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THE MACEDONIAN CONTINUITY WITHIN THE EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OF ERASMUS MUNDUS

The global initiatives for inclusive standards of the EU Erasmus program have been already investing into the academic profiling within the Macedonian educational system. This process implies an obligation and a right for the Macedonian entities to identify their local, Balkan resources, and context.

The continuity of human achievements contains core ideas shared among diverse people in history. Five hundred years prior to the Reformation period of Erasmus of Rotterdam, and five hundred years after his intellectual impact, the idea of *free will* that Erasmus opted for, remains operational. It permeates the foundations of the human rights to education, research and advancement of what is sustainable and valuable in the world of knowledge.

Half a millenia before the Erasmus European influence, there were equivalent leaders here in Macedonia, who also acted as agents of change, within their authentic global educational mission. Those are the academic minds of Cyril and Methodius, and later Clemente, Nahum and other alumni of the Ohrid School (886 AD). Half a millenia after Erasmus, in Macedonia during the late 19th century, new kind of educational leadership is again identified: among the figures of the liberation movement for independent educational, social, cultural and ethnic rights and freedoms. Goce Delcev is among them, with his famous motto that so adequately fits the agenda of Erasmus Mundus today: *I understand the world as a field for cultural competition among people.*

The continuity of the European intellectual achievements comprises of joint ventures of secular and spiritual institutions of knowledge. These intellectual ventures underwent *rebirth* during the Renaissance, when Erasmus (Desiderius) of Rotterdam (October 27th, 1460?) professed his theological, social and ethical disciplines. His freedom of expression defended the

catholic humanism in a balanced duality: spiritual and intellectual values to be understood as god-given gifts for *free will*, free will that nevertheless does not equal destructive changes of the permanent spiritual and physical laws of life. This viewpoint of Erasmus reveals his option for tolerance, while maintaining the traditional significance of stable, organized and systematized regulations (standards) of knowledge. Tradition and tolerance for Erasmus implied both divine and human order of cooperation in self-determination and informed consent about the integration of the *old* and the *new*, within the never ending process of advancement changes.

A comparative review indicates that the Medieval Ohrid School, preceded exactly what later the *free will* of Erasmus of Holland acted upon, in his Renaissance-Reformation search for balance between the spiritual and physical aspect of learning. The Macedonian Medieval School applied both theological and practical human disciplines in cultivating education, through Christian Orthodoxy. These shared approaches signify the universal educational processes developing in Western Europe and in Macedonia: theological and common sense credence that the power of human knowledge (inspired by the Creator), leads to *free spiritual and social will*, instrumental to the production, and inclusion of mass consumers of education, then, as well as today.

The continuity of *free will* exercised in Medieval Macedonia produced: 1) educational curriculum of ecclesiastical books in Macedonian Old Slavonic language (Salonica, Suho and Visoko dialects of Southern Macedonia), and 2) practical textbooks in applied sciences (agriculture, astronomy, culture, the arts, etc.) taught at the Ohrid school.

In Holland of the 16th c. Erasmus the theologian insisted on appropriating the concept of *free will* to predetermined religious laws, thus partaking in the ever renewable process of the universal human quest for earthly knowledge, and its influence. This refers to the continuity of social, cultural, educational awareness of mankind. It bears a historic confirmation in the current European Erasmus program, it contributes to the platform for continuously upgraded knowledge, skills and abilities of the human mind on our multi-cultural planet, and - it inevitably precludes the Macedonian input into the overall European educational developments.

The *free will* of Erasmus coincides with the *free will* applied at the Macedonian Medieval Ohrid and Kratovo schools and their Southeast European contribution with unique achievements and inventiveness: the Glagolic and later the Cyrillic alphabet, adequately designed for the Slavic people and their Old Slavonic language, different from the Greek. During that period, Crnorizec Hrabar also used *free will* for the purpose of objective educational self-determination and defense of the Macedonian cultural heritage from the ever present danger of Greek assimilation. Just as Erasmus defended the sacredness of the Catholic views while at the same time adopting the *free will* of Protestantism, Crnorizec respected all other languages of the Bible translations, however he preferred the *free will* determination to defend the Macedonian Slavic translation, and wrote: *The Macedonian alphabet is more sacred and more reverent, as it was edified by a sacred man (St. Cyril), unlike the Greek (alphabet) constructed by Hellenic pagans...*”

In the context of the Erasmus multi-cultural program, and for the sake of the objective scientific and cultural heritage of Europe, it is just and proper to mention the Macedonian input into the global movements of some 1000 years ago. The essence of *free will* exercised by the Medieval Macedonian educators did play a unique role in initiating an active dialogue with the European ecclesiastic and worldly thought. It also cultivated an international church diplomacy as Cyril, Methodius, Clement, Nahum and other educators engaged in their search for global recognition of the *free determination*, based on God’s equality for all. This was exemplified within their Christian education missions among the Hazars, in Moravia, Vatican and Constantinople.

Informed consent demands recognition of certain common goals between the Macedonian Medieval educators and the current Erasmus program. The first ones extended globalization and freedom of thought five centuries before Erasmus of Rotterdam, the others, five centuries after him, diffusing contemporary European and globally influential education - from the EU to the world. The Erasmus program cannot but be viewed as an advanced continuation of millennial contributions to the human civilization, which undeniably contain Macedonian educational and socio-cultural components.

Goce Delcev, the educator from Stip (1894), maintained that his *freedom oriented* ideas among the Macedonian intelligentsia and the social leadership activists, share continuity and

common purpose with the European human values system: education based on historic human rights to cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic identity, under the same European rule of law that applies to all participants in the global community standards of ethics and dynamics of exchange, on the market of ideas and intellectual capital.

We all agree that we don't disagree that freedom of creative and constructive thought, free from repressive response, derives from the basic human rights to defend individual and institutional identity, on the merit of intellectual capacity, promoted by Erasmus of Rotterdam as well. He displayed no bias in his war for equal rights to every entity, provided that this entity represents the best minds that, according to him, cannot be in conflict with God's will, all for the sake of human prosperity. It was Erasmus' *freedom from bias* that prevented massive support for him. However, today's understanding of his thinking provides the Erasmus program with the justifiable need to *free* the rights to democratic education, and transfer them from elitist to mass consumption, without radicalized collisions, exploding during the 15th c. European Reformation.

It had been because of those ideological-philosophical misunderstandings among divided catholic/protestant authorities that Erasmus renounced his citizenship in Basel and settled in Freiburg (1529). Nevertheless, despite the era of punished heresy, Erasmus often opted for a) tolerant conflict-resolution of antagonized arguments, and for b) moderate language used in disputes over human rights, upholding the objectivity that *in this manner truth is determined more accurately, since truth gets often lost among amplified conflicts of antagonized perspectives.*

To support mutually beneficial educational goals, despite existing diversity, is the legacy of Erasmus from five centuries ago. May this apply to all participants in the Erasmus program of today, so that the process of higher comprehension, and higher comprehensive education, continue to prosper. The real power of shared values, in education in particular, is the inclusiveness of both developed and developing communities of cultures and languages, so that none remain excluded, or unnamed.