

PESTALOZZI PROGRAMME
Cha(lle)nging attitudes and actions for a diverse society:
fighting prejudices and discriminatory bullying for equality through human rights:
A cross - curricular approach

15 - 17 October 2014

Cleopatra Hotel

Nicosia, Cyprus

- Dear Representative of the Council of Europe
- Dear Representative of the Permanent Secretary of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture & Cyprus Liaison Officer for the Pestalozzi Programme
- Dear Organisers from the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute
- Dear Delegates, and (last but not least)
- Dear Participants

Once more, I am pleased to be in the position to address another Pestalozzi Programme - here in Cyprus. My pleasure, primarily, lies in the fact that you -Dear Participants; educators from 13 signatory states to the European Cultural Convention- will have the opportunity, for three days long, to thoroughly examine issues and practices relating to diversity in schools. It is for this reason that the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute sustains its long tradition of co-operation with the Council of Europe and its Pestalozzi Programmes; for it is a great opportunity for teacher training on key issues that animates education across Europe.

Dear All,

Since your presence, already strongly confirms the importance that issues of diversity need to have in our schools today, I do not intent to deeply delve into this. However, I would like to stress that the way towards fostering mutual understanding, respect and co-operation within our multicultural societies is still a long one and the work that we - as educators- need to carry on in schools is extremely demanding. For these reasons, I wish that you have a prosperous educational experience to further develop your teaching skills, knowledge and expertise in promoting high quality education which will dissolve discrimination and tensions, stereotyping and prejudice, marginalisation and bullying, racism and nationalism; for they are all manifestations of issues conflict, as a result of diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexuality, even musical preferences, media and literature representations.

But most importantly, I would like to acknowledge that dealing with issues of conflict is extremely sensitive and, occasionally, painful - both personally and professionally. Thus, I encourage you -during the development of this seminar- to freely express any possible difficulties and doubts. We believe that spotting, unearthing and admitting -if needed- personal and professional limitations can strongly challenge existing thoughts and practices that will eventually lead to change. That is why this Pestalozzi Programme, so successfully, embraces in its title -both- the words "change" and "challenge" into one.

Before closing, I would like to thank my colleague Dr Pavlina Hadjitheodoulou - Loizidou and her team for organising this seminar; we all know that this has been a hard work.

Also, I sincerely thank the lecture and workshop speakers and the two schoolteachers who, all, gladly accepted to share their knowledge and expertise.

Finally, once again, thank you all for being here. I am sure that each one of you will contribute to the creation of fruitful discussions, interesting findings and observations that will eventually take us from Challenge to Change!