that Citizenship is not only a question of participation, it is a question of human rights. Nothing is more controversial – I believe – than to deal with migrant issues via a human rights approach. I experienced that during the debates we had in the Global Commission on International Migration. (link) We were very glad that especially Kofi Annan pushed this approach because the issues of citizenship are very much linked to the question of rights and obligations. Reservations against a human rights approach are still strong and widespread. This shows us that there is still a thinking in terms of social and political exclusion. The most important question and biggest problem with regard to integration is the lack of inclusion. For this reason, I am very happy the Portuguese presidency will follow a comprehensive approach when dealing with citizenship of migrants in Europe. When you exclude citizenship, then you take a very particular and not a comprehensive approach. I strongly believe that we should stop thinking of people belonging to different categories. As Mr. Krüger has told us, the French example shows us that a very progressive naturalization policy does not necessarily and automatically mean that problems of social and cultural exclusion are solved for good.

But it is important to ask: Are we really practising multiculturalism or do we just live side by side? And the other question is: Why do we hesitate so much in giving civic rights to migrants? Sometimes we speak of immigrants but we avoid the word citizens. It is as a matter of fact not only a question of rethinking citizenship, but of thinking fundamentally about citizenship of people living in our countries. An ethnic approach – I believe – may create more problems than we are able to solve. Nobody should be allowed to differentiate between ethnicities which are welcome and those which are not. What we need is a human approach which looks at people in terms of individuals with different backgrounds and different talents and asks for their potential of living peacefully and productively together. This is – I believe – the central issue in the 21st century. Therefore it is very important to have a comprehensive approach in citizenship education which includes other areas of civic life. We may have a good citizenship education, but if we fail to successfully integrate migrants in our educational systems in general and in the labour market and in the political system, we will not be able to make progress in this area.

In order to show you what „Citizenship and Immigration in a Globalized World – European Perspectives“ means to me I will present three different aspects to you. First of all, let me stress that Europe's problems in the field of migration and integration should not longer be regarded as a national affair and a national concern, which can be discussed and decided on the national level only. More or less, we recognise today that no single state alone can solve the problems we are confronted with. What we came to apprehend was that the European Commission was much more progressive, looking for more cooperation and coordination. However, they had high barriers to overcome because the member states were consistently safeguarding national decision making processes in order not to shift national authority to European institutions. As a member of the Global Commission I experienced similar processes. On the one hand, you could discern a need for a globalised view in order to detect the scope of migration in

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an interconnected world. On the other hand, you could observe a strong opposition from a lot of countries, above all the USA, to cede influence to the UN on this topic, and conduct governance and management on a global level. There was a first high-level dialogue, at New York 2006. We will have a second one in Belgium at Brussels this year and a third at Manila next year.

Secondly, there are more than 200 million people migrating around the world annually. From our point of view Europe might be the most afflicted continent. That was true for a certain time, but it is no longer true. By employing a global view we come to realize that the American, Asian (i.e. the former CIS) and especially the African continent experience a decidedly greater impact of the migration processes. From this global perspective we can learn and acknowledge that migration is not a transitional phenomenon, but a persistent one.

Looking back in history, many European countries have a similar tradition of immigration due to the recruitment of guest workers in the 1950s and 1960s. Policies were not directed at granting migrants national citizenship. Instead, the belief was held that labour-migrants should stay for a few years and then they should return to their home countries. But reality proved to be different as it was expressed in the well-known comment by Max Frisch, a Swiss author: „We asked for workers, but human beings came.“

Accordingly, we have to take into account the different and new patterns of migration, and adapt civic education to the new situation. A lot of our national policies are focused on long-term, permanent settlement, and not on temporary settlement. Nonetheless, there is a gradual change of the nature of migration around the world turning from the model of permanent settlement to a fluid and permanent process of immigration and emigration, i.e. circular migration. You set off in one country, move to another country and perhaps in the end, you settle down in one or you return to your country of origin. Then, you might even start once again. This shows the dynamic nature within migration. Consequently, we have to include in our reflection the situation of temporary migrants as well as of permanent ones, and we have to adjust civic rights respectively.

Let me come to a third point: When using the term integration we are confronted with various misunderstandings or different understandings and, thus, many difficulties. In a lot of countries integration is conceived in the sense of adaptation and assimilation. In this respect, host countries expect migrants to conform to the new living conditions in the host society. Far too often governments do not ask from their own citizens to adapt to living together with migrants. It is therefore highly significant how the term integration is interpreted. In my own country integration has become an important topic of discussion recently. Similar to other European countries for a long time Germany would not consider itself as a country of immigration. It did not acknowledge its status as an immigration country, but as a country for temporary migrants. But in reality it had become – since long – an immigration country. The migrants were expected to learn the language, to follow the values and the

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rules of the countries they were now living in. Nobody took into consideration how to deal with their personal background and their culture, and how it might effect the changing cultures in our societies.

When in my country Wolfgang Schäuble, the German Federal Minister of the Interior, said that integration does not only mean how to live with Muslims, but how to integrate their culture and their religion, this was more than a new approach, it was a revolutionary approach. Even the issue of building new mosques raised a lot of controversial debates in some German cities. When you have not got the right to participate as citizens in this decision making processes, you will soon feel alienated and not at home. People having different cultures with a diverse ethnic background should be considered as members of our societies enriching us, not as a threat. Therefore, it is important to discuss the social, economic and political context of civic education in an immigration country. Of course, in spite of all differences we need a common ground of values and norms that we all are accepting in order to life together peacefully and productively.

Until recently, we did not really invite the migrants and their organisations to solve the problems with us. It is, thus, very crucial not to make policy in favour of migrants, but to make policy with migrants. The right to vote is important but a comprehensive concept of citizenship education has to embrace migrants themselves, the individuals and their organisations. I learned a lot from women's issues insofar as we must not define the needs and necessities of women, or of migrants, or of handicapped people. Rather we need to include them and let them participate, on the city-level, on the regional, national and international level. In addition to this, I learned a lot from NGOs. By comparing European countries you will notice, the more open they are to civil society, the more qualified they are to solve problems and to find better solutions. We do know, however, that migration and integration always come with tensions and conflicts, which is part of the dynamics of our societies.

It is a pity that for decades some of the European states, and also my country, remained of the conviction that we require a homogeneous society in order to successfully manage immigration. Unquestionably, we need to create a common understanding of our similarities and differences. No society can live permanently without regulating how to live together. The substance of our constitution, of our rights and obligations is always a part of civic education. I do believe the word integration is not always appropriate: we should rather see ourselves as navigating between different cultures. Cultures which come together are enriching, they can promote development if we are willing to learn and overcome our ignorance. Civic education has to bring together these different cultures to promote learning from other continents, and to finally accomplish global education. Since many countries in Europe do not even have a Europeanized education, it will prove a great challenge to reach the stage of global education.

In the last years, the question of rights and obligations of migrants became a topic of paramount interest. We are at the stage of developing the concepts and the programmes, however, we cannot yet implement them. With all the experts in this hall we already know a lot, but we are far from implementations. Let me propose to you not to repeat what we already know, but to reflect how to implement it. Therefore, it is

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essential to come together, to learn from one another, to form networks, and to define common European standards. It cannot be that a migrant coming from a third country, in one country he finds acceptable conditions, in another not at all. With a European political and cultural identity of multiculturalism, we need some principles and some agreements how to act within these 27 states. Therefore it is not sufficient to claim we will resolve this on a national level. In 1999 with the set off of the Tampere process, the first activities in harmonising the procedures on the European level were established concentrated on refugees only. As you can see, it has been a very short time that we have started thinking of changes in our societies in a more European perspective.

Finally, I would like to stress that we do need to look for good practice on a European level. There are two more aspects I would like to comment on:

First, whenever I hear all the arguments in Germany that it is not possible to integrate people from developing countries, from cultures which are so different from European cultures, I think we should show by the work of initiatives of citizens, by NGOs like foundations, associations, sometimes researches that integration is possible and working. When confronted with the situation of so called unintegrated children – who are perceived as unwilling to integrate – we have to ask ourselves how we could allow this to happen. This kind of refusal is very often a response to frustration and failures of the educational system. Nowadays, we have numerous examples to show that their integration can be successful when it starts early in childhood and brings in the ideas of the foundations and NGOs.

I had never expected that there would be something like the German Conference on Islam¹ bringing together different groups of Muslim organisations and individuals on the national level. Accordingly, there are steps forward, but there are always steps backward as well. These steps backward – especially on the political level – are due to efforts to meet the expectations of those voters who are unsatisfied and disapprove of migrants. To avoid relapsing into old patterns, politicians as well as educators need to adopt a leading role in this context. When there is no leadership in a society, we will not be able to make any progress. Addressing the different stake holders, I spoke about the NGOs, but we should also consider the very important role of the business sector. If we want to make full use of the human potential and human capital of migrants, we cannot rely on civic education alone. Business and the corporate sector have to play an important role. This approach is participation at different levels, in different projects on a national and transnational level. Whenever we could bring together migrants and non-migrants in projects, there was a change of thinking, a change of attitudes. We solved problems together. Whereas we speak a lot of national identity, it is local identity which can provide us with another approach, looking at big cities like Dublin or Stuttgart or any other city. „I am not interested in your passports“, the mayors of these cities said, „but I tell you, you all are Dublin citizens, you all are

¹ The German Conference on Islam, launched by the Federal Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble, was first held in 2006. There are 30 permanent participants, 15 of whom are representatives of the German government and 15 of whom are representatives of Muslims living in Germany. The Conference is intended to be a long-term process of negotiation and communication between the German state and representatives of Muslims living in Germany, and will continue for two to three years. (Cf. Homepage of The Federal Ministry of the Interior)

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Stuttgart citizens, and we have to stick together to solve our problems together, to look for the creativity among our citizens and to show we can live peacefully and productively together.“ I think this approach which takes the city as a symbol of an historical forum of citizenship, should be applied all over the European Union. This will imply – I say it for my own country – to give migrants the right to vote on the local level. Therefore, I fail to understand that a EU-citizen living just three weeks in a city, has the right to vote, whereas migrants living there for 20, 30 or 40 years do not have this right. There is clearly a lack of rationality and coherence when it comes to voting rights for migrants. And if our constitution does not grant voting rights to migrants, we should convince government and parliament to change the constitution and adapt it to changing realities. I stop here and I encourage you to make the most out of this conference.

Thank You for Your attention.