

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SPEECH BY

**HIS SERENE HIGHNESS HEREDITARY
PRINCE ALOIS OF LIECHTENSTEIN**

ON THE OCCASION OF NATIONAL DAY 2006

Dear People of Liechtenstein

In the last two years, I have repeatedly called for fundamental and future-oriented reforms. I note with great pleasure that politicians, businesspeople, and citizens also see this need for reform and share my view. This also pleases me since a broad-based discussion on future problems and the necessary fundamental reforms must take place within the population.

However, there must be more than merely discussions of the reforms. We must also implement them. The next elections will take place at the beginning of 2009. There is no longer much time if we want to achieve one or more of the fundamental reforms in this legislative term, or at least initiate first steps. For this reason, I believe the time has come to call for implementation of a concrete project that – if correctly approached – could be the beginning of a fundamental reform in the field of education.

A few months ago, a preparatory project called "SPES" was initiated – "Laying the Foundations for School and Profile Development at Secondary School Level I", which provides for the introduction of profile schools at the secondary level. I have looked at this project in detail and have reached the conclusion that we can take a major and important step toward reforming our education system by introducing profile schools. I would now like to outline briefly why I believe this project to be so important and what in my view is necessary for it to achieve the desired success.

For a high-wage country without natural resources, the education of the population in the era of globalization is crucial. Only a workforce with an excellent education will enable us to maintain our competitiveness. A good education system is therefore a prerequisite for a high-performance economy and a low unemployment rate. Only a well-educated workforce will enable us to

maintain our social welfare systems in the long run. Beyond this, the education system also plays an important role in the integration of foreign-language speakers and disadvantaged people into society.

Thanks to the overall good work of those responsible for education in Liechtenstein, our schools perform very well in an international comparison of performance. However, a closer investigation reveals weaknesses, such as with respect to the promotion of students from a disadvantaged background. Our education system also looks like a centrally planned economy, with only minimal room to maneuver left to each school. Uniform regulations set out by the State will no longer be able to fulfill the demands of a world that is undergoing accelerating change. To meet educational needs better in the future, the decentralized fulfillment of responsibilities and entrepreneurial action on site must be strengthened considerably in each school. Precisely this could be achieved through the "profile schools" project launched by the Government and the Office of Education.

What is necessary for the "profile schools" project to become a success? First of all, it will be important that the profile of the schools not be set out centrally by the Office of Education, but rather be developed by the schools themselves. Only in this way can it be ensured that the profiles in each school are supported, continuously improved, and further developed by self-motivated teachers.

For the schools to develop their own profiles, they need sufficient room to maneuver. For this purpose, the framework conditions for the schools must necessarily be changed, away from central control and in the direction of a decentralized order in which the Office of Education only sets out a mandatory core program to be followed by the schools. Beyond this, the schools must be free to design their curricula in accordance with their individual profiles. Only these opportunities to design their own curriculum will give teachers the

motivation necessary to trigger the enthusiasm, desire for knowledge, and willingness to learn among students that are so crucial for educational success.

A change of the framework conditions does not mean, however, that the schools will be able to do simply as they please. The schools with their differing profiles will compete with each other and strive to be attractive for students and their parents. They will have to think through in detail what the precise educational needs of their students are and how best to fulfill them. They will plan how to work together advantageously with the schools from which they recruit their students and the schools in which their students will continue later on. The schools will also report to the students, the public, and the Office of Education on their offerings and their actual performance.

The Office of Education will also take on new responsibilities. It will have to ensure that the schools do not abuse their new framework conditions. For this purpose, it will impose minimum reporting requirements on the schools and review their compliance. For profile schools to function properly, it will be necessary for us to abolish our current quota-based system of allocating students. In the future, schools will themselves determine the criteria according to which they will accept students. Otherwise, they will hardly be able to assume responsibility for their profiles. To ensure that all students will continue to attend an appropriate school in their vicinity, however, the Office of Education will, where necessary, assign a student to a school or require schools to accept a certain number of students from the vicinity. The abolition of the allocation system further entails that the Office of Education must draft a new financing system for schools to be submitted to the Government and Parliament, so that the requisite financial resources follow the flow of students.

The redesign of our school system in the indicated direction will probably not be implemented from one day to the next. The Government and the Office of

Education have taken a first important measure toward improving our education system by initiating the "profile schools" project. This project will only meet with success if we all support these reform efforts: politicians, officials, businesspeople, and not least of all those who experience the advantages of such a reform most directly: teachers, parents, and students.

Dear People of Liechtenstein

Tomorrow, we shall celebrate the 100th birthday of my grandfather, Reigning Prince Franz Josef II. Let us recall him and what he did for our country with the utmost gratitude today and tomorrow. But let us also recall that one of his special concerns was the best possible education for our population.

After the speech by the President of Parliament, I would like to invite you in the name of my family for refreshments in front of the Castle. I would like to express my warmest thanks to everyone who has participated in organizing this National Day, and I would like to wish all of you a wonderful holiday and God's blessing.

Vaduz Castle, August 2006