

International projects Europeans for Peace – looking back in cooperation for a better future

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Abstract

The projects within the program Europeans for Peace were dedicated to different forms of discrimination and resistance to discrimination in the time of National Socialism and today's society in Germany and Slovenia. The topics of the three projects were forced labor, different forms of resistance to discrimination in society and the everyday life of people with disabilities in the past and now. The participation in the projects consisted of participants' meetings and individual and group examination of documentation. Special attention was paid to the intergenerational dialogue, social responsibility, active citizenship, the promotion of understanding the differences and to the connection of the topic to the current matters in the society. The results of the projects are usually an exhibition and a webpage, which are jointly produced and presented to the public. The projects strengthen creative international and intercultural cooperation and help young people develop different competences and skills required for the successful inclusion of socially responsible behavior in their everyday life.

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Key words: discrimination, National Socialism, intergenerational dialogue, creative cooperation, social responsibility, competences

Mednarodni projekti 'Evropejci za mir' – pogled nazaj v sodelovanju za boljšo prihodnost

Povzetek

Projekti, ki so nastali v sklopu programa Europeans for Peace (Evropejci za mir), so posvečeni različnim oblikam diskriminacije in upora v obdobju nacionalsocializma in v sodobnem času v Nemčiji in Sloveniji. Projekti so obravnavali sledeče teme: prisilno delo, različne oblike upora proti diskriminaciji in vsakodnevno življenje ljudi s posebnimi potrebami v preteklosti in dandanes. Sodelovanje v projektih je zajemalo srečanja udeležencev ter individualno in skupinsko preučevanje dokumentacije. Posebno pozornost smo posvetili medgeneracijskemu dialogu, razvijanju družbene odgovornosti in aktivnega državljanstva, spodbujanju razumevanja različnosti in povezavi tematike s pojavi v sodobni družbi. Rezultat projekta sta po navadi razstava in spletna stran, ki ju sodelujoči oblikujejo skupaj in tudi predstavijo širši javnosti. Projekti podpirajo mednarodno in medkulturno sodelovanje in pomagajo mladim razvijati raznovrstne kompetence in veščine, ki jim omogočajo, da družbeno odgovorno ravnanje uspešno vključujejo v svoje vsakodnevno življenje in delovanje.



Ključne besede: diskriminacija, nacionalsocializem, medgeneracijski dialog, kreativno sodelovanje, družbena odgovornost, kompetence

1 Europeans for Peace: Introduction to the projects

International youth projects Europeans for Peace are a part of a funding program of the German Foundation EVZ (Stiftung EVZ, Erinnerung – Verantwortung – Zukunft). The aim of the projects is to get young people interested in human rights, moral courage and social responsibility. In joint project work young people address diversity, respect and social cohesion. The exchange projects strive for open and diverse societies in a future-oriented manner. Participants in these projects develop their historical responsibility and reflect on their own experiences. They also develop a critical attitude towards discrimination and implement their social commitment and active citizenship. The reference point for historical learning is the history of National Socialism and World War II in Europe. Young people get to know the reasons, mechanisms and the consequences of social exclusion, persecution and human rights abuse in the past and now and connect them with the forms of discrimination in society today.

Europeans for Peace promotes international exchange projects for young people from the countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Israel and Germany. The binational and tri-national projects involve young people between the ages of 14 and 25 from schools and non-school educational institutions with a partner organization from Germany. The projects should address the life world of young people in the participating country and they should be developed and implemented jointly by taking into account the viewpoints and the experiences of the partner organization. The projects should stimulate the intergenerational dialogue and the cooperation with the local community. The results of the projects include the presentation of findings to a wide range of audiences and are multilingual.

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The participating schools or organizations can apply for the funding of travel expenses, costs of accommodation and board, materials for developing and presenting the results and fees. The projects usually involve two exchange visits of maximum 7 days.

2 Europeans for Peace projects at Škofijska gimnazija Vipava

2.1 Life stories behind history (2014 / 2015)

The project carried out in the school year 2014/2015 was grouped into the category Discrimination in the time of National Socialism and was mainly dedicated to the forced labor. 26 students and four teachers were included in the project (13 students from Škofijska gimnazija Vipava, Slovenia and 13 from Max Beckmann Oberschule Berlin, Germany). The main issues that students had to tackle were: the number of people included in forced labor in the time of National Socialism, the states of origin of forced laborers, their everyday life and the areas in which forced labor was mostly performed.

The preparation for the first exchange visit in Berlin involved the research of different forms of discrimination in the time of National Socialism. Slovene participants were also involved in searching for Slovene forced laborers who were willing to tell their life story to the students. During the exchange visit in Berlin the participating students studied the main issues of the



project at the German school individually or in groups, visited the Karlshorst Museum and did research work at the Nazi Forced Labor Documentation Centre Schöneweide and Landesarchiv Berlin.

The second exchange visit took place in Slovenia. The participating students visited Pokrajinski arhiv Nova Gorica (Regional archives Nova Gorica) and Muzej novejšje zgodovine in Ljubljana (The National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia), where they searched for documents and information about forced laborers from Slovenia. They also visited the synagogue in Gorizia (Italy) and met some representatives of the Jewish community. The most important event of the exchange visit in Slovenia was the meeting with some survivors of the Nazi regime who were deported to Germany and were forced to work in factories, on farms or within a concentration camp. The meeting with the survivors was enabled by the Slovenian Exiles Society (Društvo izgnancev Slovenije). For most students this was the most memorable event of the exchange as many of them have never met a person who survived the horrors of a concentration camp before. In the last phase of the project the students wrote articles and designed an exhibition. The results of the project were a webpage about the project, a special thematic issue of the school newspaper Iskre and an exhibition, which was displayed on both participating schools, in the municipality building Šempeter – Vrtojba and in the Lanthieri Manor in Vipava.

2.2 Facing discrimination (2015/2016)

In the school year 2015/2016 a project with Geschwister Scholl Schule from Leutkirch in Allgäu was started. The title of the project was Facing discrimination - German and Slovenian Youth research how different people from both countries resisted discrimination in the Nazi period.

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The first exchange meeting was held in Germany in November 2015. At the beginning of the exchange a meeting with three migrants from Syria and Africa was organized. Participating students listened to their life stories and held an interview with them. The main topic of individual and group work at school was discrimination and resistance in the period of the Nazi regime in Germany and different forms of discrimination in society today. During an excursion to Ulm students visited the memorial site dedicated to Sophie and Hans Scholl, members of the White Rose resistance movement, which practiced non-violent resistance to the Nazi regime by spreading leaflets throughout Munich and other southern German cities. The students also visited the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich, where The White Rose memorial exhibition is held.

The exchange meeting in Slovenia in March 2016 started with an intergenerational dialogue. The students spent some time at the Pristan residential care home for senior citizens in Vipava, where they visited some of the residents and discussed with them different forms of resistance to the German occupation in Slovenia during World War II. The meeting was followed by individual and group work at school with the aim of designing an exhibition and a school webpage about the project and its findings. The project work also included research work in the Regional Archives Nova Gorica and in the France Bevk Public Library Nova Gorica. Research work was done with documents and archive materials by paying special attention to the usage of the written word as a form of resistance. In the National Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia students visited a permanent exhibition about the Second World War in Slovenia. The last part of the exchange was a meeting with people who told the students their life stories



from the Second World War and discussed with them the ways in which people tried to resist the German occupation. The cooperative work of students resulted in an exhibition which was presented to the public on both participating schools. In Slovenia the exhibition was also held in Solkan, Miren and in Ljubljana at Beethovnova ulica 3.

2.3 Do not disable us (2017/2018)

The project about people with a disability in the time of National Socialism was done in cooperation with Berufskolleg Tecklenburger Land des Kreises Steinfurt in Ibberbüren. Participating students researched archive materials, made interviews and tried to experience what it is like to be a person with a disability in everyday life. Before, during and after the exchange the students dealt with a number of aspects of the topic. They paid special attention to euthanasia during the Nazi period.

During the first exchange meeting, which was held in Vipava, Slovenia, in October 2017, students visited The Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia in Ljubljana, where a guided tour and a short lecture about the deportation of Slovenian citizens during the Second World War was held. In Trieste, Italy, they visited Rižarna, a former concentration camp during the Nazi regime. Participating students spent some time with children from CIRIUS Vipava (Centre for Education and Rehabilitation of Physically Handicapped Children and Adolescents) in order to get an insight into their everyday life and into professional work in the center. Beside cooperative work at school a special workshop dedicated to the use of the theatre of the oppressed to face discrimination of people with a disability carried out by PINA was organized for the participating students.

The exchange visit in Germany in March 2018 comprised students' cooperative work with different sources and workshops. In Münster participants visited Historical Place Villa ten Hompel, which was used as the domicile of the regional uniformed police forces during the Nazi regime in Germany. The students visited a permanent exhibition and participated in a workshop held by the research center. A guided city tour of Münster concentrated on the life in the city during the Nazi regime. The students also visited the Remembrance Place Gestapo Basement in Osnabrück and a memorial place site Augustaschacht, where they participated in a workshop and did research work with documents. A meeting with Ingrid Matko von Oelhafen, who had been taken away from her Slovenian parents as a baby and later grew up with German parents was of particular interest for the participating students. Special attention was paid to the workshops at Ledder Werkstätten, where students had a possibility to work together with people with a disability. During group work at school students did research work with materials and documents dedicated to euthanasia and forced sterilization in the Nazi Germany in order to set up an exhibition and a school webpage about the project.

2.4 Participants' opinion, evaluation and sustainable impact of the projects

At the end of each project a survey for the participating students and an open discussion were carried out in order to gain relevant information about the design and implementation of the project. The participants were very much interested in meeting their peers from other countries and changing their daily school routine. Meetings with the survivors of World War II and the victims of National Socialism was for most of the participating students the best and the most memorable part of the project. German participants were especially interested in meeting the survivors and victims of the Nazi regime. For most of them this was their first life time



experience as they had never met a victim of the Nazi regime before. The participants also stressed the importance of getting the possibility of learning about the Second World War in a different, more effective and interactive way.

The project work encouraged and developed cooperation between schools and enabled the participants to get to know other cultures, reduce prejudices and develop intercultural skills. Participating students engaged in the topics and broadened their knowledge. The projects helped the students improve their command of English and German language. Thus both languages have become a normal means of communication rather than a school subject in both speaking and writing.

By visiting and meeting survivors of World War II students promoted the participation of young people in the intergenerational dialogue. Meetings and workshops with people with a disability gave the participants a deeper insight in the everyday life and the needs of these people. The students particularly underlined the fact that by participating in the project they developed a deeper understanding of social issues and get encouraged to promote responsible social behavior.

3 Conclusion

International youth projects Europeans for Peace emphasize the importance of learning and the acceptance and understanding of others. They support the participants in developing their intercultural and intergenerational skills and make them more competent as active and socially responsible citizens. The topics of the projects enable the participants to connect the past with the present and the future. Furthermore, the projects encourage participating students to connect the findings and results with their personal experience and the present situation in the society and to advocate social and historical issues important for their local community and society as a whole.

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