



7TH HOPE CONGRESS MUNICH 2010

NOVEMBER 3 - 7, 2010

GREETINGS

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Welcome Address in the Old City Hall of Munich on November 4, 2011

Dear Guests and dear colleagues from many countries, I bid you a very warm welcome in Munich!

Dear Maria Schmidt, you are to 'blame' for everything! It was your enquiry – as the director of HOPE Germany – to the School for Sick Children in Munich and the forwarded enquiry to the School at the Heckscher-Klinik which caused the idea to germinate of making this the location for a Europe-wide discussion of issues concerning sick children and adolescents. We as the headmistresses of two hospital schools found the idea quite exciting.

We were fascinated by the idea of our two schools planning a congress together. Our objective was to present the wide spectrum of educational work with pupils with somatic, psychosomatic and/or psychiatric disorders at a joint congress and thereby encourage further developments within this field. Our vision of the future is the establishment of a network between education and medicine in cooperation with the field of medicine in which all participants feel in good hands. We thank Professor Dr. Burdach and Professor Dr. Freisleder for their numerous suggestions and friendly cooperation.

We realised we would require financial support for the realisation of our project! Our planning team developed ideas and we were able to send our joint concept to many potential sponsors. We received great praise from numerous foundations, but unfortunately no funding...! The Herculean task of writing these requests and studying the multitude of handouts from foundations was undertaken by Mr. Merkt, the deputy head of the School for Sick Children in Munich: we all express our great appreciation to him! At this point, we would also like to offer our thanks to the project team from both schools: Ms. Kalmes and Mr. Ruppert from the School for Sick Children in Munich, Ms. Fuchsberger and Ms. Wagner from the School at the Heckscher-Klinik and numerous helpers who have aided us throughout this period.

We were extremely fortunate that our petition was selected among many others by the European Union and received generous financial support. We were greatly pleased with the high evaluation of our petition which will serve as an incentive for us: we are very grateful.



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Now the real work could begin: we had to find speakers and regulate the financial aspects! According to conditions laid down by the EU, we had to contribute some of our own funding which meant asking for donations for this congress – and this during a period when the financial crisis was reaching its climax and the majority of sponsors were demonstrating a certain restraint. We were however fortunate to find several investors: here the 'Friends and Patrons of the School for Sick Children in Munich' were of great help to us. The collection of funding was however not the only problem: Who would be able to administrate the funds, control expenditure and compile the final processing procedure? All this was additionally bravely undertaken by the 'Friends and Patrons of the School for Sick Children in Munich'. Our very special thanks go to Ms. Waldschmidt, director of the organisation and also to the entire board.

We still required further sponsors and supporters as the costs for the high standard of the programme and various accompanying events were intended to be kept relatively low for participants. We would like to offer our special thanks to: the Bavarian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, the Region of Upper Bavaria, the state capital Munich, the Heckscher-Klinik and the Hospital in Schwabing; in addition to their financial support, they have also provided the venues for the congress.

We also greatly appreciate the numerous speakers who will guarantee the excellent quality of the congress programme. Hospital schools can look back on many years of experience. The School for Sick Children in Munich, a relatively young institution, has existed for 26 years; close cooperation with the field of medicine was initially not always a matter of course, but has developed in a positive manner over time. The school attached to the Heckscher-Klinik can look back on 80 years of medical-educational cooperation.

Our congress topic 'The sick child – supported by a network of education and medicine' signifies the optimum encouragement of sick children as dictated by their personal circumstances to enable them to have a say in the structuring of their life and future. This necessitates special competences, patience and, above all, a great deal of time. This is a challenge we must all face together, as children are our future.

In our activities during these few days, we should always bear in mind that the most important aspect of our cooperation is always interpersonal relationships: between two individuals, between teacher and pupil and between doctor and patient. For Thomas Bernhard during the period of his extended serious illness (1949 Salzburg), his most important relationship was with his grandfather whom he visited daily, holding extended conversations with him, giving him great encouragement and generally viewing the world with him (Der Atem [Breath], 1981). He learned about life at his side. 'The grandfathers are the actual philosophers of all humans: they are always pulling open the curtain which others are trying to pull closed', Thomas Bernhard wrote years later (quoted from the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung Willi Winkler, 2001).

Thank you very much!