



## DEAR READERS!

This special issue of “*polis aktuell*” documents the Erasmus+ project “Democracy and Puppetry”.

You will gain insight into school projects from four countries (Austria, Hungary, Serbia, and Slovenia) that were carried out together with puppet theatres. The overall coordination of the project was done by the puppet theatre LILARUM from Vienna.

*polis* – the Austrian Centre for Citizenship Education in Schools was responsible for teaching activating and participatory methods of citizenship education and human rights education in the project. Working with puppeteers and teachers, who then also worked together with the pupils, gave us the opportunity to experiment how our methods work at the interface of citizenship education and arts education.

The multi-stage approach (citizenship education workshops, action research phase, and theatre pedagogical approaches) proved to be important for the success: a good preparation of the content led to a very conscious choice of topics for the plays, the different methodological approaches encouraged all young people to feel addressed and to get involved.

We hope you enjoy browsing through this booklet and that you will find many ideas for your own projects.

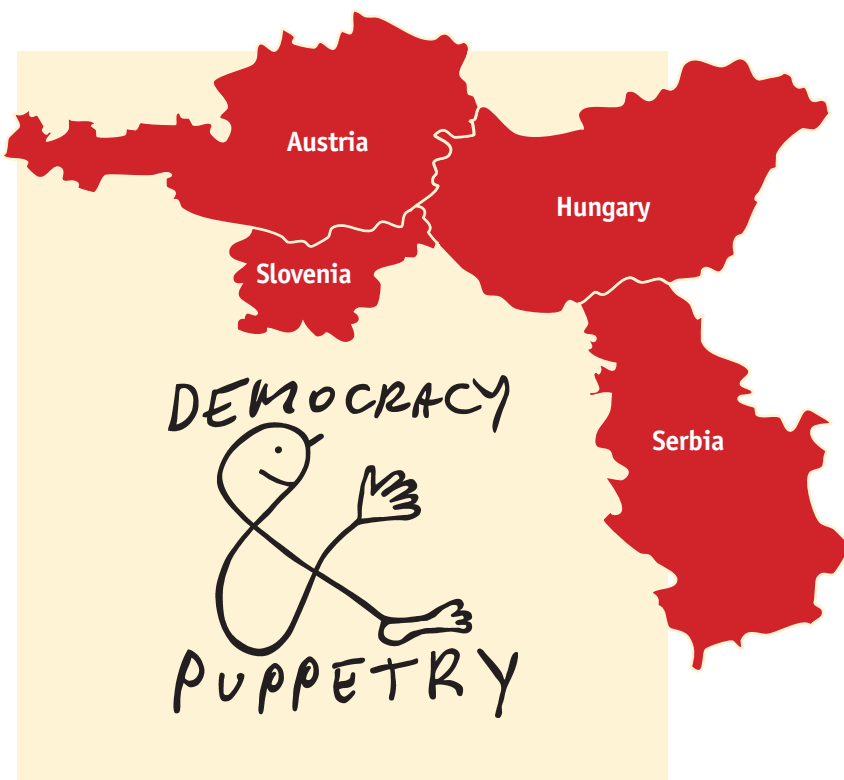
After all, artistic approaches to citizenship education bring particularly lasting experiences for students. They develop a lot of transversal competences and experience self-efficacy, a sense of community and creativity.

Patricia Hladschik and Andreas Moritz  
On behalf of the entire team of “Democracy & Puppetry”

More information about the project can be found on  
> [www.democracyandpuppetry.eu](http://www.democracyandpuppetry.eu).

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Zentrum *polis* – Politik Lernen in der Schule

Project partners in Hungary:  
Interplay Hungary  
Keleti István Alapfokú Művészeti Iskola és  
Művészeti Szakgimnázium

Project partners in Slovenia:  
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Theater WORKS)  
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Project partners in Serbia:  
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Osnovna škola “Ilija Birčanin”





# 1 THE PROJECT

## DEMOCRACY & HUMAN RIGHTS

Democracy is the guarantor of peace and cohesion in Europe. Most of us know this, but maybe sometimes we do not enough to preserve it. However, democracy, and with it human rights, are under increasing threat – also in the European Union and its neighbouring countries. In many places, populists rise up, get elected through democratic systems, only to undermine them afterwards, change constitutions and turn the respective states into “illiberal democracies” for the profit of their authoritarian agenda.

The project “Democracy & Puppetry” arose from our desire to confront young people with this issue because they are the future of Europe. Through the artistic-creative approach, a deep and sustainable engagement with the issues of democracy and human rights should be made possible over a longer period of time. In doing so, the participants should above all also have the opportunity to actively question and explore their own environment and everyday life within the framework of “action research”. What was learned and researched was finally to be processed in a puppet theatre performance and presented in public.

As a basis for communicating the topic to pupils, *polis* – the Austrian Centre for Citizenship Education in Schools, compiled a selection of possible methods that had already been tested internationally. The partners in the countries were free to choose which methods they wanted to use in their project. The methods that were actually used were evaluated, revised and finally published – in this booklet and as a separate method catalogue for download. It is intended to enable an uncomplicated reproduction of the project. With its help, teachers and artists all over Europe are able to initiate their own projects in schools and cultural institutions. Instead of puppet theatre, another art form can easily be used – from painting to music to literature and fashion.

The method catalogue was disseminated through regional, national and international youth and education networks in close cooperation with partners throughout Europe. It is also available for download on the project website and on the websites of all participating partners.

## ORGANISATION & PARTNERS

The application for the Erasmus+ call was made in October 2020. Based on the initiative of the lead partner LILARUM and in close cooperation with *polis*, a framework concept was developed and tandems were formed, each consisting of a puppet theatre institution and a school in Budapest, Belgrade, Ravne na Koroškem and Vienna.

The project design deliberately envisaged very little travel to avoid any cancellations of project meetings and to minimise the impact of the COVID pandemic. With the exception of minor delays due to official requirements at schools, the project could thus be carried out largely in accordance with the application.

The only “physical meeting” that took place as planned was the “Transnational Meeting” in September 2021 in Vienna (see p. 7), all other meetings – including the kick-off – were held via Zoom. Unfortunately, this also meant that there was no transnational contact between the students. In order to establish networking here, the performances were recorded professionally and burned onto a DVD together with short making ofs. All persons and institutions involved in the project received a copy of this DVD.

The national organising was in the hands of the participating theatres. Strategic networking took place through regular online meetings. Special attention was paid to public relations, which on the one hand was organised transnationally in the form of a multilingual project website and a social wall on which all Instagram and Facebook posts with the hashtag #DemPupp were collected and published. On the other hand, further PR measures, above all press work, were carried out at the national level. This made it possible to cover a wide range of print and online media. Overall, the good PR work significantly increased the public reception of the project and thus of the topic of democracy and human rights.



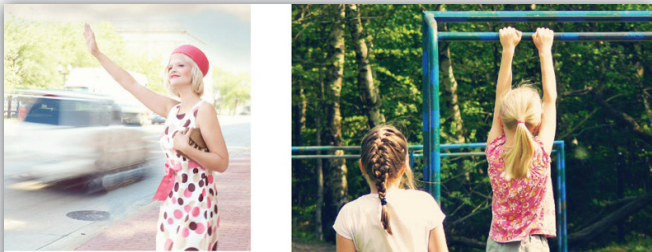
## 1.1. THE PARTNERS



### PUPPET THEATRE LILARUM

Founded in 1980, Vienna's biggest theatre for children performs puppet shows for children aged 3 to 10. The repertoire is characterised by the unique style of founder and art director Traude Kossatz who has become a trademark over the years. The programme consists of almost 40 own productions and is rounded off by guest performances by national and international artists.

[www.lilarum.at](http://www.lilarum.at)



Inter

Play

### INTERPLAY HUNGARY

Interplay is an association of playwrights, artists and theatre practitioners. Their main objective is to promote contemporary drama and to present international theatre performances in Hungary, Europe and around the world.

Their program includes children's and youth theatre performances, international cooperation projects, conferences and workshops.

[www.interplayhungary.hu](http://www.interplayhungary.hu)



### SREDNJA ŠOLA RAVNE

The school is Koroška's technical competence centre, educating for work and life in a modern way, by listening to every participant and through cooperation with business.

The mission of the vocational school is to pay attention to high professionalism. It is unique in its approach, educates young people who value their own abilities and respect others.

[www.srednjasolaravne.si](http://www.srednjasolaravne.si)



### PRIMARY SCHOOL "ILIJA BIRČANIN"

Located in a multi-ethnic suburb of Belgrade with a high number of Roma, the school educates children from different social, religious and ethnic backgrounds. In addition to regular primary education, the school and its staff offer support to children from marginalised social groups through participation in various projects and cooperation with other institutions in the field of education, culture and the arts. The aim is to allow as many children as possible to complete primary school and attend secondary school.

[www.iljabircanin.edu.rs](http://www.iljabircanin.edu.rs)

FELVÉTELI  
kimi

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/keletistvanomi>  
Instagram: [kimi\\_keleti\\_istvan\\_omi](https://www.instagram.com/kimi_keleti_istvan_omi)  
Honlap: <http://www.kimi.hu/szakkozep/felveteli>



### KIMI – KELETI ISTVÁN MŰVÉSZETI ISKOLA

Keleti István Elementary School of Art and Art Vocational High School (KIMI) is an art school network whose namesake, Keleti István, influenced the thinking and expression of many generations as a theatre teacher. The aim of the institution is for students to learn theatre skills in basic artistic education and to acquire skills and abilities that enable them to use the theatrical-dramatic form as a specific form of artistic mediation.

One of KIMI's educational centres is the Vörösmarty Mihály High School in Budapest. The pupils of class 10D were involved in the project.

[www.kimi.hu](http://www.kimi.hu)





### MITTELSCHULE HAINBURGER STRASSE

At this school, open learning phases with the COOL-Plan and the promotion of individual interests on PLUS-Days are just as firmly anchored in the timetable as social learning in order to promote the acquisition and development of social skills. Important decisions are made in the class council to strengthen democratic cooperation.

The cooperation with extracurricular organisations and the participation in international projects give the students insights into the lives of their peers in Europe as well as an intensive examination of social issues relevant to them.

[www.ms3hainburgerstrasse.com](http://www.ms3hainburgerstrasse.com)



### LITTLE THEATRE "DUŠKO RADOVIĆ"

Founded in 1948 as the "Puppet Theatre of the People's Republic of Serbia", the institution today is a repertoire theatre for children and youth with a permanent ensemble that develops and performs plays for children, youth and adults, using various puppetry techniques, with the intention of getting as close as possible to the sensibility of young audiences.

The basis of the program are projects that deal with topics of educational and social character as well as with current problems children and young people face today. The performances aim to connect children of different national, economic and social backgrounds and encourage them to think about tolerance, recognition and respect.

[www.malopozoriste.co.rs](http://www.malopozoriste.co.rs)



### GLEDALIŠČE DELA / THEATRE WORKS

Theatre WORKS is an interdisciplinary group of artists from Ravne na Koroškem, Slovenia. They offer a wide range of performances, produce performative theatre plays, happenings and situations. They explore the viewing style of the viewers and critically address the issues of today's society with original concepts which are staged in different spaces: theatres, streets, castles, cellars, parks and even abandoned halls.

The structure of Theatre WORKS is based on the intertwining of different arts. Special importance is given to movement, visual elements, music and the relations between those.

[www.zraven.si](http://www.zraven.si)

Zentrum  
**polis**  
Politik Lernen  
in der Schule

### ZENTRUM POLIS

Founded in 2006, *polis* is the central service institution for citizenship education in schools in Austria. *polis* supports teachers, schools and also extracurricular educational institutions in the implementation of citizenship education in all its facets. The organisation works with a broad understanding of politics that encompasses many thematic and content-related approaches. The most important tasks include: advice as well as information, production of material for the classroom, trainings and workshops for teachers and events for the public. For several years, *polis* has regularly worked on projects that integrate artistic approaches to citizenship education.

[www.politik-lernen.at](http://www.politik-lernen.at)



## 1.2. THE TIMELINE

<b>October 2020</b> Application Erasmus+ call	<b>21 April 2022</b> Performance in Ravne na Koroškem
<b>January 2021</b> Funding approval	<b>26 May 2022</b> Performance in Budapest
<b>March 2021</b> Start of the project	<b>15 June 2022</b> Performance in Belgrade
<b>3 June 2022</b> Online kick-off meeting	<b>27 June 2022</b> Performance in Vienna
<b>September 2021</b> Transnational meeting	<b>September 2022</b> Publication of the mediation methods, the “polis aktuell” magazine and the DVD
<b>February – May 2022</b> Workshops in the schools	





## 2 THE TRANSNATIONAL TRAINING

The methods used in the project were interactive and participatory and were intended to support the development of democratic competences.

The first aim was to strengthen the democratic competence of the teachers and theatre educators themselves. Only if they have a basic democratic attitude and reflect on it, can they also promote it in young people. This includes reflection on their own political socialisation and their understanding of democracy and participation. (see e.g. "Placemat method").

For project-based work with children and young people, methods are needed that encourage a fun, playful engagement with a topic and provide plenty of space for discussion and reflection. Therefore, teachers and theatre educators were provided with a method pool that contained proven methods from well-known manuals (e.g. "Compasito") as well as methods from the Vienna Forum for Democracy and Human Rights/*polis*.

### THE TRANSNATIONAL MEETING

To find and test pedagogical mediation methods, as well as develop the first project outlines of the national tandems, a meeting of all partners involved took place in Vienna from 27 to 29 September 2021. After the work on the funding application and the many organisational tasks, which were done in online meetings in the preceding months, we could finally meet in person for the first time. Thus, the meeting was also the start of the actual "hands on" work on the project.

The first day of the meeting took place in the LILARUM puppet theatre. The focus was on getting to know each other. The topic was given a lot of space as pedagogical methods were presented and tried out here, which can also be used in the project work with the

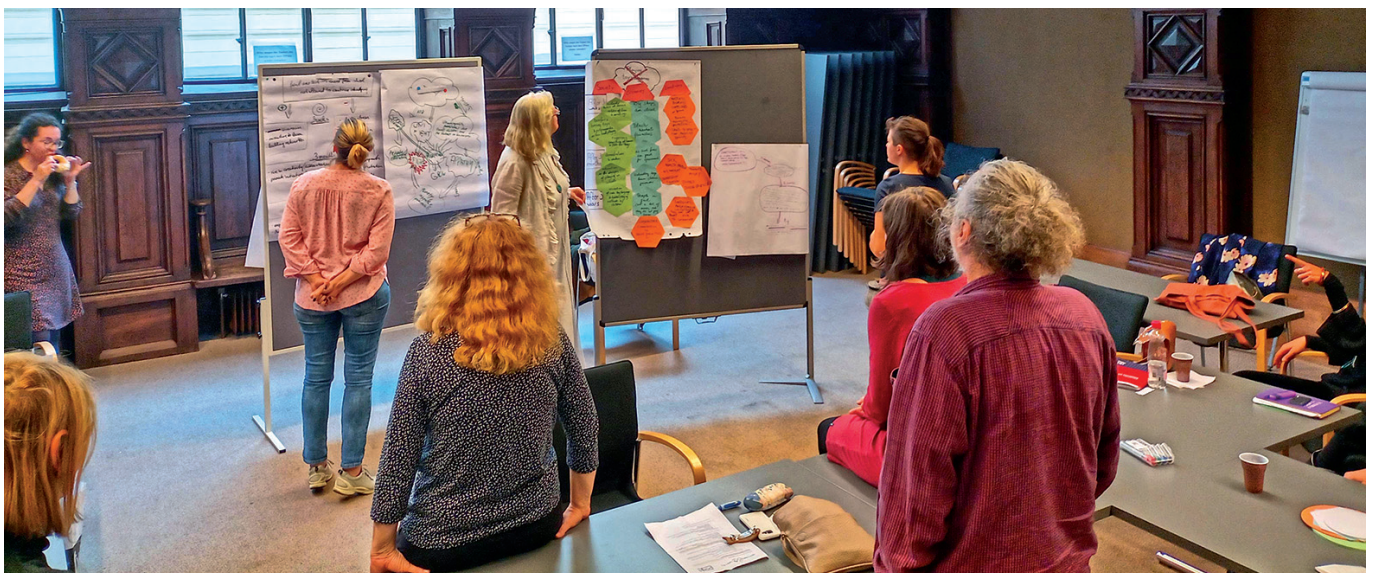


pupils as a door opener and introduction to the topic.

On the two following days, the focus was on pedagogical methods for teaching the topics of democracy and human rights. Under the guidance of Zentrum *polis*' Patricia Hladschik, approved methods were tried out and their suitability for the purposes of the project was discussed. Finally, the national tandems could begin to outline their thoughts and plans for working with the pupils. In conclusion, these concepts were discussed in the group.

As expected, the national concepts were very different, which was reflected in the projects that were finally implemented. The range of methods used is diverse with broad applicability for teachers and arts practitioners across Europe, even beyond the genre of puppet theatre.

The excellent working atmosphere during the whole transnational meeting should not go unmentioned. It was noticeable what a great concern the topic of democracy was for all those present. At the same time, the atmosphere was very friendly, as if we had worked together many times in the past. Here it became visible what a great benefit this networking was for all participants.



# 3 THE NATIONAL PROJECTS

## 3.1. AUSTRIA/VIENNA

### THE PARTNERSHIP

Regional cooperation in the district has been an important concern for LILARUM since the opening of the theatre in Göllnergasse 25 years ago. However, so far there have been no points of contact with the secondary school in Hainburger Straße, as the theatre's target group is of kindergarten and primary school age. Since both the target group and the COOL focus (Cooperative Open Learning) of the school were suitable for the project "Democracy & Puppetry", LILARUM initiated this cooperation.

The director and dramaturge Karin Koller, with whom several similar projects had already been realised in the past, was hired for the artistic realisation. She was supported by the stage designer Elisabeth Binder-Neururer. From the school's teaching staff, Marina Molnar and Dominik Schöffel were assigned to the project as supervising teachers for the first project phase. From the construction phase onwards, the pupils received additional support from teaching staff.

### THE COURSE OF THE PROJECT

In February, the 4th grade pupils of the Hainburger Straße secondary school worked in three workshops on the topic of democracy and human rights. Already at this early stage, Karin Koller tried to find theatrical impulses in the young people through various group exercises and to awaken their desire to play. At the end of this phase, the participants themselves decided who would like to continue working on the project.



The students asked passers-by two questions: Can you give us three words that spontaneously come to your mind on the subject of democracy? Do you vote?

About 40 pupils completed the "Action Research" phase from mid-March. The focus was on their own environment and everyday life. The aim was to address and reflect on relevant situations and aspects from a democratic and human rights perspective. Among other things, passers-by were asked for three spontaneous words on the topic of democracy. In the exercise "Something must be done", the young people named problems that directly affect them and that should be (politically) solved.

### WRITING STORIES

Based on this, they were asked in the final workshop to tell true or invented stories relevant to the topic. These stories were then rewritten in the next stage and thus told differently. For example, the girl who was racially abused in the tram and whom no one wanted to help, received support from fellow passengers in the changed story, which made her emerge stronger from this conflict.



The spacious workshop was perfect for making the figures and scenery, which took many hours.



From mid-April, the pupils finally developed the final performance. They worked in two groups: one group, led by Karin Koller, developed and wrote the scenes based on the stories created in the workshops. The other group built the sets and puppets under the direction of Elisabeth Binder-Neururer.



As is customary in the LILARUM, the voices of the narrators and parts of the dialogue are professionally recorded. The soundtrack is played during the performance.

A particularly exciting part for the pupils was the sound recordings. Parts of the text of the play were recorded and then played over loudspeakers during the performance together with music and sounds. This essential artistic feature of the LILARUM puppet theatre enabled the pupils to concentrate entirely on the puppet play during the performance.

### SETTING UP THE SHOW

The premiere took place on 27 June 2022 in the befitting setting of the festival hall of the district office of the third Vienna district (Landstraße). The choice of the performance venue was in line with the application concept, to take away the shyness of entering an official building through the artistic performance. In addition, the performance was included in the programme of the "Landstraße District Festival", which again significantly increased the range of the project.

In order to put on this performance, all forces were combined. Craftsmen and writers became puppeteers or stagehands who assisted the former. One pupil also played an instrument during the performance, others helped with welcoming the audience and distributing information material. Together, the topic of "democracy and human rights" was given space and a voice, and last but not least, the creativity as well as the ideas and wishes of the pupils were given expression.

In addition to all the writing and handicrafts, press interviews were diligently given. The "Wiener Bezirks-

zeitung" as well as the online platform "Kijuku" ran extensive reports on the project, and numerous media announced or reported on the final performance. The performance and the final evening were enthusiastically applauded by the families and friends of those involved, and the representatives of politics and business who were present were also very impressed. The project as a whole was a great success.



The media interest in the project was great. For the students it was another exciting, not everyday experience to give interviews or to discover themselves in the newspaper.

### HEADMASTER'S STATEMENT

**"Respectful interaction and learning democratic behaviour contribute to the development of problem-solving skills. By working on the project, our students were able to work on their own selected topics both in terms of content and creatively. The performance was a festive conclusion to the project that will remain in everyone's memory for a long time." (Liliana Janoschek)**



The audience was enthusiastic about the performance and the director gave an emotional speech of thanks.

## 3.2. HUNGARY/BUDAPEST

### WORKSHOPS ON DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

In addition to the joint training course in Vienna at the transnational meeting, we did some research and looked for alternative courses in the theme of democracy and human rights. Krisztina Lóránt went to the summer workshop of Amnesty International, where she took part in a special training course and collected relevant printed material relating to the subject matter that was also used successfully in the project. The methodology consists of plays, workshops, facts and figures. In addition to the texts, there are different strategies, games and themes that helped us to unfold the subject.

For this project we could use our former experience, skills and know-how of teaching playwriting well. We focused on human rights – they were recited, pinned to the flip chart and pupils explained each and every one while telling stories as an example to the others. We dealt with the pyramid of aggression, issues of positive discrimination and went through other sometimes provocative and challenging questions and argumentations. This phase proved to be very useful for the participants, as they had to express themselves, act out situations and demonstrate certain issues with or without words. Their body language and their rhetorical expression have improved a lot.



Different games and materials helped to get a deeper insight into the topic of human rights.

### THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Due to the strict secondary education structure, it was not easy to find a gymnasium as a partner for this project. Teachers and students are too busy with their regular curriculum to volunteer for extra work and it is difficult to fit in additional courses. Finally, we were lucky to connect with KIMI, an organisation that provides drama teachers for the Vörösmarty Gymnasium (VMG), a school with special theatre studies. As a common agree-

ment we could manage to have a fixed work schedule inserted in their regular timetable. We held theoretical classes and workshops on Monday afternoons, drama classes on Tuesdays when we worked on dramaturgy and the text, and on Thursdays we held three hours of rehearsals and improvisations in the studio theatre of the school during the spring term. It was an intense period of time for everyone. Drama and creative teachers were provided by KIMI, the classes were held at VMG and the production served as an exam for the students at the end of the school year.



Director Balázs Perényi and puppeteers Tibor Szolár and Zsombor Barna.

### PUPPETRY WORKSHOP

A class of 35 students participated in the process. Aged between 15 and 16, they have already attended theatre studies and creative drama courses during the last years. We found a fertile soil in them, they are curious, easy going and flexible. The class and their teachers were open to this Erasmus+ project possibility and they welcomed the extra education in the field of democracy. They were even more happy, knowing that they could get a deeper knowledge about theatre and puppetry through the performance which we were creating together.

We hired two leading puppet actors of the “Buda-pest Bábszínház”: Tibor Szolár and Zsombor Barna. They built a short course on puppetry and made sure that by the end of the course the kids knew a lot about the genre. They started with object theatre and taught the children what can be expressed with an object, and what colours, movements, sounds added to it. The kids learnt about the meaning of a gesture, a look, a movement of the body and how a lifeless object can be made to look alive. The course continued with improvisation games and sketches with different types of puppets. As the theme started to unfold, we decided to use bunraku puppets and neutral masks as the characteristic elements of the scenes.



## PUPPETEER'S STATEMENT



Joint manipulating of puppets was challenging.

“Our main goal was a concentrated and focused course on how to act with each other and how to work with the puppets. We wanted to teach the students how they can manipulate a bunraku puppet with synchronized movements, how to create different characters alone or together with their classmates. And we wanted to help them understand the connection between the puppet and the puppeteer on the stage and what it means when they both can be seen at the same time. We started to work with objects to teach the basic elements of the genre. After that we made life size paper puppets or brought bunraku puppets from the Budapest Puppet Theatre and we started to manipulate puppets with 3 to 5 kids each. That was a huge challenge but we could see the quick development and could tell that the students were enjoying this way of acting, improvising and developing short scenes. The masks were their next task. They had to use their body to express emotions and we taught them how to use the mask on stage. The students created very strong and interesting scenes mixing bunraku and mask techniques. That was the point when we started to focus on democracy as a topic. These short etudes were mute at the beginning. Meanwhile the director worked on the play itself. The kids had to write poems, essays and short stories about democracy and human rights. After that they acted out some scenes using these texts with bunraku, live acting and masks.”  
(Tibor Szolár)

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

“Our aim was to fully understand and analyse the topics of democracy and human rights with the kids, to gain first-hand experience on what is happening to us, how much democracy is present, what actions and attitudes are required to create and operate its administration. We examined some key documents on human rights: The Declaration of Independence, the Declaration of Human and Civil Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We discussed famous quotes about democracy and human rights. The students had to write short stories on when they exercised power on somebody and when they were forced to do something that they did not want to do. They wrote slam poetry about what they can and can't do because of internal and external commands. They made many improvised etudes about power, oppression and freedom. They used puppets, masks, live acting, rhythm or musical elements for expression. They composed music, played different instruments, and they painted their own masks. The dialogues of the performance consist of the kids' essays and improvisations. In addition to their own sentences, the production uses recitals from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as Attila József's poem *Air and Muse's Uprising*. That's how the play was put together.” (Balázs Perényi)

## PERFORMANCE OF “DREAMOFLAW” (JOGÁLOM)

The Hungarian premiere was staged in VMG. Besides parents, friends, schoolmates and professional puppeteers, some politicians and representatives of the Budapest Municipality also came to see the show. As the school was granted a scholarship provided by the “National Talents Fund”, the whole class could travel to Vienna to perform there. The kids translated the play into English exclusively for this event.



With their powerful performance, the students carried away the audience.

### 3.3. SERBIA/BELGRADE

#### THE PARTNERSHIP

“Little Theatre Duško Radović” (LTDR) was founded in 1948 as the “Puppet Theater of the People’s Republic of Serbia”. The basis of the program concept are projects that deal with topics of educational and social character, dealing with current problems that children and young people face today. The performances aim to: connect children of different nationalities and economic and social backgrounds, encourage thinking about respecting others, and support the preservation of children’s rights. LTDR develops an active relationship with the audience of specially designed projects for this purpose with the participation of relevant experts on specific topics.

The cooperation with the elementary school “Ilija Birčanin” has so far been realized through visits of students to performances on stage for children and youth. For this exceptional cooperation in the framework of “Democracy & Puppetry” we found that the location of the school in Zemun Polje, a part of Belgrade, corresponded well to the demographic structure that we marked as the target group for this project.



Opening night in Little Theatre “Duško Radović”.

The director and facilitator of the drama process, Aleksandra Jelić, together with the playwright Bogdan Španjević, formed the backbone of the author’s team in the production of the play. These two outstanding artists work in the independent art collective ApsArt, which exists since 2004 and works in the field of performing arts with a focus on working with the socially marginalized and vulnerable groups, such as drug addicts, prisoners, members of the Roma community, children with behavioral disorders, migrants, children with cancer and many others.

#### THE COURSE OF THE PROJECT

Students were introduced to the project in October 2021. After getting acquainted with the topics they would deal with, 34 students interested in further work came forward. A selection was made very quickly and the group was divided into those who will deal with various topics through workshops and those who will act in the play. The workshops were held by teachers Ana Marinović, Dragana Jevremović and Sonja Bačilović. The processing of the research and the writing of the screenplay were conducted by the director Aleksandra Jelić and the playwright Bogdan Španjević.



Rehearsal with choreographer Miona Petrović in the hall of the Elementary School “Ilija Birčanin”.

After the winter break, the students who worked on the research participated in six different workshops from the end of January to April. They were divided into smaller groups, by departments. A total of seven classes of the fifth, sixth and eighth grade participated. By the end of the project, 25 students actively participated. After this phase, in May and early June, the students worked on a marketing campaign.

#### THE MAKING OF THE DRAMA

The entire work process, which was long-lasting and towards the end intense, can be divided into four phases:

1. Group building and familiarization with different dramatic techniques.
2. Research on the topic of human rights, ecology, bad practices in the community, designing improvements.
3. Putting those themes into dramatic exercises, games and forms. Playing and discussions. Designing short dramatic forms, segments of a future dramatic play.
4. Work on the dramatic text, staging, rehearsals for the preparation of the play.



Through all four phases of the work, the children were truly engaged, both in terms of interest and in terms of creative contribution.

About 50 children attended the first couple of workshops. During the first month or two, about 20 children participated in the work process, and during the



Director Aleksandra Jelić at a rehearsal in the Little Theatre "Duško Radović".

first phase, a group of nine children crystallized and remained until the end. There was no audition by the facilitator of the drama process according to the system of excellence, instead, the deciding factor was the child's personal motivation.

It is important to point out that during the whole process and until the very end, the children were very dedicated to the work, the group, the ideas and the final realization. This kind of dedication and motivation is a wonderful prerequisite for what actually happened in this process, which is that they became a head taller than themselves. Children matured, grew up, learned not only about human rights but about life. In this way, the theatre became a training ground for learning life and a rehearsal for reality and revolution.

The children's fear that we would definitely part ways after the drama process was dispelled after the premiere by the General Manager of the Little Theatre "Duško Radović" with a promise that the play would be part of the regular theatre repertoire. This gave the children additional satisfaction and confirmation that they participated in something

important, that they have the opportunity to change the world with their involvement!

We believe that with this project we have carried out a small revolution that overcomes both personal and systemic inertia. The children's enthusiasm for working in the theatre – both as creators and performers – shows us that we are reaching the children's needs very well with our work.

### ABOUT THE SHOW

The play for young people "Better Field or Playing the Re:public" premiered in the Little Theatre "Duško Radović".

In addition to the director and the playwright, the choreographer Miona Petrović and the stage and costume designer Filip Jevtić participated in the preparation of the play. The video animation was made by Darko Duckin, while the voices broadcast from the off were recorded by the actors of the LTDR – Vladislava Đorčević and Damjan Kecojević

The media were very interested in the project and the performance. The project participants also gave statements for the National Television of Serbia and K1.

The premiere of the play was attended by young people, parents and also decision-makers in theatre for children and youth. The performance was invited by the director of "BITEF Polyphony" to participate in one of the most important festivals in Serbia. Furthermore, Alexandra Jelić was invited to present her experiences during the process of creating this play at the 29th International Children's Theatre Festival in Subotica.



The interactive performance also involved the audience's reactions.

### 3.4. SLOVENIA/RAVNE NA KOROŠKEM

#### PARTNERSHIP AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Ravne na Koroškem is a small industrial town rich in the cultural heritage of the steel industry. The town is home to the Gledališče DELA/Theatre WORKS, which incorporates individual workers' stories into its theatre productions. This is why we chose the Šolski Center Ravne na Koroškem (Ravne Secondary School), which is a technical school that preserves old metal skills and also uses new technologies. Our idea was to combine the technological know-how of the school with the puppetry and theatre know-how of the Gledališče DELA/Theatre WORKS and to create a steel puppet that we would, and did, use in the final production. We knew that the work was demanding and that we would encounter challenges, but we wanted to take the chance. In the end, we worked with the students to make two metal puppets and created a performance on the theme of democracy.



Two steel puppets were especially built for the performance. One of them was forged in many hours of work.

#### BUILDING PUPPETS

Students of Ravne Secondary School, under the guidance of the headmistress Ivanka Stopar and the mentorship of teachers Igor Kosmač and Slavko Koljibabić with the help of expert advice of Tea Kovše and Katja Vravnik, have made the first metal puppet, which, with a few modifications, was based on the template of wooden puppet technology developed by Jure Arnold and Tea Kovše.

Another, slightly smaller one was created in forging technology. It is 20 centimetres in size and very heavy compared to the first bigger puppet which is 70 centimetres tall.

The wooden puppets, the metal version and the forged puppet were used by the students in the final production of the project. We wanted them to connect with the puppet and the material that it is made of and then tell the story with the help of the puppets.

#### CREATING STORIES AND WORKSHOPS

We believe that democracy begins with respect. First to ourselves and then to the people close to us. And beyond that, we also need to respect those who are far away in our thinking. In this spirit, we have built a puppet show where everyone could express their opinions in a spirit of respect. There was a great emphasis on the fact that students need to have their own beliefs and also express them.

In the performance "I have a dream" the puppet's feelings are expressed through actions and some parts are also expressed in words. Throughout the workshops, we used three different approaches to teaching and designing the performance. Katja Vravnik based her workshops on a dance perspective and a visual presentation of the characters in the play. Tea Kovše taught puppet animation and, together with the students, designed the dramaturgy of the play. Nina Stopar decided to build the identity of individual characters from a philosophical point of view and established concepts of thinking through body movement.



The steel puppets were accompanied by wooden puppets from Gledališče DELA/Theatre WORKS.

At the end of the workshops, we designed the characters for the puppet performance and the script of the play together with the students. Each student created his own character with which he eventually performed. In the process of making the performance, we invited musicians to participate on the basis of the script. They wrote the musical and sound basis for the final puppet show according to the script and created emotional highlights in the performance. For the students, we wanted to conjure up a full experience on stage, where live music creates a magical atmosphere.



## PUBLIC PRESENTATION

The public presentation of the puppet performance "I have a dream" was held at Ravne Secondary School. The decision for the time of the performance was the forthcoming of the state elections on April 24. We wanted to present to the public the view of young people on the topic of democracy, which had been repeatedly violated in Slovenia until the time of the elections. In the week before the performance, the students had a project week dedicated to extracurricular projects and activities. During this time the students had no lessons and we were able to devote ourselves intensively to making the performance. The progress of the students in puppet animation was remarkable.



The students learned a lot about democracy and human rights but also about constructing and playing puppets.

The story of the performance is accompanied by a little iron puppet who wants to become part of society. Presented characters are a group of large wooden dolls that have beautiful clothes and together they have created a closed society. The little iron puppet has no entry into this circle. The little iron puppet is different, too loud, dirty. She is pushed to the margins, ignored, accused of everything guilty and illegal. She gets lost until finally a large iron puppet comes to help her, which can be a mother motif or an alter ego motif. A fight in the style of "The Matrix" starts between the wooden puppets and the big iron puppet, where wooden puppets are finally beaten up. But the little iron puppet is still unhappy. This is not the world she wants to live in. Looking back, the struggle was meaningless, as no new society can be formed on this foundation. In the end, the animators tell their dreams of what kind of society they want to live in. Finally, coexistence and acceptance between the different puppets are gaining ground.

The day of the presentation was well supported by the media. Several interviews were given by the mayor, principal, mentors as well as the students. For the pur-



The project was of interest for the local media in Ravne na Koroškem.

pose of presenting the steel puppet to the public, the Ravne Secondary School will make two steel replicas, which will be available for public viewing at the Carinthian Provincial Museum, the Ravne Museum. With this, the story of difference and democracy travels to other institutions in Ravne na Koroškem and students will use the knowledge gained in the project "Democracy & Puppetry" in their future lives.



# 4 THE METHODS – THE POOL AND LESSONS LEARNED

## INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE SELECTION OF METHODS:

- For an international project, methods in English are appropriate; if possible, they should also be available in the languages of the consortium partners.
- The methods must be easily adaptable and transferable to different national contexts.
- The methods must also be implementable by theater educators who have little experience with citizenship education.
- The methods should reflect the basic values and principles of the project, i.e. be participatory, inclusive and interactive.
- The methods should also strengthen the basic democratic attitude of the educators themselves and thus make them credible actors in the project.

## EXERCISES FOR THE WORKSHOPS WITH THE STUDENTS – SELECTION OF PROVEN COLLECTIONS IDENTIFIED AS SUITABLE:

### COMPASITO – A MANUAL ON HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN



Online version: [www.eycb.coe.int/compasito](http://www.eycb.coe.int/compasito)  
Third revised version. Council of Europe, December 2020:

<https://rm.coe.int/compasito-3rd-edition-isbn-8794-0/1680a4d571>

Methods tested in the training:

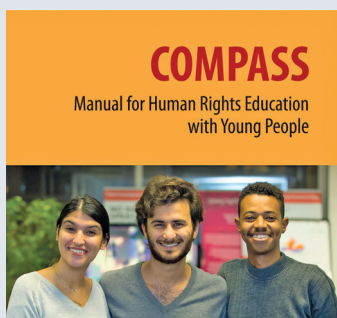
- Who are I?
- Sailing to a new land
- Take a step forward
- Who should decide?
- What if?
- Puppets tell the story

### COMPASS. MANUAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

[www.coe.int/en/web/compass](http://www.coe.int/en/web/compass)

Method tested in the training:

- Take a step forward

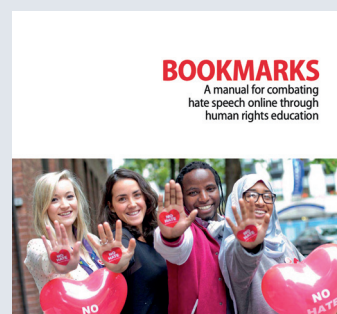


### BOOKMARKS – A MANUAL FOR COMBATING HATE SPEECH ONLINE THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

[www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/bookmarks-connexions](http://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/bookmarks-connexions)

Methods tested in the training:

- Roots and branches
- Tree of knowledge



Methods that were collected in the project:

### REDE – RESILIENCE THROUGH EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

[www.politik-lernen.at/rede\\_en](http://www.politik-lernen.at/rede_en)

Methods tested in the training:

- Arbitrary vote
- What politics is or isn't



**CLASSIC METHODS** that can be used in a wide variety of contexts and topics:

- Sociometry and constellation work
- Placemat method
- Team-building-exercises that work with students' prior political experiences



## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACTION RESEARCH

In the course of the project, the children and young people researched their environment and generated the ideas for the puppet plays from this. Here you will find a few impulses for the course of such action research phases, which can be easily adapted.

### **PARTICIPATION – WHERE DO I HAVE A SAY? EXPLORING MY SURROUNDINGS. WHERE DO YOU THINK CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE MORE TO SAY?**

Age group: 10 years and older

- In small groups, the pupils think about a short story (scene) on the topic of participation or non-participation of children and young people. School is a good place for this, but also places where young people like to spend time (e.g. parks, youth centres, etc.).
- In line with the idea of the story, they take five to ten pictures that can be put together to form a picture story.



The pupils create a collage with speech or thought bubbles, narrative texts, creative elements etc. that match the pictures. For this, the photos are either printed out or edited on the PC.

- Presentation in class.
- Debriefing: Cluster and discuss what should happen with the results (e.g. exhibition in the school or on the school website).

### **WHAT DO WE (NOT) LIKE ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY?**

Age group: from 8 years

Duration: approx. 2 teaching units (incl. taking pictures)

Materials: Paper, pens, pin board

- The pupils should photograph at least one thing they like in the community and one thing they don't like.
- These photos are printed out and arranged thematically in the class, they are put on posters and labelled. Both positive and negative things should be mentioned.
- The posters are handed over to community leaders.



### **ON THE ROAD AS COMMUNITY DETECTIVES**

Age group: 11 years and older

Duration: approx. 1 unit (implementation) and 2 units (reflection)

Materials: log sheet, pens

- As community detectives, the pupils research the wishes and needs of community residents.
- They are divided into small groups.
- They walk through the community and ask passers-by what they like about their place of residence, where they see problems and what changes they would like to see.
- The pupils record their answers on a previously prepared log sheet, which they then evaluate together.
- Afterwards, the topics are presented and discussed in class.



The results can serve as the basis for a project.

### **EXPERT INTERVIEW**

Age group: 11 years and older

Duration: 1 unit (implementation)

Materials: Recording equipment, questionnaire/interview guide

- The pupils interview different actors in their community (e.g. mayor, councillor, social worker, carer, etc.) on a specific topic they are concerned with.
- To do this, they first work out an interview guideline or a questionnaire and conduct the interview in small groups.
- The interview is recorded, evaluated and published in the school newspaper or on the homepage of the school.



## SELECTED FEEDBACK ON THE METHODS

In each country, the educators chose different methods - appropriate to the age group and the topics they wanted to work on. In order to document how the methods worked, we decided to collect structured feedback on the methods used. The trainers filled out a questionnaire for each method, which was made available to all partners. Below you will find a selection of reflections.

### SAILING TO A NEW LAND

The kids were amused by the fact that they can fly a balloon and made really wise choices according to their age. They got agitated by the fact that less and less items were left. It created a good debate among them. It was surprising, that they thought it was a real option to move abroad, and they did not mind much to leave the country, their parents and cultural roots.

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Kasija: *"I liked the activity, but I would have done it differently. Now that the whole process is finished, I realize I would have made different choices."*

Marija: *"Me too, I realize now I would have done it differently. Now I realize some cards we threw away at the very beginning were some things we actually need, and we kept some unnecessary things instead."*

### PLACEMAT METHOD

It worked well, since the children were already familiar with the type of the task. They were given the term democracy. Children didn't like this type of the activity so much, because they prefer those with more movement and activity. However, it was a useful activity, because they had to think about what it means to them, as well as in general, listen to each other, share, reach a consensus, show respect for each other's opinions.

### WHO SHOULD DECIDE + ROOTS AND BRANCHES

We connected the topics of the exercises - education and leisure, poverty and social security and hate speech. We want them to think about the topics of democracy through movement. The children liked it and found it amusing because for lots of topics they did not think about it. They also found it funny as these are often taboo themes. We had a feeling that we opened new areas to talk about in their group, with their families or friends.

### WHO SHOULD DECIDE?

We formed a circle, and the dramaturg stood in the middle. She asked questions, and the kids, actors and drama teachers had to answer. It was good, that not only the kids, but adults took part, and they could explain their preferences and make a comparison.

> It was nice to see, that children and adults voted differently. The kids were quite self-confident. They knew what was good for them definitely.

### TAKE A STEP FORWARD

Conversation after the activity was more important than the activity itself because children realised how much life circumstances shape and influence your life and your possibilities to have better quality of life. Anja: *"I understand people better now and I have more understanding for other people's circumstances."*

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At the beginning, they found it difficult to create characters for the exercises and to really dive in. With a little bit of patience they managed it very well at the end.

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We were doing this exercise with 35 children at a time. It was too much, some had to have the same life story, and ended up in the same position.

### OPINION BAROMETER

The children liked this exercise, because it was a clear visual demonstration of their opinion, not just a theoretical recital of facts and lexical knowledge. They like, when movement of physical activity is involved, not just talking. They found the three phases very useful, as at school they do not get enough possibility to express their own opinion. This method helps to improve their ability to argue and express their opinion in a well-mannered and sharply verbalised way.



### WHO ARE I – IDENTITY MOLECULE

We transformed this method into a moving exercise. We asked them to show their interest with either to stop walking or to start walking. There were also exercises where they had to show the parts of the identity only with moving and no words. Children liked it, nevertheless they are all boys, almost men, and the dynamic is very strong. They need lots of action and in the end reflection and a debate about the workshop. Exercise was really nice and also useful to get to know their interests and opinions. They found it funny as they do not do this kind of exercises usually. They liked it a lot, because it was a different approach from what they are used in their everyday classes.

### LIVE SCULPTURE AND IMPRO

We had to divide the kids into groups of 4-5. It was nice to see, that they ended up in different groups all the time during the project, and no one was complaining, that he did not want to work with X or Y or sit next to Z. They managed to cooperate in any possible ad hoc mixture. They found it difficult at the beginning. With a little bit of patience they managed it very well at the end.

### TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

This activity was liked very much by children, trainers had to give more time than they first planned because children were highly motivated and inspired and opened up to tell their stories.

#### Reaction of the children:

- Everybody has their own life story and we can learn a lot from each other's life experiences.
- I feel I know my friends better now.

### PUPPETS TELL THE STORY

Sometimes it looked like students could express themselves better through the puppet and sometimes, as they were only boys, the puppets were too childish for them or they didn't want to play some emotions. For example anger was difficult for them – nevertheless they could show it good but not when they were in the focus. They had fun and they found it difficult to create something for the stage. They liked to play but to show in public is the other level. But they did it and this is important.

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This activity was most enjoyed. Children liked it, trainers liked it and it was useful at the same time. Most of the groups chose to work on fairy tales, just one on a film scene. Children enjoyed most making the puppets and working on the scene. They successfully made the connections between the story and real life situations. One play was presented for the school principal with a lively discussion afterwards.

## RECOMMENDATIONS/EXPERIENCE

■ **Actually try out the exercises and act them out.** Experience shows that educators are more likely to use exercises that they have tried out themselves.

■ **Work on the attitudes of the trainers and educators:** The project's approach of not only presenting the methods theoretically, but also trying them out and acting them out with the educators and theater makers themselves, automatically led to an examination of their own conceptions of democracy and participation. This reflective and self-reflective approach was important in order to guarantee that they are credible actors in the project.

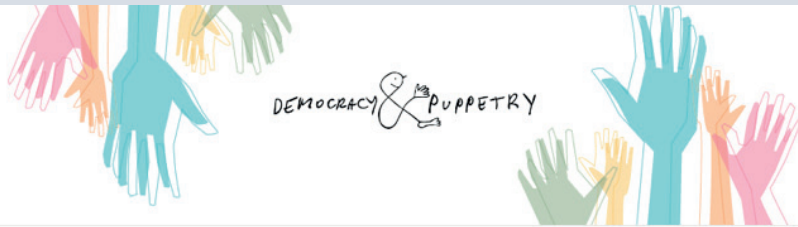
■ **Allow enough time for the preparation and adaptation of the method.**

- How do I need to set up the exercise to make it inclusive?
- How do I need to adapt the exercise to fit the project context?
- Does the exercise fit the group?

- Does the exercise fit me as a trainer? Do I feel comfortable leading this exercise?

■ **Allow enough time for joint reflection with the children and young people.** This approach is important in two respects. On the one hand, sustainable learning progress only emerges in the reflection of the process. On the other hand, the joint reflection shows the young people that they are taken seriously in their experience and that the educators also perceive themselves as learning persons in the process.

■ **The combination of citizenship education methods and artistic methods leads to a particularly lasting learning experience.** The multi-stage approach (citizenship education, action research phase, theatre pedagogical introduction) proved to be important: a good preparation of the content led to a very conscious choice of topics for the plays, the different methods encouraged all young people to feel addressed and to get involved.



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On the project's multilingual website you will find not only more information about the project's progress, but also materials to download. In addition to this *polis* aktuell, the project also produced a DVD with documentation of the national processes. Parts of the documentation are also available in all five project languages.

[www.democracyandpuppetry.eu](http://www.democracyandpuppetry.eu)



Nationale Projekte

### Premiere in Belgrad: „Better Field or Playing the Republic“

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