



Netzwerk Bildungsfreiheit

Netzwerk Bildungsfreiheit e.V. Der Vorstand
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Via e-mail

to those who are in responsibility of
Dominic Johannson

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Home Education in Sweden

Dear Sir,

first, I'd like to introduce myself briefly. My name is Jörg Großelütern. I am a member of the board of directors of the German „Netzwerk Bildungsfreiheit“ („Network Freedom in Education“), which has been campaigning for free choices in education in our country. In addition, I am the father of 2 children who have been home-schooled for seven years now.

We have learned from our international contacts that Sweden intends to change its school laws so that home-schooling would be largely prohibited. We are shocked and outraged to hear that you have denied Christer Johannson and his family departure from Sweden and that you have removed his son Christopher from the family because they had decided to home-school him. In addition to it several home schoolers are being harrassed by their local governments, permission to home school is not given in spite of applications fulfilling the law and home schoolers having to go through long legal processes. There are also threats of social authorities and fines for those who home school during the legal appeals process.

Unfortunately, you have joined the inglorious example of the German government, which has been clinging to a law that the national-socialist dictator Adolf Hitler had introduced more than 60 years ago. Are you sure you want to emulate this inglorious example of totalitarianism and unfreedom? We had thought that we had put these times behind us, which is the reason why we are fighting against the injustice that German families experience when they try to educate their children at home, outside of officially approved institutions.

All free, democratically constituted nations of the West recognize home-schooling as a legal and legitimate alternative to state education; many actually support it financially. The success that home-schooling can demonstrate in the intellectual development and socialization of children is supported by scientific research as well as the experiences of, world-wide, several million home-schoolers who are adults today. They are all well-educated citizens, who are truly integrated in their respective countries.

Nowhere but in Germany—and now, unfortunately, Sweden—would anyone think that home-schooling endangers the well-being of children. To the contrary: parents who have decided to home-school their children are often well-educated themselves and responsible individuals

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who are concerned to offer the best education they can to their children. For these aims, these parents make substantial sacrifices. They dedicate effort, time and money, and any nation could be proud of such parents who epitomise like few others intact, healthy and stable families.

May I remind you on this occasion that the U.N. special rapporteur for education Professor Vernor Munoz de Villalobos said the following about home-schooling at his visit in Germany in 2007:

*According to reports received, it is possible that, in some Länder, education is understood exclusively to mean school attendance. Even though the Special Rapporteur is a strong advocate of public, free and compulsory education, it should be noted that education may not be reduced to mere school attendance and that educational processes should be strengthened to ensure that they always and primarily serve the best interests of the child. Distance learning methods and **home schooling** represent valid options which could be developed in certain circumstances, bearing in mind that parents have the right to choose the appropriate type of education for their children, as stipulated in article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The promotion and development of a system of public, government-funded education should not entail the suppression of forms of education that do not require attendance at a school. In this context, the Special Rapporteur received complaints about threats to withdraw the parental rights of parents who chose **home schooling** methods for their children.*

*That the necessary measures should be adopted to ensure that the **home schooling** system is properly supervised by the State, thereby upholding the right of parents to employ this form of education when necessary and appropriate, bearing in mind the best interests of the child; (Report Mission on Germany)*

In addition, I'd like to remind you of article 2 of the First Additional Protocol of the European Human Rights Convention, which states the following:

No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religions and philosophical convictions.

Please also consider Article 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Therefore, I want to urge you to reconsider and to rescind your plans to prohibit home-schooling in Sweden. A prohibition of home-schooling would mean a regression into dark, pre-democratic times and a violation of the wording and the spirit of the Declaration of Universal Human Rights, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the meaning of the very terms democracy and freedom in the Western world.

An effective system of education thrives on variety and alternatives. Limiting the range of possible forms of education—in the worst case to a school in which attendance seems to be the highest value—is a regrettable step back of which the results can be observed here in Germany.

In addition, I want to urge you to ensure that Christer and Annie Johansson will get their son back, that the right of custody will be placed back into the parents' hands and that the family will be permitted to leave Sweden to India or any country of their choice. The international

home-school movement, which has several million members world-wide, is watching with deep concern on what is happening in Sweden in general and with the Johansson family in particular.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Großelütern', written in a cursive style.

Jörg Großelütern
Netzwerk Bildungsfreiheit
Network Freedom in Education
Board of Directors