

Eröffnung der 5. Leonardo Arbeitssitzung

Berufliche Schule Heidenheim

13.02.2012

G R U S S W O R T

Dear Ms Herzel

Dear Colleagues,

Dear guests from all over Europe, Spain, Turkey, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria

Dear students from Heidenheim

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for me to take part in this opening ceremony of your 5th Leonardo working session. I would like to welcome you on behalf of the Ministry of Education.

I hope you will all have some interesting, rewarding and at the same time enjoyable - and not too cold - days here in Heidenheim. To our guests I'd gladly like to point out that you are here in an area, the South-West of Germany, which has both a good name as far as the European idea is concerned and as being an outstanding place for people with innovative ideas.

The lack of raw material in this area has always been a driving force to make a living. It was here that Gottlieb Daimler and Carl Benz invented the motor car, Robert Bosch made his name in the world of electrical engineering and Graf Zeppelin built his airship on the shores of Lake Constance.

But this region is not only the land of inventors, it is also known as "Land" of poets and philosophers. Let me just mention Hölderlin, Hermann Hesse and Friedrich Schiller.

When the states Baden and Württemberg were united in 1952 one of the predominant ideas was that this may also be a first step on the way to Europe for this new Land! It was a long way to where we are now. Today we take Europe and the European Union somehow for granted. On the other hand many people have lost their enthusiasm when it comes to the European Union. In spite of that, everyone with a clear mind knows that only a united Europe can meet the economic and the cultural challenges of the new world order.

School plays a decisive role as far as the attitude of young people towards Europe is concerned. Teachers lay the foundation of interest for European questions and European decisions in a positive-critical manner. You can say: Europe

starts at school! School can show the chances this European Union offers for everyone. But it is up to each one of us to make use of these chances.

In this respect the importance of foreign languages must be underlined. Language skills are the key to - what we call - communicative competence but at the same time to the understanding of the culture of a nation. In a global world they are a precondition for working together, for living together peacefully, for mobility and cooperation.

Of course, it is English in the first place. But I am personally convinced that one should not confine foreign languages just to English. To have at least a working knowledge of one or two more foreign languages is a wonderful thing and helps to open doors and to get into contact with people more easily.

Many years ago the French entrepreneur Jean Monnet, who is often regarded as "Father of the European Union", once said: "We do not unify single states, we bring people together". One thing is clear: A common European spirit does not only come out of the study of textbooks at school. This study is necessary! No doubt! You have to deal with history, you

have to know how the institutions work, the mechanisms of decision-making within the Union and so on.

But what is one of the most important things - I strongly believe this - is indeed bringing people together, especially young people. This can happen in many ways. For example to spend one's holidays together. It can also be - and this may be even more rewarding - to work on common interesting and challenging projects. And to use foreign languages during that work as a medium of understanding.

This is - shortly expressed - the idea of the Leonardo and the COMENIUS programme. There have been many good examples within the last few years with remarkable results. Still, a COMENIUS and a Leonardo project is still something special. The aim cannot be to provide many more or even all schools with such projects. It could not be financed. It is voluntary and it is an offer to each school to sharpen its European profile and to give its students authentic and motivating forms of international learning. I am grateful that your school has taken this chance!!

I think your project "The key for success to today's labour market" is particularly important and challenging. I am con-

vinced that the kaufmännische Schule Heidenheim is the right place to deal with this successfully. This school - let me put it that way - is a competence center for Leonardo and COMENIUS projects. You have successfully managed previous projects such as "Education in times of diverse values". Your new project stands in this tradition of topics with the important focus on professional orientation.

I know, the application procedure, the organisation of such an impressive opening ceremony as today and a constant engagement in the next two years is also hard work and a big challenge! It needs motivated teachers and students. But I am sure the new experiences, the international exchanges and the results you will achieve together will be worth it.

I do not want to finish without expressing my special thanks to all those who are involved: the headmistress and the colleagues of the school and the persons in charge: Ms Kriesten and Mr. Gommel.

Finally, I do not want to forget the European Commission and the National Agency, the PAD in Bonn.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear guests I wish you all inspiring and unforgettable days here in Heidenheim! May all these aims associated with the Leonardo program become reality!

Thank you!