



Speech of Councillor of Education in the Municipality of
The Hague Mrs. Ingrid van Engelshoven

Held at 9th of October 2013, at bi-annual meeting of the SIRIUS
Network on European Policy Network on the education of children and
young people with a migrant background in The Hague

Good afternoon, Bonjour, Guten Mittag, Buon giorno!

I wish I could welcome you in all your native languages. Unfortunately, time is short, so I will proceed in English.

You are warmly welcome in The Hague. I am pleased to meet so many committed policy makers from all over Europe. Worldwide networks of professionals are essential in order to understand and deal with global challenges.

Integration of minorities is such a global challenge.

Creating an inclusive society starts with an inclusive way of organizing education.

Peaceful societies consist of peaceful citizens, who have been educated to deal with differences and indifferences.

Peace, isn't that what motivates us all?

For the purpose of your meeting, The Hague is the right place to be.

Like the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon recently said, 'The Hague is the Legal Capital of the World'. That's not just a compliment. It's a fair description of our day-to-day reality.

Just think about it: the International Court of Justice; the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia; the OPCW, all prominent UN institutions that guide worldwide peaceful relationships are located in The Hague.

We are the world's second UN city.

And today you are all part of this.

Since education of children and young people with a migrant background contributes to Peace and Justice.

I consider *shared* education, on an *equal* basis, in *mixed* groups, as an effective way to lift up minorities in the classroom.

Our local policy on minority education is therefore focussed on stimulating contact between 'majority' and 'minority' schools.

20 schools, of which 10 are mainly 'white', and 10 mainly host minorities, joined together in couples. Each couple consists of a white school and a minority school. A couple undertakes common activities, like sports, making music or a life science project.

These are normal educative activities. But the difference is that children cooperate with children from a totally different background. The activity is the main goal; learning about different backgrounds comes along.

Aren't children from Netherlands, Turkey or Surinam not most and for all children?

That is exactly how they see themselves: as children, not as a minority or majority.

Close relations between majority and minority schools is a successful way of advancing integration.

Another project focusses on parents.

Many majority parents choose a school far away in a white area, when they live in a mixed neighbourhood. Somehow they are fearful to send their precious child to a minority school. Even if the school is around the corner.
Lack of information is a big cause of prejudice.

That is why we focus on informing parents about schools in their neighbourhood.
We stimulate schools to organize open days, we organize meetings for parents and directors.
The result is that at least in four areas groups of white parents decided to choose a minority school for their child.

Stimulating parents to choose a school on its educative qualities, not on the current population, is another successful way of advancing integration.

I wish to conclude with another point.

It was not me who designed projects for mixing these children, parents and schools.
The schools and parents *themselves* developed ideas on how to do this.
They used their insights in needs and practical possibilities.
The best projects are born bottom-up. So did our projects;
Local government created an infrastructure, the schools and the parents created plans.
That's how we like to work in The Hague.

And that is also how you will work the next few days:
share insights, listen to needs and possibilities, and co-create an educational infrastructure that promotes integration, and promotes peace.

I wish you lots of fruitful discussions,
And loads of inspiration.
Cheers!

