

***Educational solutions for the promotion of  
tolerance and the combating of racism and  
anti-Semitism***

- Bucharest, May 23, 2013 -

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to today's conference on behalf of the Rule of Law Program South East Europe of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation.

The promotion of human and minority rights is a core objective of our program and therefore we carefully observe what happens in this regard - not only in South East Europe.

Human rights are universal and inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. All people everywhere in the world are entitled to them. The universality of human rights is encompassed in the words of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". No one therefore should suffer discrimination. Racism and anti-Semitism, however, are two especially repulsive forms of discrimination. If we want to live in a world in which human rights are respected we must fight these two phenomena determinedly.

Racism and anti-Semitism are a global problem and have experienced a long and inglorious history of expression.

Racism exists in today's Germany. We have an openly racist right-wing extremist party, the National Democratic Party, which is not

represented in the federal parliament but in two state legislatures. All democratic parties agree that the NPD is a dishonour for our country - it is, however, extremely difficult to ban a political party in Germany, since this can only be done by the Constitutional Court. A first attempt failed, but it is likely that another ban request will be submitted to the Federal Council. Xenophobic sentiments are quite wide-spread in some German regions, remarkably in areas where few or almost no migrants live.

Anti-Semitism has caused many victims in many countries but it has shown its ugliest and most aggressive face in Germany in the years between 1933 and 1945. The objective of the Nazi regime was no fewer than the systematic extermination of the Jewish people. More than six million Jews were murdered in the concentration and extermination camps, an inconceivable genocide.

How could this have happened in a civilized country that had contributed so much to European culture, in which Christians and Jews had lived peacefully together for centuries, although prejudice and certain forms of discrimination had always been common? The Nazis needed a scapegoat, to be blamed for all the evil in the world, a vulnerable minority against which hatred could be directed. They could rely on ignorance

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and we know that ignorance breeds fear and fear breeds hatred. This can explain why the Nazis found many supporters among the unemployed and the poor, yet it cannot explain why they also found many followers among intelligent and educated people. The only answer that I can find is that intelligence is no safeguard against opportunism, fanaticism, meanness, unrestrained careerism, and moral failure.

Germany's post war generations cannot accept collective guilt for what happened in their country between 1933 and 1945 but we must accept collective responsibility for what happens in present time and in the future.

It is therefore disturbing if according to a survey conducted by the American Anti-Defamation League on the attitudes towards Jews in ten European Countries 55 % of those interviewed and 52 % in Germany question the loyalty of their fellow Jewish citizens by affirming the belief that it is "probably true" Jews are more loyal to Israel than to their own country.

It is disturbing if 36 % of all respondents and 22 % of respondents in Germany believe that it is "probably true" "that Jews have too much power in the business world".

It is alarming if 39 % of those surveyed and 24 % of those surveyed in Germany cling to the traditional stereotype that it is "probably true" that Jews exert too much influence over international financial markets.

And it is worrying if 41 % of respondents, and 43 % of respondents in Germany believe it is "probably true" that Jews still talk too much about the Holocaust.

I do not overlook that the answers would have been different if the question had been whether these stereotypes were "definitely true" and not whether they were "probably true" but this is no consolation. Because we know from other studies that anti-Semitism is a latent attitude all over Europe. We estimate that between 15 and 20 % of Ger-

many have latent anti-Semitic convictions and this means 15 to 20 % too many.

Romania was not among the countries surveyed and I will refrain from assessing the commonness of anti-Semitic and racist attitudes in this country. This will be done by our Romanian colleagues and friends.

I am, however, happy to welcome two experts from Germany, Ms Claudia Reichmann, Study director at the State Institute for School quality and Research of the Free State of Bavaria, and Ms Rebecca Weis, Director of the Initiative "Gesicht zeigen" from Berlin.

Together we will try to explain to you how we perceive and analyze racism in Germany, what we have done in the past to combat these two ugly phenomena and what we intend to do in the future.

Let us share information and experience, let us discuss and let us agree on common strategies. Respect for minority rights assists in achieving stable and prosperous societies, in which human rights, development and security are achieved by all, and are shared by all.

In this sense I wish this conference every possible success.