

February 10th, 1999

Dear 1997'ers, dear 1998'ers and others interested

During the courses in the previous years, some of you was quite enthusiastic about the idea of making folk high schools and common courses in a larger scale.

In January I have been contacting some of you, even on your private addresses, in your home-towns and in your favorite bars. The idea was to find out, if the interest was still there and if you find it reasonable to found a new association.

This is a short summary of the results so far. Its not finished yet.

One point everybody was quite enthusiastic about was of course the inclusive chance of meeting each other on a regular base. Of course...!

Another thing is the more ideological part of it. I really expected som critique of the common European level, but almost nobody has criticized this part. Some might have interpreted the maximum vision of creating a common school-system as an enemy of state sovereignty, but nobody did. I am very happy that everybody understood that the building up of another school-system is not meant to replace the existing systems. It can only be a supplement. It is build on the principle of subsidiarity and everybody got this point.

Now, one thing I was wondering sometimes, was if the maximum vision was received a little too enthusiastic. Sometimes we have been discussing the possibility of creating folk high schools in different European regions for a real long time. This is good of course, because many of you really want a folk high school in your countries, and this aim should not be forgotten. On the other hand, I think I was maybe stressing this maximum vision a little too much, so we forgot the more realistic and shortsighted development an association might have.

In many places we have been discussing, if the association should consist of individual members or of organisations. Both have advantages both have disadvantages. Still, the balance tips to the side of individual members. Some came up with the bright idea that the criterias should be similar to the minority courses. So, only individuals already active in some NGO or association can be accepted as members of the ETS. But every individual is still representing only him/herself.

Another organisational question, is how the association should work. Many were thinking, and I too, that we need to elect an (executive) board. The board needs to meet on a more regular base, while a general meeting will take place approximately every year. It is important that meetings should be held on different places. As you know the first one will be in Denmark, but next time,... who knows.

Everybody agreed also on one simple observation: this means a lot of work. Many have already declared they were ready to work on this idea, so also on this point I'm very optimistic. Well, of course, board meetings also would mean some pleasure... do I really

know the nature of the motivation? Many have also declared their support, but at the same time they knew they would not be able to find time.

There has also been discussions, if the decentral way of organizing courses or running schools would ever have a chance in countries, where everything usually has been run from the capitals in very centralistic systems. Well, there is no answer so far, except that it will be difficult...But take it easy, this is probably a long-term perspective... some would say in the second half of the the next millenium.

More ideas came up and more are still coming in to my mailbox. Here are some of them:

- 1) Make "information prospects" which can be used by everybody. Especially to get in contact with local politicians who might support the ideas, morally and... with money
 - 2) Many had ideas on where to hold the meetings in the future.
 - 3) The board should not consist of members from one single area or state or region. Some criterias must ensure a broad representation.
 - 4) Members should be controlled somehow, if they are still interested. It is to expensive to send material to passive members.
 - 5) Some clever person observed that this very project is a real-life version of the so far very abstract principle of subsidiarity of the EU. This is probably good to remember and to mention everywhere.
- etc.

I had a good feeling when I returned. I am very optimistic and I hope to hear more from you. Unfortunately I dont have the e-mail addresses on everybody. I would be very grateful if you would send me recently changed or new addresses on some of our friends.

Best wishes
John