

Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. Günter Stock

**„European Conference on Primary Science Education“  
- Welcome -**

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Dear Vice President Keitel-Kreidt,  
dear Professor Léna,  
dear Professor Quéré,  
ladies and gentlemen,  
dear colleagues,

Welcome to the **“European Conference on Primary Science Education”** organized by the EU-supported project called *“Pollen – Seed cities for science”*, by the Freie Universität Berlin and by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Our academy was founded in 1700 by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz whose prime idea was – actually in contrast to the Royal Society in London and the French Académie des sciences – to include all sciences (that means “hard” sciences and technical sciences as well as the humanities) in order to combine the theoretical considerations with a more practical impact.

And this innovative mission developed by Leibniz is still our mission.

Supporting the *“Pollen”* project by cooperating with the Freie Universität Berlin, the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities is not only acting as an academy amongst others but we are acting, within an international consortium with the esteemed academies in Paris and in Sweden, as *“leading”* representative for all academies of sciences in Germany in this special field.

Over the last years, special efforts have been made by a number of European institutions in the fields of science, research and education to develop inquiry-based science education in primary school through joint collaborations.

As a follow up to several European conferences on science education held in 2004 in Amsterdam, in 2006 in Stockholm and last year in Grenoble, today’s *“European Conference on Primary Science Education”* intends to contribute to the international agenda on science education in primary school. Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, we are very glad to have you here in Berlin !

By organising this highly important international conference, the institutions involved will provide a platform for discussion about a variety of outstanding contributions, reflecting the diversity of innovative science education projects, with the aim of setting a milestone towards the generalisation of such an approach in Europe.

This conference is the final conference of *"Pollen"*. We are glad that the Freie Universität Berlin has made sure that more than just 10 schools funded by the *"Pollen project"* could be supported and that *"Pollen"* continues after the EU project is finished.

Therefore, as a fundamental result of the positive experience of *"Pollen"*, the Freie Universität Berlin and our academy have together decided to launch in 2007 our own initiative which we called *"TuWaS!"* (that means "Technik und Naturwissenschaften an Schulen", in English: "Technology and Science in Schools").

At the moment, 49 schools in Berlin are either *"Pollen"* or *"TuWaS!"* schools. Interesting enough is that *"TuWaS!"* schools have also started to operate in North Rhine-Westphalia and in our neighbouring Brandenburg.

In addition, I would like to say that the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities has, of course, also started an initiative to train the humanities. This project does not refer to primary schools but to young students at the age of 16-18 who are just in the process of specialising in certain areas.

It is our firm intention to reach those students who are interested in the humanities, having some extended focus of their school activities on these topics. They are most welcome to participate in special index courses (called *"Schülerlabor Geisteswissenschaften"*) to learn how research in the field of humanities is in practice.

So, in summary, our academy is highly interested and highly engaged in spreading the message that science is not only important for pupils and for young students to learn properly, but that in many cases it is fun to do sciences – both natural sciences and humanities.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by adding that our academy is not only involved in practical topics and issues regarding teaching of the humanities and natural sciences. However, on a more theoretical level, we have also initiated an interdisciplinary research group which is investigating the question of the future of higher education in natural sciences and engineering in Europe.

As in many other European countries, in Germany we have as well a lack of students and tense workforce in areas where natural sciences and engineering are desperately needed. And due to the demographic and economic development this lack will certainly appear in the years to come.

At the same time, we have a lot of young people studying humanities and searching jobs in these areas hence. However, the question has to be raised why young people more often select topics outside natural sciences, especially outside engineering.

Of course, our interdisciplinary research group will compare this development to other countries, especially also to the Asian countries where – in contrast to the German situation – in the so-called tiger countries the image for example of engineering is much better. That is also the reason why in the tiger countries many young people decide to study engineering and natural sciences.

The reason for the German situation could be that in contrast to the low-tech countries, high-tech countries like ours are somehow spoiled by the wealth situation. We are not enthusiastic enough for new technologies – we are rather more concerned about the consequences new technologies may have. It goes without saying that our society depends on natural and technical sciences and therefore we can not accept that less and less young people take classes in these areas. Hence we have to find out the reasons for these decisions and then try to cope with the results of our study.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, by means of this last example I wanted to draw your attention to our academy which feels deeply obliged towards helping society. We engage ourselves in primary and in secondary education. And we try to build a theoretical basis in order to understand why our society in Germany is no longer standing at the forefront of technical education.

I wish you a successful meeting and I hope that the most important mission of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz – *“Theoria cum praxi”* – will also be a mission for this international conference.