

Good morning, Mrs. Rosa M. Falgàs, ladies and gentlemen,

Palafrugell, as an Educating City, has education and training for citizens from all stages of life as one of its most important priorities.

Economic circumstances and the present conditions of the labour market, together with technological development and globalisation among others, represent a great challenge to the educational field: now more than ever, we need to raise both individual and community skills so that we can have cultured, entrepreneurial, socially progressive and economically competitive societies.

In this context, public services must warrant both the education of people and their employability. Learning is not concerned with just one stage of our lives any more but a permanent task.

This way, lifelong education becomes a key tool in order to achieve, through culture and knowledge, not only wider individual and community welfare but is also the best strategy for having better qualified citizens. This will help us face the hard situation we are going through. When circumstances (particularly economic ones) are so adverse, education, learning and being ready to face challenges become really important.

Now a new meaning of education comes to the fore: investing on skills for better economic results. We have to understand that education and training are fundamental to promote growth and competitiveness.

Councils want to respond to these rapidly increasing educational needs. In this sense, Palafrugell Town Council is aware of this demand; so, for the past few years, it has made an important shared effort to improve educational services at all levels, with the help and support of the citizens. It also keeps the aim of extending the current educational programme and to cover needs that can arise at any age.

So, when ACEFIR suggested organising this Third European Conference in our town, our answer was of course an enthusiastic "yes". Because we share their aims and because we are completely aware that it is totally important and absolutely necessary to keep up to date with new European projects and about the changes the European Commission is proposing, who is going to be able to participate in such programmes, and what we can work on. Nowadays, given the situation we are going through, it is more important than ever to know about these new programmes.

We are delighted to have this presentation in Palafrugell and we feel a strong responsibility for its successful outcome. I hope this conference has been helpful. Therefore, let me congratulate ACEFIR for the idea and the wonderful organisation of this event. Having updated information of the resources available and the orientation of future projects will certainly be helpful to keep working for a better educated citizenship and for a society which is ready to face the difficult challenges of the present.

I would also like to mention the centre staff too, for their effort and enthusiasm for education in our town. Thanks to this effort education in Palafrugell is an example in many aspects and in spite of the present difficulties.

To conclude, I hope that those of you who work in the fields of education and training keep trying to make education everybody's job. I hope you maintain the courage you have shown and do not give up when faced with adversity. Education needs brave people today; more than ever you have to show we can go forward, overcome the difficulties and win the future. Certainly, this seems to be a hard path but you can always count on us to walk along it.

Xavier Rocas Gutiérrez

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