

# First International Education Forum, Gamlitz

## International Forum for the Future of Education

From 9 - 11 July 2021 a group of 25 international education experts - university professors, school principals, trainers and teachers - from 13 countries met in Gamlitz for the 1st International Education Forum in Gamlitz to explore the major issues and challenges of the coming years in the education sector and to search for possible solutions. The conference language was English. Due to the changing travel and residence conditions because of COVID, not all those enrolled could eventually come to Gamlitz.



Photo credit: Mihaela Brumar

The three intensive days were filled with keynote speeches, Socratic Walks, cooperative work structures and plenary discussions, which made it possible to get to the bottom of the questions asked and at the same time to experience the region as an ideal setting for reflecting together. This event wasn't about what else we could add to school. It was neither about the advantages and disadvantages of certain reforms. It was not about more-of-the-same, but rather about the fundamental question of what education and schools have to achieve so that we as a society can cope with existing and future challenges.

Mayor of Gamlitz, *Karl Wratschko* opened the education forum on Friday, July 9th and welcomed the international participants including two Styrian and two other Austrian experts. After introductory words by the organisers and a short introduction to the program and to the goals of the event, a series of keynote speeches on key aspects of the future challenges followed:

- o Critical thinking and questioning, *Arild Nyvoll*, Norway - keyword fake news
- o Constructive and honest communication, *Ildikó Lázár*, Hungary - keyword political correctness
- o Sustainable production and value creation, *Stefan Schustereder*, Germany - keyword resources
- o Responsible and autonomous action, *Charlot Cassar*, Malta - keyword personal responsibility
- o Living together as people with equal rights and duties, *Liliyana Mbeve*, Ireland - keyword identity
- o Pedagogy: Learning with curiosity and motivation, *Josef Huber*, Austria - keyword self-determined learning

In the second part of the day's programme, the concrete work programme for the next day was worked out together with the participants: the topics, groups and processes for the Socratic Walks on Saturday were determined. Five groups with five participants each were given the opportunity to deal intensively with the following topics and to work out possible solutions:

- o How do we create a learning environment where accountability, passion, curiosity and talent blossom in order to minimise disenchantment?
- o How can understanding of diversity and values contribute to working constructively in a community of teachers and learners?
- o How do we find a way to critical thinking and the art of questioning and dialogue?
- o How can we motivate teachers to continue working on personal and professional development?
- o How can we redesign teaching so that teachers remain open to motivation and the 4 Cs (creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, communication)?

The first day closed with a reception offered by the town of Gamlitz in front of the Alte Klosterschule where the Forum took place. On Saturday morning, the groups set out on their Socratic journey through the vineyards and the deeper regions of the questions to be explored. Interim reports at lunchtime and in the evening via an online platform made contact and exchange easier, which culminated in an intensive gallery tour the following day.

The wine tasting of the wines of the *Alfred Kogler winery* perfectly rounded off this Saturday and made a significant contribution to recreation and relaxation.

The third day, Sunday, was devoted to the overview and elaboration of recommendations: a Gallery tour, cooperative working structures, and exchange and negotiation of priorities ultimately led to a series of suggestions by the expert group on what to focus in the coming years if we want an education that enables us to cope with the existing challenges. To do this, we would need the share and put into practice the following convictions:

- o We share a clear purpose of education
- o We use structures and procedures that facilitate learning
- o We focus on promoting critical thinking and communicating
- o We are a learning community
- o We negotiate clear and shared goals
- o We work together for better understanding

After more than a year of pandemic-related restrictions and online events, our forum gained a very special status as a face-to-face event. It is a great pleasure that in this situation we managed to bring many international experts to Gamlitz to spend the days researching and exchanging ideas together. The organisers - the board of the association "International Forum for the Future of Education" based in Gamlitz (*Josef Huber*, Austria, *Liliyana Mbeve*, Ireland, and *Stefan Schustereder*, Germany) - feel that their endeavours have been confirmed and are already looking forward to preparing the 2nd International Education Forum, which will take place in Gamlitz in July 2022. We want to thank the town of Gamlitz and especially *Mayor Karl Wratschko* for the generous support of this forum and future editions of this series of events.

The results of this Forum will contribute to research work that will be included in the planning of next year's forum.

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