

SIESC - TODAY

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ÉDITORIAL

For a culture of encounter

How could we not be moved by the suffering of too many children as victims of bullying at school? Thus the fear of being at school leads more and more to absenteeism, which will entail difficulties in their future lives. Acting by prevention is indispensable and it can be stated that bullying is diminished clearly if the enactment of adapted measures creates a feeling of security. We all, headpersons, teachers, pupils, and parents, are responsible to work for creating a favourable school climate.

Technical progress and the social networks today allow distributing bullying, slandering, and wrong news without limits and without control. The counter-measures cannot have an effect on those who are no more accessible for reasonable arguments. There, too, "prevention is better than intervention". Integrating the internet and social media in teaching, making critical analyses thereof, giving criteria for the evaluation of the truth and ethical principles, all that will strengthen in the pupils the defence against the dangers and the abuse of the virtual world.

An action demanding financial means requires the agreement of the political decision-makers. It appears that too often only the financial aspect is the condition, while generous motives are more or less deceivingly presented in order to justify measures of reduction of expenses. Yet, one must make possible for all to accede to formation and education under the best conditions possible. Every pupil is important. They will be taught "constructive communication which refutes prejudices against others and promotes a culture of encounter".

The European Union, whose 70th anniversary we celebrated on Europe Day, has united us in diversity. Shaken by the Brexit, it could have drifted into disunity, on the contrary to that it has experienced a reinforcement of the wish for unity, which the election of President Macron in France has still confirmed. "The period opening now", though full of uncertainties, "is one of great hopes".

Agnès ROSE

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Pour une culture de la rencontre

Comment ne pas s'émouvoir devant la souffrance de trop nombreux enfants victimes de harcèlement à l'école? La peur d'être à l'école en conduit ainsi de plus en plus à des absences, ce qui entraînera des difficultés dans leur vie future. Agir préventivement s'impose et l'on constate que le harcèlement diminue nettement lorsque la mise en place de mesures adaptées crée un sentiment de sécurité. Nous avons tous, chefs d'établissement, enseignants, élèves, parents, la responsabilité de travailler à créer un climat scolaire favorable.

Le progrès technique et les réseaux sociaux permettent aujourd'hui de diffuser harcèlement, atteintes à la réputation et fausses nouvelles sans limites et sans contrôle. Les contre-mesures possibles ne peuvent avoir d'effet sur ceux qui ne sont plus accessibles aux arguments raisonnables. Là aussi «prévention est mieux qu'intervention». Intégrer Internet et les médias sociaux dans l'enseignement, en faire l'analyse critique, donner des critères d'évaluation de la vérité et des principes éthiques, tout cela renforcera chez les élèves les défenses contre les dangers et l'abus du monde virtuel.

Une action demandant des moyens matériels suppose l'accord des décideurs politiques. Il apparaît que trop souvent seul l'aspect financier le conditionne alors que des motifs généreux sont plus ou moins fallacieusement mis en avant pour justifier des mesures de réduction des dépenses. Or il faut permettre à tous d'accéder à la formation dans les meilleures conditions possibles. Chaque élève est important. On lui apprendra «une communication constructive qui repousse les préjugés contre les autres et promeut une culture de la rencontre.»

L'Union Européenne, dont lors de la journée de l'Europe nous avons fêté les 70 ans, a uni nos pays dans la diversité. Ebranlée par le Brexit, elle aurait pu dériver dans la désunion, elle a au contraire connu en retour un renforcement de la volonté d'unité que l'élection en France du président Macron est venue encore confirmer. «La période qui s'ouvre», bien que pleine d'incertitudes, «est celle de grands espoirs».

Agnès ROSE

Für eine Kultur der Begegnung

Wie könnte man von dem Leiden so zahlreicher Kinder als Opfer von Bullying in der Schule nicht bewegt werden? Die Angst vor dem In-der-Schule-Sein führt dann ebenso immer mehr zum Fernbleiben, was Schwierigkeiten im zukünftigen Leben nach sich ziehen wird. Präventiv handeln drängt sich auf und man stellt fest, dass das Bullying sich deutlich vermindert, wenn die Einführung von passenden Maßnahmen ein Gefühl der Sicherheit schafft. Wir alle, Direktor/inn/en, Lehrer/innen, Schüler/innen und Eltern, haben die Verantwortung, dafür zu arbeiten, ein günstiges Schulklima zu schaffen.

Der technische Fortschritt und die sozialen Netzwerke ermöglichen es heute, Bullying, Rufschädigungen und falsche Nachrichten

ohne Grenzen und ohne Kontrolle zu verbreiten. Die möglichen Gegenmaßnahmen können keine Wirkung bei denen haben, die für vernünftige Argumente nicht mehr zugänglich sind. Auch hier ist „Prävention besser als Intervention“. Das Internet und die sozialen Medien in das Unterrichten zu integrieren, sie kritisch zu analysieren, Kriterien zur Evaluation der Wahrheit und ethischer Grundsätze zu geben, all das wird bei den Schüler/inne/n die Gegenwehr gegen die Gefahren und den Missbrauch der virtuellen Welt verstärken.

Eine Vorgangsweise, die materielle Mittel erfordert, setzt die Zustimmung der politischen Entscheidungsträger voraus. Es scheint, dass zu oft nur der finanzielle Aspekt die Bedingung ist, während großzügige Motive mehr oder weniger täuschend herausgestellt werden, um Maßnahmen der Ausgabenverringerung zu rechtfertigen. Man muss nun aber allen den Zugang zur Bildung unter den bestmöglichen Bedingungen ermöglichen. Jede/r Schüler/in ist wichtig. Man wird ihn/sie „konstruktive Kommunikation“ lehren, „die Vorurteile gegen die anderen zurückweist und eine Kultur der Begegnung fördert“.

Die Europäische Union, deren 70jähriges Bestehen wir am Europatag gefeiert haben, hat unsere Länder in Verschiedenheit vereint. Erschüttert durch den Brexit, hätte sie in Uneinigkeit abgleiten können, sie hat aber im Gegenteil dazu eine Stärkung des Willens zur Einheit erfahren, die die Wahl des Präsidenten Macron in Frankreich noch verstärkt hat. „Der Zeitraum, der eröffnet wird“, ist, wenn auch voll Unsicherheiten, „einer von großen Hoffnungen“.

Agnès ROSE

A FEW WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

The word is mightier than ... the word, Part 2

Rumours, slandering, wrong interpretations, lies – some of them involuntarily, but a lot of them consciously and intentionally – have always been there and been (ab)used. And “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” has also been valid all the time. But technical progress and especially the “social” media have also brought about that today everybody can, in the truest meaning of the phrase, “bring into the world” opinions, accusations and character assassination without limits and control. From bullying at school and at the work place through shit storms to fake news on a global level that scourge is spreading.

What was once true of limited groups such as groups of regulars or meetings of associations, is valid for so-called internet bubbles today: People of similar attitudes strengthen one another mutually, so that they can no more be reached by reasonable arguments. Somebody characterised the attitude one is confronted with in such

cases ironically: "Now that I have finally formed an opinion of my own, you come with arguments."

Possible counteractions (posting replies, demands for deletion, judicial actions and judgements, orders of retraction etc.) are difficult to achieve, are partly still no matter of legal procedure, and anyway do not take effect before the lies have already done their work. By the way there are already websites that try to unmask fake news, e.g. www.euvsdisinfo.eu (specialized on Russia).

In earlier times there existed the wrong assumption: "What is printed black on white, must certainly be true." And today many are ready to believe whatever can be found in the internet. But there is also a statement: "60-70 % of the contents of the internet (and especially social media) is rubbish." Unfortunately you cannot have hope of human beings – and particularly the young ones – becoming immune against those distortions of the truth.

That's why "prevention is better than intervention" in this question, too. And that is a special challenge for teachers wanting to prepare the pupils entrusted to them for the world – for the virtual one, too.

According to research in Austria youngsters think that teachers are most likely (35 %) to know about the internet and to be able to help, much more than parents. Relevant information, but first of all critical application and analysis of digital media in exemplary lessons are necessary in order to strengthen in the pupils defences against the dangers and the abuse of the virtual world. To various degrees the internet and social media are integrated into the processes of teaching and learning and into the communication between teachers and pupils in the single subjects. Aids and arguments, criteria for the evaluation of truth and credibility of contents of the internet, but also ethical attitudes and principles of character: that's what first of all the school could (and ought to) provide for the youth confronted with the virtual worlds.

For this kind of communication as well must be valid what Pope Francis some time expressed like this: "What we need is constructive communication which rejects prejudices against others and promotes a culture of encountering."

Wolfgang RANK,
president of SIES

NEWS FROM MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS

GERMANY - VKDL

The President of VkdL, Roswitha Fischer, on the implementation of inclusion in Germany

UNESCO has proclaimed the aim of making access to education and formation possible for all human beings – for handicapped human beings, too. Suddenly everybody talked about this basically positive aim of "inclusion". But is what is today sold as inclusion in education really meant, when the inclusion of handicapped human beings into the world of human beings without handicaps is at stake?

In our country UNESCO's objective has first of all brought the champions of the comprehensive school into the arena. With the support of certain groups of parents handicapped children were put into regular schools. At the same time special schools were closed down. "Learning together with individual support" was praised and introduced *ad hoc* at the expense of the children, without preparing the teachers for it.

Teachers at regular schools have not been trained for the support of handicapped children, so that success at school is withheld from these children. UNESCO, however, postulates that these children must be able to achieve the intended success in learning by means of the teaching. Individual support is demanded, but all are taught in the same way. The respective form of handicap is not taken into

account and no path promising success is taken. Meanwhile it is possible for a child who up till now was supported in all lessons by especially trained special pedagogues at its special school to sit in a regular school where a support teacher comes along at most some hours per week and rather often is not competent for the special handicap of this child. Even some kind of rather general "express further training" of teachers doesn't change anything in this respect!

If access to education and formation is to be opened to all children, one must follow some other way different from what is the case in some Bundesländer now:

- Handicapped children must be supported as early as possible by special staff.
- Windows of opportunity must be used to make certain developments mature.
- With every child an individual decision on changing to some other type of school must be taken. For that, knowledge about the "kind of handicap" is indispensable.
- Every child, including a handicapped one, is a singular personality and must be taken seriously, that is to say that wrong ambition of grown-ups must not prevent the children from having experiences of success at school.
- Experiences of success must not be created by applying different measures for children in a group. Such a procedure

leads to painful experiences of inferiority, which must be prevented.

– In the field of support teaching, too, the “standard” teacher, – trained in the same way, is no real help for the children.

A school system with one school for all, in which “standard” teachers teach all children and youngsters, is financially considerably less expensive than a differentiated school system of high standard in which every child can find the type of **school** in which it can be supported best according to its peculiar characteristics. Yet, shouldn't our children be worth that? Our country could afford that - if “inclusion” were **really** our concern!

AUSTRIA - VCL

Isabella Zins, president of VCL Austria and headperson of BORG Mistelbach, at the same time president of the headpersons of grammar schools of Lower Austria, evaluates reform measures proposed by the government.

Package of autonomy – the great success?

Where neutrality of costs is promised, saving potential is contained! A malicious statement? Recently the government presented a new package of educational reforms. Expertise by experts with practice had not been demanded for preparing the conception. The reform package is advertised under the pretext of “school autonomy” and some gain for pupils and teachers. “Autonomous arrangements and pedagogical freedom” would lead to “better results in learning” and, virtually as a positive side effect, to a “more efficient use of resources”: more efficiency by means of headpersons with greater responsibility for teaching staff, further education and autonomous arrangement of lessons at up to eight locations? “Cluster headperson” (for up to 8 schools) as a new dream job?

A check of the measures proposed shows: Some of the “new achievements” have already been normal practice in a lot of secondary schools: In Lower Austria we headpersons of secondary schools have e.g. had an important say in the choice of our teachers for many years. Autonomous arrangement of lessons is quite usual: Next to all grammar schools have further developed their school profile in the last years, have created new subjects, have emphasized project learning. Greater freedom of planning is certainly an advantage, the possibility of altering the time span of a teaching sequence and of combining classes according to the occasion as well – however with practical restrictions: It must still stay possible to organise everyday school life and lecture halls are needed if teaching several classes at the same time is to become possible.

Autonomy becomes tricky where freedom if used leads to worsening teaching in classes, e.g. if the cluster head increases the number of an English group “autonomously” – without involving the persons concerned -, in order to get resources freed for a teacher of “German for foreigners”. Here the head acts “efficiently” in the interests of school administration, yet neither pedagogically nor in the interests of the school partners. How long will it last in view of a growing deficit of the budget, until the employer/the state will continue reducing the resources and demanding even more “efficiency”?

In fact, we headpersons are already managers and pedagogical leaders. What we need, is not a cluster head, but intermediary management, more than ever in times of overburdening bureaucracy. Creating a prosperous school climate – which has been proved a precondition for successful teaching – is the task of responsible headpersons relying on teachers, pupils, and parents as partners and not making lonely decisions without communicating with them.

We have to wait and see which details will be presented in the next weeks and months. At the moment one must unfortunately doubt that the ambitious and explicitly named aims can be reached by means of the proposed measures, that is to say that “risk groups in the system are reduced” and “top groups are enlarged”, and all that under the premise of neutrality of costs.

Isabella ZINS

FRANCE - CdEP

A new deal in france ?

The 2017 ballots in France - first the presidential, then the parliamentary elections - renewed the political landscape widely. As a background, the French's growing dissatisfaction with a political class split in two blocks, right versus left, each of them divided and uniting again only to criticize the opponents, but unable to solve the country's problems. And as a trigger, the will to set up American style “primaries” : the candidates coming out of them ruined the right and the left as well, by reflecting the most dogmatic orientation on each side and leaving the moderates as orphans. And to finish with, scandals and blunders by the potential candidates on all sides eventually eliminated those who were expected to win the election.

To give a full picture, President Hollande didn't dare to run again for lack of sufficient popularity and the extreme right is strengthening, surfing on a widespread discontent. Thus the central political area was available for Emmanuel Macron, with the support of the *En marche!* movement he had launched less than a year earlier (neither right nor left, but “progressists from both right AND left”). A growing number of politicians from both sides, but above all “newcomers”, are joining it regularly.

With the attraction of youth and novelty and the appeal of a non dogmatic and fervently European programme, *En marche!* took the lead in the first ballot of the presidential election, ahead of the extreme right. And the voters who didn't want Marine Le Pen elected in any case voted Emmanuel Macron as President in the second ballot.

In the weeks between the presidential and parliamentary elections the new elect was able to embody a "jupiterian president", steering clear from either Sarkozy's activism or Hollande's indecisiveness. He quickly imposed himself on the international stage, facing Donald Trump as well as Vladimir Putin. He was also able to put up, around a right wing Prime Minister, a government including all moderate stands, with as many women as men. And the two rounds of the parliamentary election gave the *En marche!* movement an absolute majority, enough for unimpeded governing, while allowing the right and left-wing oppositions a capacity to express themselves in Parliament.

President Macron promised to rapidly launch the reforms which will allow France to clean up its economy, but there is a fear that it may be at the expense of the destitute, and the opposition may move to the streets with social demonstrations. This question is all the bigger since the abstention rate of 57% in the parliamentary election clearly manifests that not all French people support *En marche!*

Thus the coming period is that of great expectations, singularly for the European Union. It had been shaken by Brexit but in return it experienced a strengthening of its will to unite that Macron's election confirmed again. The next years will be thrilling!

G rard FISCHER,
Reims, June 2017

ITALIE - UCIIM

Europe united in diversity or going to drift into disunity?

The socio-political reality *sui generis* that in 1992 called itself European Union turns 60 on 25th March 2017. A simple calculation makes us understand that in 1957 it wasn't born under that name, like a volcanic island pops out from the sea.

The six founding Member States were Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. The catastrophic event preceding that event was World War II, which ended in 1945 with the heavy toll of over 50 million dead besides political, moral, and physical ruins.

Those who had the heavy task of rebuilding started with democratic constitutions on a national level, in order to avoid the Nazi and the Fascist totalitarianisms the war had unchained.

Already in 1941 Altiero Spinelli, on the isle of Ventotene, had elaborated the programme of a federal Europe in his famous *Manifesto*

in order to overcome the logics of conflicts between states and to join forces against the superpowers of USA and USSR.

The *Schuman Declaration* represents the passage from a dream project to politics; in fact, on 9 May 1950, Robert Schuman, then French Minister for Foreign Affairs, announced the birth of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to guarantee peace between the winners and the defeated. On 25th March 1957 the Treaties of Rome were signed (ECSC and EEC, European Economic Community).



The first elections to the European Parliament by universal suffrage were held in 1979 and in 1985 the Schengen Agreement about free circulation of people and goods was signed. In 1987 the Erasmus programme for student exchange was set up. In 1989 the Berlin wall fell and that made it easier to leap forward by means of the unification of the two Germanies and the Maastricht Treaty (1992), which established the European Union, strengthened the role of Parliament and introduced the single currency.

In 2000 the EU Charter of Rights was approved and in 2002 the Euro was to be substituted for the old currencies of 12 States. In 2009 the Lisbon Treaty entered into force; at present it represents the most inclusive and advanced general law for 27 European Union countries.

In 2012 the EU won the Nobel Prize for Peace. In 2013 the Member States were 28 and the Euro zone comprised 19 countries. But in a consultative referendum the United Kingdom voted for Brexit; the first signs of sinister creaks are appearing on the horizon for the Euro and the Union itself.

In 2001 Tomaso Padoa Schioppa wrote that "the true ground-breaking event in our century was the establishment of supranational powers in that part of the world where nation states were born". That is exactly what the Italian Constitution has provided for since 1947, in articles 10 and 12.

Luciano CORRADINI

Europe day

when I think of Europe, I envision the blue of the European flag and the golden stars on it. Together with the fathers of Europe many see Virgin Mary's crown in the stars of Europe. We believe that Christian values are the basis of a united Europe.

Which values can a teacher at a public school believe in in order to enjoy educational peace? It's the best way to believe in the same values as the legislator, thus one is safely involved in the institution and needn't worry about the job.

What happens if the teacher believes in Christian values which are part of him/her and lives them? Such teachers are in constant opposition to legislation and against him/herself. Such persons may be incorrigible optimists who constantly improve their work and develop their personalities because of their students. Such teachers don't worry only about knowledge, but because of their love for the students want to protect them against the traps of modern age.

What does a teacher do when a seventeen-year-old commits sui-

cide? Is a teacher compassionate with the distress of the families? Is a teacher in Slovenia compassionate with hundreds of young people who leave their families because there is no work for them and might be forever lost for their native country?

You may find the answers by yourselves because there are many teachers who celebrate the Day of Europe in slightly different ways.

An additional remark: Recently I was called to court as a witness for a student who I taught for a year twenty-two years ago. A former student, now a young man, sues his country for a lot of money. God helps if a teacher does it! Have a nice Europe Day!

Magdalena JARC



NEWS FROM GUESTS

SPAIN

Las Edades del Hombre

Las Edades del Hombre is a Spanish foundation of religious character, whose objective is the spreading and promotion of sacred art in the dioceses of Castille and Leon, a region which possesses 50% of the religious heritage of Spain.

Las Edades del Hombre is also the name of expositions organised by the aforesaid foundation, since 1988 up to our days; and that every year with a different topic and in various towns.

The topical exposition, named RECONCILIARE, was opened on April 24th and will end on November 12th. It takes place at Cuellar (near Segovia), a town of about 10 000 inhabitants, with very great riches of historic and cultural heritage.

They wanted to show in a plastic manner throughout the sacred history of Israel and our profane history that our world needs the reconciliation obtained by Christ between God and the human beings.

About a hundred exhibits have been distributed to three small Mozarabic churches of Cuellar. Those churches, of Christian cult and Islamic aesthetics, were built between the 11th and the 13th centuries for Muslims who were beaten during the Reconquista and decided to stay in that town. Paintings, sculptures, music and other religious ornaments are in harmony with installations, videos and photographs of our days.

Giving a follow-up to the Year of Mercy through sacred art, with reflections on the present reality, that's the message RECONCILIARE wants to transmit, the 22nd edition of Las Edades del Hombre. The Reconciliation is a view on the human being and the society of



today, set in parallel to the history of Israel, a beautiful reading which wants to reveal to us that the mercy of God is greater than our sin.

Every year Las Edades del Hombre produces a programme intended for the school community, both primary and secondary, called "Get to know your heritage".

Las Edades del Hombre have as well contributed to the conservation of works of the heritage, thanks to the restauration work for 2 400 works, among the 4 800 exhibits and the 28 restored sanctuaries in which the expositions took place.

In these 22 years more than 11 million visitors have already appreciated these expositions.

Antonia QUEVEDO



Safety in school

Many students in Swedish schools experience anxiety about being in school due to bullying and harassment. According to the anti-bullying organization Friends, 60 000 children are victims of bullying in Sweden. 20% report having been harassed by another pupil during the last year. Bullying is financially very expensive for society. The costs are certainly not only financial, but it is economic loss that makes the decision makers act.

The National Agency for Education provides a clear framework for how safety in schools should be upheld and the Education Act speaks clearly on this issue: All pupils must receive an education characterized by safety and classroom tranquillity. Teachers and pupils must work pre-emptively to ensure a good study environment. At schools a plan for equal treatment must be established and is supposed to be a living document which should permeate all activities. The form teacher is responsible for this. Time spent together with the form teacher is important and it's crucial that this time is not underestimated but rather becomes an established part of the schedule. This is to the advantage of all pupils, and particularly to those with some sort of handicap. Continuity and regularity create a sense of safety and motivate the children to come to school. Schools where this time with the form teacher is a part of the schedule have achieved good results, with a clear decrease in bullying and harassment.

Another consequence of having no sense of safety in school is unexcused absence, in which we have seen a great increase with Swedish pupils. ... During the autumn of 2015, The Swedish Schools Inspectorate made an investigation into the unlawful absence of school children. The report showed that 20 000 pupils in compulsory school had substantial continuous absence and that 194 pupils were absent from school for more than a school year.

There is no simple answer to the question why some pupils do not want to go to school. It can be that the lessons are too difficult. Neuropsychiatric handicaps, reading and writing difficulties, a tough home environment and bullying are other contributing factors. For many pupils computer games become a way of escaping reality. The risk for addiction increases, which is still another reason for absence.

What can the school do? The single most important factor for a student not to end up in this situation is, as mentioned, a sense of security in school. This can only be achieved when the classes are not too big, when the class has a homeroom, when the school day has a clear structure, and when teachers and staff are attentive to the needs of every single child. The National Agency of Education has started an enquiry which aims to survey long and frequent absence, both excused and unexcused. Because of absence from compulsory school the adequate education the pupils are entitled to cannot be guaranteed. This will lead to difficulties later in life.

Clear national guidelines for dealing with absence in schools are needed. Every pupil is important! It can be perceived as a financial loss when a student is absent from the school and resources are directed toward him to solve the problem. But the largest cost is the suffering for the pupil and his/her family for many years, should the problems not be solved. We all have a responsibility to work for positive change in this area.

UllaCarin DAHL ROLFÖ and Annette WESTÖÖ

A note from the editor

SIESC-TODAY publishes articles of two types :

1 /It provides information concerning the life of SIESC and international affairs : for this SIESC governing body takes on full responsibility.

2/ On their authors' own responsibility, it publishes information coming from member and partner associations as well as from guests to allow them to put into dialogue their own positions and to lead readers to think about these positions which can not be shared by everybody.

OUR BEST THANKS TO OUR TRANSLATORS