Projektgemeinschaft «Eiger-Klima-Schulen»
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EIGER CLIMATE
SCHULEN ÉCOLES SCUOLE

"Eiger-Climate-Schools" – the view from Brussels

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Firstly I'd like to extend my warmest thanks to the organisers of this excellent project.
It is a great honour for me to be here among you as representative of the European University Institute. I'd particularly like to thank Martin Pfisterer, who informed me about this project.

The institute was founded 30 years ago by the six founding members of the European Union, with the aim of fostering the advancement of learning for the development of Europe. The founders wanted to create a genuine European university that would act as a means of integration and educate the elite of the next generation, far removed from the nationalistic concepts of the past. We are largely financed by the member states and receive support from the European Union, whose contribution must be approved each year by the European Parliament. Our institute conducts research in all fields of social science and, since 2004, in areas such as energy and environmental protection which are attracting interest around Europe and worldwide.

Under the terms of an agreement between our institute and Switzerland, research scientists and lecturers from Switzerland can also work in our institute, where a course of federalism is co-funded by Switzerland.

In the field of energy, Swiss electricity utilities take part in the research activities of our energy regulation school together with European companies, the European Commission, European regulatory authorities and members of our institute's academic staff.

We are also in the process of launching a new project on carbon reduction in European business, which is scheduled to run until 2050. I am convinced that our colleagues in Switzerland will play an important role in the success of this project.

We all know that the future is in the hands of the young people who are with us this evening. Their future depends in no small measure on their education. Unfortunately, whenever austerity measures are launched, education and research are often the first to suffer. In times of economic crisis such as we have experienced in recent years, education and research budgets suffer the biggest cutbacks, particularly in countries which have been severely affected by the crisis. This may seem justified at first glance, but in reality it diminishes the future prospects of the next generation.

Sustainable development targets can be achieved thanks to education, intercultural exchange and research. Today it is no longer enough merely to consume less energy and use clean energy sources; we must also succeed in changing our lifestyle and habits.

"Eiger-Climate-Schools" is an ingenious project, since it is aimed directly at young people! It prompts young people to look for answers, seek information, question, debate and compare, in order to come to their own conclusions. Learning primarily consists of encouraging young people to think for themselves. "Eiger-Climate-Schools" pursues this goal, which is the first step towards an international convention on measures to combat the effects of climate change. And let us not forget that, despite fine words from our politicians, no such convention yet exists.

Over the years the young Swiss people here today will also have the opportunity to meet people from other countries. Thanks to this experience, when it comes to making decisions on their own future they will have at their disposal a useful instrument and a more responsible attitude

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towards our planet. And I would like to recommend to the organisers of this initiative that they invite other schools and young Europeans to join the initiative, so that the positive impact of this project finds even greater resonance.

To conduct research or study at a university like the European University Institute, you must be a top student: both at school and at the university from which you graduated. The institute's main mission is to educate its own students so that they become role models.

The academic career and variety of experiences you gain during your years of study will form your personality and influence your decisions. Based on what I know of this project – and I am itching to get onto the glacier tomorrow and see things with my own eyes – I am convinced that this experience will guide you in the right direction.