



7TH HOPE CONGRESS MUNICH 2010

NOVEMBER 3 - 7, 2010

GREETINGS

Maria Schmidt Committee Member HOPE Section Germany
Welcome Address in the Old City Hall on November 4, 2010

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear colleagues and friends,

on behalf of the German section of HOPE I would like to extend a very warm welcome to each and everyone present here today. This conference is the culmination of an idea which started back in 2007, and -with the help of many - comes to fruition today....

When I started out as a teacher in hospital, many years ago, one of my first students was a 16-year-old who had had an accident which left him paralyzed from the neck down. This had happened just a short time before his graduation exams (Mittlere Reife / O-Levels). He had lost the use of his hands which meant he could no longer write ... and as a consequence of the accident had a host of other physical troubles (among them epileptic seizures).

But he was adamant that he wanted 'his exam', his passport to adulthood and a professional career. But how? Computers were still rare in schools, there was no voice recognition, etc. On top of that he came from another federal state (Bundesland), another school hierarchy. My initiation into my new job was to get in touch with the Education Ministry of another state and negotiate a way how he could fulfill the requirements of a state exam which could be adapted to his needs. ... That was some 20 years ago, and the student was from Bavaria.

He passed that exam with flying colours.

So I'm especially glad that this work has come full circle and we can have this conference about education for ill and injured students in Munich with the support of the ministry, the regional government and the city, and with the help of the European Union. Thank you to all who have made this event possible. I'm especially grateful for the hard work over a long time of preparation to Lisa Meixner-Mücke, Alto Merkt, Anne Kohtz-Heldrich and many of their colleagues and staff, to the charity 'Förderverein Schule für Kranke München' with Ms. Dolores Waldschmidt and to Mr. Karl, our very supportive advisor.

Over the coming days we will highlight the issue of legal frameworks coinciding with individual requirements, the matter of natural rights to education and actual reality, the interrelation of medical treatment and educational goals; all of these issues still need a lot of work. And as we are living in Europe, a continent growing together, and as evidenced here today, the goal must be to cooperate across borders to find new solutions in these matters. I am very happy to see so many Europeans here in Munich, and many old and new friends from overseas. Let's have a few wonderful days of sharing and comparing, exchanging and learning and networking.



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Let me end with a word by Martin Luther some 500 years ago: "Everything that is done in the world is done by HOPE". Alles, was in der Welt erreicht wurde, wurde aus Hoffnung getan.