



★ NETWORKING EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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

## Welcome Address by Carsten Moser

General Secretary of the Fundación Bertelsmann (Spain)

In his seminal work *The Information Age*, the Spanish sociologist, Manuel Castells, wrote “cities have become the decisive agents for establishing development strategies and both cities and regions have set up European networks that coordinate initiatives and learn from each other, applying a new principle of cooperation and competition”.

I think the workshop we are opening today fits this description really well. In fact, the Networking European Citizenship Education initiative has already spent a lot of time setting up networks that foster the training and participation of citizens around themes that develop the identities of cities. Many professionals, specialists, academics and intellectuals from all over Europe have been adding their profiles to this network, where they share their experiences in an extremely open environment for work and discussion, with well-structured contents, aimed at achieving enriching results that entail a true advance in the way we set out to involve citizens in their immediate surroundings.

It is stimulating that, in this line of action, the NECE initiative has proposed dedicating the thoughts of the experts who are meeting in the coming days to the issue “City and Diversity”. This is a matter of omnipresent importance in all corners of Europe that no one can ignore. This is a matter that emerged much later in Spain than in other places, such as Germany or France, due to the different way in which its demographic reality evolved. But it is a discussion that has proved to be very popular in the last year, and one which is felt very closely by the citizens and that we cannot allow to be dismissed with easy solutions or measures guided by electoral strategies that could lead us down paths that make coexistence difficult.

The Fundación Bertelsmann is fully committed to supporting this discussion in an in-depth and constructive manner. Therefore, this year we initiated a project dedicated to diversity, which will run over several years and whose objective is to analyse the status quo in terms of diversity, identify the main challenges and offer society some proposals for solutions. As part of this new project, we are already collaborating with institutions of international importance, such as the Maytree Foundation of Canada, to spread the Cities of Migration initiative to Spain. The goal of that initiative is to improve integration practices in big cities that receive immigrants, via the exchange of relevant information and experiences. This project also fulfils the condition we mentioned at the start, of favouring the creation of citizen networks. In this case, it does so by connecting cities so they share their good practices for integrating and including the migrant population and it has proven to be innovative in an urban setting. We will present other initiatives shortly, aimed at the young public, in order to strengthen the positive aspects of integration in the setting closest to them: schools and colleges.





All these actions and the others we undertake cannot be understood if we do not explain to you now that our foundation's mission is aimed at developing community engagement. This was one of the causes to which our founder, Reinhard Mohn, dedicated his life. Reinhard Mohn was a businessman with a great cultural inclination and a man with enormous philanthropic interests, genuinely concerned for the well-being of our societies. He was convinced that civil society itself must be heavily involved in resolving its own challenges, and therefore he created Bertelsmann Stiftung in 1977, the parent foundation of Fundación Bertelsmann, which was founded in Barcelona in 1995.

There are many ways in which community engagement must be expressed these days. In our current times, it will obviously not be at all possible to request the public authorities to provide the solution. This is when appropriate slogans arise such as "We can only solve this together", which has become popular in Spain. But the reality is that, as the sociologist Fernando Vallespín, who will participate in this workshop, pointed out, "our social commitment is scarce". This, which I would dare to call a "democratic deficit", is something we must correct.

As a foundation convinced of the advantages of private initiatives and of the social commitments that corporate property is obliged to make, we are very pleased to collaborate in the discussion that starts today about diversity in the cities. We hope you find the working sessions very beneficial and as from now, I will be paying the greatest utmost attention, on behalf of our foundation, to the proposals and ideas that come out of them.

Many thanks.

