

## Opening Speech

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**President of International Network of Productive Learning Projects and Schools (INEPS)**

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

on behalf of the Administration Council of *INEPS* and on behalf of the *Institute of Productive Learning in Europe* - I would like to welcome you to our 26th *INEPS* Congress. This year, we are welcoming more than 90 participants from 10 countries: from Bulgaria, Finland, France, Greece, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the USA and – of course – from Germany.

I welcome the representatives of the ministry of education in Berlin and Saxony, representatives from schools in Berlin, Mecklenburg-West Pomerania and Saxony, representatives of other institutions working in the field of general or vocational education, and all members of the *INEPS* network. Last but not least I would like to welcome the founders of this network: Ingrid Böhm and Jens Schneider.

Welcome to Berlin and welcome to the European House, which symbolizes joint values and objectives, collaboration and mutual growth.

“Where many people walk together a path emerges.” This African proverb could also be the motto for our *INEPS* network.

We are able to look back on a joint history spanning over more than 20 years. Founded in 1991, today our network consists of 59 members – mostly institutions – from 15 countries.

The projects in our network have many aspects in common. This creates identity and close links and ties between us. But we are also proud of existing differences – they are the basis for our diversity.

Following the foundation of our network, many different concepts and projects were created in participating countries – basing on the City-As-School model or following the principles of *Productive Learning*. Some of them don't exist anymore, but they were important for following projects. A few examples are : “Omaura – My own career” and JOPO in Finland, “Introduction Programmet” in Sweden, “La Ville pour ecole” in France, “City-as-School Vilafranca” or IDAP in Spain, “The Center of Creative Occupation of Protasi” in Greece, “Productief leren” in the Netherlands, “Productive Learning” in Lithuania...

Due to time constraints, I am unfortunately not able to list all of these excellent examples here. However, you will have the opportunity to make yourself familiar with these different projects at our ,presentation market‘.

Berlin was the starting point for the development of *Productive Learning* in Germany. The pilot project “City-as-School Berlin” was a “child” of the City-as-School New York and at the same time the

“mother” of *Productive Learning* in Germany. Since 1991 more than 10 000 students participated in a *PL* project in Germany - in 84 schools, in 7 federal states.

In Berlin we have 19 secondary schools and two special needs schools offering *Productive Learning*. *PL* schools in Berlin are part of the regular educational program, which can be set up in every secondary school. Since its introduction, more than 2500 pupils took part in *Productive Learning* in Berlin; the majority of these pupils – many of whom were at risk of dropping out of school - completed school successfully. The majority went straight on to vocational training and employment; some continued in upper secondary school in general education, and only a minority left *PL* without a decent career prospect.

Tomorrow, 14 of these schools will welcome you with different programmes. We are happy about the fantastic co-operation with the Berlin *PL*-teams and schools in this event. During your school visits you will be able to experience how the topic of our congress „Students in focus – Individual education in *Productive Learning*“ is brought to life.

Diversity in school – or heterogeneity – is today the normality in each and every school. Pupils are different from each other in many ways, for example, they may have different motivations, they may differ in their abilities to achieve, they can differ in terms of the pace and their style of learning, they may also speak different mother tongues, have diverse social backgrounds, and there are – of course - also gender differences. The average pupil only exists as a statistical figure.

When the topic of heterogeneity is addressed, we often talk about the issue of how we can make it possible that all children and young people are able to achieve certain standards of achievement, certain benchmarks. Thus our actions are based on the principle of creating homogeneity.

In contrast to this, the aim of individualisation is to nurture and to stimulate each pupil in accordance with his or her unique personality.

“The teacher must understand the pupil – not the pupil the teacher.” I am familiar with this fine principle from the area of teacher education in Finland. It means that the teacher must somehow gain access to the pupil and he or she must also have faith in the abilities and talents of his or her pupils.

It is possible only on that basis to delegate the responsibility for learning to the learner and to create a new relationship between teachers and pupils.

Individualisation is a central notion in *Productive Learning*. But what do we mean by this exactly?

What are the indicators for independent learning?

How is the learning process regulated?

What kind of images do we see before us when we are thinking of the concept of individualisation?

How can we be sure that we all mean the same thing? Which meaning does it have within different cultures? What does individualisation mean in practical terms? Which challenges are to be expected? But also what kind of ‚counterweights‘ are perhaps being required? I mean, if we have individual learning on the one hand, do we need something on the other hand to balance the learning process, for example group learning?

Clearly, we are trying to address an exciting but also a very complex topic here. Yesterday, we approached this topic “Students in focus – Individual education in *PL*” - in a creative way. Today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow key speeches, school visits and workshops will explore and examine this topic further in different ways.

I would like to wish you many interesting discussions and a lot of new and exciting ideas! Thank you very much for listening.