
Occasional Address

Ulla Tørnæs
Minister for Education
Kingdom of Denmark

The following is the speech from the official launch of the UNESCO International Centre for Engineering Education European Branch and its Headquarters (UICEE-EHQ) given by Her Excellency Ulla Tørnæs, Minister of Education of the Kingdom of Denmark, at Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark, on 27 June 2002.

Dear Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure for me to be able to participate in the opening of the European Headquarters of the UNESCO International Centre for Engineering Education here at Aalborg University.

The liberal Danish Government, which took office in November last year, decided to transfer the responsibility for universities from the Ministry of Education to the new Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

On behalf of my colleague, Mr Helge Sander, I am glad to say that he shares my belief in international cooperation as a tool for quality improvement, not only within the educational systems, but also in the field of science and technology.

I attach great importance to the fact that educational systems throughout the world are able to benefit from the growing international cooperation across the borders. Borders can be national, cultural, political, personal and others. Diminishing, even eliminating educational borders has been, and still is, a key priority of the Danish government, as well as many other decision makers throughout the world.

The engineering educations have, for many years, shown a good example of how people are able to cooperate despite the fact that they may be sitting in different parts of the world. At the same time, they are actors in a variety of different educational systems.

Working as an engineer is, in many ways, to be in a global profession. And, of course, this is reflected in the educational structures.

Universities and other educational institutions must play a key role in the enhancement of the quality of our educational systems. At the same time, the

political system must provide a sufficient framework for this.



The Danish Minister of Education, Her Excellency Ulla Tørnæs, cuts the symbolic ribbon to launch the UICEE-EHQ.

I am glad to see that Aalborg University, since the year 2000, has developed a special Scholarship Scheme in cooperation with the organisations on the labour market and the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

Through this Scheme three Danish universities offer foreign engineering students a special course, which gives them a full Masters Degree in Engineering. This is arranged and financed jointly by the university and a Danish company. Through this you set an example of both university-industry cooperation and also cross-border cooperation without which our educations cannot survive.

As I mentioned before, the future of educational systems depends on a growing understanding of other *cultures* in a broad sense. In this field UNESCO sets out a good landmark by instituting the European headquarters of its international engineering education centre here in Aalborg.

UNESCO's contribution to world peace and development is well known. The more we learn about other cultures, the more we learn to understand their conditions – and the more we learn about ourselves to the benefit of both sides, I think.

UNESCO's recently adopted declaration on cultural diversity is an important step towards achieving this goal. With its medium-term strategy for the years 2002-2007, UNESCO has in this field adopted a strategic goal of *promoting principles and ethical norms to guide scientific and technological development and social transformation*.

I know that many of you, who are present here today, are familiar with Aalborg University as an engaged partner in many international projects. At the same time, a university is part of a national educational structure. This should give its students an education, qualifying them to work on the labour market, not only in their home country, but also across borders and in other countries as well. This is the case here in Aalborg, I am glad to say.

By setting up a European Headquarters of the International Centre for Engineering Education here at Aalborg University, UNESCO also shows that it has its eyes on an institution with a long tradition for international cooperation.

I know that the creation of an international educational environment has been one of its key priorities, and that you have Masters students from Africa,

China, Pakistan, Lithuania and several other countries. This is another move in the right direction.

UNESCO's global mission for the years 2002-2007 in education, science, culture and communication is expressed as follows:

- To promote education for all without distinction of race, sex, language and religion.
- To promote principles and ethical norms to guide scientific and technological development and social transformation.
- To safeguard cultural diversity and encourage dialogue among cultures and civilisations.
- To promote the free flow of ideas and universal access to information.

Only through this can we foster the development of a peaceful and more stable global society, built on the respect of human rights and democratic values.

I think that we can all contribute to this and that we all have a common interest in seeing concrete and long-lasting progress.

In science and research the Danish National Commission of UNESCO is focusing on the following key areas:

- Discussions and analysis of problems concerning ethics and science, for example bioethics, scientific integrity, access to knowledge and copyright problems.
- The challenges of globalisation in science's, among others, exploitation of natural resources and patenting problems.
- Promotion of the free and critical exchange of knowledge about scientific work.

Denmark is taking an active part in the international division of labour between educational institutions. Our traditions need new challenges to be met by universities, such as here in Aalborg.

I trust that the UNESCO International Centre for Engineering Education will create many different ways of synergies and thus produce *added value* both in Denmark and internationally.

I wish you all success in your future work.

Thank you.