



Doing Politics!

A concept for contemporary,
action-oriented political education



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About

SUMMARY

Independent thinking and responsible activity form the basis of a dynamic society. These are prerequisites for participation as an actively involved person – as citizen and entrepreneur. The way competences are conveyed and experienced will have a determining influence on how citizens participate in society and the economy. Educating for democracy, and training to help shape society, demand modern methods that offer experience-based learning possibilities, such as game-based learning, entrepreneurial training with challenges, and – especially – the debating club to develop a democratic way of addressing conflicts. This study shows how modern methods can be meaningfully implemented in the field of political (adult) education and presents concrete case examples.

INTRODUCTION

Multiple crises, the digitalisation of many areas of everyday life, complex problems, and a rapidly changing working environment are those challenges to which state-of-the-art education must react and prepare itself for. As a result of the so-called PISA shock, an output reorientation of the education system has been in force since the year 2000. Based on Weinert's definition, learning and teaching became competence-oriented (2001).

Many experts consider that these changes do not go far enough seeing that the loss of faith in democracy and its institutions continues to increase (Zandonella 2022): A substantive, formal-organisational reorientation, including the interdisciplinary understanding of political education, an increase in digitalisation, action- and production-oriented learning going as far project-based learning is demanded. This study investigates the following questions:

- Why do didactic concepts require experience-based approaches for the acquisition of attitude and value competences?
- Which didactic approaches think about political education in keeping with the motto of "involvement instead of reproduction"?
- Which practical examples that the students consider to be central exist in the context of political education?

SUBJECT-, ACTION-, AND PRODUCTION-ORIENTATED LEARNING

Under the key words of the 4 competences (creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration) of 21st century skills (Fadel et al. 2015), or the eight vital competences that each EU citizen should learn (European Commission, 2015 and 2018), or concepts such as the OECD learning compass (OECD 2020), it is possible to determine a series of skills, competences, and value systems: Critical and creative thinking, independent problem solving, and cooperative work in communicative connections should stand at the centre of a new educational culture that is intended to ultimately lead to an interconnected and interdisciplinary way of thinking. In addition, digital literacy, citizenship education, and entrepreneurship education (engaged citizens and entrepreneurs, active participation, empathy, acceptance of responsibility, public interest orientation) are also central competences of the digital scientific society.

With the help of these 21st century skills, traditional and modern knowledge will be used in the widest range of situations and, in this way, become anchored in the memory. Character forming is seen as being as important as the acquisition of knowledge and competences. Ethical behaviour and successful coexistence, as well as the acceptance of responsibility for oneself, others, and our earth are encouraged. On a metalevel, this teaches one to trust one's own learning capability – a dynamic self-image, metacognitive competences, and a growth mindset (Dweck, 2007) are developed.

Future oriented learning and teaching should strengthen those factors that have proven themselves to be powerful for establishing “good” teaching in empirical classroom research (Becker 2012, 11–15; Helmke 2012, 168–271; most importantly, Hattie 2020).

Steffens & Haenisch (2019, 279–311) summarise the current results for teaching-related demands placed on educators in which they rely on national and international research reviews such as the Hattie Study. This makes it possible to form seven dimensions with 22 effective fields of activity:

<u>Dimensions</u>	<u>Fields of Activity</u>
1. Connect teaching with the previous experiences and environment of the students	1. Build on the existing conceptual, knowledge, and interest structures of the student 2. Help the students develop a positive attitude towards contents 3. Encourage targeted questioning
2. Structure teaching content-wise, and provide for transparency, and explanations	1. Provide contents in ordered connections 2. Establish clarity and transparency for the students 3. Offer clear explanations, illustrate, and present attractively
3. Use the already learned, and provide for an active involvement	1. Consolidate the learned through a wide variety of exercises and applications 2. Embed teaching in meaningful and authentic contexts 3. Encourage the individual activities of the students

4. Carry out learning diagnoses, give feedback, and take regular balance of what has been learned	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have an overview of the students' progress2. Enter into a "learning dialogue" with the student, and provide support3. Help the students to reflect on their efforts4. Regularly back up and balance what has been learned5. Use various possibilities for evaluating performance
5. Enable differentiated approaches to learning	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Create diversified lessons; i.e. combine and balance teaching and learning forms2. Enable more cooperative learning
6. Have faith in the students' capabilities, and ensure a positive teaching climate	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Show interest in the students' personal goals2. Believe in the students' capabilities3. Ensure a teaching context that is conducive to learning4. Make allowances for the students' emotions in teaching
7. Develop structural order for teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Pay attention to orderly classroom management2. Reduce teaching disturbances through increased student orientation

Table 1: Factors of "good" teaching (Steffens & Haenisch 2019)

In summary, the following can be formulated:

- The students (and not the teachers) stand at the centre of learning and teaching; stimulating teaching leads away from a passive-receptive attitude to an active subject (Cohn & Terfurth 1997) whose educational trail is self-determined as much as possible, and who is able to help shape learning and teaching substantially and formally.

- This requires a friendly, open-minded, and trusting human image on the part of the teachers that finds its expression in a positive “error culture”, metacommunicative reflection, in interesting exercises, and in intelligent practice using a variety of methods and alternating social forms.
- Modern learning takes cognitive, affective-emotional, and action-related components into consideration; it should be clear and encourage the students to experiment and discover – even if this “only” takes place within a simulative framework.
- Teaching culture should [educate, A.P.] the students “in a free and democratic social system to maturity, independence, self-fulfilment, and autonomy, as well as social responsibility, joint responsibility, responsibility for the world, solidarity and the ability to accept criticism.” (Becker 2012, 12–13).

Modern, didactic concepts assume that these kinds of competences, capabilities, and skills can only be taught based on experience if this teaching is carried out in a sustained manner and holistically. The horizon of meaning should no longer be determined by the teacher; the students themselves should experience and co-create – this can take place in the real world or be simulated: learning by doing! (Inquisitive-) exploratory learning concepts connect the subject and the object, they grant the students agency and, as best-practice examples show, make them **co-constructors of values and meaning**. One of the expressions of this new learning is the “Deeper Learning” concept as propagated by Sliwka & Klopsch (2022): The three-part model is founded on an instruction and appropriation phase based on the presentation of a problem organised by the students, followed by a co-constructive and co-creative phase in which central skills and abilities are acquired, used and tested; the stage ends with an authentic performance – ranging from a theatrical play, over the organisation of a charity activity, to the creation of digital products – that rounds off the previous steps in the process of producing a real product (blog, YouTube video, social media contribution).

RETHINKING POLITICAL EDUCATION – INVOLVEMENT INSTEAD OF REPRODUCTION

The discussion about what political education should be is being carried out within the field of political didactics itself. The positions range from a rather closed concept of politics from the sphere of political science, to a broader social-science perspective (Hedtke 2014). The same conflict runs through the discussion on educational goals; namely, of whether political education should target (pre-) scientific, cognitive aspects, and actor-related, institutional knowledge, or concentrate more on personality building, on political culture, and politics as a type of action.

Predominantly, didactics advocates a broad concept of politics (incl. Sander et al. 2017, 2016; Kühberger 2009, 116; Hellmuth/Klepp 2010), and this will be our position. Here, politics does not merge into state action or into the explanation of state institutions. Politics is understood as a type of action and, therefore, political education should impart communicative and moral skills. The guiding principle is political maturity (Sander et al. 2017, 13–22) seeing that, more than an institutional framework, democracy is a specific culture of political participation and civil engagement. Current concepts therefore focus on citizenship education (Kenner/Langer 2018). Sybille Reinhardt (2004, 3–7), for example, conceives of democratic competences with five corresponding sub-competences: perspective adoption, conflict skills, political judgement, analysis of social subsystems, and scientific propaedeutics.

With competence orientation, a domain-specific competence model became anchored in the subjects of history and political education; political judgement, action, methodological, and professional competence, based on the concept of the German “Society for Political Didactics and Political Youth and Adult Education” (GPJE), was also established in Austria (Kühberger 2009).

If the displayed efficiency features of good teaching (see Table 1) of a school of the future are linked with the action orientation of political education, it becomes clear that, here, a new form of teaching-learning culture is necessary: Political education must move away from focusing on institutional civics towards a political action orientation; democracy competence in the form of citizen education is not a purely cognitive matter but combines content aspects with volition (doing), and social and emotional facets. Everyday civil courage (Meyer 2004), and the active participation in the living environment are just as much part of this education as an understanding of the political system in Austria. Instead of producing passive knowledge, political education should provide a subject-oriented space of experience in which intelligent knowledge, in the form of engaged political competence reaching beyond the learning environment, can be acquired. In the following, as a first step, various concepts will be used to illustrate the way in which this can be successful, and then be exemplified by best-practice examples.

Game-based learning

“Digital games occupy a fixed place in the everyday use of media by the twelve-to-nineteen years olds in Germany. Only nine percent stated that they did not play any digital games” (Media-Pedagogical Research Association of the Southwest 2021, 57). Seventy-two per cent play at least once a week. It can be assumed that similar numbers apply to Austria. This makes it high time to also take advantage of the potential of digital games in teaching.

Games provide complexity-reduced models of reality and make “as if”, or simulative, activities possible. In games, interactivity is achieved when the gamers’ input leads to an automated output. The circulation produced is described as an input-output loop and leads to **experience-based learning** that has been conceptualised in many works using the model created by Alice and David Kolb (Kolb & Kolb 2017). The experience-based learning circle consists of four sequential cognitive and/or performative activities. In this concept, learning means making experiences, reflecting on them, and adapting one’s own behaviour accordingly (see Fig. 1 & 2).

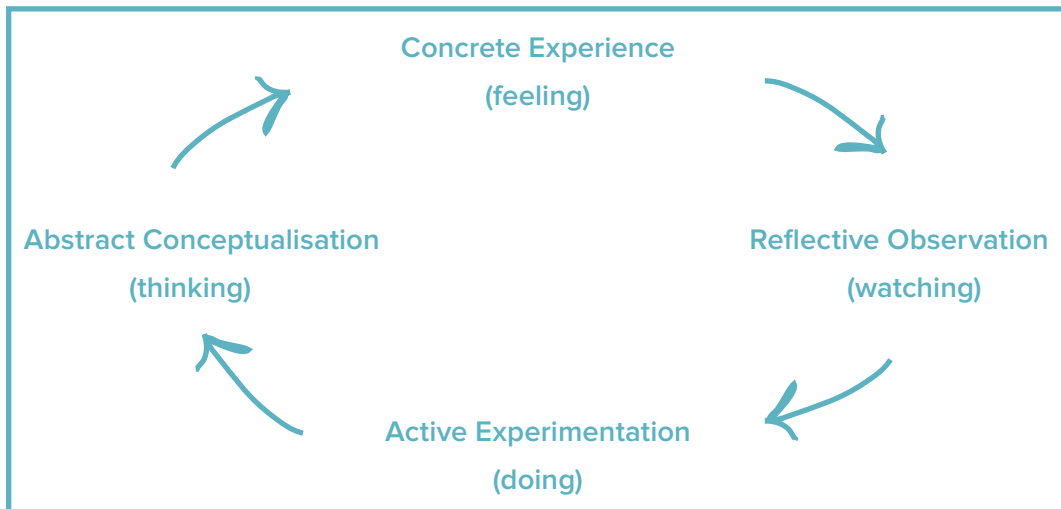


Fig. 1: Experience-based Learning Circle (Kolb & Koln 2017)

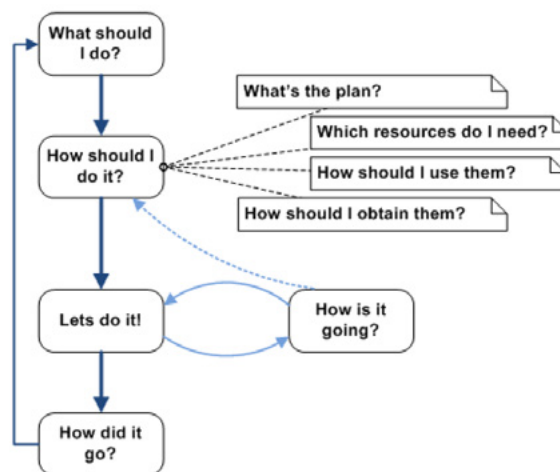


Fig. 2: Experience-based Learning Circle (Fabricatore & López, 2012, 212)

Games make experiences that are not possible in the real world achievable. Above all, they give the gamers agency; they do not simply take in politics, but “experience” it actively, even though it is simulated. Simulation games in the form of negotiation and planning games have been used in political education for decades (Scholz 2022). Based on (scientific) models, computer games make it possible to simulate social subsectors (Preisinger 2022a, 53–56). Systematising the forms of play according to their relationship to action and politics allows the following classification to be made (see Table 2):

Relation to politics	Polity (form): political culture	Policy (contents)	Politics (process): Political simulations
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Field of experience	Everyday activities, individual experiences, narrative-re-constructive	Meso-level: individual und systemic; action in an institutional framework	City, province, and federal government; world government, systemic level, systemic-constructive
Examples	“Bury Me, My Love”, “Orwell”, “Before I Forget”	“Headliner”, “911 Operator”	“Urban Empire”, “Democracy 3”, “Fate of the World”

Table 2: Political simulation styles (Preisinger 2022b, 165)

Computer games deal with a wide variety of political aspects ranging from subject-related and lifeworld themes, going as far as global strategic options for action: In “Before I Forget”, the gamer experiences the world through the eyes of an Alzheimer patient; in “Headliners”, the goal is to guide a newspaper through a period of social upheaval as its editor-in-chief. In games like “Democracy 3”, the players react to challenges facing the state from the perspective of the federal government.

There are now a number of games that have been produced by commercial enterprises, as well as NPO educational institutions. Germany’s Federal Agency, and its State Agencies for Civic Education, in particular, are central players in making so-called serious games – games that have been expressly developed to be used for educational purposes and are, therefore, usually made available free-of-charge. Table 3 presents examples of some analogue and digital games.

Political education takes place in several ways within the structure of the previously mentioned competences: Digital and analogue games constantly demand that the players make factual and value judgements, partially within the framework of dilemmatic decision-making structures (*political judgement competence*). Through their interactivity, digital games simulate a repertoire of potential actions within the framework of the game mechanics. While games with a polity reference represent forms of action from an everyday perspective, the possibilities of action are of an institutionalised-systemic nature in politics games. The feedback loop of digital games makes it possible to experience politics in a simulated ludic mode (*political action competence*). Depending on the game, tables, graphics, diagrams, symbols, key figures, texts, and images can be part of the game world. Polity games use semiotics that are close to the real world;

politics games – like “Fate of the World” for example – make use of a great number of statistics that the players have to interpret to be able to evaluate the course of the game and take founded action. In this way, games train methodological and professional competence (*politics-related methodological and profession competence*).

<u>Game</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Genre</u>
Digital Games		
Augen auf www.game-augen-auf.de	New right-wing movements, Fake news	Deduction game
Bad News www.getbadnews.de/#next	Fake news	Smartphone Adventure
Bury me, my Love	Refugee flight	Serious game
Decount game.extremismus.info	Extremism	Smartphone Adventure
Democracy 3	Political systems	Government simulator
Democratic Socialism Simulator	Political systems	Socialism simulator
Escape Fake News escapefake.org/en/home-4/	Political education / Fake news	Puzzle game
Fake it to make it www.fakeittomakeit.de	Fake news	Simulation
Fake News App www.politische-bildung.nrw.de	Fake news	Smartphone Adventure
GO VIRAL! www.goviralgame.com	Fake news, Conspiracy theories	Serious game
Headliner: NoviNews	Media	Adventure
Hellapagos	Island game	Analogue board game

Hidden Codes www.hidden-codes.de	New right-wing movements	Smartphone Adventure
Leons Identität	New right-wing movements	Point-and-Click
Majority www.majority-game.com	City administration	Strategy game
Moderate Cuddlefish www.moderate-cuddlefish.de	Fake news, Discourse ethics	Simulation
The Climate Game www.ig.ft.com/climate-game	Climate change	Choose your own Adventure
The Westport Independent	Media	Simulation
<u>Analogue Games</u>		
Die Kunst einen Kürbis zu teilen www.wirtschafts- pielendlernen.org	Democratic everyday decisions	Cooperation game
Jetzt mal ehrlich	Everyday decisions	Card game
Changemaker	Introduction to the sustainable development goals (SDGs)	Card game
Klima-AktionsSpiel	Climate politics	Roleplay
Next Generation of Changemaker	Problem solving with your own ideas	Cooperation game
Sozialstaat Planspiel	Social legislation	Simulation
Torfitz	Structural change	Negotiation game
Utopia	History of ideas of economics	Memo
EcoMania Planspiel	Economic relationships	Simulation with roleplay

Table 3: Analogue and digital games (authors' compilation)

“Produce” media-critically

Critical media competence is of foremost importance in today’s society in which the social media, in particular, play a significant role in the dissemination of (mis)information and in opinion making. Previously, the main challenge was being able to find information, but today it can be difficult to differentiate between reliable and less-reliable sources (Herzog & Martin 2018). One possibility for overcoming this is the use of fact-checking sites and tools that can help to evaluate the credibility of news and information.

In this respect, political education is also a central subject in the area of media education. Modern action-oriented teaching should pay much more attention to the digital media reality and familiarise students with tools such as fact-checking sites (FactCheck.org, Snopes, etc.). However, even in the case of these sites, it should be made clear that they are not always in the position of being able to check all aspects of a statement, and that their evaluation could possibly be subjective. This makes it important to ensure that students include more than one source before accepting a statement as being true or false. Here, an additional experience-based approach is provided by digital games that make it possible for students to experience a “digital discourse ethics”. In some games, such as “Bad News”, students should specifically take on the position of the spreader of the fake news in order to be able to develop counterstrategies (see 3.2).

A “producer” approach departs from conventional educational methods and, similar to the digital games mentioned above, allows students to experiment on the action and production sides in simulative spaces. For example, zeoob.com can be used to produce imitation social media posts from all platforms, and Google Sites makes it possible to generate websites in next to no time. Politics-related videos on YouTube, reels on social media, and podcasts on Spotify can be analysed and, conversely, created personally. In this way, political education develops into a media subject that is not only analytically reflective, but also critically produced.

Just how complex reality and the interconnection between production and reception, analysis and synthesis, have become is revealed in the current discussion on artificial intelligence (AI): AI will make it possible to develop individualised learning programmes that conform with the process made by the students. The application potential of AI in all forms of communication will result in great challenges for traditional spheres of reflection of critical media competence – such as the suspicion of manipulation – seeing that it opens up new possibilities for the depths of media manipulation (Moring 2011). In the future, it will become increasingly difficult to answer questions on authorship, and the veracity of essays and high-school theses, as well as entire dissertations. The discussion should not focus on whether this development should be stopped

through bans, but how students can make use of these new technical developments actively and critically.

Teaching and learning controversial subjects

“The inescapability and necessity of ‘teaching controversial issues’ in any form of citizenship education, which seeks to transcend the merely informative, has long been recognized by those concerned with the field, including teachers.” (McLaughlin 2016, 149) Regardless of whether this deals with the handling of the Corona pandemic, the question of tax relief, or the developments in the refugee issue, controversial – and multiperspectival – subjects run through our society and media landscape and, consequently, provide ideal examples that can be used for studying a specific culture of political communication and participation.

When dealing with controversial matters, the teacher is faced with challenges: Complex, topical affairs, emotional students, a critical environment (parents, school administration, school authorities, media, etc.), and disputed material in various media (Kerrer et al. 2015) are just some of them. The formal, methodically-incisive debate, which was also invested with central importance in education in ancient times (Bartssch et al. 2005, 25ff.), that promotes a number of factual, linguistic, and social competences, in addition to listening and respect for each other, can provide methodological support here. This could be realised in the form of an open, parliamentary debate (see Chapter 3.9) and game-based learning with roleplay and a simulation game (see Chapters 3.6 and 3.7).

A central aspect is that the teacher should not provide the sole “correct” answer, but that a variety of depictions “collide” with each other under clear rules of the game. In this way, controversial subjects can be depicted as such, and serve as a central possibility for acquiring and using political competences. A didactic approach of this kind supports people in becoming able to “provide justifiable reasons to act going beyond their own personal interests and ideas in order to be able convince others, and secure their actions against criticism and objections; i.e. to “present an argument.” (Massing 2012, 261). Central competences of democracy education are addressed with the formats of discussions and debates.

Entrepreneurial challenge-based learning

Entrepreneurship education is concerned with the development of the competence to take action through the design and implementation of one’s own ideas with value, and the consolidation of an entrepreneurial mindset (Lindner 2020, 2022). Entrepreneurship

education (Aff & Lindner) ranges from the development and implementation of a person's own ideas (Level I: Core Entrepreneurship Education), over promoting a culture of independence and an encouraging relationship culture (Level II: Entrepreneurial Culture), to the strengthening of autonomy and accepting responsibility for social challenges (Level III: Entrepreneurial Civic Education). This level of entrepreneurship education is linked to civic education in which responsible participating citizens are at the centre of **actively shaping society**.

In order to promote an entrepreneurial mindset to trigger process of change among students, they should develop and implement ideas with value on “challenges from everyday reality”. This learning process supports the development of internal structures and attitudes (Dubs 1995). “Reality” follows its own movements, and dealing with it frequently demands a process of **research-based learning** in a close theory-practice context. Strengthening attitudes has a great deal to do with one's own **self-efficacy**. Self-efficacy (Deci/Ryan 1993) is understood as being the conviction that we really want to do – and can do – what we are doing at the moment, or planning to do. Self-efficacy already develops in our childhood. The good news is that it can continue to develop and increase throughout our life. Self-effective learning (Bandura 1997; Pervin 2000) takes place:

- when an environment with competent role models exists,
- when a person consciously perceives a situation as a challenge,
- when the person accepts the challenge as a thinking and energetically acting person, and is ultimately able to master it successfully, and
- when a person is aware of themselves in connection with the development of their concepts and own self-evaluation – metacognition (Kolb 1983).

The learning process should encourage a high level of independence and responsibility. Learning only then reaches its “complete” form when it is self-guided learning. This has far-reaching implications for the contextual and pedagogical shaping of the learning/teaching arrangement and is linked to a combination of various learning approaches (cf., Fig. 3).

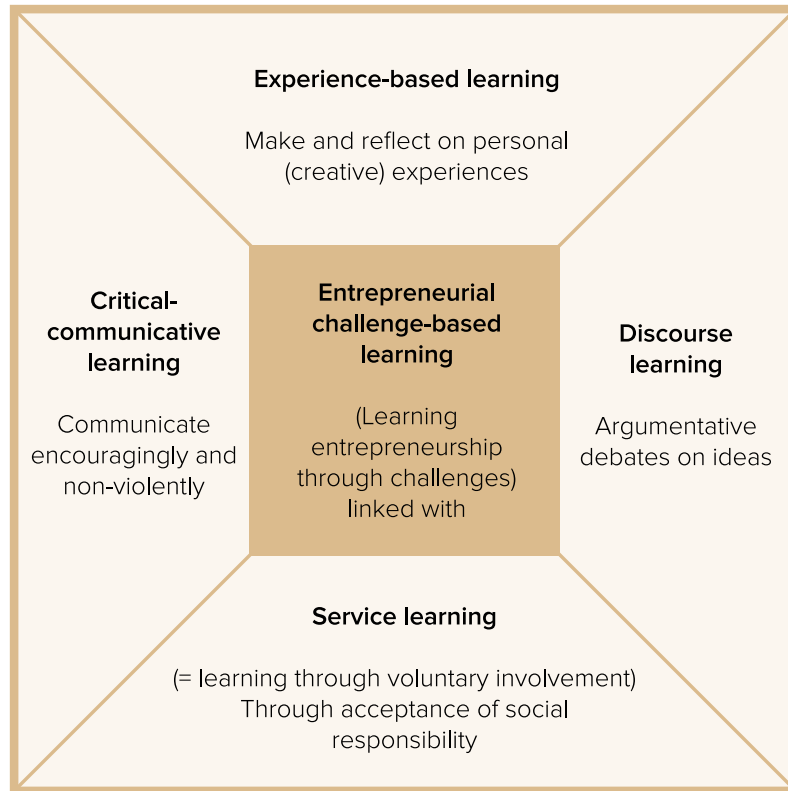


Fig. 3: Entrepreneurial challenge-based learning links various learning approaches (Lindner 2018)

The entrepreneurial challenge-based learning approach that connects cognitive, personal, and social competences with the content and situational components of entrepreneurship stresses agency. The development of new ideas and their creative, conceptive implementation stands at the centre of entrepreneurship education. The learning situation combines various approaches (see Fig. 3).

- The representatives of experience-based learning (Kolb 1983) argue that competences are best acquired when they can be experienced graphically in real situations. This form of learning is reflected in the interplay between an action-oriented (especially, project-oriented) and a reflection-oriented pedagogical approach. An experimental process of researching learning is fostered.
- Critical-communicative learning stands for a dialogical form of communication between the trainers and learners that is characterised by respect, empathy, and encouragement. The respectful relationship to other people, which makes more cooperation and joint creativity possible, stands in the foreground.
- Service learning provides learning through involvement in an already-existing idea. This approach shows the possibility of performing social service in practice that is interlinked with learning (Calvert 2011, 118). In this way, “service” and “learning” profit from each other.

- The discourse learning approach offers the opportunity – by dealing with controversial issues – to obtain an insight into the variety of interests to be found in social questions. The goal is to strengthen one’s own argumentative competence oriented on a common set of values. In this context, the debating club is a central teaching-learning setup seeing that is important to be able to argue for ideas for society. Democratic processes and values cannot be learned by heart, their evolvement demands a mixture of listening, convincing argumentation, and willingness to respond to each other. An increase in the interest for social affairs goes hand in hand with analysing and participating in them (Lindner et al. 2012).

Entrepreneurial competences, such as developing ideas for dealing with problems, personal initiative, having an innovative spirit, controlled risk-taking, and self-assurance are just as essential for a lively civil society and economy as they are for challenges in one’s private life.

BEST-PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN THE AREA OF POLITICAL EDUCATION

I Simulate digitally, play analogously – “Democracy 3”

The following best-practice example has been tested and documented many times (Preisinger 2022b, 2022c). “Democracy 3” is probably the most popular political simulator on the “Steam” game platform. The gamer takes on the office of the federal government of an available country and is confronted with a specific initial situation (such as GDP, political stability, or demography). The game is played round by round, with each round representing several months.

The voters, ordered in specific categories, and their satisfaction with the political situation are depicted in the middle of the screen. Key figures and measures are shown around them, with the latter influencing the former. The dependencies are indicated by red and green arrows (negative and positive effects). Individual key figures, such as those for unemployment or the GDP, are dependent on a whole range of factors so that complex networks of aspects that influence each other formed. Policy changes are paid for with political capital – a point value generated in each round. New measures are introduced by way of the “policy ideas” options menu; they expand the main overview through new influencing factors and, in this way, increase the systemic complexity. For example, the introduction of a tax on kerosine leads to a reduction in air traffic, the CO₂ produced, the income generated by tourism, and – as a consequence – the GDP. In addition to conventional measures (such as a public or private school system), the “policy ideas” menu also provides some that are utopian or dystopian (like drones for citizen surveillance, or fusion energy): The game has a comprehensive statistics section and it is only possible to evaluate the effect of the measures taken with its help. Taken as a whole, the game can be used for fostering value, factual, and methodical competences.

Several didactic scenarios are possible with “Democracy 3”; they will be sketched in the following, and can be combined:

- **Goal-oriented Game:** The students are given or choose political goals that they want to introduce during the game. These goals can be political (CO₂), ideological (establishment of a Socialist state), or utopic/dystopian (police state). The students then attempt to use political measures to implement their goals. The goal achievement can be discussed and compared in the plenum.
- **Discovery Game:** The gamers put forward hypotheses about what would happen – for example – if a specific tax was increased or lowered, or a certain measure was introduced (or not). This turns “Democracy 3” into a political-science laboratory. The students have to use the statistics section of the game to verify their hypotheses.
- **Simulation Game:** The most complex kind of game use is a mixture of an analogue and digital simulation game. The students found political parties that, ideally, can be categorised as belonging to a specific ideology and then present their programme. After the election, the party with the most votes is given a period of time or number of rounds to implement its election promises using the digital game. At the end of the legislative period, the statistics section is evaluated, and commented on – by a media group, for example. Election and play phases are repeated.

II Digital discourse ethics – Discussion moderation with “Moderate Cuddlefish”

This digital game is intended to demonstrate the innovation character of game-based learning. “Moderate Cuddlefish” was published by Germany’s Federal Agency for Political Education in the year 2017 and reworked in 2020. It can be played free-of-charge in the browser (www.moderate-cuddlefish.de). A round takes about 10 minutes. The gamer takes on the role of a forum administrator. The postings appear on the lower edge of the screen and disappear from view at the upper edge. The number of users changes dependent on what has been deleted or allowed. They are the indicator of success, and lead to the forum growing or decreasing in popularity. There are a total of five levels; at the end of each level, the gamer is given a brief, automatically generated, evaluation.

What, at first sight, appears to be a simple game reveals its complexity under closer observation: First of all, the question of censorship and freedom of expression rises up in connection with deletions made. The postings are taken from the real world and, in many cases, conflict with the maxims of discourse ethics. Deleting problematic contents does not necessarily result in higher user numbers; on the contrary, the

more likes a posting receives – regardless of how upsetting it might be – the more users the forum sometimes loses when the message is deleted. This draws attention to another conflict of goals; namely, between user maximisation and appropriate communication behaviour. It shows quite clearly that, although the platform’s success can be superficially measured according to the number of its users, this says nothing about the quality of the debates taking place.

The game invites experimentation in the sense of explorative-discovering learning. The playthrough is brief, enabling the use of new strategies, such as specifically generating the most or least number of users, of positioning the forum on the left or right side of the discourse spectrum, of allowing everything or deleting a great deal, each time. In addition, this makes it possible to discuss concepts like fake news, click baiting, hate speech, and censorship based on the game experience. It is also possible to reflect on the role of social media as discourse platforms for a democratic society. The fine line between censorship and freedom of speech can be vividly experienced in this game. The game mechanics are also sophisticatedly linked with its message: The longer the game lasts, the faster the postings appear and, in this way, simulate a flood of contributions that cannot be dealt with editorially by the platforms. Therefore, the player is only able to take a quick glance at them and look out for key words – similar to a search programme. Sarcasm, and the metaphorical use of language can no longer be perceived, making the implementation of qualitative standards haphazard.

The game is suitable for many current subjects at the interface between politics, the media, and digitalisation and, therefore, touches on central aspects of digital literacy or the Digital Citizen Education Programme of the Council of Europe (Richardson & Milovidov 2022).

III Acquiring political competence – the climate-change simulation “Fate of the World”

The policy aspect stands at the centre of “Fate of the World”. The game, which is scientifically monitored by the Oxford Climate Change Group, was published by Red Redemption on the Steam platform in 2011. “Fate of the World” gives the player, as a global government, the possibility of trying out various strategies against climate change. Dependent on the scenario, a certain level of average temperature increase must not be exceeded. In addition, the stability of governments, quality of life, and the population’s supply situation must also be considered. According to the strategy, the climate regime can resort to authoritarian, or democratic measures. The gamer is only informed about the success of the measures indirectly by way of statistics

whose factors are linked with each other interdependently. Political competence is required to interpret them correctly: Factors of influence must be determined, found in tabular overviews, and the relationships between them established. Graphs illustrate the processes of change. This makes “Fate of the World” a kind of simulated global laboratory. The scenarios can be produced in a number of ways; failure means repeating the exercise using new strategies, completely in keeping with the sense of experience-based learning.

IV Recognising everyday activity as political activity – “Jetzt mal Ehrlich”

There are two parts to the card game “Jetzt mal Ehrlich” (Let’s be Honest); the second edition was published in 2015 (Weber 2015). Germany’s Federal Agency for Political Education makes it available free-of-charge. It consists of 120 cards from the areas of civil courage, criminal/regulatory offences, social behaviour/interpersonal relationships, and political attitudes. Each card confronts the player with a problematic situation and offers three possibilities to react. For example: Should you give a counterfeit ten euro note you have found to the police, to a homeless person, or spend it as quickly as possible. The problems and answers are consciously controversial; it is often the case that the players are not completely satisfied with any of them. This game, with its simple mechanics, can be played in a number of modes: The players can discuss about the cards, test various voting modes, reflect on their own behaviour, take a close look at the legal framework of individual cards, or attempt to estimate what the majority of the others, the group, or the class had chosen.

“Jetzt mal Ehrlich” makes the political dimension of everyday activity visible. Democracy does not only consist of the political system but is also the expression of a specific democratic culture made up of multiperspectivity, understanding others, empathy, civil courage, and participation – in everyday life as well. Due to its relationship to the world we live in, the game can be used in Sections I and II, and even adults enjoy exchanging their views on the multifaceted cards.

It is an example of how low-threshold, game-based democratic education can begin.

V Democratic decision making – The art of sharing a pumpkin

Three people, one pumpkin – and they all want to have it. Which criteria should apply when making the decision? Is it necessary to compromise? Or can a solution be found that satisfies everyone? This experiment reveals solution-oriented – instead of need-oriented – procedures and transfers the concept of the four steps of democratic

decision making to concrete everyday problems. The central aspect is to show the students how to solve conflicts constructively.

1. No Conflict: All participants get the part of the pumpkin they want, and there is no conflict.
2. Change the situation and find a creative solution to the problem: There will soon be more pumpkins, and the participants agree on who will get this pumpkin now and who will get one later.
3. Compromise: The participants negotiate a solution.
4. Majority decision.

The last two variants should only be considered after the first two have been attempted. The experiment causes the young people to be thoughtful and reflect on the extent to which the experiences gained can be transferred to their everyday situations as a member of a family, class, or enterprise. Here, the important thing is reaching a compromise that has not been predetermined by the teacher, but is an action set by the students themselves.

VI Experience structural change – “Torfitz” as an example of a political simulation game

“Torfitz – the Simulation Game on Structural Change” is an example of a classical analogue simulation game. The Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS) Potsdam released it together with the serious-game developer Playing History, and it is distributed by the Brandenburg Agency for Political Education (www.iass-potsdam.de/de/torfitz). It is oriented on the Lausitz and other rural regions in Germany where communities are confronted with structural challenges. Five communities are available, and each of them has specific opportunities, as well as problem areas – unemployment, the end of brown-coal mining, and emigration, on the one hand, and a beautiful landscape, startups, and technical colleges, on the other. The game can be structured by various modes: Small groups can develop reform concepts for specific communities that are then presented to the representatives of the land, and possibly rewarded, at a regional conference. Phases of small-scale work alternate with those of negotiation, and project presentation.

The game is prototypical of a simulation game as published in Klippert’s classic work (2016) and should belong to the standards of political education today (Petrik & Rappenglück 2017). Factions are formed based on a real-world and simplified set of problems.

The course of the game is divided into group work phases, cross-factional discussion and planning phases, and voting and presentation phases if required. Additional event cards and the players' own rules bring the game close to a simulation. Within the framework of a game of this kind, students gain political competence, methodological competence (discussion, working with statistics, texts, and diagrams), and – above all – action competence in all three dimensions of politics (politics, policy, polity) in a simulative fashion.

VII Developing ideas on economy – Utopia

Everywhere and at all times, people have worked, collected or produced their food, traded and cooperated with each other. No matter in what form, they have tried to survive by using the resources at their disposal as sensibly as possible – this is known as “economising”. The kind of economising has continuously changed over the centuries. People have always had new ideas on how the economy should be organised. Throughout the course of history, many ideas, concepts, and economic theories have been developed. Until the 19th century, political economy was the term used to describe national economics or macroeconomics (Rousseau 1615) to underline the possibilities politics had to influence the economy.

Some economic theories were introduced, while others remained utopia. In economics, there is a lively discourse about various possible manifestations; always in the context of new challenges and social developments. The major contemporary challenges, such as the man-made climate crisis, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor in a number of countries, the political instability in many regions, the limitations of resources and how they are dealt with, have raised questions about established ideas of economics.



Fig. 4: Memo cards for Joan Robinson (Lindner & Holzheu 2015)

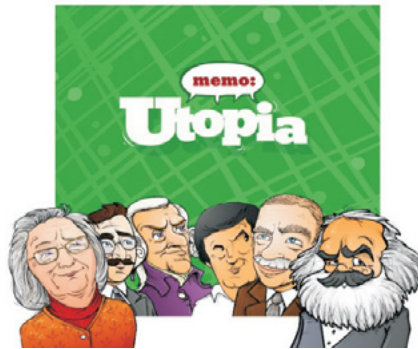


Fig. 5: Memo Utopia (Lindner & Holzheu, 2015)

This analogue game offers a low-threshold approach to dealing with economic ideas. The selection of central economic concepts takes place with the involvement of renowned representatives from various universities and the Society for Plural Economy as a sounding board. “Utopia” is a memo game portraying 36 important economists. They – and their theories or their classification in the different economic schools – are vividly depicted in English and German in the accompanying booklet. Utopia has the goal of bringing the great economists and their ideas – from those of ancient times, over Smith, Hayek, and Keynes, to the present day with Stiglitz and Piketty – closer to the students in a light-hearted manner, and to offer the opportunity to discuss new ideas about present and future challenges.

The several didactic scenarios that can come into play with “Memo: Utopia”, and can be combined with each other, are described below:

- Simple pair game: The cards are shuffled well and placed individually, face-down, on a table. The goal is to find pairs completely in accordance with the well-known rules for Memo. The aim is to become introduced to the persons and to look them up in the accompanying booklet.
- Context game: 36 cards (each with one economist) are placed, face-up, on the table and sorted according to the background colour. There is only one card for some colours, while there are several for others. The background colours represent schools of economics from the history of ideas. The students make research in the accompanying booklet and draw up an overview diagram with the names of the schools, the main representatives, and two or three of their most important ideas. The aim is to have the student consider what could have been the historical reason for the birth of this school and, in a further step, they should develop ideas for the challenges facing the 21st century.
- Expert variant of the twin game: Each player is only allowed to uncover a second card if he or she can interpret the symbol representing the specific economist on

the first card. The aim is to become acquainted with the concepts of economics and be able to classify them.

VIII Strengthening the culture of dispute – The debating club

Democratic processes cannot be learned by heart. To develop, they require a mixture of listening, convincing argumentation, and the preparedness to meet each other halfway. Participation is necessary if the interest in social affairs is to increase. This means that political education must not be reduced to the mere consumption of knowledge but should open up the possibilities of dialogue and participation. It must be allowed to question – and debate about – everything. If not, the danger that students will feel at the mercy of a complex “incomprehensible” world is much too great (Lindner et al. 2012).

What are the aspects of general economic and social concepts that must be transmitted in order for citizens to understand the relationships, to become involved in the development of society, and be able to reach responsible decisions? Many – if not most – of our decisions have an economic and social dimension. The person who is active, decides! And the persons who decides should be in the position of being able to substantiate their decisions. As a result, in addition to the transmission of fundamental knowledge, education also requires an argumentative approach to the evaluation of the pro and contra of positions – especially when dealing with topics that are controversial in society – in order to be able to arrive at a well-founded decision. The debating club (see Fig. 6) seems to be the “missing link” in this connection (for an overview of the history of the debate, see Bartsch 2005):

- Developing new ideas. Regular debates offer a free space for the open exchange on matters that affect all of us, and the possibility for developing new ideas for the civil society. A debating club encourages people to think and have a say, and – ultimately – to collaborate.
- Learning to present an argument. The best way to convince people of new ideas is with arguments. In a debate, light is thrown on important subjects from at least two sides. Putting oneself in another position and presenting arguments for other opinions not only helps to understand the other side, but also why one does not support that position oneself. Debating therefore assists the individual in developing his or her own well-founded opinion.
- Structured speech can only be learned by speaking. The best arguments are insufficient if they cannot be followed. This makes it important to formulate them clearly and in a way that is easy to understand.

- Respect. Being continually confronted with opinions, arguments and positions that often deviate greatly from one's own teaches one to understand – and be able to relate to – them. In a discourse, the danger of accepting only a few worldviews and – all too quickly – rejecting other opinions, soon becomes obvious. This is not only damaging to the democratic exchange but to one's own spirit.
- Responsibility. Knowing one's own values also means being able to question them. This includes moral concepts and the justification of words and deeds, as well. In order to become responsible, one must be in the position of being able to do what is right without being pressured from outside.

A debating club is a pedagogically-valuable format for developing the thoughtful handling of problem analyses, recommendations for solution, and controversial arguments. It requires the students to draw on their own creativity and wealth of knowledge in a very short period of time. However, the sporting and enjoyable aspect of debating, which is promoted by the triggering of positions, and the distribution of roles within the sides and teams, as well as the observance of rules, is just as important.

Debating cultivates democratic culture. In a debating club, students are sensitised to consider subjects and arguments taking place in the social, political, economic, and philosophic discussion critically. In this way, they also learn to develop their own arguments in a peaceful and polite interaction with others (also see the link to explanatory films on debating at Fig. 7)


The debating club is an excellent alliance between the goals of political education and entrepreneurship education. Therefore, the most significant demand is: Let us create a free space for the debate, a free space for the exchange of ideas on problems that affect us all, and a free space that offers the possibility to develop and reflect on new ideas for the civil society. The potential of the debating club in German-speaking countries as a “thought, speech, and social form” is a long way from being exhausted (Kemmann 2022, 664). The debating club should not be a one-off event but a regular part of school life (the curriculum), of youth organisations, and in adult education.

Butt in! How does a debate function?

A three-step guide to successful discussing. Take part and strengthen your skills of communication. The “open parliamentary debate” (OPD) is one of the most important debating formats.


1. Debating ≠ wild, unordered arguing

Rules can help listening to others and meeting halfway.




2. Find a subject mutually

and write it down so that everybody knows what is being debated.



3. Allocate the roles and get going!

Select your function. The draw always decides which side of the discussion (pro/contra) a team takes.



The rules


- Each speaker has five minutes speaking time. No questions may be asked during the first and last minute.
- It is allowed to ask questions but not present counterarguments during a speech.
- The two teams take turns to speak. The free speakers speak before the final speeches.
- In conclusion, the jury evaluates the arguments and considers the content and rhetoric of the two teams. Insults or offensive remarks are evaluated negatively. Suggestions for improvement complement the feedback.

In the preparatory phase, the speakers of both teams consider:

- What is the problem? What is the initial situation?
- Who is affected by the proposal?
- Brainstorming about the arguments
- Selection / sequence of the arguments


Jury

Takes care of the procedure, timekeeping, and evaluation.




Speaker of the team Government

15 minutes preparation time without technical aids




Speaker of the team Opposition

15 minutes preparation time without technical aids




Free speaker

Only informed about the subject at the beginning and decides on a team during the progress of the debate. Their speaking time is only half as long.



5 Minuten Redezeit pro Sprecher



Tip!

Listening closely and writing notes are helpful for being able to react to the arguments of the other side.

What it brings you

In a debate, you learn to study a subject in depth and throw light on it from various perspectives. You also strengthen your communications skills: listening, reasoning, and formulating more precisely.





Fig. 6: How does a debate function? (www.ifte.at/debattierclub)



Fig. 7: How does a debate function? (www.ifte.at/debattierclub)

IX Kialu Edu – The attempt to have a constructive written debate

The written form has great strengths in the exchange of opinions. Students have to consider how arguments can be meaningfully formulated seeing that prompt enquiries are often not possible. They are therefore forced to express themselves as clearly as possible if they want to present their opinion convincingly.

This kind of exchange of opinions takes place millions of times a day in the form of commentaries, opinions, and all the other sorts of responses on the widest range of subjects. However, the flood of commentaries and opinions is usually unstructured, poorly argued, hardly founded, and often offensive and destructive,

As the largest site dealing with the visualisation of arguments and discussions worldwide, “Kialu Edu” attempts to explore the structure and logic of discussions with a clear depiction. The goal of the website is to make constructive discussions, in which the students can express their knowledge, prove their understanding, train critical thinking, and discuss constructively with each other, possible.

Kalu Edu allows the teacher to initiate a discussion and pass it on to the students as a “work assignment”. The site itself presents the discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of deleting fake news in social media as an example. At the beginning, the central arguments of the two sides are collected (green = pro, and red = contra). In return, counterarguments can be presented to each argument. In the course of the debate, this results in a clear graphic depiction in the form of a tree diagram. The students can then take this, together with the arguments, as the starting point for making a decision to decide on a specific side, and write a more detailed “essay”.

X Solving problems through new ideas – Youth Entrepreneurship Week

Young people’s ideas are in demand! This is the motto of the Youth Entrepreneurship Week where young people learn how they can participate in society with their own ideas. Over a period of three-and-a-half days, they work together with representatives of the entrepreneurial ecosystem Ökosystem on innovative concepts for solving social problems. Young people from schools and enterprises that train apprentices have already shown just how much potential lies hidden in them: They have developed ideas such as a smart rubbish bin to make waste collection more efficient, a concept for sustainable fashion, the first compostable disposable cup, and a website to assist students to select the right school for themselves.

The Youth Entrepreneurship Week offers space for (social) innovations in areas that are relevant to the future such as sustainable development goals (SDGs), or digitalisation.

The young people learn how to develop projects using the methods of entrepreneurship education (e.g., creative and systematic idea development, sustainable business models, empathy maps) that can be implemented by themselves by creating initial prototypes. Successful entrepreneurs offer support to the young people as trainers and sparring partners. In this way, the Youth Entrepreneurship Week also provides a network with the entrepreneurship ecosystem. In addition, the project is not restricted to one week: an interlocking platform that supports project teams in implementing their ideas going beyond the specific Entrepreneurship Week – such as the crowdfunding platform “Starte Dein Projekt”, the idea competition NEXT GENERATION, and the European Youth Citizen Competition – is provided (see www.entrepreneurshipwoche.at).



Fig. 8: Youth Entrepreneurship Logo (www.entrepreneurshipwoche.at)

A total of 90 Youth Entrepreneurship Weeks, two Summer Weeks, and three advanced training seminars for teachers were held throughout Austria in the 2022/23 school year. The programme was initiated by “IFTE – Entrepreneurship for Youth” and AustrianStartups, together with partners from Entrepreneurship-Ecosystem (120 trainers, 600 sparring partners, and 60 inspirational hosts). The action is supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Labour and Economy, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science, and Research, and the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (BMAW & BMBWF 2020). As an idea workshop, the Youth Entrepreneurship Week creates a space for the development and implementation of one’s own ideas. It is a methodical approach that should reach all young people and is also well-suited to be used in adult education.

OUTLOOK AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Our world is changing faster than ever before. As a result of the accumulation of crises – from the financial and economic crisis, over the climate crisis, the ongoing Corona pandemic, the return of war to Europe with the linked energy crisis and highest inflation since the 1950s, to the never-ending accusations of corrupt political representatives – we can sense the fragility of our political system. That there is a loss of faith in the political institutions and their representatives, which still goes hand in hand with a high level of acceptance for democracy, seems ambivalent. The faith in the system varies according to the subjective experience of the citizens and ranges from the feeling of not being represented, over the impression that privileged groups use the political system to further their own interests, to the notion of being patronised by the state (Zandonella 2022). Faced with this overall attitude, political education has become more important than it ever has been. We would like to recommend five concrete recommendations for action to be taken to strengthen a modern form of political education:

- 1.** Democratic participation has to be learned – and that, by each and every generation anew. It is a mistake to believe that democracy, and a social market economy, are inherited. Each generation faces the challenge of finding its own ideas and values that it considers important for its life and society. Empowering citizens to help shape our democracy and social market economy in a self-determined, active, and responsible manner is a key target of political education.

2. Political education through democracy should begin at the level of social reality and everyday life, and offer experience-based learning possibilities. Modern didactic concepts assume that competences, skills, and proficiencies can only be learned based on one's own experiences. Approaches promising success include generation-appropriate, game-based learning and the implementation of personal projects with which the autonomous participation and codetermination in our society – as citizens and entrepreneurs – can be experienced first-hand.

3. Strengthening a democratic culture of debate. Currently, the political dispute over controversial matters frequently leads to polarisation and division. Political education must open possibilities for dialogue. Democratic processes and values cannot be learned by heart. Their development requires a mixture of listening, convincing argumentation, and the preparedness to meet each other halfway. The debating club provides an excellent learning environment for this and should be a separate component of political education in schools and adult education.

4. Negotiate compromises. Political education should strengthen people to demand their rights using democratic methods, and to champion the rights of others, to settle conflicts in a peaceful manner, find compromises, and support democratic decisions.

5. Formal-organisational reorientation. If political education is to be able to perform all of this, it must be given sufficient space in day-to-day school life, and in adult education. Political education must break down subject boundaries and be a fundamental component of each level of education.

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The European Network of Political Foundations - ENoP serves as an umbrella network and information hub for political foundations on topics related to democracy and development cooperation. ENoP brings together 46 political foundations from 19 European countries, active in Europe and with over 130 local offices in partner countries. Although independent in nature, ENoP is a cross-party network, and its broad spectrum of affiliation corresponds to the political representation in the European Parliament. As such, the Network reflects the political diversity of the European democratic landscape and gives ENoP a unique approach.

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