



Position paper on the ERASMUS+ project "Democracy Education in the Family"

Introduction

Modern democracies are seen as under threat globally (van/Wnuk-Lipiński, 2012, Merkel, 2015). In addition to the stress factor of war, this also applies to the increasing intensification of inequalities, which can unleash an enormous potential for frustration in societies (Butterwegge, 2018). The consequences of these developments can be observed within Europe. There has been a "shift to the right" in parliaments, with various right-wing populist movements gaining strong momentum and benefiting from the so-called "post-factual age" as their "fake news" falls on fertile ground.

Equally worrying are current studies on attitudes, which suggest that anti-human and anti-democratic ideas are on the rise or are openly admitted (Leipzig Authoritarianism Study, 2018, Zick/Krause, 2016). How can Europe meet these challenges? One key aspect is educational work and, in this context, democracy education in particular. The EU emphasises the duty to pass on democratic values to young people as the future of Europe, and the consortium led by MITEINANDER IN EUROPA wants to contribute to this with the results of this ERASMUS+ project FED (Democracy Education in the Family). Our experiences in the exchange and development of this project have given rise to the following impulses and positions:

1. Develop educational institutions as democratic learning spaces: Educational institutions should be understood as places where democracy is learnt and lived. Democracy education should be an integral part of the curriculum, enabling students to experience democratic principles through participatory decision-making, discussion and collaboration.
2. Promote critical thinking and media literacy: Young citizens need to be empowered to critically question information and recognise misinformation. Integrating media literacy into the curriculum helps to build an informed citizenry that is able to see through manipulative propaganda.
3. Diversity and inclusion: Democracy is based on recognising and valuing diversity. Democracy education should aim to raise awareness of the importance of diversity, equality and inclusion in order to counteract discrimination and prejudice.
4. Strengthen democracy education. Families as well as youth organisations, civil society initiatives and non-profit organisations can help to teach young citizens about democracy and its values. We are making a contribution here with FED.





5. In order to protect the values of democracy against populism and radicalism, we need critical citizens who are democratically literate. In Bulgaria, even more than 30 years after the democratic transition, there are currently no politics lessons - they are "integrated" into other subjects. This urgently needs to be changed. In Germany, too, prospective politics teachers are in favour of starting politics and history lessons as early as possible - preferably as early as year 5. Politics and history lessons need to be more highly valued. It is the basis for political knowledge and commitment to democratic values.
6. Personal, economic and social security is also part of the realisation of democratic values. It became very clear that politicians must therefore counteract "fear-mongers" and other populist slogans in particular. Citizens must be actively involved - through various formats of citizen participation.
7. The refugee crisis in Europe has still not been resolved. European solidarity is needed. Solidarity is not easy - but it is of great importance in this challenging issue. Otherwise, the citizens of Europe will completely lose "faith" in Europe. This is because populist parties throughout Europe are repeatedly taking up this issue, thereby putting their finger in a wound that all European governments must address.

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