



★ NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

European Workshop
“City and Diversity Challenges for Citizenship Education”
24-26 June 2010 in Barcelona, Spain

Welcome Address by Thomas Krüger

President of the Federal Agency for Civic Education, Germany

Dear Mr. de Torres Barberi, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

I really regret that I was not able to attend the Workshop Opening at Cosmo Caixa Barcelona yesterday!

All the more, it is a pleasure for me to be here at the City Council of Barcelona and welcome you on behalf of the Federal Agency of Civic Education and the NECE Network at this magnificent venue right in the heart of Barcelona. Let me thank you, dear Mr. de Torres Barberi and the City Council of Barcelona for your great hospitality and co-operation in organising this workshop. It is an honour to work with you and we appreciate the opportunity to explore Barcelona's policies and projects on migration and diversity.

Today's workshop brought more than 20 leading experts for urban development and citizenship education together to discuss new ways of dealing with migration and diversity in European cities in the 21st century. And it is not by chance that we decided to hold this meeting in Barcelona. Just take a quick walk through the city centre: African, Arab, Chinese, Latin American voices, (and sometimes songs and dances as during the Fiesta of San Juan) can be seen and heard at any time of the day. Within less than ten years Barcelona has become a city of global migration with more than 300.000 people of more than 150 nationalities. How to deal with this growing and complex and at times difficult reality is – I believe – the central challenge of our time. And for that reason, we should really not dismiss the many sceptic and pessimistic voices from citizens who see migration and the transformation of their urban areas as a problem or even as a threat.

Beyond any doubt, diversity and rapid changes have a great potential for social, cultural and economic benefits but can also bring conflicts and clashes of interests. Cities can be both at the same time: global and dynamic stars in the world economy and an ethnic and/or religious battleground. Quite often a lack of transparency in urban politics going along with social inequality and exclusion leads to alienated and frustrated citizens, ready to listen to populist and xenophobic slogans.

And it is precisely here where our workshop and our network have a key-role to play.

Today we had interesting inputs and impulses. So, I would like to summarise and emphasise that our main problems and challenges are to find and create new mechanisms, formats and forums for political participation at all levels of city planning and political decision-making. Cities and urban communities can be – and many of them already are – excellent laboratories and breeding grounds for a new interaction between citizens and stakeholders and the city administration.



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In Germany our Agency is already running some exploratory projects along these lines, like a new format to let urban citizens participate in the decisions of the allocation of budgets. And we train – for example – young Muslim activists in Berlin and Stuttgart to play an active role in citizenship education.

To sum up: citizenship education as well as urban policies and politics will have to re-invent themselves if we want to deal successfully with a new and ever more complex reality in our cities. We will transcend borders between experts and minority communities, create new areas of political participation and transparency and start a European debate on the future of our cities.

Tomorrow will be the final day of our workshop and again I am looking forward to interesting discussions. I also would like to thank you for all your efforts so far! It would be a pleasure for us to discuss the challenges for Citizenship Education with you at this year's NECE Conference in Trieste.

