StandUp for Europe!

Argumentation Training Against Undemocratic Slogans: European Extension and Updating

Project Ref. No: 2023-2-DE04-KA220-YOU-000175190

Dealing Adequately with Anti-democratic Slogans

Volume 1: Training Manual on Fostering Democracy in Europe

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standup4.eu

Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships in Youth (KA220-YOU) Programme

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Florian Wenzel, Katrin Kuhla, Christian Boeser, Klaus-Peter Hufer

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www.standup4.eu

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Introduction: How to use this manual

Background

The project ‘Stand Up for Europe’ (www.standup4.eu) aims to increase the quality, innovation and recognition of youth work, and to promote active citizenship, young people's sense of initiative and youth entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship, to enable people to effectively embrace European values. The focus of this training manual is updating and Europeanizing the German "Training against Regular Table Slogans" (Argumentationstraining gegen Stammtischparolen) and spreading it to other European countries. Dr. Michael Sommer from the Akademie Klausenhof (www.akademie-klausenhof.de) took the initiative and successfully applied for an ERASMUS+ project to put this idea into practice together with partners from Türkiye (Doğa Schools), Hungary (Katolikus Ifjúsági Alapítvány - Catholic Youth Foundation), Italy (InEuropa SRL) and Slovenia (Socialna Akademija).

The initial training had been developed 25 years ago by Prof. Dr. Klaus-Peter Hufer and is one of the best known and used trainings of civic education in Germany and German-speaking countries. In its origins, it focuses on combating tendencies of right-wing extremism in Germany by working with rationally-based argumentation strategies. Over the years, components of self-reflection, values, emotions and structural developments of modern Western societies were added by Hufer and colleagues who took up his idea and integrated it into their approaches.

The University of Augsburg, where the Network on Civic Education in Bavaria (Netzwerk Politische Bildung Bayern – www.politische-bildung-bayern.net) is located, has worked with this approach in numerous projects theoretically and practically and worked together with Prof. Dr. Hufer by composing this training manual.

The Stand Up for Europe! Project builds upon Prof. Hufer’s concept and books, integrating the approach with additional perspectives, including all extremist populist anti-Europeanist approaches, and contributing to the preparation of the curriculum with special regards to the definition of training activities.

Objectives and Target Groups

The *Training Manual on fostering democracy in Europe* is mainly aimed at Youth leaders, Youth workers and teachers who want to get hands-on material for designing training with young people. Its 40 activities provide a wide range of cognitive, emotional, concrete and very open options for putting together such training sessions with a duration from 60 minutes to five days. The clear focus is on young people coming together in presence and working on the basis of their everyday experiences, fears and hopes as human beings wanting to live together peacefully. More than ever these analogue spaces for personal and individual encounters are needed. Recent findings in digitalization of education suggest that it is of utmost relevance to safeguard times for non-digital learning; this is also why there will be no explicit activities dealing with populism and anti-democratic developments in social media. It became clear during the last 2-4 years that pedagogical work which builds on some trust does no longer function in the current context of ‘social’ media: intransparent algorithms, powerful capitalist platforms defending what they call freedom of speech as well as an enormous expansion of digital bots call for different forms of regulation, sanction and red lines. We appreciate all efforts in this direction – at the same time it should be clear that educators should not let themselves be tricked into doing something with ‘social media’ which will be impossible as long as their basic mechanisms do not change. Current

discussions on the European level concerning the ban of social media for young people under the age of 16 show how dramatically the situation has developed.

Our main aim is therefore to strengthen young people in their trust towards each other, building communities that can resist the temptations of hatred, extremism and exclusionary moves which are currently not only supported by some, but increasingly by a number of political and economic leaders of Europe and beyond. Trusting, inspired and creative young people will recognize best what is helpful for living together, and what is not and hopefully rather exit existing social media than trying to win over them. At the same time this manual wants to provide possibilities for working with adults – as trainers but also multipliers who spread what they experienced to other young people in their extended families. This is an important contribution to strengthen informal learning spaces between the generations and adds to the sustainability of training.

Overview

This training manual presents in its *first part a* background on threats to European democracy by populism and extremism; it sketches democracy as a form of life in the sense of living together peacefully as our way of responding to this challenge.

The *second part* consists of 40 activities which are arranged in what we call different ‘angles’ to look at anti-democratic slogans from a holistic perspective.

The four angles are:

A. Identity and values

B. Dealing with conflicts and dilemmas

C. Confronting anti-democratic slogans

D. Structures of power, privilege and discrimination.

The third *part* presents training options for young people. It shows the logic of the different activities and starts by giving visual examples of how to arrange, put together and combine different activities according to specific topics you might use in training sessions. Concrete examples from European partners illustrate sample trainings that have already been tested. In this part we also give a concise summary of hints concerning challenging situations in a training and invite trainers to integrate democratic evaluation as part of the learning experience.

In the *fourth part* of this manual we sum up many ideas by providing concrete hints for why it is necessary to intervene in the light of populism and provide ten theses on what it means to be an active citizen in Europe. This part can be used as a summary handout after a workshop and also as an overview tool for interested cooperation partners.

Finally the *fifth part g*ives more background on the approach of Prof. Klaus Peter Hufer’s original argumentation training and its further developments; it connects it with insights on anti-democratic slogans by the European partners of the project.

Volume 2: Deepening the approach

In a separate publication (*Volume 2*) you will find a lot of background on socio-political developments and the theoretical foundations of our approach. Questions of didactics, quality criteria and evaluation will be looked at in detail in this document. This is especially interesting for

train-the-trainers and managers of Youth organisations who want to take this approach to the next level. It can also be used for academic interaction and presentation at conferences dealing with questions of current developments in civic education fostering democracy in Europe. In this separate publication you will also find all the bibliographical references made in this training manual.

We want to thank all our partners institutions and especially all those persons from Türkiye, Italy, Slovenija, Hungary and Germany who have passionately dedicated their time, inspiration and creativity in adding to and critically reviewing this training, testing it in many events around Europe. The way we worked together in this partnership was a truly trustful and democratic learning experience by itself. Dr. Michael Sommer from Akademie Klausenhof brought us all together as consortium manager with an experience of over 20 years in European projects. It is his last project before starting a new phase after his working life – we thank you and wish you all the best, it was a pleasure working together with you!

We hope this training manual is a contribution to fostering and expanding the idea of democratic *Europe* as a model for living peacefully united in diversity.

Florian Wenzel, Katrin Kuhla, Christian Boeser, Klaus-Peter Hufer

Munich, July 2025

Part 1: Dealing adequately with anti-democratic slogans

The challenge: populist moves in Europe

Slogans, extremism and democracy

When we are talking about populist slogans, we are always talking about reducing complexity in combination with trying to dominate some other group and mark them as inferior or less worthy than oneself. Slogans tend to go into the direction of one or the other kind of extremism, as they simplify things to the extreme and do not allow for shades of grey. Additionally, their often emotional tone prevents differentiated argumentation and sensitive discourse. In this way we could say that populist slogans are anti-democratic in the sense that they close down creative possibilities of democracy. Democracy always means a certain amount of self-doubt, uncertainty, which is the other side of keeping open different options for the future. Democracy wants to differentiate, never absolutizes its position, grants mistakes and sees dilemmas which make the picture more colorful than black/white-thinking.

In this sense Democracy is normative – not normative towards a certain political brand, be it on the left or on the right side of the spectrum, but normative to defend an open, diverse and inclusive society based on the equality of all human beings. Basically this normativity is given by the basis of the human rights which are the basis of many modern constitutions.

Democratic slogans?

With this in mind, the interesting question is, whether there could be ‚pro-democratic' slogans in the name of this normativity. We know different examples in which slogans are used to express solidarity with those discriminated in the sense of „we all are…" – in current times they often express themselves on Social Media, two famous examples are #metoo to criticize violence against women and #blacklivesmatter to speak out against racist events in society and by the state against black people.

Pro-democratic slogans therefore take the side of the 'weaker ones'/discriminated ones in society as a counter to dominating power structures? They want to be a counter-balance to extremist tendencies and increase complexity as they speak up against closing down options for minorities and weaker groups.

Sometimes it is not easy to decide whether a specific slogan is pro- or antidemocratic with a tendency towards extremism. It depends on who uses it with which strategy. Especially in contexts of insecurity in a society, slogans can be used to form and assert a strong identity in order not to be excluded by strong powers in that society. At the same time, this form of identity can be exclusionary by itself. Examples which are seen very differently depending on one's perspective are gender language, assertion of veganism and current issues of war and peace. Slogans in this context can be seen as an ideology closing down options or they can be seen as assertions

opening up new possibilities and freedom for more human beings. The clear focus of our project are anti-democratic slogans, but the reflections above should also be kept in mind not to become self-righteous and arrogant when working in this field. In *Volume 2 – Deepening the approach,* you will find a lot of reflections on the socio-political background of populist and anti-democratic developments in Europe and also psychological aspects of mental health which become increasingly relevant in migration societies.

The response: Democracy as a form of life

Strengthening European values is a task that is linked to the question of how Europe will manage to find a balance between unity and diversity; between the need to take position and not excluding others; the challenge to remain open without giving up identity. It is basically a question about upholding democracy and how democracy can give inspiration to the people of this continent. Increasingly, democracy is under pressure: according to the Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2023 (EIU, 2023)1, democratization has recently suffered further setbacks. Less than 8% of the world's population live in a full democracy, while almost 40% live under authoritarian rule. The global Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend. At the same time, the report shows empirically that democracy itself is in no way a guarantee to prevent global crises such as climate change, or settle international conflicts and wars. Democracies open up enormous opportunities to their citizens, and at the same time, they do not always provide decisive and quick answers to challenges. So democracy is no longer the only attractive narrative for the future as authoritarian networks are building strong ties to secure advantage of the few against the majority of the people, as Anne Applebaum shows in her impressive report *Autocracy, Inc.* (see Applebaum 2024): authoritarian rulers are linking up internationally and secure land, capital and resources with the help of companies and investment organisations. Existing democracies are realizing that their means to confront these tendencies seem too weak to work in a world of crises and wars. The frustration about governments in Europe grows as they are unable to deliver the desired goods and are confronted with multiple crises like a shift in international order, war and climate change. Populists, especially right-wing populists, take up this frustration and convert suppressed bad feelings into their extreme forms. They are operating with strong right/wrong and good/bad distinctions and claim that they would be the real democrats uttering all those opinions forbidden by the 'elites' who are to be generally distrusted. They claim to re-enter diversity but at the same time have an absolutist idea about their own values which mostly go hand in hand by wanting to exclude all those weaker ones that are not deemed to be part of the 'people'. Another authoritarian shift oppressing diversity in the name of an 'alternative truth'. Lewandowsky et al. (2025) describe in *The Anti-Autocracy Handbook. A Scholars' Guide to Navigating Democratic backsliding* the 3Ps of autocracy: Populism, Polarization, Post-truth. They are analyzing how these influences lead from democracy over an emerging and competitive autocracy to totalitarian autocracy in which elections play no real role and legal spaces for protest do not exist anymore.

In this training manual we suggest that we look at democracy from a more fundamental point of view in order to re-vitalize it for Europe: democracy is not a thing – we can not have or own it; democracy is not simply a technical set of rules and regulations to be installed. The management of things and beings is important, but leads to the liberal-capitalist assumption that democracy could be run like a company generating added value for all – a good brand to be consumed,

1 Please note that a list of bibliographical references can be found in Volume 2: Deepening the approach

without asking too much about content. This fosters a very passive understanding of democracy: we are consumers and want those responsible for democracy to deliver goods; an understanding in which values, diversity and dealing with conflicts are excluded in favor of ‘neutral’ decisions without alternatives. Democracy is seen by many as something that real experts should take into their hands – not the people, but smart technocrats will take the decisions – indeed another quite authoritarian shift eliminating the diversity of voices.

Stand Up for Europe! starts with democracy as an open question that is posed to all of us. A fundamental question that shows that the idea of democracy is directly linked to what it means to be a human being, a question to human life itself. A question that cannot be answered once and for all; a question that calls all of us to responsibility again and again. A question that begins in the family, the neighborhood and ranges up to the complex construct like ‘Europe’. In this way, it wants to foster what has been termed ‘radical democracy’, in the sense of the Latin word radix/root, trying to fundamentally go back to what democracy could mean. 'Radical democracy' normatively means strengthening the roots of democracy which are diversity, inclusiveness and active participation (for the origins see Mouffe 1992).

The question is very simple but fundamental:

“How do we want to live together in Europe?”

Let’s look at the different components of this question to make more precise how democracy is understood here:

- *“How do”*

These two words remind us to make the enterprise of answering the question of democracy concrete; the ‘how do’ asks for a frame in which this can happen. One answer is to install, strengthen, and facilitate spaces of daily interaction where diverse people come together. This can be activities in daily public spaces, busses, community centers – spaces that are safe enough to talk about diversity and conflicts; often it is helpful to add a creative and tangible element, doing something together, cooperating and realizing that the question of democracy is not abstract, but can be felt and touched with others.

- *“we”*

Democracy is never for others, it is for us. This is why the question of democracy is constantly posed in different contexts: how do we deal with the ‘here and now’ in a given group? And, more importantly: who are we, how closed or open are we? In our context, does Europe mean the European Union, the continent, all those that feel European? ‘We’ poses the question of openness: who can be part of the we, where are the limits (of time, complexity, energy). Which consequences do ‘we’ accept when drawing lines to others? Should we regard the global community, should we even include animals and things as we see that nature itself reacts to climate change and needs new forms of giving it a unique voice? To extend the limits of ‘we’ is part of expanding democracy.

- *“want”*

Democracy does not prescribe how we should live. The freedom to start from one's personal values and essential needs is key to democracy. What we want is often linked to emotions. This dimension of democracy is underrated and at the same time abused by populists, stirring up emotions to the extreme. We should positively appreciate what we really want and need and thus strengthen the value-basis of democracy. Appreciation is the motivation and inspiration to be creative for new paths in the future.

- *"to live"*

Democracy is not simply about knowledge, better arguments or the best analysis. Democracy links itself to life, it respects biographies, dreams, aspirations of human beings who are born and will die. Thus, democracy is an activity, it cannot be thought but has to be done, experienced, felt. Doing democracy means granting a fulfilled life to all – this begins with our daily actions and decisions. To take responsibility for democracy means supporting the unfolding of life itself. To protect this very essence of democracy, a constitution with human rights safeguards human life as a non-negotiable absolute.

- *"together"*

Democracy deals with diversity, it cannot be done by some. Together we live on this planet and have to find out how we constantly balance majority and minority, privilege and discrimination, participation and decision; together also means positively regarding value conflicts as the essence of dealing with each other. Together we can construct the contexts and arrangements required to deal with each other peacefully. This also means that violence is not acceptable as it enters a win/lose logic for living together; instead, it is acknowledged that living together involves many tensions, dilemmas and often painful decisions with the hope to find better answers in the future.

- *"in Europe"*

The great promise of the project of the European Union is and was to fulfill the aspiration of combining unity with diversity. Different cultures, languages, traditions to be united on one continent. The different waves of expanding the European Union posed this question more and more, but also led to a crisis: is the common market all that unites us? What about those currently undermining the idea of the European Union? What about countries currently excluded? Where does Europe start and where does it end? How can Europe remain open and protected at the same time? What would a European democracy in diversity mean in the end?

If you are interested in deepening the conceptual approach of strengthening European values, please also consult the respective part in the *Volume 2* of our approach.

Part 2: Pool of 40 activities

Character and logic of the different activities

Kinds of activities

In this chapter a wide range of activities is presented. In some of them, variants are presented to offer the opportunity to work on a topic with pre-defined scenarios or to work very openly and directly with examples from the respective target group. We deliberately refrain from categorizing the exercises according to specific target groups, since this often enough goes hand in hand with a repetition of the stereotyping and objectifying them; furthermore, it also repeatedly implies a very elitist image of 'learning' and 'knowledge' that is putting trainers as reflective people over others marked with deficits: “They are given names like mentally ill, physically disabled, developmentally disabled, youth-at-risk, single moms, welfare recipients, people in the trailer court, immigrants. All of these people have gifts we need for a real strong community.” (McKnight 2013, 17). This turns things around: instead of treating and targeting certain groups, maybe in the end we are the learners and get gifts from them. This attitude invites to design a shared learning environment with new insights for all.

In this sense the activities open up a trustful and appreciative room for interaction, experience and process for all human beings as such. Most of the time, about 80 % of the ‘content’ of an activity will be contributed by the biographical experiences of the participants. In this sense, we chose not to work too much with pre-defined topics like Euroscepticism, climate change or technological domination; rather, the activities invite the participants to responsibly bring on the table what bothers or frightens them and then work with that. This means that trainers should be ready to adopt an open ‘inductive’ educational approach which does not want to convey ‘expert knowledge’ on certain topics but picks up what comes from the everyday experience of his or her participants. As Peter Levine puts it in one sentence: “Relational organizing does not start with a cause, but rather with a set of people.“ (Levine 2013, 112).

The range of activities in each subsection is broad and allows for adaptation and use in very different settings. Examples can be found in the section on examples of workshops. The focus is fundamentally on active learning as a social event and on learning support from trainers who take independent processes in the group seriously and, in the best case, see them as an opportunity to define topics.

The activities can generally be divided into different categories.

Experiential activity: based on the direct experience of a situation “at first hand” and requires a high level of self-involvement on the part of the participants. These are often exercises that allow something to be expressed and experienced in a non-verbal way.

Cognitive activity: aims to achieve a factual examination of the topic, which is primarily geared towards mental processes. Conscious reflection is used to promote rationally acquired knowledge. Especially in the case of exercises for transfer to one's own everyday life, as well as for exercises for securing results and evaluation, this also involves written work.

Biographical activity: used to support self-awareness and the awareness of others by examining one's own biography and to develop an understanding of the contextuality of one's own or others' experiences. In exchange with others, one's own life is to be examined in order to, on the one hand, free oneself from preconceptions about others and, on the other hand, to gain insights for the present and the future and for dealing with each other.

Role play: the aim of this interactive simulation is to get the group process started. By taking on someone else's role, participants can see things from a different perspective and gain new experiences. In the subsequent evaluation, the relationship between the person and the role is taken into account, and the connection between the mechanisms and processes of the simulation and real-life situations is examined.

Visual activity: directly geared towards emotions and creativity. Using alternative forms of communication such as photos or film material, the participants are visually confronted with situations from everyday life and the environment, so that spontaneous perceptions, associations and evaluations arise before cognitive reflection and can be illustrated using a non-verbal means.

Statement of position: to challenge the participants to take a personal position on an issue and thus to adopt a specific perspective for which they have to take a stand. This method can spark a sense of direct concern and thus interest in an issue or problem. Among other things, dilemma situations can arise and be reflected upon. Different to a role play, participants use their own conviction and do not adopt someone else’s position.

Setting, teachers’ involvement and materials

For workshop contexts, a room with an open circle of chairs and tables at the edge that can be used for small group work is recommended. The openness of the setting is congruent with the openness of interactive work and the equal footing and appreciation of everyone's independent contributions. However, a more classic seminar setting with tables in a U-shape can also be useful in some circumstances to avoid exposure in an open circle of chairs at first. Especially in a school setting, the normalization through front-back, teacher-student is still very strong and should not simply be completely interrupted from the outside, as this can lead to uncertainty about which (new) norms apply in the context of a workshop. In any case, a conversation with teachers is useful as part of a clarification of the assignment in this context. Also, as school is a formalized and non-voluntary setting, the question of whether teachers should participate in the workshop is also important. On the one hand, a protected setting may be useful for students in particular, but on the other hand, the absence of teachers implicitly promotes target group orientation again and not democratic cooperation between teachers and students. Here, too, it is important to weigh up the individual case and include the school's assessment.

Ideally, a flipchart and movable screens should be available to visualize models, processes and work results. Small groups can take 'their' screen with them for independent work and thus also experience personal responsibility and appreciation of their results.

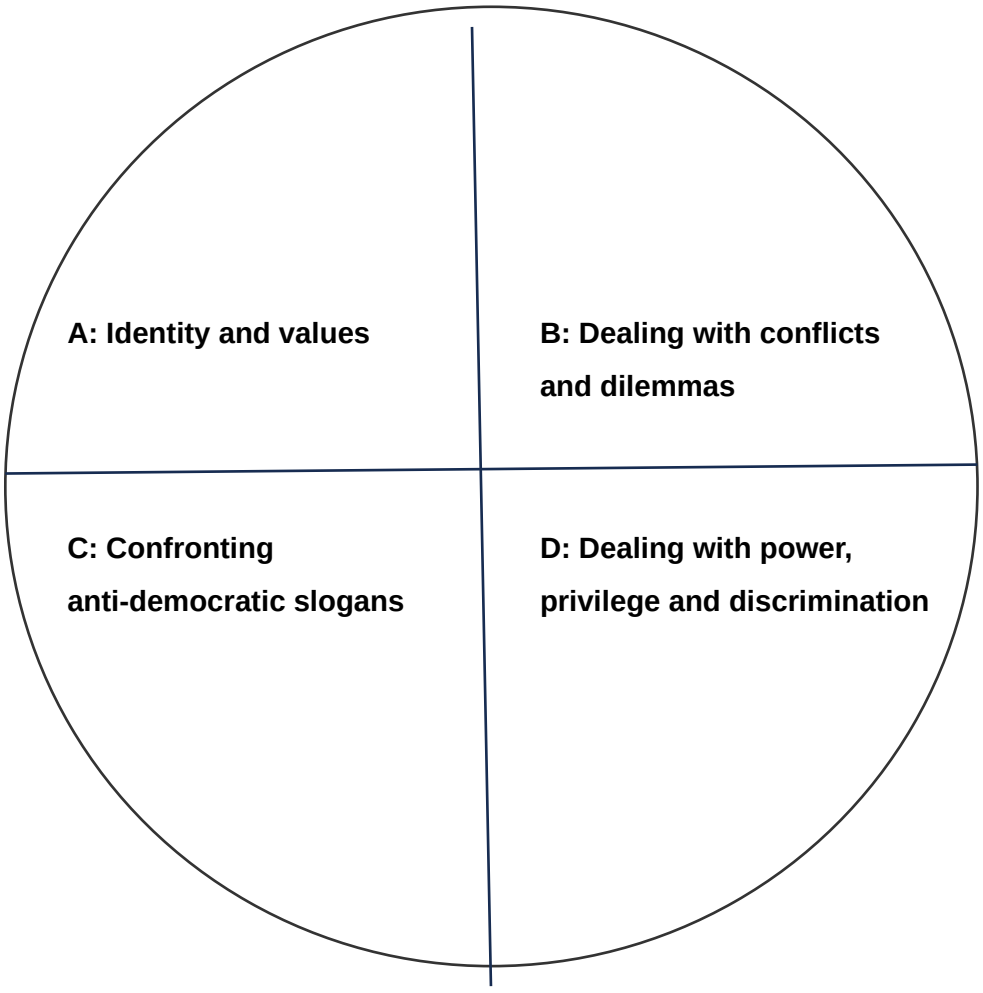
A seminar case with flipchart pens, scissors, pin needles, wax pens, crepe roll, cards, DIN A4 sheets and a signal bell is part of the standard equipment for flexible and appropriate work. For presentations, a projector is now available in most schools – this can be used for content-related orientation, but should not be in the foreground, especially in the workshop setting, so as not to distract from the focus of the joint activity.

When it comes to materials, it is important to ensure that they serve as an 'enabler', but should not be in the foreground for their own sake. Very elaborate and perfectly designed multi-colored flipcharts run the risk of outshining the exercises and content; here, too, it is important to find a balance in order to express appreciation for the shared learning process with visual design.

The logic of the activities – four different angles

Activities follow a logic throughout the different angles from A to D; each angle presents many alternatives for exploring it. A training should last at least one day and contain a minimum of one activity from each topic to cover the basic aspects. In the context of schools or recurring groups, e.g. each week one activity could be picked. When all the angles from A to D are covered, you can achieve a truly comprehensive and holistic coverage of dealing with anti-democratic slogans – yet there can be good reasons for focusing on a specific angle only.

Here is a summary of the different angles that combine to a holistic approach of a full circle:



Angle A: Identity and values

In this section you will find activities that work with emotions, identity and values. Reflecting these dimensions of human life is a necessary pre-requisite for dealing productively with anti-democratic slogans. Even more, it is at the core of what ‘radical democracy’ means, going to the root of how we want to live together.

Angle B: Dealing with conflicts and dilemmas

This angle continues dealing with values and connects them with the fact that we live in a world of diversity. You can use activities that bring participants into small conflicts with each other. Building upon that, the relevance of accepting fundamental democratic dilemmas is shown. Looking at anti-democratic slogans from this angle prepares for dealing with them adequately beyond ‘right or wrong’.

Angle C: Confronting anti-democratic slogans

Taking this angle, you will find two aspects of confrontation: developing an attitude which is helpful for keeping contact and conversation, and techniques which provide options for dealing with anti-democratic slogans. Concrete scenarios will help to find productive solutions to respect the diversity of opinions in a society while defending democracy.

Angle D: Dealing with power, privilege and discrimination

This angle focuses on often neglected aspects when dealing with anti-democratic slogans. Especially in longer training sessions where participants sit in a circle, it seems that all are equal. Yet they and we all are embedded in societal structures of power, privilege and discrimination. This issue will be tackled with different approaches in order to understand anti-democratic slogans are linked to structural and also historical phenomena.

This logic allows you to choose from many different options when putting together a training, also taking into consideration the categories identified in the previous chapter. You can focus on specific topics, important values, on self-reflection or action, on more academic or hands-on activities. In order to provide good orientation, the following deck of cards with colors was developed.

Please note that generally you should start with angles A and B as they start immediately from everyday experiences, connect participants in an appreciative way and enter into reflections on difference, tension and conflict. Parts C and D contain the ‘harder’ topics: confrontations with populist people and those uttering anti-democratic slogans as well as structural impacts of power and discrimination. Never forget these issues in your workshops but decide responsibly at which point they can be introduced to a group of young people.

Additional Online resources

Young people, in particular, gain additional value from using visual online materials. As part of the Stand Up for Europe! project, we developed 40 different scenarios that can be used as supplements in the workshop and, after the workshop, as self-learning tools in everyday situations. You can access the scenarios online at https://www.standup4.eu/

Angle A: Identity and values

In this section you will find activities that work with emotions, identity and values. Reflecting these dimensions of human life is a necessary pre-requisite for dealing productively with anti-democratic slogans. Even more, it is at the core of what ‘radical democracy’ means, going to the root of how we want to live together.

A1. Who am I?

This high-energy activity encourages participants to explore their identity through rapid questions and creative expression. Participants will reflect on their values, passions, and unique qualities, fostering self-awareness and celebrating individuality in a fun, fast-paced environment.

Objectives

- Encouraging rapid self-reflection and identify core values
- Promoting creative expression and celebrating individual uniqueness in a fun way
- Fostering a sense of community and shared exploration

Setting and material

- Small pieces of paper (enough to be handed out in little decks of 5-6 to each participant).
- Markers or colored pens.
- Music playlist (upbeat and energetic).
- A "magic hat".

Age range and group size: 16+ (adaptable for various age groups) / 5 to 30 participants

Time frame: 15 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Introduction: Identity Sprint. Briefly introduce the concept of identity as a dynamic and ever-evolving aspect of self. Set the tone for a fast-paced and fun exploration of self. If using music, start it now – use some upbeat playlist to make the activity energetic for all.

2. Rapid Questions. Participants take turns drawing a card and answering the question quickly and creatively. Encourage short, punchy answers and spontaneous expression.

3. Visual Identity. Provide participants with markers and paper. Give them three minutes to create a quick visual representation of their identity, using symbols, colors, or abstract shapes.

Let participants briefly share their visual identities with the group.

Reflection (3 minutes)

Facilitate a short group reflection:

- "What did you learn about yourself in this activity?"
- "What surprised you about your own answers?"
- "What did you notice about the diversity of identities in the group?"

Background material for preparation

Prepare some questions such as:

- What's one thing you're passionate about?
- What's a value that's important to you?
- What's a unique talent you have?
- What's a dream you have for the future?
- What is a word that describes you?

Place the cards in the ‘magic hat’. Depending on the size of the group, each question can also be there multiple times.

A2. Speed Dating on democracy

Through a set of personal questions participants are quickly exchanging on different spheres of democracy. They get to know perspectives of others in the group and connect personally and professionally. This activity can be done at the beginning of any new group workshop in order to sensitize that democracy is the normative core for what will be done later.

Objectives

- Getting to know each other in an unusual communication setting
- Connecting personally in a quick and emotional way
- Approaching the topic of democracy on a personal level

Setting and material

- Open space in a room or outside
- Signal / Alarm clock

Age range and group size: 12+ / 8 to 100 participants

Time frame: 15 - 30 minutes depending on number of questions and reflection intensity

Facilitation Steps

1. Half of the group is forming an inner circle, facing to the outside, the other half of the group is forming an outer circle facing to the inner circle so that everyone has a direct partner.

2. The trainer announces that several questions will be asked. Then one partner of each pair starts repeating the question, the other partner will give answers for exactly one minute. After that the first partner answers for one minute. Signals are given for the turns.

In terms of who begins, the trainers can creatively think of things like the following: the one with longer hair, with more siblings, who has spent more time abroad, with the darker clothing etc.

3. Then the outer or inner circle is moving to the right to have a new partner, then the next question is being asked.

Reflection

The reflection can take up different aspects of the activity: participants can share interesting or surprising statements they heard; contradictions and dilemmas between different questions might come up; the setting itself and the way of communication and getting to know the others can be focused upon.

Background material for preparation

In terms of the questions here is a list that might be adapted depending on the group. There should be about 3-5 questions being chosen.

- When – for the first time in your life did you become aware that there is such a thing as ‘democracy’?
- Was or is there democracy in your family?
- What does it mean to you to be ‘active’?
- How relevant do you think categories like gender, race, education are for you?
- What is one group in society that irritates you?
- What might be a personal prejudice that you have with respect to this group in society?
- If there was a magic moment: which law would you install in society?
- What do you appreciate most about democracy?

A3. The story of my name

Participants share an important part of their identity with each other. This is used as a prerequisite for looking at the value basis they share and respect parts where they differ. Confronting anti-democratic slogans also means going back to the core of who we are. This approach to sharing identity also prepares for dealing together in democratic and ways beyond a technical level.

Objectives

- Exploring important aspects of one's identity
- Realizing positive and negative values connected to identity
- Connecting participants with identity and difference

Setting and material

- Markers or colored pens and small pieces of paper
- Open circle of chairs

Age range and group size: 12+ / 5 to 16 participants

Time frame: 30 minutes

Facilitation Steps

Invite participants to introduce themselves in small groups in the following way:

- Can you design a simple symbol that represents you and your name?
- What is your first name / the name you want to be called? Do you know the story behind your name? What does your name mean? Do you like your name? Does it connect to your identity as a person? Would you prefer another name? A male name?
- Please tell us one sentence in your mother tongue or dialect as a welcome to the others in a workshop / or tell us a saying that you know from home.

Reflection

The group discusses intercultural insights it gained from this activity. The way the participants presented themselves shows different perspectives on the world and also on how to do things. To know this is important for working together collaboratively.

Reflect with the group on the tension between the necessity of identity for stability and the danger of being marked by an identity; is this still relevant in times when we can easily change our self-description? How much self-determination and how much orientation should our societies allow in terms of who we are?

A4. Life-line

This activity offers participants the opportunity to connect values – which may seem abstract to some – with concrete life experiences. It is based on the principles of biographical learning, meaning learning from one's own significant past experiences.

Objectives

- Understanding the importance of values in everyday life
- Recognizing the significance of key life turning points, especially those related to specific values
- Contributing to greater mindfulness among participants

Setting and material

- Papers and pens

Age range and group size: 16+ / 4-20 participants

Time frame: 45 - 75 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Each participant begins by drawing a horizontal timeline on a sheet of paper. They mark their birth and key periods of their life (e.g., ages 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, etc., depending on their current age). The present moment should also be indicated. Instead of specific ages, participants may choose to label the timeline with life stages (e.g., birth, preschool, lower primary school, upper primary school, high school, etc.).

2. The facilitator or the group selects one of European values (e.g., freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law …) This value will guide what participants reflect on and represent in their timelines.

3. Participants then spend approximately 20 minutes in quiet reflection, identifying and marking the most significant experiences related to the chosen theme. They may also use a graph-like representation to indicate whether each experience was perceived as positive or negative ("ups and downs" on the line).

4. Afterward, participants share their timelines in small groups of 4–5. During this phase, they are encouraged to reflect on both internal and external changes they have experienced connected to the topic (value) of discussion. The following guiding questions may support deeper reflection:

- What made a particular experience significant for you?
- Looking at your timeline, what challenges did you face connected with this value? How did you deal with them?
- What successes or setbacks did you encounter while overcoming these challenges?

- What did you learn from these experiences? How have you changed as a result?

Reflection

The whole group comes together. They share the “common denominators” they have observed in relation to the value being discussed. The facilitator can use the following questions to guide the discussion:

1. What common themes did you notice in your small group? Where did you see differences?
2. Looking at your personal stories, what seems important to you now in relation to this value?
3. Could you create a definition of this value that would be unique to your group?

Background material for preparation

Here are some of the values, this activity works best with:

Work, Solidarity, Dignity, Peace, Freedom, Democracy

A5. Proverbs, values and the metaphor of the sailing boat

Using proverbs shows the diversity of cultures and languages, and seeks connections between them. A diversity of personal values is brought into the room. The sailing boat as a metaphor for living together in a democratic way is introduced and the dangers of populism and autocracy for democracy will be discussed.

Objectives

- Connecting proverbs to important democratic values and tensions between them
- Getting to know a metaphor on what democracy means in daily life

Setting and material

- Papers and pens

Age range and group size: 16+ / 6 – 40 participants

Time frame: 60 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Choose a proverb from childhood and write it on a card in its original language – in the first round just share it without comment in its original language. In the second round, expand on it shortly in the common classroom language (who said it, when and why, did you like it?)

2. Then in groups of three consult which positive (democratic) value is behind it and write that one on the back of your card.

3. Each group folds a paper boat with a large piece of paper

4. Briefly explain the metaphor of the sailing boat symbolizing democracy (see background text below)

5. In plenary the values are presented in a round and put into one of the boats which one wants to choose. Each time group can discuss whether the diversity of values is still ok in the boats or what could be possible tensions when deciding to sail into a certain direction.

6. Optional expansion I: The situation in Europe:

Take out values, put them upright if possible on wooden sticks (takes them to the extreme) around the ship or circle of ships – values are no longer inclusive, but become exclusive for those inside and excluding for those wanting to come (migrants). The situation could lead to the auto-destruction of the idea of democracy as the boat can no longer move, a fall back into autocratic search for security which philosophically is a fall back into an exclusive truth (European Christian culture…)

Reflection

Let groups discuss how a balance between openness for diversity and safeguarding democracy as a flexible concept can be guaranteed. What would you do if populists / autocrats come with speed boats stopping the sailing business or locking the ship to a certain area?

Background material for preparation

The Symbol: Democracy as a sailing boat

To get a better grip and understanding on what has been discussed above, it is helpful to use a symbol as a way to further explore and creatively expand on the notion of democracy.

Democracy is a sailing boat. This metaphor implies that it can be built, has a certain appearance and security, people can look at it, copy it and enter it. In Europe we have different sailing boats, yet one thing is the same: sailing can only be learned under the insecure conditions of waves and weather on the ocean. Depending on changing and opposing winds, it is necessary to take sharp turns, seeing no land on the horizon but keeping up the hope for continuing life's path together. People in different nations do different sailing and explore different routes.

This means that democracy is in a way passive – like a sailing boat it has no pre-fixed plan for the future, but is reactive – it needs guidance and governance – at the same time the equal inclusion of all on the boat to actively participate. Radically, democracy tries to leave the (male) domination over the world as an object – when sailing around, the surface of the sea is preserved. Often this is seen in a negative way that there is no clear route for the future; in a positive sense, being a sailing boat is very close to life itself: what will be tomorrow, the future, that which will happen, is in principle never clear. Democracy is the promise to take new turns to whatever might happen. In an appreciative way, sailing boats will take up those in open water, who do not have a boat or cannot swim and make them part of their community. In such a way, the sailing boat of democracy is embodied freedom combined with responsibility. Sometimes it might even be necessary to take down the sails to protect the boat – and take out the paddles and all have to work hard to continue the path.

In this sense sailing boats do not have a 'grounding' – there is no fixed reference point to cling to, no truth, power or religion that provides a safe haven and reason for action. Democracy therefore is also fragile – Insecurity is the one member always being on board. Democrats need the boat of democracy to start – and the boat of democracy needs democrats to keep it on its route and maintain it. If it sails too much with the wind of extremists, it might be smashed on land – if it tries to be too defensive against enemies of democracy, it might break. Those who want to stop the boat of democracy (opposing winds or enemies from within) will use the anchor trying to re-ground it. Authoritarian rulers and dictators try to do this as they cannot accept the freedom of a moving, unforeseeable and also fragile democracy. They want security, restriction and control. Then the sailing boat is still there, but its active beauty and participation of all when sailing is lost. In a way it will auto-destruct itself when no longer in use because it is not flexible to react when winds and situations on the water change – it will fall apart, also because most likely those prevented from sailing will no longer take care and responsibility for this dead object.

In Europe we are in a situation in which a storm is so strong that symbolically different sailing boats

have formed a strong circle, like a fortress. This prevents especially migrants from entering ‘our waters’ in the middle; these become empty and can no longer be used by anyone – the sailing boats themselves are locked and cannot take any turns anymore. Here democracy is also in the danger of auto-destruction by becoming inflexible, a hard shell that cannot move anymore and also takes the freedom and inspiration from its people.

The eternal question for the sailing boat of democracy is how to balance the acceptance of insecurity and fragility (which opens up to life – also and especially vulnerable life) with the need for protection of the ship itself. Being open but not naive; being prepared but not excluding.

A6. The Values Map

This activity explores the Schwartz' Values Map (Schwartz 2012), raising awareness of how we often perceive our own values versus those of others. Participants will analyze value biases, understand the spectrum of values, and reflect on how these insights impact communication and collaboration in diverse societal groups.

Objectives:

- Identifying and analyzing personal value biases and fostering open-mindedness towards diverse value perspectives
- Developing strategies for more effective communication and collaboration across value differences, as a base for effective argumentation and dialogue.
- Introducing participants to the Schwartz's Values Map and its core concepts.

Setting and material

- Schwartz Values Map on a computer to be projected or printed out
- Value definition list in print or as projection
- Pictures of famous people, as many as the participants are. Try to take them from different backgrounds.
- Pens and pencils.
- 2 Flipchart sheets or whiteboard with two different columns.
- Sticky notes

Age range and group size: 16+ (adaptable for older audiences) / 15 – 40 participants

Time frame: 35 - 50 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Individual Reflection: My Values vs. Their Values

- Provide participants with sticky notes and with the value definition list
- Ask them to write down on sticky notes the 3 most important values to them
- Ask them to write down on sticky notes the 3 least important values to them
- Ask them to think and write any value that is important to them which does not appear in the list using a different color
- All participants will put their sticky notes on the 2 flipcharts, respectively the most important in flipchart 1 and the least important on flipchart 2

2. Individual Reflection: Their Values

- Hand out to participants one picture of a famous person (it is important that at least 2 participants have the same famous person)
- They have 5 minutes to repeat the previous exercise with sticky notes, focusing now on the values they think are most important to the people in the pictures.
- When the reflection time is finished, all participants will put their sticky notes on flipchart 3

3. Group Discussion: Unpacking Value Biases beyond dichotomies

- Which are the prevalent values in the flipcharts?
- How do you consider the values on the flipcharts? Do you see them as positive or negative?
- Which behaviours or attitudes can be associated with the individuated values?

Open the Schwartz's Values Map on the computer or the printed one, and comment related to the areas where most of the values identified relate to (refer to research findings: intrinsic values/extrinsic values – comments on the different groups of values appearing on the map – how they affect behaviours and choices…)

- Do you think that more individualistic values can be connected and complemented by universalistic ones? Can you think of some examples regarding the people in the pictures and your own experience (if you are comfortable in sharing)?
- Which values do you mainly find in society and why?

Reflection

In plenary, brainstorm strategies for more effective communication and collaboration across value differences. The following list provides some orientation concerning the direction of reflection

- Active listening and empathy
- Seeking to understand diverse perspectives
- Focusing on shared goals and values
- Challenging stereotypes and assumptions

Create a collaborative list of these strategies on the flipchart.

Background material for preparation

This activity is based on the renowned scheme of basic human values by Shalom Schwartz.

Resources on the Schwartz Value Map and its applications (Common Cause Foundation) can be downloaded here: https://commoncausefoundation.org/_resources/the-values-map/

Pictures of famous people can easily be found online – make sure they connect to the everyday experience of participants; at the same time choose famous people who are not overly stereotyped so that their authentic personality might be covered totally. Controversial persons also invite participants to think deeper about values connected to them.

A7. What does democracy give to me?

This activity invites participants to reflect on the perks of living in a democratic society. Ideally, it comes after the reflection on the ideal citizen and politician. Despite democratic dilemmas, democracy gives us the possibility to thrive and prosper.

Objectives

- Identifying how democracy contributes to guarantee to citizens a better life, starting from the personal perspective of building it day by day
- Connecting individual experience and interests to collective ones
- Listening to others' perspectives on life and developing a feeling of belonging to a group.

Setting and material

- Sticky notes
- Pens and colored pencils
- Flipchart or whiteboard

Age range and group size: 16 – 30 / 10 – 20 participants

Time frame: 30 - 50 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. The trainer gives to participants sticky notes and asks them to think about their daily life: which activities do you enjoy more or are you grateful for? Think about everything that makes you feel comfortable and give you the feeling of living a fulfilling life.

2. Then, participants are divided in five groups and the trainer gives them a blank paper. Each group must analyze their sticky notes and to cluster them in topics on the blank paper and answer the question: How are they related to democracy? Does democracy make it possible to enjoy these activities? Could it be possible to have the same life under a non-democratic regime?

Each group decides which of the participants will be their spokesperson for the plenary session.

Reflection

During the plenary session, each group representative presents to the others the clusters and connections with democracy they found. With the facilitation of the trainer, they cluster their sticky notes on the big blank sheet under the questions: What does democracy give to me? What can we do to maintain these advantages for all community members?

Background material for preparation

The trainer prepares a blank paper sheet from a flipchart (or a whiteboard) with the questions “What does democracy give to me?” and “What can we do to maintain these advantages for all community members?”.

A8. Weaken weaknesses? Strengthen strengths!

The participants use an 'appreciative exploration' (see Cooperrider et al. 2008 and Wenzel et al. 2009) to ask each other about their motivations, highlights, talents and visions for a strong democracy. Together, they identify success factors for social change in the group. This clarifies the positive vision of why it is important to deal with anti-democratic slogans. In debates, this helps to keep the normative core and creative potential of European democracy. It supports a positive attitude and motivation to deal with stressful debates.

Objectives

- Realizing that appreciation is a key attitude in confronting populism and extremism in stressful situations
- Mutually strengthening resources of the participants by narrative means
- Developing positive visions for European democracy

Setting and material

- Interview guide

Age range and group size: 16+ / 6 – 100 participants

Time frame: 60 - 120 minutes depending on extent of interview duration

Facilitation Steps Part 1

1. The trainer clarifies the following approach for the participants by means of the following task. The following calculations are displayed on a flipchart (you can also choose a different color for each type of calculation):

9 – 7 = 2 8 – 5 = 3

3 + 8 = 11 4 + 5 = 10

1 x 7 = 7 2 x 6 = 12

9 : 3 = 2 1 2 : 3 = 4

Everyone is invited to share what they notice about these calculations. Usually, they will quickly mention the 'wrong' results, the order and structure of the calculations, or even the coloring. It is rare and usually mentioned later: “Six calculations are correct!” This example can be used to illustrate the “engineering culture” rooted in many of us: we look for deficits and patterns. Errors are highlighted and a logic of order is sought. The example shows that we tend to focus on deficits rather than seeing appreciative aspects as a basis for change. The glass that is half full or half empty, depending on your perspective, is suitable as a visualization. The seminar leader gives a short input explaining the significance of the image for one's own attitude in a strong democracy.

2. Participants are invited to use a guide to go on an 'appreciative exploration' (see Cooperrider et al. 2008 and Wenzel et al. 2009) of a strong European democracy. They have 40 minutes to do this. They interview each other in pairs using the worksheet for the exercise; one person should ask questions and the other person should listen carefully and not yet contribute their own perspective. The 'appreciative exploration' systematizes one's own motivation, highlights already experienced, success factors for a strong democracy, one's own talents and, finally, one's own vision of the future. It invites people to engage in personal storytelling. This creates a broad arc from biographical values that drive people to collective social change.

Reflection Part 1

In the plenary, everyone is asked to write down a striking quote from the interview with the person sitting opposite to them. These quotes are then read out in a round and visualized for everyone. This makes clear the resources available for positive change in the group. The participants reflect on how this kind of exchange was different from usual conversations. What role did 'facts' play in this conversation? What was the personal biographical significance? How do one's own attitudes towards others relate to the potential for collective change?

Facilitation Steps Part 2

3. Small groups of 3-4 interview pairs are formed, who then introduce each other and share the 'success factors' (question 3) they have learned from their counterparts. One person takes notes and together the most important 'success factors for a strong democracy' are formulated in complete sentences (30 minutes).

Reflection Part 2

In plenary, the groups present their results and together 3-5 important success factors are formulated in a sentence or paragraph. Finally, everyone in the plenary session considers what a concrete implementation of these success factors would look like in everyday life, at work or in the class and school community; the seminar leader visualizes the results.

Background material for preparation

Large parts of social thinking are based on the deficit approach. This leads to always seeing what is not working. Speaking about politics, reporting in the media and, not least, the compulsion of politicians to stage dramatizations are all oriented towards deficits. In the context of power and discrimination, there is also the temptation to see more and more historical and collective 'failures' through the lens of dramatization. Frustration and paralysis are often the result. This always implicitly suggests that there is already an idea of how things should actually be. Or, not so rarely, that things should be as they used to be, somewhere else, in an imagined country without these problems. This means that the perspective of deficits is one that is in the aftercare mode. The child has already fallen into the well, and now it is to be retrieved. The aim is to mitigate existing weaknesses by recognizing supposed 'facts' (see calculations).

An appreciative perspective (for details see Cooperrider et al. 2008 and Wenzel et al. 2009) is based on a different understanding of society, on what is already working and what can serve as a basis for further development. Especially in the context of power and discrimination, this perspective should not be confused with “positive thinking” or a rose-tinted view that simply imagines away problems. Rather, looking at what works, at the half-full glass, can have a liberating effect and open up the view for independent further thinking. If the focus is on what works in democracy and in political life (perhaps only by way of example), a vision of a society can emerge in which this would be fully realized. It becomes clear that what exists is not set in stone, that there are possibilities for transcending the status quo. The power of ideas is a contribution to the further development of democracy, which starts from people and their values.

The following guideline can be adapted according to topic, age and target group of the respective training. The general sequence of the keywords from 1 to 5 should however be kept.

We are showing our profile for a strong democracy!

Appreciative Exploration

Recognizing diversity, the necessity of critical self-reflection and the protection of democratic standards are guiding us. We all have the motivation and talent to implement this – and we have all already experienced where and how a strong democracy can function on a small scale. Today, we want to network positive everyday experiences and share successes.

Please ask your partner about enriching experiences to show your support for a strong democracy. Don't ask like an analyst collecting facts. You want to hear the best stories! Pay attention to exciting phrases and metaphors and write them down. Give your interview partner time to reflect and support them by asking helpful questions.

1. Motivation: go back to the beginning: What do you find interesting about democracy? Is there a value that is particularly important to you in your life? What does this value stand for and how do you see it in reality?

2. Highlights: can you think of an experience or a situation that was a real high point in your engagement with democracy and the values that are important to you? Is there a story from your everyday life or work where you thought, “Yes, that's how it should be!”? What happened there? Who was involved? What role did you play?

3. Success: in your opinion, what are some important success factors for showing your profile for a strong democracy? What do you think is the most important building block for democracy to work in the classroom, in the family and in your own environment?

4. Talents and Resources: now don't be so modest! Tell me what you like about yourself. What talents or abilities do you have, what strengths do you build on, that you can contribute to a strong democracy? What would you really like to do? What would you tackle with a lot of energy?

5. European Vision: now imagine that three years have passed. Much has changed. Your dreams and visions have become reality. Your commitment and skills have significantly advanced democracy. You and others involved have received the 'European Democracy Prize'. What are the first sentences of the acceptance speech (“Today we are awarding this prize because...”)?

A9. Belonging to a community – steps to come closer

With a physical visualization all share their amount of ‘belonging’ to a community in their context. They exchange and share important factors for being integrated into a supportive network. This shows the relevance of how our place in society has strong effects on our possibility to connect, to be in comfort and in general on our mental health. It serves to understand why in some conditions and positions of exclusion, anti-democratic slogans can be found more easily.

Objectives

- Addressing the issue of integration and exclusion as relevant for extremism
- Physically experiencing one’s position in a community
- Addressing ideas to find a comfortable position for all

Setting and material

- Open space in a large room or outside
- Round pieces of paper

Age range and group size: 15+ / 8 to 30 participants

Time frame: 30 – 45 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Everyone gets a round paper or is asked to draw a circle on a piece of paper which symbolizes the neighborhood or community around them. All are invited to place a mark at that point in the circle where they would locate themselves: in the middle, being fully immersed in the community, more or less outside or totally outside like an observer not (yet) linked to many others.

2. In a big space in the room all position themselves according to the mark they made. Differences of belonging are becoming visible in a physical way. The trainer collects statements with some guiding questions:

- Do you feel comfortable where you are? Would you like to change position?
- How do you feel standing in the middle? What allowed you to get there?
- Can you see the others outside, are you surprised to see many / some there?
- Why are you on the outside? Is this also a good position for an overview?
- Do you know one or two persons from outside, from the middle?
- What is the strength and resource of your current position?
- How could we help each other in this group to find a comfortable position?
- Who could help you as a personal bridge-builder within this group or the larger community if you want to change your position?

- Would you want to get more in the middle? What are obstacles, which help would you need?
- How could you invite others to come closer to the middle?

3. Then groups of four, combining those in the middle and those on the outside are formed. They are exchanging their views in more depth and collect supportive steps for belonging, but also advantages of being outside. Both aspects are discussed with reference to being an active citizen.

Reflection

In plenary important results are being shared. Advantages and obstacles of being an active citizen in the community are being discussed.

- What do you observe around you?
- Do active citizens have to be fully integrated?
- What is your relation to those already living in the community?
- How could you support each other in these aspects?
- How can we start with this group to build a democratic community with different but comfortable positions using all our resources and strengths?

A10. Four aspects of my identity

Everyone from the group is being invited to individually reflect about his or her personal identity by reflecting the following questions. It is important to keep in mind that the self-description reflects only the current situation of the here and now and can change with time and location. Participants will explore inner aspects of their personality and visualize them in written and physical form (adapted from BST 2002).

Objectives

- Realizing unique and shared aspects of one's identity
- Experiencing how identity can form community but also exclude
- Understanding how populism and extremism are linked to uncertain identities

Setting and material

- Prepared guideline sheets
- Pens
- Open circle with chairs

Age range and group size: 16+ / 10 to 30 participants

Time frame: 60 - 90 minutes depending on number of questions and reflection intensity

Facilitation Steps 1

1. Ask participants to fill out the guideline sheet individually following questions individually

2. After answering the questions each participant writes down her/his four terms on separate slips of paper. These are collected by the trainer and used for a later stage of the activity.

3. In small groups the participants are exchanging their results and especially discuss the ambivalent experiences with identity as they have reflected upon in question IV.

- When is identity essential?
- When is identity exclusive to others?
- When do we want to 'leave' parts of our identity?

4. After the discussion all the terms from question one are being placed on the floor with the participants sitting around them. Everyone can call for a term that he or she identifies with – it does

not have to be a personal one.

The person and everyone else who identifies with it is getting up, is „taking a stand“ for a short while. In this way it becomes visible who identifies with certain terms, in which cases there are many standing up and in which cases it's only a few. Thus new connections and differences between the members of the group can be seen.

Reflection 1

The reflection should focus on the following questions which start with impressions from the last phase and then move over to explore more in depth aspects of describing one's identity, having to be reductive when judging others and dealing with differences in an adequate way.

- How did it feel to stand with many others? How was it to be standing only with one or two other persons?
- Was it hard to come up with four words? Did you have many more or maybe just one you could come up with?
- How did you feel when your identity was getting insecure?
- How does this insecurity lead to the search of closer communities (others in the group) that might tend to exclude others – could you feel that?
- How do identity, community and extremism connect?
- What would be the identity of a community that is diverse and open for including others?
- What would that mean here in our group?

Facilitation Steps 2

5. The final step allows for a physical and bodily expression and experience of different aspects of identity. Small groups are asked to choose together one of the identity card that have been written. They are preparing a ‘living picture’, using their bodies to express the aspect of identity together. They are asked to integrate possible tensions, ruptures, questions into the visualization.

6. In plenary each group is presenting its living picture. Each participant of this group shares one sentence from her position.

The others in the group share observations from the outside. If acceptable, one or two participants can go to the living picture and suggest a physical change that represents a development into a better future.

Reflection 2

The group discusses insights from this bodily experience. Was there another type of insight using a physical visualizations? How can our body be part of being active citizens? What is the relation between body and mind in your culture? How do you experience this in your country?

Background material for preparation

Guideline sheet on identity

I. That is how I describe myself concerning my origins, identity and culture in four words:

_____ _____ _____ _____

II. One experience in connection with this description is:

III. Please choose the most important of the four words _____

IVa. One thing I like about being _____ (the most important word)

IVb. One thing that makes it sometimes difficult being _____

A11. Quotes on democracy

This activity gives the opportunity to network and get to know many classical and current perspectives on what democracy is – in its positive as well as challenging aspects. It is a chance to get to know important thinkers on democracy and allows to develop a common understanding and its implication for debate. It is a rational and historical reflection of the concept.

Objectives

- Getting to know historical and current personalities and their controversial perspectives on democracy
- Participatory development of a working definition of democracy
- Realizing democracy to be a contested and always endangered concept

Setting and material

- Printed quotes on democracy
- Flipchart paper

Age range and group size: 14+ / 10 to 30 participants

Time frame: 30 – 45 minutes depending on number of questions and reflection intensity

Facilitation Steps

1. This cognitive activity presents famous quotes on democracy and politics by a (subjective) selection of thinkers. The quotes are distributed on papers in the room in a way in which the authors are not visible (folded to the back). Participants have the chance to read all of them and select one quote which they fully agree with or which they completely reject.

2. In small groups of three or four they present their quotes and their opinion to each other; in this way underlying attitudes, values and also experiences with democracy are made explicit and participants can network their biographies with a focus on the topic.

3. Finally each subgroup develops a short working definition on democracy on a flipchart. Under the definition it writes 2 to three points on what this definition implies for being ready for dealing with anti-democratic slogans.

Reflection

In plenary the definitions are presented. The following reflection questions can guide the discussion on the results:

- Which of the quotes were well known? Were there surprises concerning the authors?
- Is a definition of democracy a recipe to be followed, making it possible to strongly implement democracy?
- Can democracy be ‘made’ at all? Should we just wait for it?
- Why should it be important to know what democracy is? Is knowledge important for being democratic?
- Are people’s actions more important than knowledge? Do we need formal institutions and procedures in order to ‘control’ people’s actions and make them democratic?
- What is our role as citizens dealing with anti-democratic slogans?

Background material for preparation

Here are a number of internationally selected quotes on democracy from history and current times. Depending on the target group and the topic other quotes should be researched.

Choose between 5 and 15 quotes depending on the size of the group of participants.

Every quote should be printed on paper and folded so that the name of the author is not visible.

"A democracy is no more than an aristocracy of orators. The people are so readily moved by demagogues that control must be exercised by the government over speech and press.“

Thomas Hobbes *was an English philosopher. Hobbes is best known for his 1651 book Leviathan, in which he expounds an influential formulation of social contract theory guaranteeing a balance of power on the background of his negative view of human beings. He is considered to be one of the founders of modern political philosophy.*

“Humans are, as has been said, by nature, all free, equal and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent.”

John Locke *was an English philosopher and physician, widely regarded as one of the most influential of Enlightenment thinkers and commonly known as the "father of liberalism.“*

„Democracy owes its existence to Christianity... Christianity proclaimed the equality of all men by nature... An anti-Christian democracy will be a caricature that will either descend into tyranny or anarchy.”

Laczkóné Dr. Ágnes Tuka *(born 1953 in Budapest) is a retired university professor.*

"A real democracy has never existed and it will never exist, because it violates against the natural order when a majority governs and a minority will be governed.“

Jean-Jacques Rousseau *was an author, philosopher, pedagogue and composer of the Enlightenment era. He had big influence on pedagogics and political theory of the late 18th century Europe, but also until nowadays. He was an important pathmaker of the French Revolution.*

"The lack of dialogue and debate between the majority and the opposition could lead to a further erosion of trust in institutions."

Matteo Renzi *is an Italian politician who served as prime minister of Italy from 2014 to 2016, who was at the time the youngest leader in the G7. He has been a senator for Florence. Renzi has served as the leader of Italia Viva since 2019, having been the secretary of the Democratic Party from 2013 to 2018, with a brief interruption in 2017.*

„Democracy means that two wolves and a sheep are talking about what to eat for dinner.“

Thomas Jefferson *was the third president of the United States of America from 1801 bis 1809, the main author of the Declaration of Independence and one of the most influential theorists of state in the US.*

“To be a democrat is, above all, not to be afraid: not to be afraid of dissent, of other languages, of other races, of revolution, of conspiracies, of the unknown evil designs of the enemy, of hostile propaganda, of belittlement, and in general of all those imaginary dangers which become real dangers by being feared.”

István Bibó *(Budapest, 7 August 1911 - Budapest, 10 May 1979) Posthumous Széchenyi Prize winner, doctor of law, politician, university professor, writer.*

"Democracy is beautiful in theory; in practice, it is a fallacy."

Benito Mussolini *was an Italian politician and journalist who was the dictator of Fascist Italy from the March on Rome in 1922 until his overthrow in 1943. He was also Duce of Italian fascism from the establishment in 1919, until his execution in 1945. As a dictator and founder of fascism, Mussolini inspired the international spread of similar movements in the interwar period.*

„What is democracy? The opportunity to say in dialogue, "I think so, I have such and such an opinion." And the other person says: "I don't think so, I have a different opinion." And everyone expresses their opinion, and eventually, if it is humanly possible, they agree on the truth. That is the very meaning of democracy. But it is not democracy when a power crushes tyranny and then declares that there is no other kind of power but the one represented by its supporters. Tyranny cannot be cured by tyranny.”

Sándor Márai*, originally Sándor Károly Henrik Márai Grosschmid Sándor (Kassa, 11 April 1900 - San Diego, California, 21 February 1989) Hungarian writer, poet and journalist.*

„Democracy is the rule of the people by the people.“

Abraham Lincoln was 16. president of the United States of America from 1861 to 1865.

“All tied landed property - state, aristocratic, ecclesiastical - should be returned to the eternal source of all rights and all power, to the people. This is the bulwark of economic democracy.”

Oskár Jászi (Nagykároly, 2 March 1875 - Oberlin, USA, 13 February 1957): writer, politician, university professor and sociologist.

"Democracy is a set of rules (the so-called rules of the game) for resolving conflicts without bloodshed. And what constitutes good democratic governance if not the strict observance of these rules?"

Norberto Bobbio *was an Italian philosopher of law and political sciences and a historian of political thought. He also wrote regularly for the newspaper La Stampa. Bobbio was a social liberal and is considered one of the greatest Italian intellectuals of the 20th century.*

„Democracy, as I understand it, must give equal chances to the strongest and to the weakest.“

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi *was an Indian lawyer, resistance activist, revolutionary, publisher, moral teacher, ascetic and pacifist.*

“The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the dedicated communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction, true and false, no longer exists.”

Hannah Arendt *was a German-American historian and philosopher. She was one of the most influential political theorists of the 20th century. Her works on totalitarianism grew out of the aftermath of the Second Wold War and she wrote about possibilities to share power within society by acting collectively.*

„The states of Europe [...] have different national histories, different geographies, cultural traditions and symbolisms. Despite these differences, many agree that Western Christianity, the Renaissance and humanism, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, capitalism and urban development, democracy and the rule of law, and the protection of human dignity are common foundations of our 'Europeanness'."

Dr. habil. Koller Boglárka *(born 1974 in Budapest) is a University professor.*

„The disadvantage of democracy is that it binds the hands of those being honest with it; but for those who are not honest, it enables almost everything.“

Václav Havel *was a Czech novelist, human rights activist and politician. During communist times he was one of the leading critics of Czechoslovakia. He is one of the enablers of German-Czech reconciliation.*

“Political chaos is connected with the decay of language... one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end.”

George Orwell *was a British novelist and journalist. His novels ‘Animal Farm’ and the dystopian book ‘1984’ became famous for vividly describing totalitarian practices by controlling language and thought of human beings.*

"Democracy is the rule of the people, or more precisely, a political system in which the people, that is, the common people as a whole, are in a position to select their leaders, to control them and, if necessary, to drive them out.”

István Bibó *(Budapest, 7 August 1911 - Budapest, 10 May 1979) Posthumous Széchenyi Prize winner, doctor of law, politician, university professor, writer.*

“Because today we are handing over power not only from one government to the other, but we are giving it back to you, the people.“

Donald John Trump *is a US-American entrepreneur, entertainer and politician. He was 45th president of the United States of America from 2017 to 2021. He is owner of the conglomerate ‚The Trump Organization‘ and was leading it from 1971 to 2017.*

„Democracy and the rule of law depend on one another; the absence of the one prevents the existence of the other.”

László Trócsányi *(born in Budapest in 1956) is a Hungarian jurist, lawyer, diplomat and university professor.*

„Let us listen to one another. Hear one another. See one another. Show respect to one another. Politics need not be a raging fire destroying everything in its path. And if you still disagree, so be it. That’s democracy.”

Joe Biden *is a US-American politician of the Democratic Party and since 2021 he is 46th president of the United States of America. From 2009 to 2017 he was Vice-president during the government of Barack Obama.*

"We must ensure that our democracy remains strong and resilient, protecting the rights and freedoms of all citizens."

Giorgia Meloni *is an Italian politician who has been serving as the prime minister of Italy since October 2022, the first woman to hold this position. She has led the right-wing to far-right Brothers of Italy (FdI) party since 2014. In 2024 she was listed among the most influential people in the world by Time magazine.*

„The best form of government is Kingdom. The degeneration of the kingdom is tyranny which is the worst. Amongst the mediocre constitutions, democracy is the most tolerable.“

Aristotle *was a Greek philosopher. He founded and influenced many disciplines like theory of science, logic, biology, physics, ethics, theory of state and theory of poetry.*

"Democracy can therefore also be defined as a system of power that ensures both freedom and political equality."

Mihály Bihari *(born 1943 in Budapest) is Széchenyi Prize-winning Hungarian jurist, political scientist, university professor and academic doctor of political sciences. He is one of the organizers of Hungarian political science education, a renowned researcher of political systems.*

"Democracy is not only the right to vote, but the right to live a life in dignity."

Naomi Klein *is a Canadian journalist, a critic of capitalism and globalization and a political activist. She became well known with her book ‚No Logo' which criticizes the development of global companies.*

„The liberal and secularized state exists on the basis of <ethical> preconditions which it cannot create by itself. This is the big risk he took for the sake of freedom."

Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde *was a German legal scholar and a justice at Germany's Federal Constitutional Court. He was a professor at the University of Freiburg. He became famous with this quote that shows one essential dilemma of the liberal state that has to rely on past social capital but cannot create it anew.*

"Democracy is a promise for the future."

Jacques Derrida *was a French philosopher, one of the founders and main representative of deconstruction philosophy. His works massively influenced philosophy and theory of literature in Europe and the US in the second half of the 20th century. As opposed to other systems, he sees democracy as the attempt to come to terms with an open future – therefore democracy itself is never finished or ended.*

"In Democracy, the place of power is empty."

Claude Lefort *was a French philosopher and activist. His writings examine totalitarianism and what it does to human relations. Contrary to this, he sees democracy as institutionalizing diversity and not having power concentrated in one place. Social movements are seen by him as an important contribution to that kind of democracy.*

"Democracy is like the air, we don't notice it because we take it for granted that we live in it..."

László Trócsányi *(born in Budapest in 1956) is a Hungarian jurist, lawyer, diplomat and university professor.*

"History is the science of the causes and effects of human things, and democracy is the system that allows men to govern themselves according to the laws of their nature."

Giambattista Vico (born 1668) *was an Italian philosopher, historian and jurist during the Italian Enlightenment era. He criticized the expansion and development of modern rationalism as being impractical to human life, therefore he is recognised as one of the first counter-Enlightenment figures in history.*

"No nation deserves freedom or can long retain it which does not win it for itself. Revolutions must be made by the people and for the people."

Giuseppe Mazzini *(born 1805) was an Italian politician, journalist, and activist for the unification of Italy (Risorgimento) and spearhead of the Italian revolutionary movement. His efforts helped bring*

about the independent and unified Italy. Mazzini's thoughts had a very considerable influence on the Italian and European republican movements.

Angle B: Dealing with conflicts and dilemmas

This angle continues dealing with values and connects them with the fact that we live in a world of diversity. You can use activities that bring participants into small conflicts with each other. Building upon that, the relevance of accepting fundamental democratic dilemmas is shown. Looking at anti-democratic slogans from this angle prepares for dealing with them adequately beyond ‘right or wrong’.

B1. The ideal active citizen and politician

Participants are critically reflecting their vision of being an active citizen and an active politician. They discuss 'ideals' and what they realistically want to achieve. They will understand to respect different ideals and visions of what it means to take responsibility in democracy. Also, they will discuss what it means to confront anti-democratic slogans in a diverse society beyond individual interest.

Objectives

- Taking responsibility for ideals which are often mapped onto politicians
- Critical examining of (absolute) ideals in the context of democracy
- Reflecting on skills of citizens needed to confront anti-democratic slogans

Setting and material

- Large pieces of papers
- Sets of colored pens

Age range and group size: 8 - 20 / 10 to 15 participants

Time frame: 30 – 45 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Participants split up in groups of five. Half of the groups are discussing what an “ideal active citizen” would look like, the other half of the group leads a discussion on the “ideal politician” and which characteristics he or she should have.

2. Both groups are asked to draw this person on a large piece of paper. They should not use words, but only symbols and drawing in order to avoid reason-focused thinking at this point and letting creativity prevail.

3. Each group presents their picture in plenary, the other participants can ask questions for better understanding the ideal.

Reflection 1

In plenary, participants discuss their pictures by linking them to the situation within their country and what it means to take responsibility for diversity beyond individual interest.

- Which are the most essential characteristics which are not negotiable for an active citizen, a politician? What is the most important part in your picture?
- Are there common characteristics between the pictures? Do you see contradictions between the pictures?

- Do you see differences or tensions between an active citizen and somebody with a political mandate?
- Does such an ideal exist? Should it exist or could it become an idol?
- Can an individual exist in such a way? What is his or her relation to a (participatory) collective? Which responsibility does he or she have to confront anti-democratic slogans in society and where is the limit to this responsibility?
- Do you know actual persons (citizens or politicians) representing this ideal?

Reflection 2

The participants reflect in pairs in which cases they have already acted as an active citizen and which characteristics and skills they are still lacking for dealing with anti-democratic slogans more effectively.

In plenary each pair presents the insights from the other partner. The trainers visualize a list of existing skills and missing skills. In this way the existing resources of the group can be better used and the following activities can be focused on the needs for improving the dealing with conflicts and confronting anti-democratic slogans.

B2. From deficits to Active Citizenship

This activity allows participants to reflect on the idealization of active citizens and politicians by combining it with an exploration of our tendency to focus on negatives rather than positive aspects of reality. It merges activities A8 and B1: participants will analyze how deficit-oriented thinking can hinder democratic engagement, then collaboratively build a vision of proactive civic participation, and reflect on their own roles and skills.

Objectives

- Understanding how a deficit-focused perspective can limit constructive engagement with democratic challenges
- Cultivating an appreciative perspective that identifies existing strengths as a foundation for positive change
- Critically reflecting on personal ideals of active citizenship and political engagement

Setting and material

- Flipchart or whiteboard
- Markers (various colours)
- Large sheets of paper (2-3 for each group)
- Drawing materials (markers, coloured pencils)
- Worksheets with guiding questions (for the appreciative exploration)
- Pens or Pencils
- Sticky notes
- Lego® Serious Play® bricks (optional)

Age range and group size: 16+ (adaptable for adult learners) / 10 – 30 participants

Time frame: 50 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Introduction: The Deficit Lens. Present the following calculation exercise on a flipchart, using different colors for each calculation.

9 – 7 = 2	8 – 5 = 3
3 + 8 = 11	4 + 5 = 10
1 x 7 = 7	2 x 6 = 12
9 : 3 = 2 1	2 : 3 = 4

Ask participants what they notice. Guide them to recognize their tendency to focus on the incorrect results and patterns, rather than the correct calculations.

Introduce the "half-full/half-empty" metaphor and explain how a deficit-oriented perspective can limit our ability to see potential for positive change in democratic contexts.

Discuss the influence of media, politics, and social thinking in reinforcing deficit-oriented views.

2. Appreciative Exploration: Ideal Citizen Vision

Divide participants into pairs. Using the provided worksheet, participants conduct an "appreciative exploration" (see Cooperrider et al. 2008 and Wenzel et al. 2009) of what constitutes an ideal active citizen.

If you like, you can use the Lego® Serious Play® bricks to invite participants to make their ideal active citizen, first individually.

3. Group Creation: Ideal Citizen/Politician

Divide participants into groups of five. Half of the groups create a visual representation of an ‘ideal active citizen’, the other half an ‘ideal politician’, using only drawings and symbols.

Each group presents their visual representation to the plenary, explaining their symbolism.

If you like, you can use the Lego® Serious Play® bricks to invite participants to create a shared model of their ideal active citizen and of the ideal politician – first the group reflects on its own on the two models, comparing and contrasting the main characteristics represented, strengths/weaknesses, connections, oppositions...

Reflection

Facilitate a plenary discussion about essential characteristics of the presented images:

- What are the non-negotiable characteristics of an active citizen/politician?
- Are there commonalities or contradictions between the images?
- How do the roles of citizen and politician differ?
- Does such an ideal exist, or should it?

- What is the individual's role in a collective?
- Who represents this ideal in reality?

With Lego® the discussion is made on the models, which can be compared among the groups and reflections can be guided on the above questions and beyond.

Background material for preparation

Appreciative exploration: guiding questions for working in pairs

The following worksheet provides an orientation and should be adapted depending on the specific topic, target group and age range within the training. The worksheet should include questions about: personal motivations for civic engagement. Examples of successful civic actions or initiatives. Key qualities and values of an ideal active citizen. Their vision of an ideal active citizen.

The ideal active citizen

Appreciative Exploration

Please ask your partner about enriching experiences to show your support for a strong democracy. Don't ask like an analyst collecting facts. You want to hear the best stories! Pay attention to exciting phrases and metaphors and write them down. Give your interview partner time to reflect and support them by asking helpful questions.

1. Motivation: what is your personal motivation to be an active citizen?

2. Highlights: do you remember having experienced or contributed to successful civic actions or initiatives?

3. Success: in your opinion, what are some important key qualities and values of an ideal active citizen?

4. What would be your vision for an ideal active citizen?

How should an ideal citizen be? Please, fill in the following table.

The ideal citizen's motivations to action	Some practical examples of successful civic actions or initiatives	Key qualities of the ideal active citizen	Key values of the ideal active citizen	To sum up: how should your ideal citizen be?

B3. Building an Active Citizen with Lego®

The activity aims at putting the ideal of an active citizen to the dilemma square's (compare Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023) proof. It builds on the results of the previous activity B2. It encourages participants to reflect on idealization and to focus on useful activities, such as finding out common solutions to the dilemmas and related concrete actions as citizens. At the end, a new version of the Active Citizen is created.

Objectives

- Critically reflecting on the effects of active citizenship's idealization
- Understanding how to work towards positive change, avoiding inflexibility and recognising value in concrete actions
- Collaboratively finding a solution to civic dilemmas beyond winning or losing

Setting and material

- Lego® Serious Play®
- Many blank value schemes on paper sheets
- Papers with ideals of citizen/politician from previous activity B2.
- Pens or Pencils
- Sticky notes
- One big Active Citizen's drawing

Age range and group size: 16+ (adaptable for adult learners) / 15 to 30 participants

Time frame: 50 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Hand out to each participant a blank value square (compare Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023) and one of the papers with ideal citizen/politician

2. Each participant has five minutes to create a Lego® model on this ideal

When the model is ready, ask them to put it at the top left space of their square

3. Each participant has 2 minutes to build a Lego® model about the negative counter-value to the positive feature, and they put it on the bottom right space of their square

4. Ask them to create in 2 minutes a model of what would happen if the positive value would be exaggerated to be taken as absolute. They put it on the bottom left of their square, below the positive value.

5. To find out the last value, ask the participants to build in 2 minutes a Lego® model of the positive counter-value of the last value, and to put it on the top right of the paper (e.g. flexible; process-oriented; outspoken)

6. In plenary, each participant presents the first model with the feature written on the card. They show the other models to the rest of the group. The others must find out which features were represented, according to the dilemma square and the single models

7. Still in plenary, consider some of the features and try to find a solution to their related dilemmas. While participants are talking, the trainer writes down the solutions on sticky notes and puts them on the big Active Citizen's drawing

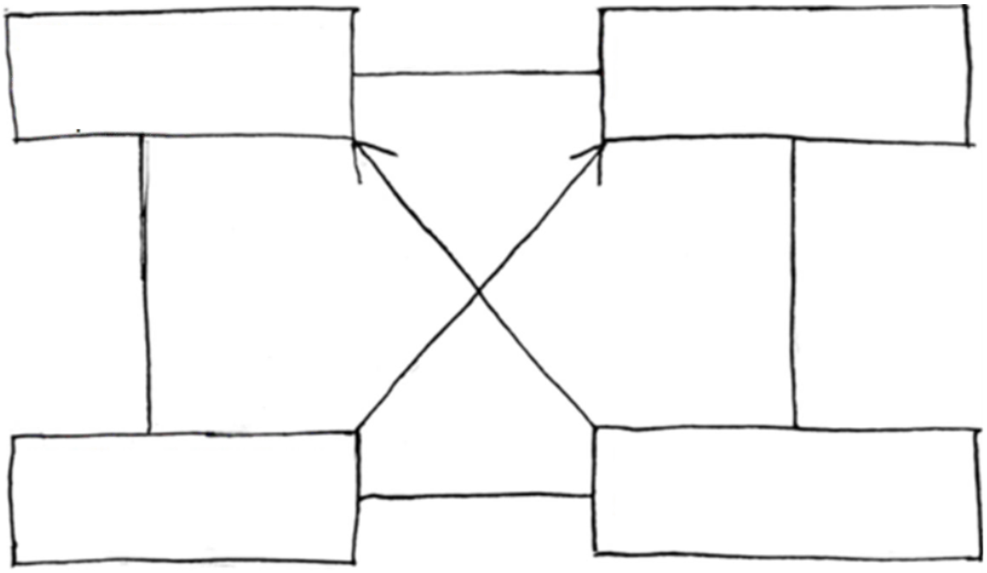
Reflection

Personal Skills and Action: ask participants to reflect on their own experiences of active citizenship and identify if their experiences are linked to the identified active citizen's features.

Pairs share their insights in plenary and find out concrete actions that individuals can take to embody these features in their daily lives.

Background material for preparation

This activity uses the idea of the duality of democracy through the following value square (compare Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023). More information on the value square can be found in the section on Socio-political background of *Volume 2 – Deepening the approach* accompanying this training manual.



Prepare a drawing representing an Active Citizen on a blank sheet of a flipchart (it will gather all the features resulting from the activity, so it should be big enough for them all).

B4. My and our house of Europe

The participants draw their shared idea of Europe on large sheets of paper under the theme “My European house” (adapted from LpB NRW 2024). Similarities and differences between the group posters are discussed.

Objectives

- Using the symbol of a house to concretely reflect European identity
- Negotiating and enduring different values and learning what this has to do with Europe

Setting and material

- Large and small sheets of paper
- Pens
- Flipchart sheets
- Lego® bricks (optional)

Age range and group size: 12 – 20 / 15 to 30 participants

Time frame: 45 – 60 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Small groups of four to seven pupils are formed. Each group is given a large sheet of paper and draws the outline of a house with a foundation, a roof and as many rooms as there are participants in the small group. A question or overarching theme is formulated to suit the topic and the group, e.g: ‘My house Europe - What is Europe for me?’. The participants now start by writing their personal associations and answers to the question ‘What is Europe for me?’ in their own room.

2. In a next step, the group has to filter out commonalities, which then form the foundation of the house. The roof is filled with the group's shared visions for Europe. The small groups present their ‘Our House of Europe’ in plenary and hang up their poster in the group room. Finally, similarities and differences between the group posters are discussed. What is striking?

Variation 1

Each participant receives a large sheet of paper and draws on it - just for themselves - a concrete idea of Europe in 20 minutes under the main topic: ‘My house Europe - What is Europe for me and what or how should it be?’. No further tasks are initially specified. Then two participants each receive a small sheet of paper (DIN A3) and, as a team, are given the task of summarizing the most important initial images in their opinion in a common image of Europe in 15 minutes. In a third round, two pairs are then transformed into a team. Together they have 10 minutes to realize their results for a common house on a DIN A4 sheet of paper. Finally, in a possible last round, 8

participants or 4 pairs are asked to try to do the same on half a sheet of A4 paper (depending on the time and number of participants, it is also possible to draw all the people on a piece of paper).

Variation 2

Another variation can be by following the same steps but asking participants to build their models with Lego® bricks, share the story of each of the models, then follow in couple and in a bigger team, using the parts included in the individual models for shared models to be narrate in the end and upon which base the final reflection.

Reflection

Participants describe the difficulties that they had in negotiating and reconciling different interests, and analyze what the points they wrote down have to do with Europe.

They share everyday experiences that connect to what they wrote and explore possibilities to strengthen European identity.

B5. I am here: placing ourselves in our community

Participants will visualise themselves with their identity as part of their communities. This activity merges activities A9 and A10: starting from a reflection on their personal identity here and now (with the awareness that it can change in time and location), they will then physically represent their position in society and reflect on the consequences on their possibility to connect, live a fulfilling and comfortable life and being mentally healthy.

Objectives

- Reflecting on inner aspects of self identity here and now and their implications on living in a community
- Developing awareness on the connection between our position in society and our possibility to live a good life, connecting with other citizens
- Understanding why in some conditions and positions of exclusion, anti-democratic slogans can be found more easily

Setting and material

- 4 blank paper sheets for each participant
- Pens and pencils

Age range and group size: 16 – 30 / 10 to 20 participants

Time frame: 30 minutes

Facilitation Steps Part 1

1. Finding common values: Give to each participant 4 pieces of paper.

Ask them to write at least four values which are important to them, on different pieces of paper

2. The trainer collects all the words and puts them on the floor, at the centre of the room. The participants are in a circle around the cards.

The trainer reads the single words and invites participants to stand up for a while if they identify with that word (even if it’s not the word they wrote down). In this way, it becomes visible who identifies with certain values, in which cases there are many standing up and in which cases it's only a few. Thus, new connections and differences between the members of the group can be seen.

3. In plenary, the following questions are reflected

- Which values do you feel closer to you? Do you confirm to identify with the ones you stand up for?
- How did it feel to stand with many others? How was it to be standing only with one or two other persons?
- Was it hard to come up with four values? Did you have many more or maybe just one you could come up with?
- Which are the most common values in the room? How can we make them work? Shared reflection

Facilitation Steps Part 2

1. Living picture: cluster the participants in small groups. Each of them will have to choose one of the values related to the cards and to represent it in a ‘living picture’, using their bodies to express the aspect of that card together. They should integrate possible tensions, ruptures and dilemmas.

2. In plenary, each group presents its living picture. Each participant of this group shares one sentence from his/her position. The others in the group share observations from the outside. If acceptable, one or two participants can go to the living picture and suggest a physical change to develop the concept further.

Facilitation Steps Part 3

Where am I? Put a chair at the centre of a circle made of other chairs.

Explain to participants that the chair represents the centre of the community, and the circle its boundaries: on the base on the position that people take in relation to that chair (in the middle, not in the middle but inside the circle or fully outside), they are active and fully immersed in the community, more or less outside or totally outside like an observer not (yet) linked to many others.

All participants are invited to stand and position themselves accordingly. In this way, differences of belonging become visible.

Reflection

The trainer collects statements with some guiding questions. For example:

- Do you feel comfortable where you are? Would you like to change position?
- How do you feel standing in the middle? What allowed you to get there?
- Can you see the others outside, are you surprised to see many / some there?
- Why are you on the outside? Is this also a good position for an overview?
- Do you know one or two persons from outside, from the middle?
- Which are the advantages of your current position?
- How could we help each other in this group to find a comfortable position?

- Who could help you as a personal bridge-builder within this group or the larger community if you want to change your position?
- Would you want to get more in the middle? What are obstacles, which help would you need?
- How could you invite others to come closer to the middle?
- Do active citizens have to be fully integrated?
- What is your relation to those already living in the community?
- How could you support each other in these aspects?
- How can we start with this group to build a democratic community with different but comfortable positions using all our resources and strengths?

Final question: How do you think that we can act following the values we identified in Phase 1?

Variation

Use Lego® Serious Play® bricks. Phases 1 and 2 become:

- Invite participants to build the model of what is important to them (individually). Ask them: which are at least the 4 main values for you?
- Sharing models: each individual shares the story of their model with the others. Each person writes the values on sticky notes and then put them next to their model.
- Questions are placed on the models.
- Shared reflection on the values represented, connections, thoughts.
- All participants work together to create a shared model (if there are more than 15 people, it is recommended to divide participants into smaller groups), where the values represented are connected and included. In the shared model of the group's values, connections between people become evident and concrete.
- Which barriers can limit the implementation/application/development of those values? What can foster it? People can build their answers through a new model, share and reflect together.

B6. Value auction

This activity enters into a reflection on whether values have an economic worth and how to deal with scarcity when not all values are available. Participants enter a market of values where they can invest fictional money on values and bargain on them

Objectives

- Trying to place economic worth on different values
- Realizing the situation of scarcity when dealing with a diversity of values
- Reflecting on economic and non-economic values

Setting and material

- Values printed on paper

Age range and group size: 16 – 20 / 8 to 15 participants

Time frame: 30 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Divide the group into pairs. And explain the following task: you are now in an auction and there are 30 values for the auction (see background material). Put the values on pieces of paper on the floor.

2. Each group receives 1.000 EUR fictitious money (coins/papers) for the value auction. Each group discusses (individual group consultations) how much they want to give per value.

They should ask themselves these questions (visualize them): How much is a value worth? What is the breakdown and strategy? There are many values on the auction market! What values do we want to have? Discussions are done beforehand.

3. Each group then chooses an auctioneer. Now the auction starts. At 10 Euros / coins the auction begins. 10, 20, 30, 40, 50

“For the first, second and third, the value for ... goes to group xyz”.

After each turn, the remaining sum should be written down by each group.

Reflection

Questions should focus on the process of the auction and then also be combined with questions of democracy and market economy.

- What was the peak?
- Was the value really worth it?
- Do you now own the value, what's your claim on it?
- Which values have hardly any cost?
- Do you really need them?
- How was it, if "my" value was not possible to get?
- What happens to democratic values if they become part of an economic game?
- Where in our everyday life do we observe that values are 'paid for' – when does this have positive and when negative consequences?

Background material for preparation

Values for the auction:

Freedom of belief	Freedom of choice	Liberty
Freedom	Equality	Personal property
Freedom of religion	Citizenship	Voting rights
The right to life	Minority rights	Social contract
Justice	Right to information	Common Good
Diversity	Truth	Inclusion
Participation of citizens	Transparency	Accountability
Human rights	Free and fair elections	Tolerance
Accepting election results	Patriotism	Separation of powers
Independence of the judiciary	Free, independent and pluralistic media	Freedom of expression and opinion

B7. Values in conflict

This activity draws a connection between important values of democracy which participants are presenting, and the processes they get involved into while doing this. Thus, the result-orientation and the process-orientation of democracy will be discussed and conflicts built into democracy will be analyzed. This allows for an attitude of looking beyond right and wrong or good and evil when defending democracy.

Objectives

- Connecting the claim for values with the actual process in the training group
- Realizing conflicts between rational decisions and actions in practice
- Understanding the dynamic and emotional nature of populism and extremism in everyday reality

Setting and material

- Pens and pencils

Age range and group size: 16+ / 8 to 15 participants

Time frame: 30 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Ask participants to individually collect important values of democracy on a piece of paper. Let them make a range of importance concerning the values they collected.

2. They then separate into groups of 4-5 participants each. They get a fixed amount of time to decide upon the five most important aspects of democracy which they write on slips of paper.

3. The results of the groups are being visualized and briefly presented in plenary. The focus of the discussion should not be on the content of the values being presented, but on the process of how they were being decided.

Reflection

The reflection focuses on the process of the group work in relation to the results. Was there a democratic process in the group, are the five aspects of democracy being reflected there? How did everyone feel about the process? It is important that there is no “right” and “wrong” slipping into the reflection. Everyone can learn about the process that happened and draw consequences for him-or

herself. To achieve this it is also crucial not to step too quickly to the larger societal picture but stick to the group process as such in which participants might discover important dilemmas of democracy, e.g. “generally I am for freedom of expression, but in this case I ignored it because I thought that the task to be achieved is more important” or “I felt so comfortable being the majority and really liked it so that I did not care about the minority, did not even realize his/her feelings although protection of minority was one of our important aspect of democracy”.

Stress that democracy means to balance processes and results and be aware that there will always be fundamental dilemmas between values which we have to be aware of.

B8. My values – your values

Participants use the metaphor of a ‘role model’ to explore which values are important to them. They exchange with others and focus on differences, tensions and dilemmas between these values. They visualize one dilemma in a bodily form and others help find a ‘solution’. This biographical approach allows for a human-centered understanding of the other when confronting anti-democratic slogans.

Objectives

- Generating personal values from biographical experiences
- Exploring differences and tensions between values in the training group
- Discussing ways to deal creatively with a diversity of values beyond populism and anti-democratic moves

Setting and material

- 4 pieces of paper for each participant
- Pens and pencils

Age range and group size: 14+ / 10 to 20 participants

Time frame: 30 - 45 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Ask all participants to think of a person who is an important role model for them. It could be someone from the family, a ‘hero of childhood’ from a fantasy book, someone living or dead, a real or fictitious person, someone from a movie or an artist. All try to ‘draw’ this person in a small sketch or symbol.

2. Ask participants to write down four important values which this person represents. They can write these values around their drawing. Ask them to choose the two most important one of these values and circle it.

3. In small groups participants present and exchange on their important values. Let them focus on possible tensions or differences between the values in the group. Ask them to reflect what would happen if they had to take away some of the values.

Reflection 1

In plenary results of the discussion are presented. The trainer looks for values which are conflictual and can deepen this by visualizing a ‘value square’ showing how civic values are often interdependent and connected, yet at the same time in tension. What happens if we take one value

absolute? What about active citizens who do this in the name of a great idea? When you look into our group: are there important values which are missing for a comprehensive democracy?

Where are sharing spaces in our society in which insecurity and tensions can be dealt with productively?

Reflection 2

Ask participants to once again write down the one or two most important values from their role model. They are then asked to find 3-5 examples for each of these values in how far they themselves live these values, and how they apply to themselves.

They exchange this briefly in pairs in plenary.

In the final round everybody shares a sentence: “I am (value), because I…” - how this value applies to their personal life.

B9. Populist voices within me

Participants will get to know the diversity of communication within themselves. They have the chance to see their inner voices visualized on a stage. They will learn to better deal with the complexity of inner conflicts and realize that they are inner mirrors of larger societal structures of conflict and that they also have a number of populist and anti-democratic voices within them (inspired by Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023).

Objectives

- Reflecting on populist voices we all have within us
- Making explicit the tensions between different values we are trying to integrate individually
- Finding democratic solutions for situations of inner conflict

Setting and material

- open room with some sort of ‘stage’
- Sticky paper

Age range and group size: 16 – 20 / 8 to 15 participants

Time frame: 60 – 120 minutes depending on the number of cases

Facilitation Steps

1. Each participant thinks about a conflict from personal or professional life, it should be an inner conflict in which it is not easy to make a decision. Participants present a selection of conflicts in plenary and the trainers are selecting one case. Depending on the level of trust and intimacy within the group, they make sure it’s a case which is not too intimate or touches certain tabooes. It’s good to start with an ‘easy’, everyday case many can relate to. It could be for example the conflict over the decision whether to move out from one’s parent’s home.

2. The person that has provided the case is asked which 'inner voices' there are in the conflict (e.g. anger, despair, hope, joy, frustration...). The trainers and participants can help find these voices by asking about different perspectives of the conflict. It is important to find 'loud' and more 'quiet' voices of the conflict.

3. When 5-7 voices have been found, the case giver selects participants representing the different voices. They get a sticker with the name of the voice to identify them, and they get a starting sentence that they will say first in the conflict.

4. Now the voices are going on 'stage': they say their first sentence and then go into a dialogue about the conflict – always from their specific perspective. There will be alliances, certain voices might leave the stage, others will sharpen their voice.

5. After 5-10 minutes the trainers ask the voices to find a solution in the conflict and tell the solution to all.

Reflection

First the case giver shares his or her observations: was it realistic, were there new perspectives and helpful insights? Then the voices share how they felt during the dialogue and whether they were influenced by new perspectives.

The general discussion should focus on the issue of diversity: how does the issue of inner diversity link to larger societal structure? How do our inner limits reflect outer limits in society? Where could we hear populist voices or even anti-democratic statements? How far do we allow these voices needing orientation, clarity and exclusion within ourselves? Do we need to expand our own perspectives before changing society to become more diverse? Does diversity in society in turn have an effect on our personal lives?

B10. Attentive listening

Participants enter the experience and value system of another participant by closely listening to his or her story and by empathically adopting the role of this person. Thus they begin to realize the multiplicity of perspectives that might be valid within their country. They might get the uneasy feeling to identify with others they normally would not accept within their value system (inspired by and adapted from Ulrich 2006 and Cepin et al. 2025).

Objectives

- Entering into a deeply personal and intimate exchange of another person' life experience
- Realizing the amount of biographical difference even between people of a similar target group
- Gaining empathy for otherness as a prerequisite for preventing extremism

Setting and material

- Open circle of chairs

Age range and group size: 16+ / 8 to 16 participants

Time frame: 60 – 90 minutes depending on the size of the group

Facilitation Steps

1. Participants work together in pairs (preferably those that do not yet know one another very well or come from very different backgrounds) and should look for a space in which they are not disturbed. They should make sure no mobiles will interrupt them during the activity. For seven minutes one partner of each pair shares something from his or her life – the other partner must not speak during that time. The other partner must not speak during that time, fully concentrating on what is being said. Then the other partner equally shares within the frame of seven minutes a little story from his or her life. It isn't allowed to take notes and not necessary in this activity. After that, the group gets together in plenary.

Important advice

Depending on the target group, you might advise participants to not share issues from their life which are too personal, but an interesting story or experience from their professional or community background. This is important when working with target groups not used to sharing private issues as part of a learning process.

2. In plenary, pairs are asked to share their contributions in the following way. One partner of one

pair stands behind the other partner and puts his or her hand on the shoulder of the sitting one. (If the partner feels uncomfortable about being touched – it can be done without it.) Then he or she repeats what he or she has heard by adopting the respective point of view and speaking as if he or she were the other one - “walking in the shoes” of the other person. Only at the end the sitting partner shares if he or she could identify with what had been said. After that the other partner takes on the role of standing behind and sharing in the. Then the other pairs will share in the same way.

Reflection

The reflection focuses on the following questions, which can be answered individually and then be shared with the partner. Alternatively a discussion in plenary can be facilitated by the trainers.

- How did it feel when you were presented by the other person?
- How was it to repeat what you heard as if you were the other person?
- Could you feel his or her point of view (“walk in his/her shoes”)?
- Did you leave the “shoes” of your partner by interpreting according to your value system?
- How was it to speak seven minutes without interruption?
- Did this influence the choice of topic?
- How was it to not be able to speak for seven minutes?
- What did you learn from the other person, what did you focus upon?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- How could you implement such a style of communication in your everyday life?
- How does this experience help you balance empathy and confrontation when dealing with anti-democratic slogans?

B11. Be the change you want to see in the world

Being an active citizen means wanting to change things for the better. One danger is that this change is externalized to others while many activists do not question their own position. Especially ‘left-wing’ activists have been criticized for playing with moral standards like tolerance, inclusion and plurality, while not accepting other positions fitting their idea of what that means. The activity is aiming at self-reflection at this point with the concept of the duality of democracy / value square (compare Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023) showing dilemmas.

Objectives

- Critically reflecting the effects of positive and negative values’ absolutization
- Developing self-awareness and criticism on own values and analyzing their possible shades
- Collaboratively finding solution to democratic dilemmas

Setting and material

- Many blank value schemes on paper sheets
- Pens or Pencils
- Sticky notes
- Lego® Serious Play® bricks (optional)

Age range and group size: 16+ (adaptable for adult learners) / 8 to 15 participants

Time frame: 120 minutes

Facilitation Steps

This activity uses the idea of the value and development square (compare Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023).

1. Ask participants to start personally: They should write down a problematic character trait of a person they know (e.g. not reliable; messy; too talkative…). Invite them to write down this word on the bottom right of a paper. Then they should think about the positive counter-value to this problematic character trait and write it down on the top left of their paper (e.g. reliable; tidy; listening…). That is probably also a value which they like themselves. Even graphically you see: I feel superior while the other seems to be below me.

Then they reflect on what it would mean if this positive value would be exaggerated and to be taken as an absolute. In the case of reliability this could be unflexibility/dogmatism, in the case of tidiness it could be obsession, in the case of listening it could be lack of own position. They write down this value on the left side below the positive one.

Finally one value is missing: the positive counter-value on the top right of the paper (e.g. flexible; process-oriented; outspoken...). Doing this participants can understand that each positive value needs a counterpart not to be exaggerated into a negative extreme. At the same time they have understood that the negative character trait of the other person might contain some positive core which is to be appreciated.

This does not mean that there is no conflict anymore – you probably still do not like the trait of the other. But you recognize that he or she also has a perspective which is part of a value-based dilemma. At the same time you recognize that you might be perceived as exaggerating your personal values.

Confronting the other therefore always means confronting oneself. In this way it is not so easy anymore to disapprove of a person as such – you enter into a dialogue, trying to find common solutions which can be more creative than just winning or losing.

Basically it comes down to two questions:

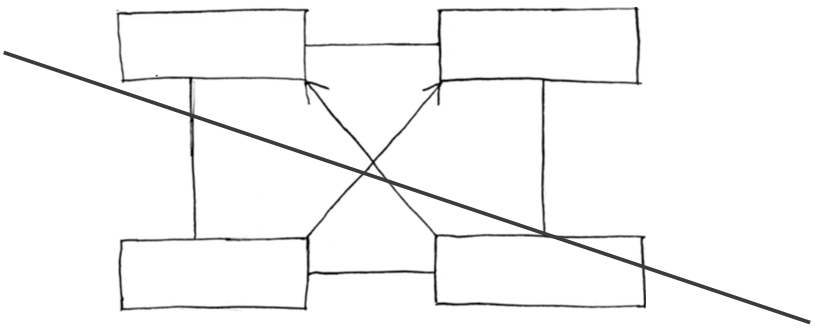
- Which negative and exaggerated value do you see in the other?
- What is your own positive value you want to defend?

Do this with your partner and share the different perspectives!

2. Participants now convert this idea to anti-democratic slogans. Let them collect populist statements (or use from the list below) and ask them to complete a scheme accordingly which is trying to find a democratic dilemma. Here is one example. Populist statement: “Politicians are all corrupt”. The positive counter-value might be “Politicians are independent”. Now, if you exaggerate this positive value, you might end up with “Politicians take uninformed decisions”. As a positive counter-value you might say “Politicians have good networks”. On the top level a democratic dilemma between Independence and Networking becomes visible. This dilemma should be embraced, it cannot be dissolved and democracy as a process means to decide in different situations anew.

One important advice concerning defensive democracy: you should be careful not to forget possible power imbalances between those being in a dilemma. For example it is easier for men in top positions to take a decision whether they want to network or be independent – because many times they already have (male) networks; women are much more dependent on networks and not easily decide to be independent – they need network support to be able to be successful since they did not have it in the past in many cases.

Privilege – *options to decide freely within the dilemma*



No privilege – *dependent on one side*

3. Ask participants to form small groups and let two of them visualize one of the democratic dilemmas they have found with their bodies in the room. In plenary for each visualization the two participants share one sentence from their position. The others are observing and making small changes to possibly find a ‘solution’ in the dilemma.

To prepare this individual participants can stand behind each of the two representing the dilemma in order to physically experience both sides. Finally the two participants representing the values are sharing a sentence of how they feel and if they experienced a good decision taken in the dilemma.

Variation 1

If the group already has built up enough trust and is in a group phase in which diversity can be lived, you can take a more concrete turn: let the group collect controversial issues which they do not agree upon as a group. Form groups in which opposing positions concerning the respective topics are represented. In the small groups, the different positions are presented in turn – the others listen for 2-3 minutes. On this basis, they create a common value square and make a decision that is supported by all.

Reflection

The reflection focuses on the question of how inner and outer change go together; what was the feeling doing this move into insecurity and tension? What ‘right’ do we have as active citizens to push for change in society? How far can participation of others go? How do we take good decisions in a dilemma? How do you feel about that?

Variation 2 with Lego®

Facilitation Steps Part 1

1. Give each participant 5 minutes to make a Lego® model on a problematic character trait of a person they know (e.g. not reliable; messy; too talkative, etc.) Each participant places his/her model at the bottom right of their square, shares the story of the model with the others and writes the character trait on sticky notes next to their model

2. Then, each participant has 5 minutes to build the positive counter-value to the problematic character trait (e.g. reliable; tidy; listening, etc.), and they put it on the top left space of their square, and share their models

3. A third model is then made in 5 minutes on what would happen if the positive value would be exaggerated to be taken as absolute. In the case of reliability, this could be inflexibility and dogmatism; in the case of tidiness it could be obsession, in the case of listening it could be lack of a personal position. They put it on the bottom left of their square, below the positive value

4. Finally, ask the participants to build in 5 minutes a Lego® model of the positive counter-value of the last value, and to put it on the top right of the paper (e.g. flexible; process-oriented; outspoken).

All participants have their models on the dilemma square (compare Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023) and can comment and reflect on their entire scenarios, comparing them, focusing on the values arisen and related dilemmas

Reflection

Ask to the group the following questions for the final reflection phase:

- What have we learnt?
- Is the conflict still there? Where do you see them, show them on the models
- Do you still consider the negative value as negative as before?
- What can you infer from the graphic position of the boxes in the scheme? Is there some kind of superiority and hierarchy? (Graphically you can see that the values on the top feel superior to the others – you can see it on the models)
- Have you learnt something about your personal values?
- Which solution can be found in this dilemma?

Facilitation Steps Part 2

1. Let’s switch to slogans! Participants can work in couples or small groups – provide each group/ couple with a blank dilemma scheme. Prepare a list of antidemocratic slogans to support the groups in case they don’t have any ideas to start with.

2. Ask each group to apply the scheme to anti-democratic slogans. They should think of a populist and anti-democratic statement and using the models they have made before, they will put them together and transform them into 4 models, one for each box according to the scheme provided, creating their dilemma scenario – 15 minutes (invite the groups to write the slogan and related counter values on post its to be placed beside each of the 4 models).

Example.

Populist statement: “Politicians are all corrupt”.

The positive counter-value might be “Politicians are independent”.

Now, if you exaggerate this positive value, you might end up with “Politicians take uninformed decisions”.

As a positive counter-value you might say “Politicians have good networks”.

On the top level, a democratic dilemma between Independence and Networking becomes visible. This dilemma should be embraced, it cannot be dissolved and democracy as a process means to decide in different situations anew.

3. Each group will have 10 minutes to reflect on their scenario, talking on the models, integrating the models, including connections and adding elements while sharing on the democratic dilemma they have created

4. Each group will be invited to think of solutions to their dilemma by working on the models, transforming them, putting them together, taking elements away or adding new elements (bricks) – this is a phase of deep reflection among each of the groups (10 min)

5. In plenary, a spokesperson for each group presents the main reflections coming from their scenario to the others, which solutions they have found in their dilemma pointing to the model/s they have created

Reflection

Ask and reflect the following questions in plenary

- What was the feeling doing this move into insecurity and tension?
- What ‘right’ do we have as active citizens to push for change in society?
- How far can the participation of others go?
- How do we make good decisions in a dilemma?
- How do you feel about that?

Additional step

Once the basic idea of dilemmas has been established and with it an awareness of the challenges of democracy, attention can also be drawn to alternatives to this approach, which historically and

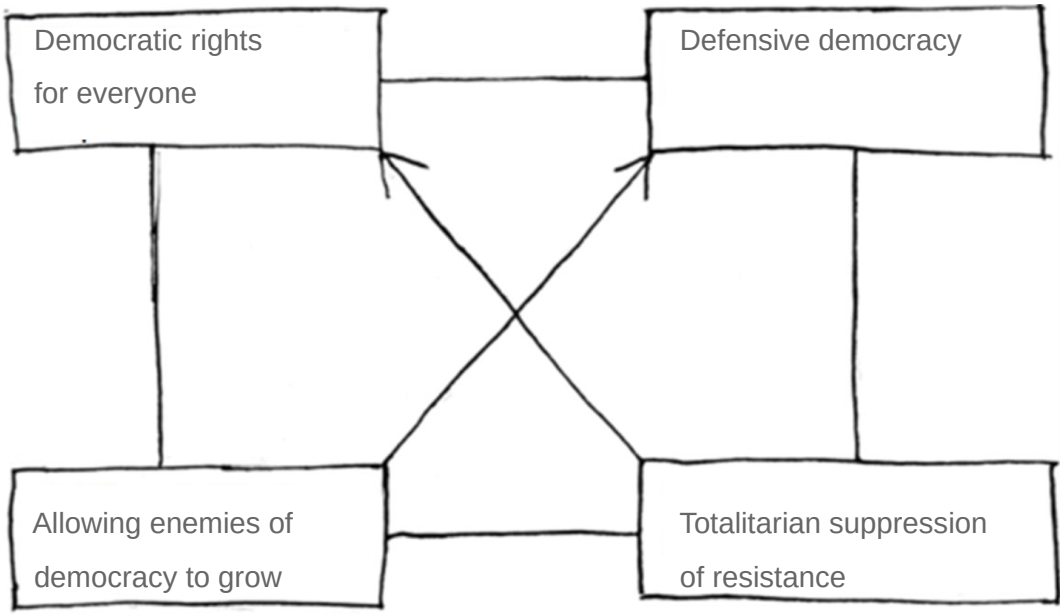
currently also repeatedly reflect social trends. The participants discuss the following alternatives for taking decisions and their respective advantages and disadvantages in small groups:

- regulation by market mechanisms (as a political approach that sees parties, politicians and voters as suppliers and consumers in a free competition)
- regulation by historical necessity (socialism, communism)
- regulation by expert committees (reliance on scientific objectivity, expertocracy)
- regulation by authorities (charismatics, populists, dictators)

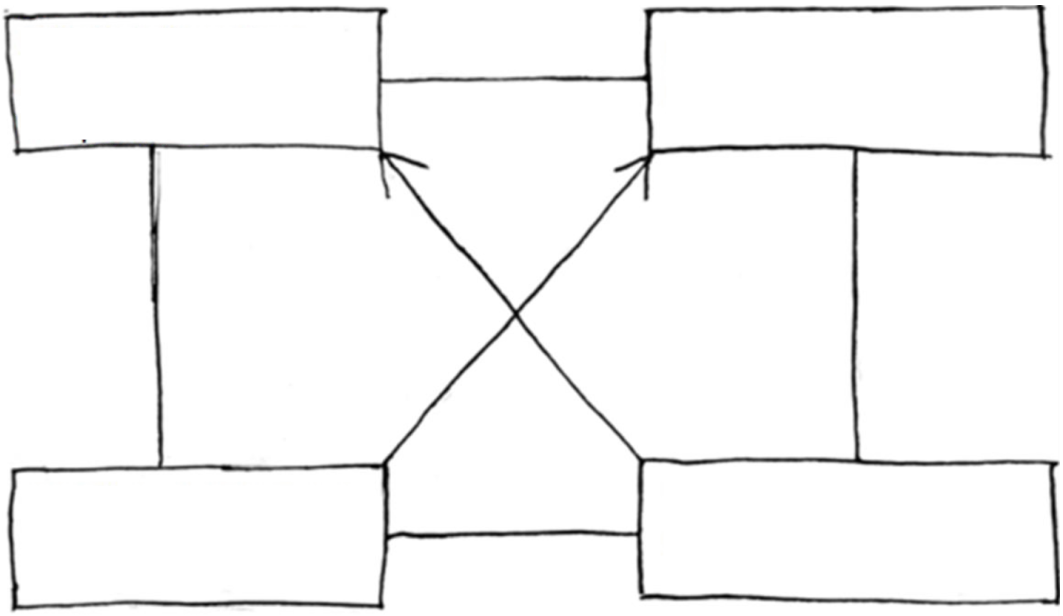
Background information for preparation

More information on the value square (compare Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023) can be found in the section on Socio-political background of *Volume 2 – Deepening the approach* accompanying this training manual.

The general dilemma of democracy



Empty sheet to be used by participants:



List of anti-democratic slogans

Here is a list of anti-democratic and populist slogans for orientation. Of course you should use those fitting your regional context and if possible collect them together with participants. In part 5 you will find more examples from European partners.

Use the scissors to prepare single slices of paper with a single affirmation, and hand it out to each group. Be very aware that listing, visualizing and uttering anti-democratic slogans in a training setting can have discriminatory effects by repeating what actually should be confronted; especially when participants are present who are marked by one or more of these statements, you have to very sensitive not to instrumentalize them as a ‘tool for learning’ and thereby discriminate them again.

- Action must be taken against immigrants. Immigrants pose a threat to the native population.
- Roma people are not actual citizens of our country. They are criminals and burglars; we give them everything they need while Italian people in need are left behind
- Green policies and ideologies are crazy and useless. Europe is against ‘real people and workers.
- Immigration from Africa is an invasion, and it is meant to replace white people with black and brown people. Our national identity is in danger.
- If you're new somewhere, you should first settle for less.
- Most long-term unemployed people are not really interested in finding a job.
- Most long-term unemployed people are not really interested in finding a job.
- Women should focus more on the role of wife and mother again.
- Whites are rightly leaders in the world.
- Most homeless people are work-shy.

Angle C: Confronting anti-democratic slogans

Taking this angle, you will find two aspects of confrontation: developing an attitude which is helpful for keeping contact and conversation, and techniques which provide options for dealing with anti-democratic slogans. Concrete scenarios will help to find productive solutions to respect the diversity of opinions in a society while defending democracy.

C1. Dates of opinion opponents

Participants experience the connection between democracy and dialogue and discuss the importance of European values in real-life situations. They will recognize diversity as a source of richness, not as an obstacle. The activity is supported by an Online tool and app which makes it especially attractive for young people (adapted from Cepin et al. 2025).

Objectives

- Realizing one's own political position and value base
- Being confronted with different political positions within the training group
- Understanding the added value of a guided dialogue

Setting and material

- Open circle of chairs
- Printed Dialogue Guideline Cards
- Smartphones of participants or provided by trainer

Age range and group size: 19 – 30 (adaptable for younger people 15 – 19 years old) / 10 to 20 participants

Time frame: 90 – 120 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Present the aims of the activity and its „why". For these you should use the web application that will enable the participants easily to create dialogue couples

2. Present the principles of dialogue using „Dialogue Guidelines Cards"

3. Implement all phases of the HardTopics app (questioning, pairing, dialogues, feedback)

Reflection

The group gathers back and evaluates the dialogical process using the Dialogue Guidelines Cards

Background material for preparation

Before the activity, the trainer should familiarize him/herself with the “HardTopics application”, available at https://hardtopics.eu. This tool supports structured dialogue between participants with opposing views through the following steps:

- Participants respond to opinion-based questions.
- An algorithm pairs individuals with the most contrasting views.
- Participants are invited to engage in one-on-one “opinion dates.”
- After the conversations, participants provide feedback.

The facilitator should also print the “Dialogue Guidelines” cards, available at https://hardtopics.eu/dialogue-tools/. These cards will be used during the introduction and reflection phases of the workshop.

C2. Walking in Their Shoes: The Competitive Conversation

This dynamic role-playing activity challenges participants to step into the shoes of characters with populist, anti-democratic viewpoints, potentially leading to hate-speech. Through a series of short and competitive debates, participants explore the rhetoric and tactics used to promote these ideologies, fostering critical thinking and awareness.

Objectives

- Developing an understanding of the rhetoric and tactics used in populist and anti-democratic discourse
- Fostering empathy and understanding of the motivations behind extremist viewpoints
- Creating a safe space for exploring and challenging difficult and controversial ideas

Setting and material

- Character cards (each containing a brief description of a character with a populist/anti-democratic viewpoint).
- Topic cards (containing controversial or politically charged debate topics).
- Timer
- Optional: props or costumes to enhance role-playing.

Age range and group size: 16+ / 15 – 30 participants

Time frame: 20 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Introduction: Setting the Stage

Explain the concept of "competitive conversation" as a role-playing debate.

Establish the rules: emphasize the importance of respectful engagement, even when portraying characters with disagreeable viewpoints.

Explain that the goal is to understand the rhetoric, not to endorse the ideas.

Divide participants into pairs or small groups or you can also decide to divide the full group into two and make the competitive conversation happen on plenary level.

2. Character and Topic Selection

One participant in the couple or one part of the group receives a character card and all participants receive one or more of the topic cards.

Participants have a moment to familiarise themselves with the topic/s and with the character cards (for the part of the group receiving them)

You create then 2 lines of people: one playing the populist and anti-democratic position, the other playing the opposite

3. Competitive Conversations

Pairs/groups engage in short debates (e.g., 5-10 minutes per round).

All Participants stay in character, using the rhetoric and arguments provided on their character cards from the populist and anti-democratic position

Encourage participants to be creative and engage in lively, dynamic debates.

Facilitate rounds of debate, switching up the groups and topics.

Reflection

In a brief plenary session, facilitate a discussion on:

- The challenges and insights gained from playing these roles.
- The common rhetoric and tactics used by populist and anti-democratic figures.
- The emotional impact of engaging with these viewpoints.
- How to effectively counter these arguments in real-life situations.

Background material for preparation

Real world examples that represent the viewpoints. Try to create character cards that are connected to real positions. Use debates and controversial positions circling around young people in your context; also integrate social and political conflicts in the larger regional or national context to provide a range of variation for topics and characters.

C3. Two facts, one lie

Anti-democratic slogans often spread fake news and misinformation. With this activity participants can explore their own tendency to at least ‘frame’ who they are and enter into a discussion as to where fake news and deliberate lying are starting and what has to be accepted as opinions which we do not agree with at all. This connects to the question of how we trust each other in society.

Objectives

- Connecting ‘fake news’ to personal stories participants tell about their life
- Realizing the immediate power of prejudice and absolutization of views of others
- Reflecting how trust is essential for a community living together democratically

Setting and material

- Open circle of chairs

Age range and group size: 14 – 20 / 5 – 15 participants

Time frame: 20 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. This activity can be carried out at the very beginning, previous to the introduction of the trainers and the training content. The trainers tell three facts about themselves, of which two are true and one is a lie. The participants are asked what they consider to be a lie and why. The trainers choose the statements with care:

- It can be facts that build a relationship of personal trust. The trainer can reveal something personal about herself, e.g. ”I have three children“, “I have no high school diploma“
- There should be facts that contradict what is expected, e.g. ”I am a Hindu“, ”I live in the countryside“. Such facts could provoke reactions such as: ”No, a Hindu woman wouldn’t wear such a skirt “, ”No, a man from the country looks different!”
- We also recommend facts that provoke questions, e.g. “I drive a woman’s car“. Participants might want to ask: “What is a woman’s car?“, which leads to further questions: ”What is a foreigner?“, ”Who determines that and why?”

2. Now invite all participants to share two facts and one lie and let the others guess in each case where the lie is.

Reflection

Start by focusing on the facts and not the lie: Why did you choose these facts (as trainer or participant), how did you frame your life? Is this objectively true or a nice version of yourself? What

is legitimate framing to control a story that seems to be helpful, where does misinformation start? If we agree that we construct reality to a certain extent, is there truth at all or are we all producers of fake news? Did you trust others in the group before and after hearing the stories? Did it change?

When we look at society: could you think of good reasons to spread misinformation or fake news in a certain context? How can we make sure that there is something like truth when we argue with each other? Is truth objective or do we need trust? How do fake news affect trust between us in society?

C4. Freedom of expression!? Fake News!?

As decision-makers, the participants are asked to decide who may participate in the content design of an information brochure on war and which information should be included and which should be left out. They discuss this issue in different subgroups. This scenario on the war in Ukraine provides an example and should be adapted depending on societal controversies in the context you work. It urges participants to take responsibility and decide where they draw the limit between information, opinion, misinformation and fake news. They will feel the dilemma between freedom of expression and the need to limit this value for the sake of stabilizing collective truth and trust.

Objectives

- Working with a concrete political scenario urging for responsible decision
- Recognizing tensions and dilemmas decision makers and politicians are facing
- Realizing the danger of moving towards populism in complex topics and processes

Setting and material

- Scenario cards

Age range and group size: 16+ / 10 – 20 participants

Time frame: 90 - 120 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. The trainers divide the participants into small groups, who are to imagine that they are responsible for a school information brochure on the Ukraine war either in the Ministry of Education, as members of a school forum or as young people with Russian roots. The general scenario is presented by the trainer.

2. Each of the three groups gets one individual task as Ministry of Education, school forum or young people with Russian origin. Each group discusses the scenario questions and decides on the title of the brochure.

When guiding the groups, the trainer emphasizes that the aim is to make a democratic decision. A non-decision and thus a non-appearance of the brochure would also have consequences that should be discussed.

Reflection

The results are presented in plenary and, above all, the tension between freedom of expression and the necessary restriction of this fundamental right in a democracy is discussed. At the same

time, the participants' sense of having to take responsibility and make decisions in this situation is reflected upon.

Also at the same time, the question of participation in democracy will be discussed: how far should participation go? Which groups, including minorities, are excluded from decision-making? Which groups must be excluded? Where is the limit of freedom of expression reached and who is responsible for marking messages as 'fake news' or deleting them, for example on social media?

Background material for preparation

Scenario Card for all participants

You have three tasks that will be visualized beforehand:

1. Decide which people and/or groups should be included in your discussion (key questions: everyone who wants to? Only 'western-oriented' experts or citizens; or those with Russian roots? Especially those who are very critical of the majority opinion? Those who suspect a completely different agenda behind the war and the role of Russia and NATO? (e.g. democratically elected politicians/student representatives?)

2. Decide which title to choose: (key questions: should the title be neutral, represent a controversy? Should it appear neutral and objective or already propagate certain normative values?)

3. Reflect: Which democratic value dilemmas have emerged? Which value did you ultimately decide on here and now?

Cards for three different groups

Working group 1: Ministry of Education

You are part of a working group at the Ministry of Education that is preparing an information brochure for schools about the war in Ukraine to provide teachers and students with orientation. The title proposed by the minister is: “A turning point – how we now defend our values in schools”. There is an argument in the working group about this title and the demand to include “other voices” in the discussion.

Discuss different perspectives and agree on a common title!

Working group 2: School forum

You are a member of the school forum, which would like to publish an action-oriented brochure for students about the war in Ukraine. The student council has proposed the title “Shut down Russia! How we can stop the madness.” There is an argument in the school forum about this title and demands to provide only neutral information.

Discuss different perspectives and agree on a common title!

Working group 3: Young people of Russian origin

You are a group of young people of Russian origin in an extracurricular youth group and want to create a brochure about the war in Ukraine as part of a project. Two of the initiators of the idea have proposed the following title: “How the West defames us – our story”. This title has caused a dispute in the youth group and especially with the social workers, who are calling for the story not to be presented in such a one-sided way and for other people who are not of Russian origin to be included.

Discuss different perspectives and agree on a common title!

C5. Opinions beyond my world

The trainer collects statements which are potentially controversial within the group of participants, on which the participants express their position. In small groups, representatives of opposing positions state their point of view while the others are collecting positive values for each side. Thus the positive core of each side is found and creative decisions can be taken.

Objectives

- Making explicit controversies within the group of participants
- Using positive values to explore areas of agreement and difference
- Analyzing fundamental democratic dilemmas within controversial issues

Setting and material

- Visualized or printed out trigger points

Age range and group size: 16+ / 8 – 15 participants

Time frame: 45 - 60 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. The trainer collects current social issues which are controversial; To give some direction, the list of ‘trigger points’ can be presented. Other controversial topics and/or topics from the local community can of course also be chosen. Please keep in mind that the goal is, on the one hand, to address controversial and potentially discriminatory statements and, on the other hand, not to stabilize the reproduction of existing discrimination by corresponding examples and thus directly expose those affected to this discrimination (again).

2. Two protagonists sit down next to each other at the front on chairs; each has 2 minutes to talk about it. No discussions or questions. The others collect positive values for each side.

3. All are placing their collected values in front of the two protagonists and discuss areas of commonality or difference.

4. Small groups discuss how they would decide among the positions of the protagonists. Would that be relevant for the continuation of the training and have an impact on working together as a training group?

Reflection

In the plenary session, the experiences and feelings in the small groups are discussed.

What contributed to mutual understanding? What role was played by arguments, emotions, personal biographical experiences or concern? Was it easy to give up one's own convictions or claim to absoluteness when seeing the positive values on the other side? How were similar values interpreted differently?

What allows one's own position to be relativized, what further solidifies it or perhaps even 'radicalizes' it?

Variation 1

It is also possible to address the issue of dissenters without predetermined statements. Participants are standing in two concentric circles, facing one partner. They discuss each question for 2-3 minutes before moving to the next partner.

1. Where do you encounter (completely) different opinions (in your everyday life, on the internet)?

2. What is your goal in dealing with different (absolute) opinions?

3. At which point have you learned something new in the course of the discussion?

4. Have you ever believed something that turned out to be false? What made you change your mind?

5. Have you ever shared something online and later regretted it? Why?

6. What do you feel when someone challenges your opinion? Defensive? Curious? Angry?

7. Do you know someone who strongly believes in a conspiracy theory? What would you say to them now?

Afterwards, small groups discuss their results. The focus of the reflection is on exploring the extent to which participants come into contact with people who think differently at all. This can lead to reflection on the composition of the group and also on one's own filter bubble. Ideas for actually entering into such a dialogue can be actively collected. In addition, it can become clear how difficult it is to let go of one's own perspectives, but possibly to demand this very vehemently from those who think differently. In doing so, one's own claim to absoluteness and one's own self-righteousness becomes clear.

Variation 2

To start the exercise, the participants form groups of two and discuss the following two questions:

- What if we no longer had any differences of opinion in our society, i.e. no longer argued at all?
- What if we always had hostile disagreements in our society?

The need for democratic debate is emphasized by the management team, and at the same time, both positive and negative experiences of the participants are discussed.

Background material for preparation

Trigger points (see also section A2 of *Volume 2 – Deepening the approach)*

Steffen Mau (Mau et al. 2023) has done empirical research concerning the often discussed division of society. His observation is that there are indeed certain 'trigger points' that serve as emotional stirs and let people opt for a clear position they do not easily want to leave. Yet, in society in general, empirically there still is a consensus about many things and many shades of grey beyond black and white positions. The challenge, as he sees it, is rather that there are certain associations and parties which function as 'division entrepreneurs' who emotionally scandalize trigger points and make them big and extreme in public discourse. They can be found in populist parties and movements fundamentally opposing the existing democratic system and division of powers. They use the trigger to establish strong opposition between 'us' and 'them' and often build on conspiracy theories. They actively undermine a diversity of opinion and, as discussed above, they often in consequence exclude those from public discourse who already have a weaker position. Their aim is the establishment of an autocratic order in which control and power provide orientation. Democracy is thus seen as something 'weak' producing confusion and uncertainty. 'Take back control' is the slogan that was originally used by the 'vote leave' campaign leading to the Brexit. In its many variations since then it represents this wish and autocratic vision of securing power, often in a nationalist vision in which migrants are deemed to be part of the problem as they are regarded as confusing this imagined control.

The following topics are very often triggers that are actively used to 'take back control' – they vary across Europe – depending on the political system, history and societal discourses in present.

- The institution of politics

  Politicians are an elite which wants to deprive the people of their rights and install a controlling dictatorship by not allowing divergent opinions. Examples: Corona as an invention to control the people, letting the energy system collapse on purpose after the start of the Ukraine war to deindustrialize European countries.

- The media

  Media are controlled by the state and have developed a closed system with politicians in order to control opinions of the people and secretly pursue their own hidden agenda about which no-one should know.

- Integration

  The state is planning the 'big exchange' of the people with migrants. The destruction of the original population makes it easier to control the territory by elites.

- Gender

  'Gender craziness' wants to dissolve the categories of man, woman and family; the abolishment of everything 'male' produces societal chaos.

- Climate

> Panic concerning climate change serves to install chaos and establishes the ruling elites as saviors providing a clear direction.

The basic idea behind many of these positions: there is something ‘natural’ in the world that is being threatened by an elite of conspiracists. It is ‘our’ task as a people to defend this natural order of things: traditional gender relations and hierarchies, protecting our ethnicity and neo-liberal capitalist way of living without questioning existing privileges that mostly go at the cost of the weaker ones in society (and the environment to be used limitedlessly and unquestionably).

C6. Myths we believe in

Students work in small groups to list conspiracy theories or fake news they've heard locally or online. They analyze their respective emotional and psychological appeal.

Objectives

- Critically reflecting on popular fake news and conspiracy narratives by analyzing them using structured questioning
- Build awareness of emotional appeal, hidden messages, group dynamics, and how to intervene on fake news conspiracy theories

Setting and material

- Printed argumentation question tables

Age range and group size: 15 – 20 / 15 – 30 participants

Time frame: 60 minutes

Facilitation Steps

As a preparation, the facilitator researches current conspiracy theories from local or national context. Alternatively, the participants themselves are researching one to three.

1. The facilitator divides participants into five small groups. Each group gets on example of fake news / conspiracy theory (alternatively participants are researching themselves one to three examples and choose on)

2. The facilitator assigns one argumentation question table to each group which will be filled together by each group

3. In plenary each group presents their findings to all

Reflection

The facilitator discusses with the group general questions arising from the analysis and group responses:

- What happens when an authority like a teacher or doctor shares misinformation publicly?
- Does the level of influence or authority change the ethical responsibility concerning fake news / conspiracy theories? Should public figures or influencers be more accountable?
- Can a message still be 'free speech' if it causes someone to behave in a potentially harmful way (like e.g. medical treatment)?

- Where is the line between exploring alternative views and promoting conspiracy?
- Can misinformation in times of crisis be considered dangerous or even hate speech?
- How do fake news / conspiracy theories affect social harmony or dealing with endangered minorities?
- How can we balance respect for beliefs with the need to protect vulnerable groups?

Background material for preparation

Argumentation Questions Table

Step	Guiding Question	Group's Response
1. Claim	What is the main claim or belief in this conspiracy theory?	
2. Emotion	What emotions does it appeal to? (Fear, anger, pride, etc.)	
3. Target Group	Who is the group being blamed or idealized?	
4. Background	What societal or historical issues make people believe this?	
5. Facts	What are the actual facts or truths that counter this claim?	
6. Strategy	How could you respond if someone repeats this claim? (Stay calm, ask questions, share facts, etc.)	

C7. Populism? Anti-democratic slogan? Hate Speech?

Participants collect slogans they know from their surroundings and from their society. They discuss together the line between populism, anti-democratic slogan and hate speech when censorship might be needed. They will discover that it is very different to find a common line in general terms and that abstract definitions will not really help when dealing with human beings.

Objectives

- Analyzing the range from opinion to position, slogan to hate speech
- Realizing different ‘red lines’ among the participants
- Understanding the difference between individual statement and general attitude

Setting and material

- Sticky tape
- Colored cards
- Lage pens

Age range and group size: 12 - 20 / 15 – 30 participants

Time frame: 45 - 60 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. In small groups, the participants look for typical statements that they would describe as populist statements or anti-democratic slogans in general and write each one on a sheet of paper. The statements are visualized on a board in the plenary session. After a presentation of the statements, comprehension questions are clarified. Controversial views within the group (“Is that really a slogan? That describes reality!”) can be represented on the flipchart with a “lightning symbol”.

2. Afterwards, the participants collect, visualize and discuss characteristics of 'slogans' in pairs and come up with a working definition.

3. In plenary, all present their results and the trainer adds a recognized definition concerning populism and anti-democratic slogans (see background material).

4. The trainer explains that in recent times, in connection with 'social' media, there has been less talk of populist slogans and more talk of 'hate speech'. In particular, insulting and hateful comments directed against politicians, minorities and, in general, those who think differently are a major problem, especially in view of their rapid spread.

5. The participants collect slogans and sayings from the context of the private or professional experiences with social media. Each slogan is written on a card and the participants are divided into groups of three and each group receives a few cards.

6. A line is drawn on the floor with the endpoints 'pointed statement' and 'hate speech'. Each group decides where the statements should be placed on the spectrum. Some statements may want to be moved by some people, while for others it is more obvious.

Reflection

The results are discussed in plenary and, in particular, controversial positions are reflected upon. The trainer uses the general values square (compare Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023) of the exercise to make it clear that it is not always about the individual statement, but about the attitude behind it. However, due to the autonomization of problematic statements in social networks, it is often no longer possible to recognize who originally made a statement with which attitude. The multiplication and uncontrolled dissemination of such statements, combined with the devaluation of individual groups, results in 'hate speech'.

Background material for preparation

Definitions of populism and anti-democratic slogans

In *Volume 2 – Deepening the approach* you will find a lot of reflections on the socio-political background of populist and anti-democratic developments in Europe and an extended version of definitions.

Jan-Werner Müller (2021) categorizes populism with two characteristics:

- criticism of the elites (including old elites, if one belongs to the elite)
- claim to speak for the people ('other' people do not belong to the people)

Klaus-Peter Hufer (Hufer 2022) defines slogans as:

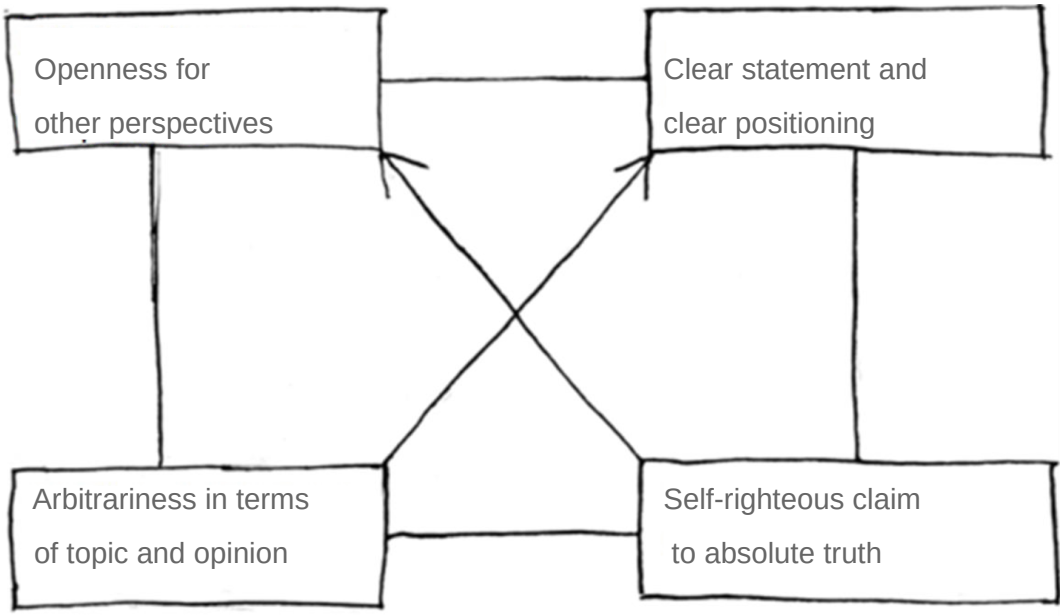
- Platitudinous sayings
- Aggressive dogmatism
- Categorical either/or
- Decided self-righteousness

This is the challenge of dealing with populist slogans: they are statements that, although one-sided, flat, sweeping and self-righteous, may still have a kernel of truth or contain a relevant aspect. And this raises the question of how a slogan can actually be distinguished from a pointed

statement, a clear positioning; or, taken further, whether clear positioning is not helpful or even necessary for political discussions. Doesn't a sharpening provocation offer the opportunity for a deeper discussion? Isn't populist criticism of the elites still criticism and thus a component of democratic culture? Isn't it legitimate to look beyond individual opinions for statements that claim to be relevant for everyone? And isn't the anticipated compromise in one's own positioning a hindrance to an open dispute?

Here, too, a values and development square (compare Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023) is helpful: it can be used to show that both the justification of a pointed statement is seen and the necessity of openness to other points of view and perspectives. Absolutizing one of the two values would either lead to arbitrariness in terms of content or to a self-righteous claim to absoluteness, i.e. a populist slogan. From this perspective, it is not only crucial what someone says in a single statement, but also how he/she reacts when someone else takes issue and has a different position, i.e. whether there is a fundamental openness to other points of view and perspectives. An abstract definition will not help in human interaction.

The general dilemma confronting anti-democratic slogans



Populist and anti-democratic slogans can thus be understood as statements that are not only made in a single statement, but also defended in a self-righteous and undifferentiated manner in conversation with a number of anti-democratic slogans. And these are problematic because they prevent a real conversation and are dangerous for political culture as well as for democracy, which depends on discourse. The question of how we ourselves react to slogans is also relevant here: with self-righteous claims to absolute truth or with a balance between openness and clear statements.

C8. Action! Techniques of intervention

Participants collect everyday situations in which they would have liked to intervene; they get to know three techniques in the field of tension between openness and positioning and try out various alternative actions within the group in role plays. Doing this, they will reflect their inner tendency to self-righteousness and the tension between technique and attitude.

Objectives

- Working on concrete cases of populism with the necessity of intervention
- Realizing the chances and limitations of different techniques
- Discussing the necessity for intervention especially in public spaces

Setting and material

- Visualization of intervention techniques
- Separate rooms for role plays of small groups
- Sheets of paper

Age range and group size: 16+ / 10 – 20 participants

Time frame: 90 - 120 minutes

Facilitation Steps Part 1

1. The trainer asks the participants to individually note down everyday situations from their private or professional lives in which they would have liked to intervene based on a statement or remark, but did not do so or were dissatisfied with the result.

Alternatively, they can also describe future scenarios that they would like to work on as case studies. The trainers emphasize that the situations should be as concrete and real as possible so that they can be worked on as cases. All cases are visualized on a flipchart with the statements and key points.

2. Then the participants discuss in pairs for 10 minutes what their goals are in dealing with these slogans. These goals are then collected on another flipchart in plenary.

3. The trainer goes through the goals and asks whether they are intended to change others or whether they are also connected to the participant themselves. It often becomes clear that there is

a great willingness to change others (for the better) when it comes to the goals, but that one's own position or perspective is unquestioned and not discussed at all. Here, it is again about discovering the little populists in ourselves: phrases such as 'invite to reflect', 'expand perspectives', 'make thoughtful' are often enough very polite or pedagogically correct formulations for the statement: “Become like me, then it fits!”

The trainer reminds the group of the fundamental values of openness and clear positioning and reflects on the extent to which it is conceivable to leave one of the described situations with a completely different world view.

Facilitation Steps Part 2

1. The trainers present the following three intervention techniques to the participants with an input based on the following material. The term “intervention technique” implies that you want to achieve something. This is also legitimate, but the conversation techniques should not be used in such a way that they obscure what we actually want to achieve; that would be manipulation.

2. The trainer explains that, despite these techniques, it is not a given that people will take action. The first step to constructive debate is also the most difficult: you have to find the courage to react at all when confronted with a different opinion. And that is not a given. Many people today consider it risky to take a political stand. In a complex and confusing world, where disagreement often arises not only about the right way to achieve a goal, but already in the analysis of the situation and even more so at the level of the goals, discussions about politics are not a feel-good topic for many, but far beyond the comfort zone. There is a widespread “fear of making a statement”.

Some believe that expressing an opinion is only justified if it is based on a maximum of knowledge, awareness of problems and analytical skills. And hardly anyone lives up to this claim – and not on all topics anyway. But what is actually to be said against statements not as immovable positions, but as expressions of interest, seeking and striving for understanding? Which can also be an expression of an appropriate attitude with which one can encounter someone who makes populist statements. Because the latter is not afraid of the statement, but possibly afraid of being contradicted.

3. The trainer invites the participants to work on some of the case studies using small role plays and the three techniques. Initially, one or two examples are worked on in plenary. Often, the person who outlines their case study is then also willing to play the role of the person who utters the statement or slogan. It is also always important to clarify what the goal of the intervention would be. Afterwards, the participants can consider together which reaction and which technique would be appropriate here. Depending on the group, a trainer can also take on a role, participants can also stay in their place – the important thing in this challenging situation is to do everything to avoid a meaning-laden heaviness and to creatively try out what could go wrong and what might help both opponents. The small role plays in the plenary focus on at least two different techniques in two rounds in each case, in order to expand the field of action. After each role play, the actors have their say first, followed by the observers. From the discussion of what alternative possibilities there might have been, further role play sessions usually develop.

After each round, other participants who may have seen further options for action from the perspective of the observer can also join in.

4. It is important to release the participants from their respective roles after each role play and, in particular, to point out that the participants should no longer address each other in their roles, even in informal spaces – which can happen, especially in funny runs and groups of students, but leads to stereotyping. Afterwards, the participants are invited to work on further statements in separate rooms, in groups of three. One person in each group is an observer and can share their view of the effect of each strategy from the outside after a role-playing session. The small groups receive a visualized work instruction with the following steps:

1. Which statement do we want to work on?

2. What is the goal of the intervention?

3. Which technique is suitable for this?

4. Execution of a run and reflection of the actors and observers: what worked ? What didn't? What emotions arose? Which arguments played a role?

5. Collect important success factors from the process

6. Dismissal from the role and further rounds with a different cast and technique

7. Depending on the time available, further statements can be processed.

Reflection

In plenary, the trainer collects the experiences that have been made. He/she invites the participants to answer the following questions individually for themselves in the sense of a summarizing reflection:

- What made me think (what do I need to think about further)?
- What surprised me (about myself, others, the process)?
- What do I find remarkable (in the sense of noteworthy)?
- What is a specific intervention that I would like to try out sometime?

The trainers collect as a summary all the success factors that were visible in the process of the role plays and visualize them as a guideline for the group.

Additional Step

To take this training with techniques beyond the workshop text, invite participants to reflect their everyday life. Everyday life is subject to a flood of information, personal and professional encounters, formal and informal occasions for conversation, casual encounters and spontaneous, automatic trains of thought. Various internal and external dialogues take place. It is a contribution to democratic culture to become aware of this and to decide where you have to represent your own point of view and where a dialog with other points of view makes sense.

Let participants individually reflect on their normal daily routine and let them note on the left side encounters and options for dialogue. On the right side of the paper they can write down correspondingly which controversial topics, fruitful discussions and also dead ends could result from using this communication encounters more actively.

Let them know about the opportunities for discussion that arose for political topics: “Who did you meet, what places, situations were there where you could have addressed a political topic? Were there situations where you thought, evaluated or judged something internally, but did not say it? Where did something in social life bother you or pleasantly surprise you? With whom could you have talked about it? Don't just think of 'big politics' – encounters at the office, with hierarchies, in kindergarten and school, on public transport can also be occasions to learn about the shaping of social life. Encounters in family and partnership also belong to this.

Once you have listed a number of occasions, consider how you could have constructively entered into a dialogue to 'argue' about political issues based on your previous knowledge. What would you constructively answer, formulate as a first sentence? At the same time, note down what dead ends could be in this dialogue – these may be due to the topic, but also to the time or the situation.

Now look at the occasions and possibilities – you will see that there are or would be a lot of occasions within a day to enter into a dialogue about politics. Finally, write down one to three possibilities for actively using these occasions in the near future.”

This additional step serves to reflect more consciously on how everyday life is shaped by 'politics'. Perceiving this and actively using it is an important step towards actively participating in democracy and being an active citizen.

Background material for preparation

Three Intervention techniques

Intervention technique 1: clarification questions and focusing on openness

How questions can be used to open a conversation

This intervention is located in the value square (compare Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023) very far in the direction of openness and one's own willingness to learn new things. If I have a sincere interest in getting to know the views of the person I am talking to and actually want to learn from and with them, the use of so-called *clarification questions* can be useful. These do not question a general statement, but are interested in a more precise explanation.

Clarifying questions serve to better understand the other person; they cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no”, but require a more complex explanation. Here are some examples:

- That's an outrage from the politicians. – What exactly do you find outrageous?
- The politicians' laziness can be seen from the empty parliament plenary. – Why do you think one is connected to the other?
- Politics has failed here. – How do you think the politicians should have acted?
- Politicians are incapable. – What abilities should a politician have?
- That is unfair. – What would be fair in your opinion?

Of course, it can be problematic that the use of clarification questions can be perceived as inquisitorial questioning, that the other person feels under pressure to justify themselves and thus possibly also threatened. So-called 'softeners' can be helpful here, which express our interest in the thoughts of the other person:

- I am curious to know why you see it that way.
- I am not quite sure how to understand when you say: ... What exactly do you mean by that?
- I am just wondering, what exactly do you find so bad about the specific behavior of politicians?

Participants often find it challenging or even impossible to technique to a large extent without arguments. Questions like 'don't you think that...?' are nicely packaged arguments. Here, too, the tendency to always want to put one's own ideas in the foreground can be rediscovered.

Intervention technique 2: analytical method, balancing openness and positioning

First understand the other person, then question and irritate – how people learn new things

This intervention (inspired by Ulrich 2006) offers a good balance between openness and one's own positioning and attempts to analytically separate areas of agreement and difference..

The *analytical method* is about keeping three levels separate: the situation analysis, the goal and the strategy. In the situation analysis, I ask the other person how they view the situation, i.e. what

the underlying problem is. For example, our counterpart could describe why the tax system is unfair. In the second step, we ask about the goal, that is, what is important to our conversation partner, what personal interests he or she may have here. Ideally, we would be able to understand his or her understanding of tax justice (e.g. the demand for more performance justice or the demand for more justice for needs). And in the third step, we can ask how s/he wants to achieve his goal, i.e. which political strategy would be appropriate here, and which specific political decision would be used to achieve this goal.

The advantage of this analytical separation is that we can determine where exactly a possible disagreement exists: already in the situation analysis, in the goals or only at the level of the strategy?

Intervention technique 3: Necessary distancing, focusing on clear positioning

Stop! – When to distance yourself and how to do it effectively

And yet, with all due understanding, there are statements that you not only want to contradict, but that you explicitly do not want to give any space to. Questions for clarification, for example, would be inappropriate here, as they would enable the other person to elaborate on inhumane statements. In this case, the strategy of “necessary distancing” is recommended. This is especially important in public spaces where people who are being discriminated against, are present. An intervention does not only protect individually, but keeps the public sphere open as a democratic space of diversity.

For example, the statement “All politicians belong in a labor camp” is so inappropriate that a clear distancing is necessary.

When distancing is necessary, there are three steps:

1. I repeat what the other person has said to me in my own words, thus giving them the opportunity to clarify. Applied to the above example: “Did I understand you correctly, you would want to lock politicians away? In a labor camp?” The other person may now put it into perspective and simply say that they are disappointed in politicians. Then you could leave it at that if necessary. But maybe the other person will confirm their statement, or we may actually agree that such statements should not be made lightly. In either case, step 2 follows.

2. I tell the other person how the statement makes me feel. I confront him with my own position: “It annoys me when a group of people is spoken about in such a derogatory way. And I think the demand for labor camps is completely out of line.”

3. I distance myself from the statements and say what I would like to see instead: ”I don't want to hear anything like that anymore. We're welcome to talk about politics and politicians. But I will never accept such statements and let them go unchallenged.”

C9. Five steps of democratic decision taking

Dealing with anti-democratic slogans means entering situations of conflict. Participants are reflecting on their dealing with conflicts in various ways and are introduced to five steps of democratic decision taking which go beyond compromise and majority decision (inspired by Fisher / Ury 2012 and Maroshek-Klarmann 2001). They are applying these steps to situations of conflict they have experienced.

Objectives

- Realizing different conflict types in society via a biographical exploration
- Trying out a hands-on instrument for democratic decisions in conflicts
- Realizing the necessity of combining attitude, trust and technique in conflicts

Setting and material

- Printed out versions of the five steps

Age range and group size: 16+ / 8 – 15 participants

Time frame: 120 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. As a preparation for working with conflicts and decisions, participants are standing in the room and are going to position themselves on a scale of “a lot” to “not at all” concerning the following questions:

- How comfortable do you feel when conflicts are arising?
- How much do you agree that conflicts should be avoided?

They then provide statements to their position. They are being asked about the causes and possible personal and cultural backgrounds that influence their relationship to conflicts. This activity shows that how we feel about conflicts has important biographical roots. Certain experiences and patterns will influence how we react to and deal with conflicts. In plenary participants share examples of meeting different 'conflict characters' in their daily life and how they felt about their approach to conflicts.

2. To deepen this biographical reflection, ask participants to individually take some time to reflect on the (positive or negative) role of conflicts within their lives and do a sketch of them. They should symbolize with colored pens which situations and points in life were problematic and which ones

were productive in the end. They can design this in any way they want – as a tree, a line, a spiral, roots, a scheme, a diagram, etc… After this, they exchange with one partner.

Depending on the target group, you might advise participants to not share conflicts from their life which are too personal, but conflicts from their professional or community background. This is important when working with target groups not used to sharing private issues as part of a learning process.

3. When taking decisions in a non-violent way, we often and quickly think about voting to find a majority. When a decision over various options for doing a project has to be taken, fingers are being raised and the “majority project” will be done. Sometimes these options are not possible, and equally quickly we offer compromises and expect others to compromise. In this way we achieve solutions which are not of the highest quality but which all agree upon. If this does not work, people and entire societies quickly ask for a strong leader who should decide to make things easier.

This approach has a number of problems:

- How do we deal with the minority that lost in a voting? They might cause trouble later.
- How do we know if the basis for voting is connected to the topic? Maybe it is rather about opposing certain people, attitudes or values and not the project itself.
- How can we be sure that compromises do not lead to mediocre forms of democracy in the long term? Always compromising might be exhausting, taking away motivation and enthusiasm.
- How do we know that an authoritarian leader will not abuse his or her power? Authority provides quick solutions but might lead to abolition of serious forms of participation in the long run.

The following alternative, based on the ‘Harvard concept of negotiation’ (Fisher et al. 2012) and our expansions, integrates the hidden dimensions of human life and allows for non-violent conflict resolution.

4. Ask three volunteers to sit in the middle. Place an orange in the middle and tell them that they are in a role play. They all want exactly this orange. Let the remaining students be ‘consultants’ and collect ideas how they could solve this conflict. Very often, the compromise of cutting the orange into three parts is being suggested. Ask them about other, creative and crazy options.

Next, ask the three volunteers in the middle how they like the different suggestions and ask them to solve the conflict among themselves. Always relate back to the suggestions given from their ‘consultants’.

5. Present the five steps of conflict resolution (see background material) and tell them which of these steps they had taken in the conflict about the orange. Focus on step 2 (becoming creative) and link it to the concept of nation-building which begins with us and our responsibility.

6. Ask participants to describe a situation of conflict; it should not be something big or overwhelming, rather something from everyday life. Ask them to split into pairs and consult each other on what it would mean to try to solve the conflict with the five steps. Present results in plenary and share new perspectives on dealing democratically with conflicts in this way.

Reflection

Discuss how this approach can provide some more guidance when confronting anti-democratic slogans:

- Can the steps be followed like the techniques presented above?
- Which attitude is necessary when doing this?
- Are we dependent on the willingness of the other to accept these steps?
- Where in society can you find examples when some of these steps were taken?

Background material for preparation

Five Steps of Democratic Decision-Taking

Normally, we learn democracy by taking majority decisions and we are urged to give in, to make compromises. These are functional and result-oriented mechanisms of democracy. But often they can lead to frustration, especially if people in weaker positions are always those who 'lose' something, which might make them aggressive and turn away from democracy. That's why the quality of focusing on needs, values and a mutual process of democracy is an important remedy for anti-democratic slogans (the following steps are inspired by and adapted from Fisher / Ury 2012 and Maroshek-Klarmann 2001).

Step 1: Clarifying needs and values

At the beginning of any decision-taking is the process of becoming aware of my own needs and values, and those of others. We are often about to vote without knowing what we really want and need. We are involved in processes of quickly adopting a position and entering the win-or-lose game.

Needs and values must be respected as equally valid on an existential level. Fundamental needs are recognition, security, autonomy, stability, among others. We are moving into the hidden dimensions of what really moves and motivates us, beyond technical and factual appearances.

Many conflicts in democratic decision-taking arise from the lack of recognition: I want to be recognised and appreciated for who I am, with my view of the world. Stating the obvious – the basics, fundamentals – is usually not happening. The obvious is not an issue – and a new conflict is born. Democratic dilemmas become explicit.

If the needs are compatible, the conflict is dissolved, and a consensus is reached.

If the needs are not compatible, move to the second step.

Step 2: Being creative

Following the shift from conflicting needs and the gamble to ‘win or lose’ on to recognising and acknowledging differences and different options within the community, the creative part sets in: We question the framework, the context, and the setting of what has to be decided. We find alternative ways of fulfilling the needs, completely without having to make someone compromise.

If we are successful, the conflict is dissolved, and a consensus is reached.

If the conflict remains, only then move to the next step.

Step 3: Compromising

This step is about cutting down on the fulfilment of needs in equal measure.

There is an important distinction in this process. A fair compromise equally cuts down on the fulfilment of everyone’s needs. A foul compromise cuts down on fulfilling certain needs more than others.

Also, it is important to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative compromises. The aim is to think about ways how everybody can cut his or her needs equally and fairly.

If a compromise is possible, the conflict is dissolved, and a consensus is reached.

If a compromise cannot be reached, move to the next step.

Step 4: Majority decision

Only now comes the classical step of decisions as we know it: Take a vote. All votes are being counted equally, and the majority will decide what will be done.

If a majority decision is possible – because the minority accepts the vote –, the conflict is dissolved, and a consensus is reached.

If a majority decision cannot be reached, move to the last step.

5. Legitimate Leadership

Someone with legitimate authority or power will decide.

It is important to understand that this step, like all the others, is also fundamentally democratic. In our society we distribute mandates and have representatives with hierarchical authority.

Angle D: Dealing with power, privilege and discrimination

This angle focuses on often neglected aspects when dealing with anti-democratic slogans. Especially in longer training sessions where participants sit in a circle, it seems that all are equal. Yet they and we all are embedded in societal structures of power, privilege and discrimination. This issue will be tackled with different approaches in order to understand anti-democratic slogans are linked to structural and also historical phenomena.

D1. Tolerance and its limits

This activity is about getting to know one's individual limits of tolerance as well as that of the others. Also, it is important to acknowledge that different limits of tolerance may be opposing one another. There will be a reflection of the emotions which were experienced when one's personal limit of tolerance had been transgressed. In small groups, participants will try to find a common limit of tolerance for their school community (inspired by and adapted from Ulrich 2006).

Objectives

- Realizing one's personal red lines in interaction with others
- Learning to respect different red lines within the group of participants
- Reflecting the emotional dimension of acceptance and rejection of others' positions

Setting and material

- Sticky tape
- Pieces of paper
- Colored pens

Age range and group size: 14+ / 15 – 30 participants

Time frame: 45 - 60 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Participants explore situations and actions in which the notion of tolerance has its limit for them. For younger participants: you can ask them what they find hard to accept and what they cannot stand at all. To visualize this, provide them with a range of pictures, photographs, or let them draw their own.

2. On the floor, there will be a line representing the 'limit of tolerance'. All participants are placing their papers closer or further away from both sides of the line. One side represents "beyond tolerance/acceptance", the other one "tolerance/acceptance".

3. In plenary, there is room for questions on the papers along the tolerance line. Wishes for changing positions of certain cards can be voiced, and the position may be changed if the person who has written it agrees to that change.

4. Groups are being formed, representing different positions on similar issues concerning the limit of tolerance for their community. Their task is to describe what cannot be tolerated or accepted in the community anymore. First of all they are listening carefully to the arguments of the others then

they are trying to sort out issues. In plenary the groups are presenting their results as well as the process of discussion in the small group.

Reflection

Here, the focus lies on the following questions:

- Is a common line necessary for a community?
- Is it the same in a family?
- What do we do if someone goes beyond the limit of what we can tolerate?
- What is the advantage of limitless acceptance and what is the danger?
- Who will structurally profit from this limit? Who will be excluded in terms of his/her identity by this limit?

Discuss with participants that limits of tolerance are deeply linked to structures of power, privilege and discrimination. Often in history it is those in power who decide what is acceptable in society and where the limit is reached. Let them find examples from society and history in which this was the case.

D2. Do we actually need political parties?

The participants first fill out a questionnaire on the topic of the exercise and then receive a letter from a reader, whose point of view they discuss and then formulate a response to. This activity focuses on raising awareness that we live in individualized societies, yet need collectives to represent us. These structures are powerful, can create exclusion, but also have the chance to productively design societal reality.

Objectives

- Reflecting the necessity for and danger collective identities in democracy
- Reacting to a populist statements concerning politicians and political parties
- Reflecting one's own engagement in collective identities in everyday life

Setting and material

- Printed reflection sheet
- Printed letter to the editor
- Flipchart paper

Age range and group size: 14+ / 10 – 20 participants

Time frame: 60 - 90 minutes

Facilitation Steps

The trainers ask the participants to consider the extent to which (political) parties are necessary in a democracy. Points of criticism of parties and their justification, as well as possible alternatives, are then reflected upon. The workshop leader asks everyone to answer the following questions of the reflection sheet individually (see background material).

In the plenary session, positions are then collected, bundled and visualized. After that, small groups (4-6 participants) are formed. The trainer hands out the letter below. The small groups are given time to read and process it and are asked to visualize a differentiated response to the letter on a flipchart to present to the whole group later. If there are several small groups, one group can formulate a very pointed position of their own, while another group can formulate a very appreciative openness.

Variation

Let the participants themselves research a current comment on social media against the 'party clique' on the internet in small groups, to which they can write a reply or a comment.

Reflection

The results are presented in plenary. On the one hand, the simplifying statements contained in the letter to the editor are discussed, and on the other hand, the justified concerns they express are appreciated. The topic can be used to discuss the fundamental issue of individuality and collective involvement in groups: when do I want to speak for myself? When do I depend on others, on groups that represent my interests? Should everyone in a democracy simply have a voice that counts directly? What happens to minorities or those who are not so good at expressing themselves? Which collective power structures make sense in a democracy and where do they possibly suppress the diversity of individuals or minorities? What protection do common associations offer for the weaker members of society? How many 'parties' would be useful?

This exercise lends itself to transfer to the existing communities of the participants: who is represented by whom? What tensions arise between 'everyone always having a say' (democratic process) and the necessity of representing common positions and also 'powerfully' enforcing them (democratic decision)?

Background material for preparation

Reflection sheet on ‘parties’

1. When I hear the word “party”, I think:

2. What I find positive about the existence of parties:

3. What I find negative about the existence of parties:

4. Why do we actually need parties?

5. If I could change something in the existing party system, I would...

Letter to the editor

Discuss the letter to the editor of a newspaper, entitled “If I were president” written by a 57-year-old self-employed woman from:

“My first official act would be to abolish the party clique. My employees, that is, all elected representatives of the people, would work completely free of parties and only for the benefit and good of the people. Affiliations to parties or other associations - including faith communities - would not play a role. There would be no left or right, no opposition - everyone would have the same rights and duties and would be capable of governing together.”

D3. Doesn't make any difference, does it?

Participants exchange ideas in pairs about individual and socially relevant differences between them. They consider the extent to which justice can be established in these cases: through equal treatment or through unequal treatment? They will get at structural components of when we favor equality for all as individuals, or rather favor inequality (positive discrimination) in order to undo existing discrimination.

Objectives

- Realizing how individual differences can come with structural privilege or discrimination
- Reflecting together about the chances and dangers of ‘positive action’ (quotas etc.)
- Discussing structural dimensions of populism and anti-democratic slogans

Setting and material

- Open space for exchange in pairs

Age range and group size: 16+ / 10 – 20 participants

Time frame: 30 - 45 minutes

Facilitation Steps Part 1

1. The trainer ties in with the basic topic of social diversity and how to deal with controversial opinions and values. She explains that social diversity is often not only individually located, but is also linked to the question of collective belonging to certain groups.

2. The group is divided into pairs, and each pair is asked to find two differences between themselves:

- a difference that is not relevant individually and socially (an example could be whether I like to drink water or herbal tea)
- a difference that makes a difference in terms of one's own position in society and thus has a collective impact on one's own identity (an example could be the wage gap between men and women)

3. The pairs present their differences in plenary. In larger groups, it is advisable to have the socially relevant differences visualized in particular, in order to be able to address the links between them.

Reflection 1

The trainer reflects on the examples: for whom and why was it easy or difficult to find examples of socially relevant differences? What does this say about privilege or one's own concern? Who learned something new in this exercise? How does that relate to one's own affiliation with a majority or minority? How do the topics find shape or question our identities? How is the 'we' and 'they' perceived from the perspective of privilege or discrimination?

What changes in the perception of the group as a whole when these issues are addressed? Who benefits from this, who can afford not to be aware of structural discrimination? How does this relate to our idea of what is “normal”?

The trainer explains that power and privilege in a society are often invisible and considered “normal”; on the other hand, those affected by (structural) discrimination are often marked as questionable in their identity, role and options in society. The image of the “fish in water” can be used as a metaphor, which moves effortlessly through society as if invisible, without the medium of water being particularly noticeable. People for whom this is not possible come up against invisible walls or are actively stopped by barriers in the water and prevented from moving in their direction and also questioned.

All these factors are important when we deal with anti-democratic slogans: in addition to the individual level of the debate, it is always important to consider one's own and the other's social “speaker position”.

Facilitation Steps Part 2

The trainer asks the pairs to get together again and to consider which measure could be used to achieve more social justice for a democratic coexistence based on their example:

1. through equal treatment of all or

2. through unequal treatment (positive discrimination) to eliminate existing discrimination

Reflection 2

The pairs present their decision and the associated consequences for social coexistence in plenary. The trainer emphasizes that the different options are legitimate and that a dilemma arises here as well, which can be visualized in a value square (compare Schulz von Thun 2008 and 2023): too much equal treatment in the sense of an individualistic liberal democracy fails to recognize the consequences of structural discrimination and leads to existing inequalities being exacerbated and the privileges of the 'powerful' being stabilized.

At the same time, it can be seen that too much unequal treatment in the case of discrimination can lead to a bureaucratized and also segmented and thus potentially hostile society that no longer recognizes a common framework.

This also shows why a supposedly 'neutral' representation of all opinions in a society often favors those who are loud and in the majority and can express themselves; here, it is also important to

repeatedly take a clear position for the voices and perspectives of those social groups that are more likely to be affected by discrimination and scrutiny.

D4. When words become reality

The so-called 'framing' with metaphor-rich words creates a powerful reality in discourses that needs to be analyzed and questioned in terms of power structures. The participants explore the advantages and disadvantages as well as the consequences of the framing on the basis of current social examples (inspired by Seberich / Wenzel 2001 and Ulrich / Wenzel 2006).

Objectives

- Realizing how populism often hides behind positive metaphors
- Exploring exclusionary tendencies of absolutist framing
- Exploring new ways for a '#democratic framing' of important words

Setting and material

- Flipchart paper

Age range and group size: 14+ / 10 – 20 participants

Time frame: 30 - 45 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Introduce the topic: 'Framing' simplifies or deliberately controls the interpretation of certain terms. This reduction of complexity is helpful at first glance in view of the abundance of information and offers contexts that can be understood.

However, this also results in powerful interpretative patterns that can often intentionally or unintentionally fulfill orienting, morally evaluating or excluding functions. In democratic debate, it is important to be aware of one's own concepts as well as those of others and to decide independently where these constructions are helpful and where they should be questioned. It is always also about who has the power to categorize a situation and thus shape reality and the consequences of action. Current examples are "corona dictatorship", "disposal park", "wave of refugees", "foreign agents", "sleeping sheep", "angry citizens", "those at the top", "provincial politicians", "prohibition party", "climate catastrophe"...

A general example is the glass that is half full, which, depending on the 'frame', can be seen as half full or half empty. For example, when it comes to achievements in a particular policy area, it can be deduced from this whether the respective government should be seen as incompetent and voted out of office or as progressive politicians who are tackling the issues and can be trusted.

2. In small groups, the participants collect 2-3 concise terms from their personal, academic or social environment that are supported by strong images or metaphors. The trainers select terms that, if possible, do not discriminate against certain and, above all, present groups.

In the plenary session, the terms are each placed on half of a flipchart and everyone is invited to write associations in two different colors on them in a round:

- What are the negative connotations of the term?
- Why is the term used, and who benefits from it?

3. The group splits into the same small groups and takes the terms and associations with them, trying to find a new term, a new 'framing' that fulfills the claim of democratic diversity and is helpful for further social development. It is helpful here to imagine a specific situation in which one could react to the term.

Reflection

The trainer invites the group to reflect on their group work on the basis of the following key questions:

- What was particularly challenging?
- What realities do the terms create in each case?
- For whom are they a positive orientation, and whom do they possibly exclude?
- What 'power' do the respective terms have and who has an interest in this power? What consequences for action can you derive from this in reality?
- Why are there generalizations in the world? Are they always bad? Would there be 'good' framing? How general or how differentiating should it be?
- What would an alternative 'framing' for the respective terms look like? What would change and who would benefit from it?
- Would it be possible to do without 'framing'? How much complexity can a democratic society afford and when is it overwhelmed by it?

D5. Trust, Emotion & Belonging – Mental health and democracy

The group is reflecting the quality of its working together as a model of a democratic society dealing successfully with diversity. The group is seen as a ‘laboratory of democracy’. Participants realize the structures and dynamics that are happening within the group beyond the individual level. As a variation and intensification issues of power and discrimination can be focused upon.

Objectives

- Developing awareness of how emotional needs influence behavior in social settings
- Experiencing attachment styles through interactive, body-based activities
- Reflecting on personal and shared strategies to foster emotional resilience and a more inclusive, caring community

Setting and material

- Large open space for physical activities
- Blindfolds (one per pair or trio)
- Strings/ropes (about 1,5 meters, 1 per pair)
- Printed cards describing attachment styles (Secure, Anxious, Avoidant, Disorganized)
- Markers and sticky notes
- A timer or bell
- Optional: Music speaker for atmosphere

Age range and group size: 15 - 18 / 8 – 15 participants

Time frame: 90 minutes

Facilitation Steps Part 1: Blindfold trust walk - Exploring Trust & Senses (20 minutes)

Pairs take turns leading each other while one person is blindfolded. The blindfolded person relies on their partner’s verbal or physical guidance. After switching roles, students debrief how they felt giving or surrendering control. This builds awareness of trust and emotional safety. The go though the following four points (20 minutes):

- Participants find a place in nature where they feel safe. They sit with eyes closed and tune into their senses: sound, touch, smell.
- In pairs, one partner wears a blindfold. The other asks how they prefer to be guided, then leads silently. Focus is on building trust without sight.

- The blindfolded partner touches unknown objects and guesses what they are by feel. Roles switch.
- In small teams, participants invent and try out their own movement-based game using natural materials.

Reflection Part 1

Facilitator-led Questions for sharing in plenary or journaling individually:

- How did it feel to not be able to see? Did you feel vulnerable, calm, or nervous?
- What was it like to guide someone else? Did you feel responsible, cautious, confident?
- Did you trust your partner? Why or why not?
- What made you feel emotionally safe — or unsafe — during the activity?

After this reflection the facilitator elaborates on important ideas of the experience:

Why did we do this?

- To understand how trust and emotional safety are not just ideas, but felt physically and emotionally.
- To become aware of how we behave when we rely on others or when we are asked to care for others.
- To experience what it's like to lose control and still try to connect or cooperate – a core part of both mental well-being and social life.

How does it connect to mental health and democracy?

- In real life, people feel emotionally "blind" when they're anxious, excluded, or unsupported. How others treat them determines whether they shut down or open up.
- If we don't feel safe — at home, school, or in society — we might isolate ourselves, stop trusting, or follow loud voices that promise control or certainty (even if they're harmful).

Secure emotional attachment and mutual trust are essential not just for personal well-being, but for a healthy democracy where people listen, include, and support each other.

Facilitation Steps Part 2: Rope games – communication, control and empathy (25 minutes)

1. This part of the activity marks the entry point to exploring *attachment styles* and *basic emotional needs* in the context of *mental health and democracy.*

The facilitator refers back to part 1 of the activity: "In the last activity, you experienced what trust feels like – both physically and emotionally. Now, we're going to explore a deeper pattern behind how we relate to others – how we lead, follow, resist, or try to control. These reactions often come from how emotionally safe or unsafe we feel – something shaped by our past experiences, relationships and also societal conditions we live in."

2. The facilitator introduces defined *four core needs* (Klaus Grawe) that every human being has for mental well-being:

Attachment – feeling connected and emotionally safe with others

Orientation & Control – understanding your environment and feeling in charge

Self-esteem – feeling valued and confident

Pleasure / Avoidance of Displeasure – seeking joy, avoiding harm

Among these, **attachment** is especially powerful — because it shapes how we trust, cooperate, and handle conflict (for more please read section A3 of *Volume 2 – Deepening the approach*).

3. The facilitator introduces the rope activity: “Now that we've *felt* what trust and guidance feel like physically, in the next activity we explore *tension, control, and silent cooperation*. The rope adds a new dynamic: power, push-pull, and the challenge of staying connected *without force or words* – just like real relationships and group dynamics.”

The facilitator invited participants to explore these dynamics:

Part 1: Playful Discovery

1. In pairs, explore what movements or games can be done with a rope.
2. Join with another pair, combine ideas.

Part 2: Silent Communication with Tension

- As a pair, hold each end of a rope and move together silently.
- One begins to gently lead without speaking — the other follows.
- Switch roles.

Part 3: The Wild Horse (Trust-Building)

- One person is the “wild horse” (resistant, chaotic).
- The other must build trust to slowly bring the horse closer and wrap the rope around their waist.
- After calming, partners switch.

Reflection Part 2

Facilitator-led Questions for sharing in plenary or journaling individually:

Understanding Attachment Through Action:

- How did it feel to be led or resisted?
- Did you find it hard to give up control? Why?
- When playing the “wild horse,” what made you feel calm or trust your partner?

Making the Connection to Attachment:

- Which part of the game reminded you of real-life relationships — in school, home, or on-line?

- How do you react when you feel misunderstood or out of control?
- Do you see yourself in any of the *attachment patterns* we introduced?
- Why do people who feel disconnected or unsafe sometimes reject cooperation or spread blame?

Linking to Mental Health & Democracy:

- In a society where people feel emotionally safe and connected, how do they act?
- What happens when people feel isolated, unheard, or disrespected?
- Which frame conditions and structures of our society and politics influence our mental health?
- How can understanding emotional needs help us build a more democratic and caring community?

Facilitation Steps Part 3: My inner voice (30 minutes)

1. Label four corners of the room as: **Secure, Anxious, Avoidant, and Disorganized**

2. Read aloud one scenario (please adapt scenarios according to your national context). After hearing the scenario, students should walk to the corner that best represents how they think a person with that attachment pattern would respond.

3. Once in corners, students fill in a sticky note with:

- *View of Self:* Positive or Negative
- *View of Others*: Positive or Negative
- *Comfort with Intimacy*: High or Low
- *Trust in Relationships*: High or Low

4. Ask volunteers to share why they chose their corner and what that pattern might feel like.

5. Repeat with additional scenarios. At the end, invite reflection on which pattern they most identify with and whether that can shift over time.

Reflection Part 2

Facilitator-led Questions for sharing in plenary or journaling individually:

- Which corner did you find yourself in most often?
- Did any of the attachment patterns surprise you or feel uncomfortable?
- Do you think people can move from one attachment pattern to another? What helps shift toward secure attachment?

- Which frame conditions and structures of our society and politics influence our mental health?
- How do emotional safety and support influence how we engage in school or society?

Background material for preparation

Scenarios

Scenario 1 – Bullying at School:

“X name is a student who has been bullied at school for weeks. Others laugh at your clothes or accent. You try to act confident, but inside you feel isolated. How would you react emotionally or socially?”

Scenario 2 – Body Image and Social Media:

“X name posts a picture online, but people comment negatively on your body. You start comparing yourself to influencers, skip meals, and feel like you’re not enough. You stop sharing things online.”

Scenario 3 – Academic & Future Anxiety:

“X name is stressed about upcoming university exams. You applied for scholarships but didn’t get any. Housing in your place is too expensive. You feel pressure from your family, fear failure, and often isolate yourself.”

Attachment Styles Reference

(for more on the conceptual background please read section A3 of Volume 2 – Deepening the approach).

Attachment Style	View of Self	View of Others	Comfort with Intimacy	Trust in Relationships
Secure	Positive	Positive	High	High
Anxious (Preoccupied)	Negative	Positive	High (but overly reliant)	Low
Avoidant (Dismissive)	Positive	Negative	Low	Low

Attachment Style	View of Self	View of Others	Comfort with Intimacy	Trust in Relationships
Disorganized	Negative	Negative	Low (fearful yet craving)	Low

D6. Democracy check in our group

The group is reflecting the quality of its working together as a model of a democratic society dealing successfully with diversity. The group is seen as a ‘laboratory of democracy’. Participants realize the structures and dynamics that are happening within the group beyond the individual level. As a variation and intensification issues of power and discrimination can be focused upon.

Objectives

- Deciding on important criteria for a democratic living together
- Reflecting the training group as a ‘laboratory of democracy’
- Reflecting one’s personal responsibility in contributing creatively to democracy as a form of life

Setting and material

- Small pieces of paper
- Pens

Age range and group size: 16+ / 8 – 15 participants

Time frame: 45 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Participants are individually asked to take notes on what they would realize a democratic way of being active together as a group. They should write down concrete criteria and indicators on how they would be able to see this.

2. They then separate into groups of 4-5 participants each. They get a fixed amount

of time to decide upon the five most important aspects of democracy which they write on slips of paper. The five criteria of each group are being visualized in plenary. The whole group is then asked to decide on the three most important criteria

3. Participants get a slip of paper and write down a grade from one to ten (one = very little democracy; 10 = perfect democracy) which represents their evaluation on democracy within the workshop group. Then everybody puts down his or her paper on the floor.

Additional step

As a possible expansion of the activity, groups can be formed, each group comprising participants with lower and higher grading. They can explain in more depth their grading and get a better perception of the different perspectives.

Reflection

A round of statements is being started, everyone can explain their grade and contribute possibilities for improvement concerning democracy in the workshop. The trainer asks how the different ratings might connect to different positions of power within the group. How do those with lower grades regard those with higher grades concerning this aspect and vice versa? Who is responsible for achieving ‘more democracy’ in this group? Those with lower grades or those that seem to know what it needs? As a trainer, let the group think about concrete and practical steps to change the existing structures of power, privilege and discrimination in the training.

D7. Discourse on group dynamics

This activity puts the idea of working productively with group dynamics into practice. Issues concerning the group as a collective are being focused upon explicitly with this activity. Hidden aspects like emotions, concerns, conflicts and wishes are being made explicit as part of the learning process. Power and exclusion structures within the group will become visible (inspired by and adapted from Schneider-Landolf et al. 2017 and Ulrich 2006)

Objectives

- Making explicit issues of group dynamics within the group
- Reflecting exclusionary and populist moves in the group from different points of view
- Experiencing a safe and protected space for individual expression and listening

Setting and material

- Open circle of chairs
- Flipchart
- Small ball or object to pass on in the circle

Age range and group size: 14+ / 8 – 15 participants

Time frame: 45 - 90 minutes depending on the needs of the group

Facilitation Steps / Reflection

1. Each participant is getting a slip of paper and is asked to write down something that occupies or irritates him/her concerning the group. On the other side s/he writes down a wish or hope for working together in this group.

2. Then the trainer is presenting five important supporting rules for the following activity (see background material)

3. The trainer will now only support these rules, otherwise the activity facilitates itself. A ball will be in the middle, someone who wants to start, takes it, says something and passes it on. The ball circulates and whoever wants to say something can do this once he or she has the ball. The trainer is participating on an equal basis.

4. After some time the trainer indicates that it might be time to switch to the second side of the slip of paper to get more future oriented.

When the ball goes around completely without someone saying anything, the activity is finished. There will be no additional reflection or discussion as issues will sort themselves with this activity.

Background material for preparation

Rules for a safe space of expression and listening

The following rules should be visualized on a flipchart during the activity. Additional information can be found in the didactic background of *Volume 2 – Deepening the approach* to this training manual.

- Principle of confidentiality – what is spoken remains in this room
- It is my decision to speak or remain silent
- Disturbances have priority
- You can talk about everything, but share your personal perspective
- Most important issues come first

D8. Dealing productively with power

This activity helps become aware of the productive force of power which is often neglected in civil society and ‘substituted’ by participation and collaboration. An exploration of the positive and negative aspects of power is essential for achieving sustainable social change and getting confidence when defending democracy in a non-naive way (inspired by and adapted from Powercube 2009).

Objectives

- Getting to know the positive aspects of power in civil society
- Doing a personal inventory of positive sources of power for societal change
- Realizing that power is a shared quality between human beings

Setting and material

- Reflection sheet
- Flipchart

Age range and group size: 16+ / 15 – 30 participants

Time frame: 60 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Present to the participants the different functions of power from the background information. Dealing with power is essential, especially in civil society where it is often not talked about, seen as negative but still implicitly working just in any organisation. Power aspects have to be made explicit to control and use them productively.

2. Divide the participants into small groups and let them find examples from their everyday life, organisations or communities where there is ‘power to, power over, power with, power within’.

3. In plenary, the groups are presenting their results written on cards. The trainers add another dimension of power, the ‘three faces’ of power:

Open – *e.g. visibly dominating someone else*

Hidden – *e.g. rules that lead to exclusion of non-English speakers*

Invisible – *e.g. deep cultural norms assigning certain roles to men and women*

The group enters into a discussion where they can find which face of power in their community and how they can make invisible and hidden faces of power more explicit and transform them positively.

4. The focus is then on how to use power (especially power within) to create social change in civil society. Each participant reflects on power resources s/he has and makes a list of how they could be supportive or hindering for achieving change. In some cases a power resource can be supportive and preventive at the same time. They can use the sheet or develop a mind map by themselves.

5. After the individual reflection, let the participants reflect in pairs which is their two most productive and two most preventive resources of power

Reflection

In a final round participants share their most productive power resources and let themselves be inspired by each other.

Reflection sheet on power for active citizens

Power resource	Supportive for social change (Why? Give an example!)	Preventive of social change (Why? Give an example!)
My position		
My capital		
My social class		
My culture		
My gender		
My living location		
My family		
My network		
My physicality		
My emotions		
My knowledge		
My work-life balance		
My…		
My..		
My...		
My...		

Which is your most productive power? Which is your most preventive power?

Background on Power

Often power is seen as a negative concept, but power is not necessarily repressive, prohibitive, or exclusionary (although it can be all of these things): Power can also be positive. The French philosopher Michel Foucault states: "We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production" (Foucault 1997, 194). So power can be used in a more positive sense, referring to the power to bring about a desired change in personal life or in the structures surrounding us.

Power is not positive or negative by itself, it can have different functions:

1. Power within - individual

Power within is the capacity to imagine something different and formulate aspirations about change. It is about self-worth and self-knowledge. It is a pre-condition for taking action. Exploring this expression of power is a precondition for expressing power to, power over and power with.

2. Power to - individual

This is a basic expression of power that most of us possess: it may be small and circumvented by various conditions, but we almost always have some ability to act according to our own will.

3. Power over – can be open, hidden (individual) or invisible (e.g. structural)

This is the opportunity to force someone to change their behavior involuntarily. Anyone who possesses such power has the obvious potential to transform a situation in a certain direction. However, this expression of power has to be handled with caution. To achieve long-lasting change, power over has to be considered legitimate, e.g. by being executed or mandated by an elected body.

4. Power with – collective, democratic – comes into existence ‘between people’

This is the ability to share synergy and alliances with others, and the ability to combine powers by acting together or bringing together knowledge, resources and strategies collectively, e.g. in demonstrations and peaceful action of civil society. It can reduce social conflicts and creatively build bridges between different interests.

D9. The vehicle of change

This activity allows participants to make connections between different structural elements in society when aiming at fostering democracy. Through symbolizing they find anchor-points where and how they can become active individually and as a community..

Objectives

- Understanding democracy as a continuous journey
- Regarding democratic change processes in a holistic way
- Getting motivation for starting processes of change for fostering democracy

Setting and material

- Flipchart
- Colored pens, paper, scissors and glue

Age range and group size: 16+ / 5 – 20 participants

Time frame: 60 minutes

Facilitation Steps

1. Form groups of 2 – 4 participants. Ask the groups to take a piece of paper and different colored pens and draw the following shapes in whichever size / design they want. Give them 30 seconds for each of the following shapes:

- a triangle, a rectangle, a circle, another circle, a half-circle, a long rectangle

2. Now groups are asked to use these shapes for constructing an „innovative“ kind of vehicle which might be flying, hopping, moving... After doing this, they should find a creative title for their vehicle. In a short round everybody shows (not explaining it!) their vehicle with its title.

3. The participants are invited to regard their vehicle as a metaphor for „being on the way“, on the road to fostering democracy in Europe. Individually they are reflecting the following questions with this metaphor

- What is driving the vehicle? Is there an engine, are there external influences?
- Who is on the steering wheel? Are you driving alone or together with others?

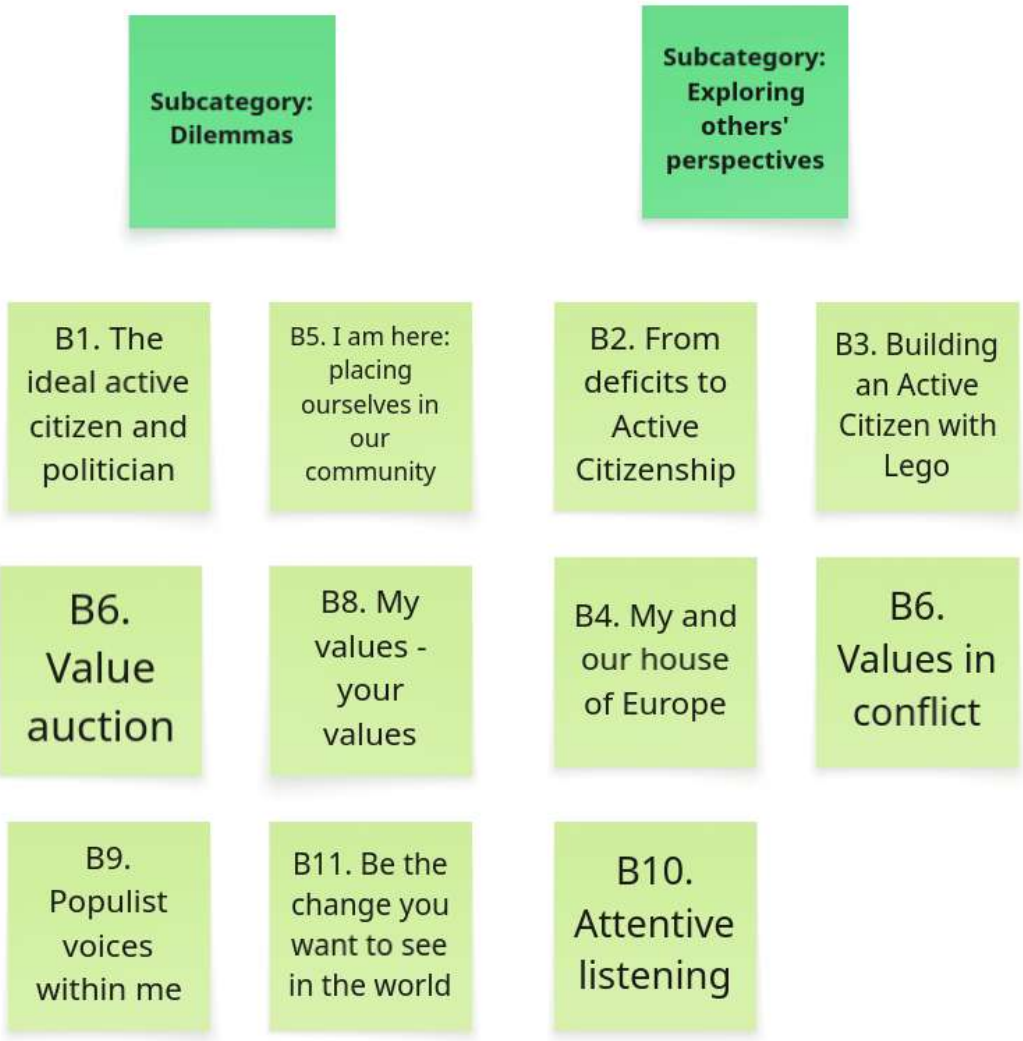
- What is the most important part without which your vehicle would not work any longer? Which part might be a burden and should maybe be kicked out?
- Is there a set direction? Are the road and the goal visible? Are there stumbling stones?
- How do you know the trip was successful, is there an end result for transformation?

4. After that participants exchange with two other participants on these points and take notes on the most important insights concerning the options and limits of confronting anti-democratic tendencies and fostering democracy in Europe.

Reflection

In plenary, each group presents and visualizes their results. The facilitator leads a discussion focusing on the question of when and how the structures of being engaged as a community can become successful and who can contribute what to that.

Part 3: How to arrange a training



Putting together a training by topic

The sequence of the 40 activities follows a balance between reflecting oneself and confronting others; between knowledge, values and dealing with dilemmas. When thinking about a training using these activities – maybe in combination with your own existing material, you can use the following graphical overview that shows all the activities of the four angles with their subcategories. This allows planning for specific objectives and focus you want to concentrate on.

###from miro board provided by inEuropa – in the layout version we would need a nice graphical version to be printed – this here is just to illustrate how it could look like

Angle A: Identity and Values

Subcategory: What are anti-democratic slogans, fake news etc.?

Subcategory: Attitudes and techniques to become active

C2. Walking in their Shoes: The Competitive Conversation

C3. Two facts, one lie

C1. Dates of opinion opponents

C5. Opinions beyond my world

C4. Freedom of expression!? Fake News!?

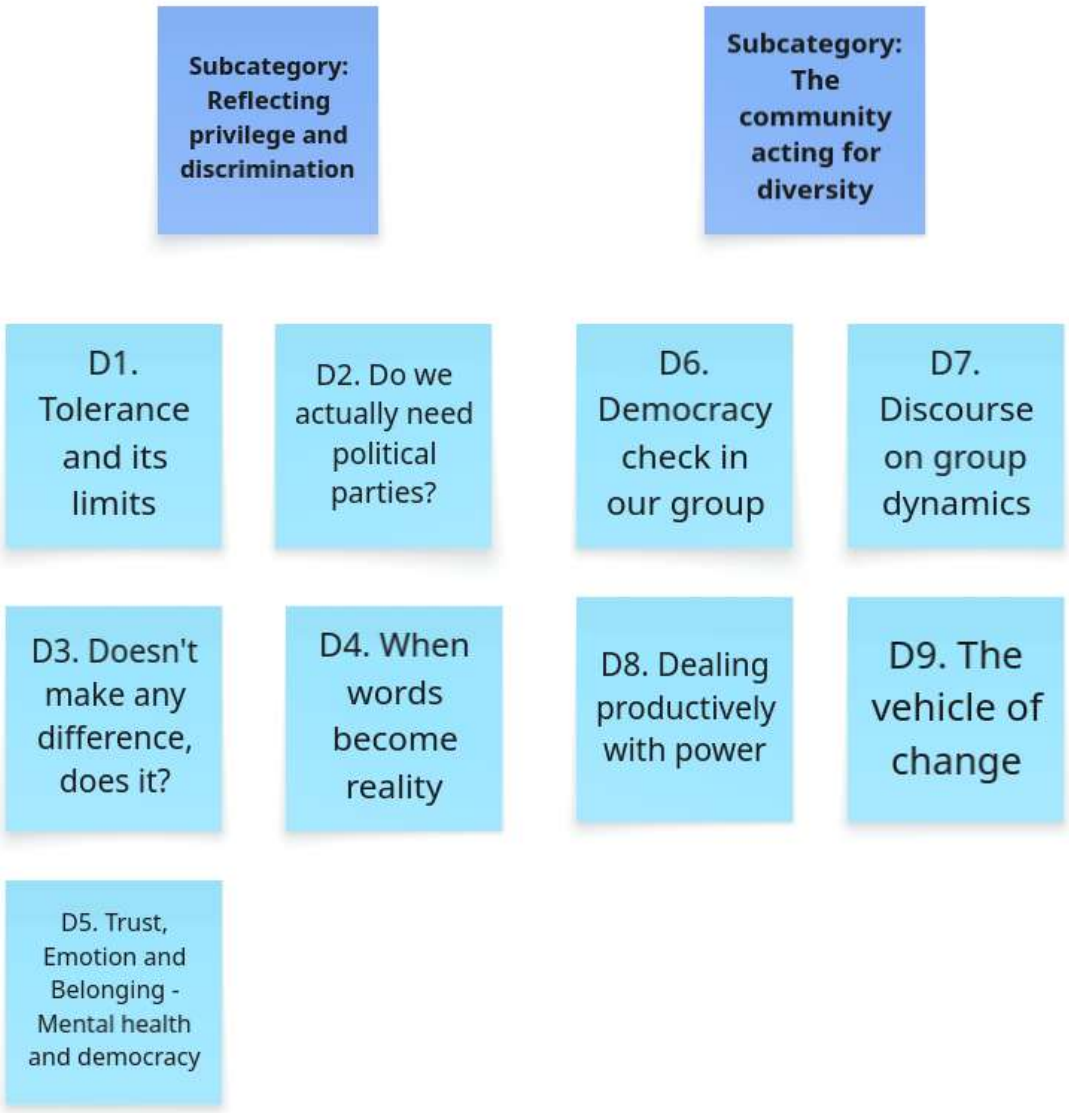
C6. Myths we believe in

C8. Action! Techniques of intervention

C9. Five steps of democratic decision taking

C7. Populism? Anti-democratic slogan? Hate Speech?

Angle B: Dealing with conflicts and dilemmas



Angle C: Confronting anti-democratic slogans

Angle D: Structures of power, privilege and discrimination

To give some more concrete examples by topic, we provide some examples according to specific topics you might want to focus on. They do by far not cover all possible activities or topics but can be a guideline for developing your own topic-based training.

Concrete examples for different time amount and target groups

To make it even more concrete, you find here a number of sample workshops from European partners that can give inspiration and courage to become active in your own context. The range from three days to a very short intervention of only 60 minutes.

Generally, all activities open up possibilities for adaptation and also combination with your own existing activities.

###layout maybe in different color to make clear these are experiences/examples?

Example 1: Three days at a school

Title

Day 1: My own identity and values

Target group

Youth, students, youth leaders, youth workers, trainers for youth leaders, teachers, teacher trainers

16-30 years old youngsters / Young adults from 30 years old

Objectives

- Reflecting on the concept of community starting from individual identities and values
- Building a group concept of democracy based on quotes and personal reflections linked to participants' lives

Setting and material

- Flipchart
- Blank paper sheets
- Sticky notes
- Pens and coloured pencils
- Open circle of chairs

Road map

Time	*Activity/Reference*	*Content*
15 minutes	Who am I?	Identity and values
30 minutes	B5. I am here: placing ourselves in our community	Conflicting values, community and active citizenship
30 minutes	A11. Quotes on democracy	Introducing the concept of democracy: democracy seen by others
50 minutes	B2. From deficits to active citizenship	Individual expectations from society and democracy
50 minutes	A7. What does democracy give to me?	Advantages of democracy: individual perspective
10 minutes	Final reflection	What do we take home from today's activities?

Title

Day 2: Meeting the others: democracy and dilemmas

Objectives

- Developing awareness on the dilemmas linked to conflicting values and individual expectations from society

Setting and material

- Lego® Serious Play® bricks (in case you don't have it, the activities can be adapted with sticky notes and flipchart)
- Blank dilemma charts
- Flipchart
- Blank paper sheets
- Sticky notes
- Pens and coloured pencils and markers
- Open circle of chairs
- A big picture of an anonymous active citizen

+ **Homework for the following day**: searching and making a list of populist and anti-democratic slogans in their communities, on the traditional media, on social media and in daily life.

Road map

Time	*Activity/Reference*	*Content*
20 minutes	B10. Attentive listening	Empathetic and active listening to others' stories and values
120 minutes	B11. Be the change you want to see in the world / variation with building dilemmas with Lego® bricks	Conflicting values, collaboration to solve dilemmas
50 minutes	B3. Building an Active Citizen with Lego®	Idealisation, conflicting values, collaboration to solve dilemmas, active citizenship and concrete actions

10 minutes	Final reflection	What do we take home from today's activities?

Title

Day 3: Nonviolent Approach to Controversies

Objectives

- Defining anti-democratic slogans, populist assumptions and hate speech and how to deal with them in daily conversations.
- Acquiring specific techniques to deal with anti-democratic slogans in a constructive way
- Working on our own objectives and priorities while dealing with antidemocratic and populist slogans

Setting and material

- The Values Map
- Flipchart
- Blank paper sheets
- Sticky notes
- Pens and coloured pencils
- Famous people pictures
- Character cards
- Timer

Road map

Time	*Activity/Reference*	*Content*
35 minutes	A6. The Values Map	Being aware of cognitive

		bias in visualising ourselves and the others and finding solutions to bridge the gap.
30 minutes	C7. Populism? Anti-democratic slogans? Hate Speech?	Defining, identifying and distinguishing populist affirmations, antidemocratic slogans and hate speech
30 minutes	D4. When words become reality	Reflect on the effects of language on reality and develop awareness to avoid discrimination reiteration
60 minutes	C8. Action! Techniques of intervention	Acquiring and practicing argumentation techniques in daily situations
20 minutes	C2. Walking in their shoes: the competitive conversation	Learn to walk in populists' shoes, understanding the reasons behind antidemocratic viewpoints and developing empathy and a constructive approach to discussion.
10 minutes	Final reflection	What do we take home from today's activities and from the workshop?

Example 2: Short trainings with different youth age groups

Objectives

- Recognising and understanding democracy and active citizenship on a personal level
- Expressing and discussing different opinions and thoughts

Setting and material

- group members know each other well because they either attend the same class or meet weekly and form a community
- open circle of chairs in the classroom or community space
- flipchart papers (10 pieces)
- colored pen

Title

Variation 1 Younger students: Democracy – what are we talking about?

Target group

Primary school students, youth – 14-15 years old students

Road Map

Time	*Activity/Reference*	*Content*
10 minutes	Introduction and group rules – 5 minutes Energizer- How do you feel	Why are we here, what is the aim of this workshop, about the project etc.
20 minutes	Part 1: Democracy as a form of life	Anchoring democracy as something that is relevant here and now
15 minutes	A2. Speed Dating on democracy	Getting to know each other and the topic more deeply in an unusual communication setting
15 minutes	A11. Quotes on democracy	Getting to know historical and current thinkers and controversial positions on

		democracy
15 minutes	A9. Belonging to a community – steps of coming closer	Recognizing the necessity to build democracy together and discussing the topic of integration
15 minutes	Part 3: Integrating Democratic evaluation	Assessing the effects of the workshop in a participatory way

Title

Variation 2 Older students: Active citizenship and values

Target group

Secondary school students, youth – 16-19 years old students

Road Map

Time	*Activity/Reference*	*Content*
10 minutes	Introduction and group rules – 5 minutes Energizer- How do you feel	Why are we here, what is the aim of this workshop, about the project etc.
15 minutes	Part 4: Ten theses on being an active citizen	Discussing the relevance of different fields of action with connection to everyday experience of the students
20 minutes	B6. Value auction	Reflecting whether values have an economic worth and how to deal with scarcity when not all values are available.
15 minutes	B1. The ideal active citizen	Discussing ideals of an

		active citizen and where we could find examples for him/her
15 minutes	B8. My values – your values	Biographical exploration of important personal values, their commonalities but especially tensions between them
15 minutes	Part 3: Integrating Democratic evaluation	Assessing the effects of the workshop in a participatory way

Example 3: Short intervention with pension club

Title

Spread the message of democracy in your families!

Target group

Pension group – 65 years and older

Objectives

- Increasing knowledge about democracy
- Initiating discussions on democracy with young people in their own families and neighborhoods

Setting and material

- group members know each other well as part of a pension club
- on tables in a community café
- flipchart papers (10 pieces)
- colored pen

Time	*Activity/Reference*	*Content*
5 minutes	Introduction and group rules – 5 minutes	Why are we here, what is the aim of this workshop, about the project etc.
15 minutes	A2. Speed Dating on democracy	Getting to know each other and the topic more deeply in an unusual communication setting
15 minutes	A11. Quotes on democracy	Getting to know historical and current thinkers and controversial positions on democracy
15 minutes	Part 3: Integrating Democratic evaluation	Assessing the effects of the workshop in a participatory way

Example 4: Half-day training with young people

Title

Stand Up for Europe

Target group

Youth students – 14 years to young adults

Objectives

- Raising awareness on values and democracy
- Discussing European democratic attitudes

Setting and material

- classroom or educational institute
- open circle of chairs

- flipcharts and papers
- beamer

Road Map

Time	*Activity/Reference*	*Content*
75 minutes	Welcome and introduction	The participants are welcomed, the instructors give an introduction.
15 minutes	A2. Speed Dating on Democracy	The participants are activated by entering into dialogue with each other.
60 minutes	B4. My and our house of Europe	The participants draw their shared idea of Europe on large sheets of paper under the theme ‘My European house’. Similarities and differences between the group posters are discussed.
30 minutes	COFFEE BREAK	
90 minutes	C7. Populism? Anti-democratic slogan? Hate speech?	The participants will work in small groups. Each group will have a unique assignment involving different formats and contextualize their products by discussing challenges of the specific topic.
30 minutes	Presentation	The seminar room is transformed into a ‘theatre’ and the small groups ceremoniously present their results.

30 minutes	Evaluation, transfer to the praxis and feedback	The house of Europe is taken up and a transfer to the praxis is drawn.

Example 5: Afternoon training with youngsters in a football club

Title

Conflicts running for democracy!

Target group

Members of a local sports club - young adults between 18 and 29 years old

Objectives

- Reflecting on existing conflicts in the sports club
- Getting to know a value-based attitude towards differences amongst each other
- Training techniques of intervention on slogans on the soccer field

Setting and material

- In the sports club meeting room
- using tables as the usual and expected setting to feel safe
- beamer for impulses
- pinboards for visualization
- after the workshop barbecuing together.

Road map

Time	Activity/Reference	Content
30 minutes	C9. Five steps of democratic decision taking – Part 1	Conflicts and their relevance for living together. Collecting examples from

		the sport club in a ‚light way‘
60 minutes	A9. Belonging to a community – steps of coming closer	Connecting everyday experience concerning integration in the sports club – who is in, who is out?
15 minutes	COFFEE BREAK	
45 minutes	B11. Be the change you want to see in the world	Collecting situations of conflict and slogans from the sports club. Working with them in groups
60 minutes	C8. Action! Techniques of Intervention“	Discussing goals we have when we want to confront others and their slogans. Getting to know three techniques of intervention. Doing sample role plays
30 minutes	C5. Opinions beyond my world - Variation 2	Reflection on what would happen if we would decide for complete harmony in our sports club – or decide that from now on we will be very clear and even hostile when encountering conflicts.
30 minutes	D6. Democracy check in our group	Reflecting personally how the football club can improve its internal democracy

Example 6: One-day training with students

Title

Unmasking the truth: Fake news and conspiracy theories ind the digital age

Target group

High school students from 15 to 17 years old

Objectives

- Raising awareness about the spread and real-world consequences of fake news and conspiracy theories.
- Understanding the emotional and psychological factors that make conspiracy theories appealing
- Empowering youth to responsibly identify, reflect on, and respond to misinformation in their environments.

Setting and material

- School classroom or seminar room equipped with:
- Open circle of chairs (for dialogue and empathy-building)
- Flipcharts and markers
- Sticky notes
- Beamer/projector and speakers
- Printed samples of fake news and social media headlines
- Large sheets of paper for collaborative group work

Road map

Time	Activity/Reference	Content
30 minutes	C3. Two facts, one lie	Participants share two truths and one fake statement about themselves; others guess which is false. Introduction to fake vs. real information.

60 minutes	Impulse & Discussion: Section A2 Volume 2 – Deepening the approach	Brief presentation on how fake news spreads and why people believe in it. Examples on trigger points from national context
20 minutes	COFFEE BREAK	
40 minutes	C6. Myths we believe in	Students work in small groups to list conspiracy theories or fake news they've heard locally or online. They analyze emotional/psychological appeal.
60 minutes	LUNCH BREAK	
60 minutes	C4. Freedom of Expression!? Fake News!?	Groups debate: When does free speech become harmful? Role of social media, influencers, bots.
40 minutes	C5. Opinions beyond my world – Variation 1	Students discuss questions on how to deal with alternative opinions and when they would change their own mind
20 minutes	Silent Reflection & Closure	Round of impressions. What did you learn? What will you watch more critically from now on? Written reflection or sharing circle.

Hints for Trainers: process over results

The following 15 guidelines can provide some orientation when facing challenging situations as a facilitator. They were developed against the fact that basically the whole training is a challenge if it is really done in a participatory, interactive and open process that allows for an exploration of democracy and democratic values in the setting itself.

So to be clear: these guidelines are not and cannot be a ‘recipe’ for how to act. This would fundamentally contradict the very approach presented in this training manual. At the same time, they can be taken as an orientation, a frame, a basis for discussion amongst trainer who, in turn, will find practical ‘translations’ into their training experiences.

Much more on the didactical background, your role as a trainer, group dynamics, open learning processes, theoretical aspects of teaching and learning as well as transferring all of this into online settings can be found in *Volume 2 – Deepening the approach,* coming with this training manual.

1. The glass is half full. Use resources and appreciation as an important frame for learning processes.

2. Work with participants at eye level, and at the same time, do not think or pretend that there is an equality of power.

3. Take the needs of the individual participants into consideration, and also be aware that they belong to groups in society with more or less power.

4. When you think you know what is best for the participants, it is a good moment to ask for feedback from them to check whether they are still on their individual learning track.

5. Walk the talk. Try to be the best role model for your participatory approach. Keep inviting participants to give feedback in regular rounds.

6. Strike a balance between flexibility and reliability.

7. Be aware of the group dynamics and make them work for your participatory approach.

8. Strike a balance between the needs of the individuals, the group as a whole, and the topic and ensure a supportive learning environment.

9. Rely on the ability of participants to be responsible for their own learning process.

10. Be transparent about your decision-making and involve participants in the process.

11. Give the participants a chance to learn from experience rather than just by receiving new knowledge.

12. Use the group as a model for society and apply activities to bring about real change in the group (and society).

13. Use irritation as an important part for deep and comprehensive learning processes. At the same time make sure, irritation does not become a threat which prevents learning.

14. Rely on the diversity in each group and raise the issues of inequality and discrimination; do not aim at (fake) harmony but deal actively with conflicts.

15. The grass does not grow faster when you pull it. Try new ways, and also accept you cannot force learning processes. Learning takes repetition and time.

Integrating Democratic Evaluation

The problem of evaluation

In many trainings feedback sheets or small online surveys are commonly used. Evaluation experts often call them ‘happy sheets’ in a slightly demeaning way – and indeed very often the aim is to find out how satisfied or happy participants are at the end of a training sessino. In the light of our project the question is whether ‘happiness’ or ‘satisfaction’ are (the only) relevant categories for monitoring success. Moreover, standardized feedback and evaluation questionnaires have been often designed by an expert round – the phrasing and kind of questions often seem to be far away from the specific reality of a training. For the sake of quantitative counting and comparability, they are abstract and not rooted in the training experience. Finally, participants often have no idea what will happen with their data after filling out these questionnaires – how will they be used or misused?

Happiness, abstraction and intransparency – three values that do not really fit with the democratic idea of running training on fostering democracy in Europe. Moreover, if we do evaluation in this way – aren’t we acting as social media platforms? Making people happy, taking their data and using algorithms to manipulate them (i.e. target advertisements to them).

Evaluation is a good example of how good intentions by educators turn into opposing what they really want to achieve. Therefore, the need there is to turn evaluation itself into a democratic contribution to the overall learning experience.

If you want to know more about this approach and its backgrounds, please turn to V*olume 2 – Deepening the approach* which is a separate publication to this manual. Here we will provide a hands-on method for integrating evaluation democratically as part of a learning process in training.

Hand-on Democratic Evaluation in training

Ideally you start the process of democratic evaluation already as an integral part at the beginning of the training with steps 1 – 3. Pragmatically, if you do not have enough time, just focus on steps 4 – 6.

1. Introduce participants to the basic four values of a democratic evaluation (see *Volume 2 – Deepening the approach)*. The focus is on understanding that evaluation is about values and evaluation itself represents certain values.

2. Then let small groups develop ‘symbols of success’. Evaluation is about the value something has, how would you symbolize this positive value and the success of this training? For the symbolization, you can use colored pens and paper, alternatively, some Lego® bricks. Ask participants to give an inspiring name to their symbol.

3. Let all groups present their symbols and what they would consider the essence of success of the training. Here the democratic impulse becomes clear immediately: not (only) the trainers, but also the participants decide what success is; furthermore, they become (partly) responsible by what they describe and will be inspired to achieve it.

4. Ask each group to think about good questions they would like to see in a feedback questionnaire, in order to find out whether their description of success was achieved. It could be professional,personal, yes/no or quantitative questions or inquiries on some biographical information or story-telling.

5. Let the groups present the questions and decide together which ones should be integrated into a questionnaire at the end of the training. To make it practical, use different flipcharts to write down the questions. Ideally, there should be a range of 5 – 7.

6. Ask participants at the end of the training to answer the questions individually or in pairs on the flipcharts. Give some time to see all the answers and enter into a final round of statements.

This way of doing evaluation in training shows how participation, appreciation, transparency and creativity can become part of a new experience concerning feedback procedures.

Part 4: Guidelines for European citizens

Here we would like to sum up what has been addressed so far. This part can be used after a workshop as a summary handout and also as an overview tool for interested cooperation partners. It goes beyond a specific training and translates the socio-political background and conceptual theory into concrete hints and steps.

The necessity for intervention

Why should you act?

It would be fatal if the impression were to arise that there is no need to really intervene but just try to come to terms in an accepting way. That would be wrong for a number of reasons. The basic rule is: if you remain silent, you are deemed to agree. This can foster a situation in which extremist discourse becomes stronger as it is by nature loud and emotional. In public situations there are also the "bystanders", the undecided, the listeners. They are the actual addressees, they are the most likely to be convinced, perhaps dissuaded from agreeing with the "false" statements. They will carefully observe how you react to anti-democratic slogans. Intervention makes it clear that "air sovereignty" at supermarket checkouts, on streetcars, in train compartments, at garden fences, in canteens, at family celebrations and among friends etc. must not be left to those who proclaim their slogans without restraint. It is important to take sides for democracy, for a civilized civil society, especially at a time when this is threatened by exclusionary thinking and parties, by extremist groups and the spread of corresponding attitudes. A conversation is not over when it has formally ended. What has been said continues to have an effect, is perhaps reconsidered after an appropriate period of time and linked to experiences that have occurred in the meantime. It may then unfold its effect. After all, anti-democratic slogans are not only expressed in words. There is a smooth transition from words to action. Those who are verbally denigrated can become victims of violent attacks. Those who intervene in the case of statements protect those who are threatened and persecuted.

What can you do?

Despite this fundamental insight, many people who are confronted with anti-democratic slogans react with disillusionment or even resignation. So wouldn't it be better to avoid such conversations? You don't stand a chance anyway, you just get upset and even risk escalation. It depends on your attitude and strategy. Of course it also depends on the level of risk that is present in the society you live in: “A person’s level of risk depends on the degree of autocracy they live in as well as on personal and collective factors. Such factors include citizenship (visa status), vulnerability of family members, gender, race, ethnicity, seniority of position and other attributes that render a person more or less vulnerable to arbitrary action. To illustrate, a senior white male scholar who is a citizen is less at risk than a female person of color on a temporary visa. This is the case even within functional democracies, and much more so in autocratic regimes.” (Lewandowsky et al. 2025, 12).

Here are some general hints that will be unfolded broadly in the practical part with training activities given a general risk assessment:

Take the initiative

Experience has shown that those who speak slogans are immediately on the offensive. Therefore, those who disagree should take the initiative and lead the discussion. Your own position should be justified with reference to human rights, fundamental law, humanitarian precepts of Christianity or other religions, philosophical ethics, political convictions or similar. It is shown which values one represents and defends. This also provides a solid foundation for your own arguments.

Establish rules of conversation

If it gets too loud and everything gets mixed up - which is always the case in such situations - then it is important to set rules and demand that they are followed, e.g. to insist on letting each other finish speaking. Regulars' table slogans are not proclaimed with the intention of having real conversations. However, in order to enable at least a rudimentary exchange, people should insist on listening to each other.

One topic at a time

Do not take part in the slogan jumping. The protagonists of the slogans often switch from one topic to the next when discussing their slogans, bringing one slogan after the other into play like buzzwords. This should be stopped if possible. If you want to intervene, you should insist on sticking to the topic.

Pay attention to the undecided

A conversation is rarely structured in such a way that there are only two sides, decidedly pro and clearly recognizable con representatives. There are usually others in between: Indifferent, wait-and-see, sit-in, undecided, hesitant and procrastinators. They - and not the hard core of those who merely spout their slogans - are the real addressees of the discussion. They are what matters first and foremost: They are still open and approachable, they can still be impressed by the determination with which contradictions to the slogans are voiced and convinced by arguments.

Ask specifically

Those who proclaim slogans without restraint indulge in generalities. Then they should be asked to state what they mean in concrete terms, i.e. to make it more concrete by asking questions "What exactly does that mean and in detail?", "Which people do you know that you are talking about?", "What examples can you give?".

Dissolve the general "the", but don’t instruct or moralize

"The foreigners", "the Jews", "the gays", "the politicians" ... - it is characteristic of generalising regulars' table slogans how sweepingly they classify people. That's why you should ask who exactly is meant: for example, does "the foreigners" also include the Italian innkeeper, the Turkish greengrocer, your daughter's Spanish classmate, the Austrian, Danish or Dutch border neighbor, the Iranian engineer, the Moroccan parcel carrier, the Indian IT specialist, the Japanese manager, the Syrian specialist? Those who lecture provoke resistance. Who likes to be voluntarily

pedagogized? Teaching comes across as arrogant, know-it-all and leads to isolation. Those who moralize, i.e. raise their index finger in indignation, want to demonstrate their deeper, i.e. better knowledge. That doesn't go down well.

Address feelings

Aggression is an expression of emotion; it reveals a lot about the life situation and needs of the person who makes pithy remarks and unreflected slogans. Perhaps the vehemence of the statement reveals a fear, a feeling of threat, a grievance. Nevertheless, the regulars' table is an extremely unsuitable place for attempts at therapy. For example, anyone who gets personal and asks in an emphatically gentle voice: "What are you afraid of?" or "What problem do you have with ...?" has already lost. After all, who wants to have someone look into their soul uninvited and even have a psychological problem diagnosed? Moreover, that would be the wrong approach: racism, for example, is simply inhuman and by no means an excusable statement even if it is a symptom of structural deficits. But such feelings should certainly be taken seriously. Perhaps the slightly different question "Why are you so upset?" will open up a completely new perspective.

Build bridges, but set boundaries

Behind many slogans lies a subjectively experienced truth. Instead of building walls, it can make sense to build bridges in these cases. The solution formula would then be: "You're right too, but look ..." This creates a relationship with the other person and breaks up the rigid confrontation. Even when it comes to building bridges, boundaries should be drawn. Because there can be no compromise when it comes to outright contempt for humanity, open extremism or pure racism. Then the conversation should be ended as quickly as possible, which means: stand up and walk away.

Change the perspective

Why is there so much defensiveness towards those who are different, live differently, look different, have a different origin, a different religion? Is there possibly also envy involved? You can address this assumption, but in the "we" form (because the aim is to build bridges): "Maybe we're just jealous of their way of life and their attitude to life?" Or you can point to another scenario: "What if we had to ask for asylum ourselves?"

Stay authentic

Persuasiveness, decisiveness, clarity, straightforwardness, genuineness and authenticity are impressive, especially to those who have an authority problem (and this is often hidden behind the pithy slogans). They can be impressed by people who have this power.

Bring in wit and irony

Irony reveals absurdities, clarifies contradictions and eases tension. An example: "Every welfare recipient has a dog and a cell phone." - Possible answer 1: "Should he shoot his dog?"; possible answer 2: "That's great - when are you going to the welfare office?". Another case: "We need a national consciousness again." - Answer: "Do you parade flags in your garden every morning?". The following exchange is reminiscent of Dadaism: "Germany to the Germans." - Answer: "And

pizza to the pizzas.". However, caution is advised: Cynicism is not meant here, it hurts and exacerbates the situation.

Reduce claims

One must know that the attitudes that lead to the slogans are part of the continuum of a life story. These people have acquired distorted images over the years. The confrontation with an opposing position often changes little at first. The following often applies: "What is believed without argument cannot be refuted with argument." There is a plausible core to this sentence. It is based on the realization that slogans are based not least on certain psychosocial conditions and factors. Those who oppose them are not responsible for them.

Consider the long-term effect

A conversation is not over when the encounter has formally ended. What has been said has a lasting effect, especially if - see above - the opponent has convinced with authenticity. For a variety of reasons (e.g. fear of losing face or prestige), no concessions are often made during the conversation. However, the words heard may be linked weeks or months later with experiences gained in the meantime and ultimately have an effect.

Ten theses on being an active citizen

Strengthening European values is about recognizing democracy as a form of life in which we have to take responsibility. In the end it boils down to asking ourselves what it means to be an active citizen, contributing to the common good of Europe. An active citizen understands his or her responsibility for participating in the ongoing project of democracy; an active citizen will live this attitude in his or her family, neighborhood and community and inspire others to creatively cooperate. The following ten points that can be understood as a guideline for adopting this attitude of an active citizen and have the “courage to act” (Hufer 2024) in a comprehensive sense.

1. Being an Active Citizen is more than going to elections

Democracy is not only based on institutions but extends to each of us personally. Don’t only look to or blame ‘big politics’ for what is not working around you. Whenever there are decisions in your family, job or neighborhood, it’s up to us to contribute to our nation’s further development. It’s our passion, inspiration and civic values which will decide how we can live together peacefully. Good examples of democracy are often formed in neighborhoods where people live and experience directly and emotionally how social cooperation and mutual responsibility can make a powerful difference in designing the future.

2. Being an Active Citizen is linked to responsibility and diversity as a form of life

Democracy is not a simple technique to be followed. There is no absolute orientation for ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. Democracy means giving up the idea that there will be a centralized power being responsible for everyone’s fare. It means rather being courageous and taking our freedom to respond to those issues at stake. This responsibility involves being careful not to try to dominate others with your ideas. Democracy of course needs power – but not power over others, rather power with others. Others should not be seen as enemies, but as those being able to critically question our ideas and contribute to better solutions. This means accepting diversity as much as possible in our personal life.

3. Being an Active Citizen means creativity in living together peacefully

Democracy is not only about alternative directions; it cannot only rely on good examples from elsewhere. Democracy has a creative component and needs diverse cooperation of all involving the acceptance of conflict and need for respectful decisions. Participation can happen in official state institutions, local committees, the diversity of civil society and spontaneous forms of civic action. In each case we can activate our potential to extend the limits of what is given and invite others to make collective life better for all.

4. Being an Active Citizen means being curious

It’s good to be an expert in our fields of profession. It can be more enriching for democracy to be open to perspectives of others. This gives us the chance especially to understand other’s value systems and orientation in the shared world. Look beyond positions, arguments and facts and try to understand the hopes, aspirations and fears of those that are totally different from you.

Appreciation of your own potential and that of others is an important source of inspiration to do things differently in a creative way.

5. Being an Active Citizen means being ready for debate

Democracy is fostered by accepting debate – between government and opposition, between civil society and the state, between different groups of interest, between us and our opponents. Let's open debate prevents radicalization and extremist 'truths'. Our own values can only be lived on the basis of a frame of Human Rights guaranteed for all. Within this frame we always have to find the balance between our positions and actively keep rooms open for the position of others. At the same time, being ready for debate also means guarding red lines when extremists want to destroy open discourse and accept violent means for pushing their interests.

6. Being an Active Citizen means accepting dilemmas

Democracy is not a linear transformation of the basic rights of a national constitution. In the constitution with its basic rights there are a number of dilemmas between values like individualism and security, freedom of speech and protection of dignity, equality and difference. Accepting these dilemmas contributes to an understanding of democracy as an ongoing process of balancing opposing values in many different situations. We should accept the impossibility of fulfilling each of them perfectly; it is our responsibility to look for what is helpful or not so helpful at a given moment.

7. Being an Active Citizen means using power productively

Power is often seen as a negative category especially in civil society and community projects. This is problematic as this attitude contributes to the development of invisible structures of discrimination and privilege. Privileged majorities then seem to 'naturally' use their power over others. Be aware of power and make it explicit when it means domination over others (mainly minorities). Use power productively to do things together with others and join forces in a transparent and open way.

8. Being an Active Citizen means appreciating mistakes

In science as well as in technology tolerance towards mistakes is important for finding a balance between perfection and imperfection. Often political decisions are only criticized for not fulfilling original ideas and visions. This leads to frustration and a deterioration of political culture and disenchantment of political processes in democracy. Participatory democracy is only possible on the basis of the acceptance of decisions that contain mistakes and can be the source for further improvement. Appreciate your own mistakes and those of others as attempts to design the future together.

9. Being an Active Citizen means being ready for long-term processes

Very often we have the wish to quickly change things to fulfill the interests of all immediately. Be aware that democracy is a difficult long-term and never-ending process involving the frame conditions of history, international conflicts, opposing groups and differences in property and wealth. It needs an open eye for limiting conditions of what can be done here and now. Be ready for stepping back from immediate success and quick fulfilment of good ideas and look for what is

possible with the power and energy of what you can do in your surroundings.

10. Being an Active Citizen means to focus on a sustainable culture of democracy

Political decisions are not only technical means for providing service to a nation; they are part of a civic culture showing which values are important for a society and which values do not come to life. We should register the ‘societal climate’ and public atmosphere as an important indicator of democracy as a sustainable project and we should contribute to sustainability in ecological, economic and social terms. This holistic approach helps us understand that culture in a comprehensive sense is the glue for a functioning society. It is Active Citizens that need to keep up and defend the precious values of living together peacefully. Let’s keep our eyes open for a holistic view that integrates and includes the need of ecology, economy and human dignity.

Part 5: Background on anti-democratic slogans

The approach of Prof. Dr. Klaus-Peter Hufer

Prof. Dr. Klaus Peter Hufer defines anti-democratic slogans (Stammtischparolen) as exaggerated, racist, populist, discriminatory, and sexist statements that are based on half-truths and spread negative prejudices. These slogans categorize groups of people, divide the world into "them" and "us", and provide simple answers to complex societal issues. Common examples blame foreigners, refugees, Jews, Muslims, the EU, politicians etc. for problems in society Anti-democratic slogans propagate racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and authoritarian views. Examples blame foreigners, minorities, politicians etc. for societal problems.

Hufer argues that while table slogans are simplistic, it is difficult to spontaneously refute them as they fulfil a dual function - they are both aggressive and a source of self-affirmation for those who proclaim them. Additionally, logical argumentation is often ineffective as table slogans are not grounded in reason but rather in fundamental value judgments, beliefs and principles. Nevertheless, Hufer provides recommendations for countering table slogans, which he terms "argumentation techniques". Klaus Peter Hufer's core argumentation technique involves avoiding escalation, asking probing questions, addressing emotions, and redirecting conversations to sway undecided onlookers. These include avoiding getting drawn into slogan debates, taking the initiative in the discussion, establishing rules for dialog, asking specific questions to elicit details, insisting listeners truly listen, positioning yourself based on ethics/values, revealing contradictions in the slogans, using Socratic questioning, addressing emotions behind the slogans, and refocusing on undecided bystanders who may be convinced by strong counter arguments. The goal is not just to win an argument but to demonstrate a steadfast yet understanding democratic attitude. Verbal disarmament is key, as table slogans can lead to physical violence. The aim is to speak out in an appropriate yet upright way to demonstrate that democracy still allows dissenting voices.

Klaus-Peter Hufer developed, implemented and continuously improved his own curriculum as a practitioner and head of department at a municipal adult education centre in 2000. His "Argumentationstraining gegen Stammtischparolen" (Argumentation training against slogans at the regular's table) is the best-known program of civic education in Germany. He is still a trainer and lecturer throughout Germany today, organising around two events per week. He has also trained other trainers who also use the programme. Various universities in Germany (in particular Essen/Duisburg, Cologne and Augsburg) are involved with the training programme and have developed quality criteria and enhancements and conducted studies. Demand has risen sharply, particularly due to political events and multiple crises after 2015.

What is argumentation training against regulars' table slogans? Klaus-Peter Hufer describes it as follows: "Argumentation training against regulars' table slogans is a special case of argumentation training in that it involves dealing with conflictual encounters that are politically explosive. In this argumentation training, political education takes place – initiated and developed by everyone together. Rhetorical skills are also learnt and practiced, but it is not just empty rhetorical training. The participants' self-confidence is also strengthened, but it is not an individualising seminar for self-awareness." (Hufer 2022). The aim of the training is to learn techniques for countering provocative, racist and undemocratic slogans in specific situations of personal encounters and confrontation. Various techniques are rehearsed in role plays, such as counter-questions or irony. For example, typical positions of conspiracy theorists, overt or covert racism and anti-Semitism,

misogyny or anti-European prejudices are discussed. The positions can be loud, provocative, hurtful, illegal and obvious – as well as covert and even unconscious. The spectrum ranges from statements such as “All politicians should be gassed” to quite inconspicuous slogans and jokes such as “Women can’t park”. The courses therefore also teach participants to recognise such anti-democratic statements in the first place, to identify the underlying values and to summon up the courage to take a stand against them with arguments. Finally, the participants should also critically scrutinise their own attitude to avoid the suspicion of arrogance. The training is primarily aimed at those who are already politically engaged or are willing to do so. It is not designed to change the users of the slogans or to motivate a disinterested group of people. Accordingly, the training is primarily requested by clubs, associations, extracurricular educational institutions, NGOs and political parties, churches, groups and similar civil society organisations. For example, workshops are held for certain migrant groups, trade union organisations or Catholic parishes. The main target groups are young people aged 16 and over and adults.

This training manual expands Hufer’s approach to more strongly integrate values, dilemmas of democracy, critical self-reflection and new insights from psychology and political theory; it wants to prepare to keep up the dialogue in a situation when in some countries over 30 % of the population tend to populism and/or extremism as recent polls and elections have shown repeatedly: it also expands the approach by adding a European dimension, providing insight into the situation of a number of European countries.

Insights from the European partners

Similarities and differences in Europe

Analysis has shown that there are common global challenges and common European societal developments leading to tendencies of populism and extremism. Psychological backgrounds and the threat of basic human needs is something we have in common. The threat to democracy can be felt in many countries. At the same time the manifestations of anti-democratic slogans, the topics and references are very different. Each partner country of our project (Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, Türkiye) has analysed these accordingly.

Germany

A study has determined which slogans and statements receive a high to very high level of approval in Germany:

1. "If you're new somewhere, you should first settle for less.": 65.3%
2. "Most long-term unemployed people are not really interested in finding a job.": 50.6% "Most asylum seekers are not persecuted in their home country.": 44,2%
3. "There are too many foreigners living in Germany.": 35.0%

4. "The many Muslims here sometimes make me feel like a stranger in my own country.": 34.9%
5. "It's disgusting when homosexuals kiss in public.": 14.8%
6. "Women should focus more on the role of wife and mother again.": 12.1%
7. "Most homeless people are work-shy.": 11.7%
8. "Whites are rightly leaders in the world.": 10.6%
9. "Jews have too much influence in Germany": 8.1%

(Zick et al. 2018, 70ff.)

In addition, there are other topics that can be identified from various sources (in particular evaluations of publications, statements, election programs and corresponding studies and research). The topics of migration/deportation/Islam, political actors, media and press freedom, nationality/tradition, climate protection/credibility of science and gender are mentioned particularly frequently. It is striking that left-wing positions currently play a significantly subordinate role in the national discourse in Germany. With the entry of the right-wing populist party "Alternative für Deutschland" (AfD) into the parliaments from 2013 and the election of D. Trump as President of the USA in 2016, right-wing populist statements in particular are present in the discourse (amongst others Hufer 2018, Decker 2024). Since then, various academics, constitutional guardians and politicians from left-wing, liberal and conservative parties have repeatedly emphasized that the greatest threat to democracy currently comes from the 'right'.

Hungary

The following three anti-democratic slogans are representative for populist tendencies in Hungary.

1. “Egy vérből valók vagyunk”s” ("We are of one blood")

The slogan "We are of one blood" comes from the song Nélküled („Without You”) by the Hungarian band Ismerős Arcok. The song is often played at national holidays, sport events and other community events, and is thus closely associated with social experiences. From time to time, the song has also been used in political discourse, which has increased its popularity. Politicians often quote the lyrics of the song, emphasising the importance of national unity. The lyrics of the song strongly express the identity of Hungarians and cross-border solidarity. Both Hungarians living in Hungary and in the diaspora, as well as Hungarians living in Hungary's neighbouring countries - who were forced to live outside the Hungarian borders as a consequence of the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty - see their common historical and cultural heritage and their sense of belonging reflected in the song and its slogan. It is also important to note that since 2010 Hungarians living beyond the borders of Hungary can also have Hungarian citizenship and the right to vote, so strengthening cross-border national identity and cohesion can be an important basis for building a democratic society.

2. “NER lovag” (“NER knight”)

According to the Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his second government, a new social contract was concluded in the 2010 parliamentary election, with which they decided to establish a new system. The name of this system is the National Cooperation System (NER). The epithet "NER knight" is usually used by citizens with opposition sentiments to refer to pro-government voters. The term often portrays political opponents as corrupt, blindly serving power, bribed persons, which is considered a personal attack and undermines democratic political culture, contributing to the polarization of society. This kind of thinking limits political and democratic debate. In a democratic political culture, debate with political opponents should ideally be conducted with arguments and personal attacks and derogatory epithets should be avoided. Unfortunately, the term "NER knight" does not meet this expectation

3. ”Hazaáruló dollárbaloldali” (“Traitorous dollar left”)

The term "dollar left" identifies an entire political trend and its supporters with a single, negative feature (foreign, mainly American, financing). The term often portrays political opponents as corrupt individuals at the mercy of foreign interests, which constitutes a personal attack and undermines democratic political culture. The term "dollar left" makes it appear that there is only one correct political ideology and that all other ideologies are under foreign influence. This kind of thinking limits political and democratic debate. The term is used to delegitimize political opponents and prevent them from participating in political life.

Italy

Populism is a key aspect of some political parties: that’s why in order to elaborate a list of the trending populists and anti-democratic slogans, we focused on Italian political parties’ communication on social media, and specifically on right-wing parties, which in the country are the ones in the political spectrum relying most on this kind of argumentation to widen their electoral consensus (Napoletano 2023). Also, they have been recorded by scholars and analysts such as Amnesty International with its Hate Barometer (Amnesty International Italia 2018).

Populistic slogans can change quickly. In the very last years, for example, in Italy some of them vanished from public debate because of the ending of COVID-19 pandemic, which eliminated one of the crucial issues (the pandemic management). When the emergency slowed down, some of the populistic and anti-democratic slogans of the previous years became popular again because of remarked conflictual situations (immigration, anti-Roma discourses, family, and islamophobia) (Cataldi 2024), and some others changed in their contents (European climate action).

Immigration and racism

1. “Immigration from Africa is an invasion, and it is meant to produce a great replacement of white people with black and brown ones. Italian identity is in danger.”

Given Italy’s position, immigration from the Mediterranean has always been very high, and poor countries’ migrants (even from Balkans in the 90s) have always been labeled by populists as invaders, capable of being a serious threat to internal security, especially because of the inadequacy of the system of reception and shelter (Action Aid and Openpolis 2024). In the last decades, immigration from African and Muslim countries has been considered also as an attempt to replace white “true Christians and Italians” with black or brown people. Even Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni believes in this theory (Vohra 2023).

2. European climate action

“Green policies and ideologies are crazy and useless, Europe is against “real people and workers.”

As climate change has become undeniable, people are suffering not only for its consequences but also for the adaptation measures perceived as an illogical burden. Changes are difficult and require time and policies capable of dealing with complexity and with the many flaws of the global economic system. Fear and uncertainty bring many people to consider sustainability an annoying diktat, and Europe an enemy of common people because of its commitment to climate action (Cotugno 2024).

3. Sexual orientation and family

“There is only one family, which is the one with a mother and a father. Queer people can’t bring up children nor start a family. They are a threat to traditional families.”

Recent surveys show that the majority of Italians think that family is the union between two people, no matter which gender they are. But the percentage of people thinking that this is not the case is still relevant (37%) (IPSOS and Area Studi Legacoop 2023), preventing queer people to be considered equal. Right-wing parties strongly support this belief (Amnesty International Italia 2018).

4. Islamophobia

“Muslims are a threat to security. They only want to impose their beliefs on us, to get rid of our Christian symbols, to make us all Muslim and to cancel our women’s rights.”

It is one of the Italian right-wing parties’ trending slogans about Islam. It reemerges every time that segments of the Italian society (educational institutions, mayors, municipalities, NGOs, etc.) prove to recognise and answer to Muslim needs (with mosques or sharing religious celebrations). Recently, it came back as a school decided to close for the Ramadan’s ending (Il Post 2024).

5. Anti-Roma discrimination

“Roma people aren’t Italian. They are criminals and burglars; we give them anything they need while Italian people in need are left behind.”

Roma people in Italy are approximately 15.000 - many of them living in the Roma camps (UNAR 2024) - and 6 out of 10 are Italian citizens (Associazione 21 Luglio 2023). Antiziganism has always been very strong in Italy, and it is “constantly and uncritically reproduced, not only in the common

sense and by the media, but also in political and institutional discourses and actions” (Pontranfolfo 2020). This lack of elaboration of anti-Gypsyism as a discriminatory discourse makes it difficult to contrast Roma discrimination and further isolation from the rest of the Italian population.

Slovenia

For the selection of our "slogans," we relied on a master's thesis that investigated the language and content of hateful comments on online platforms, providing a good summary of the main themes. Here are some examples:

1. “Brezposelni posamezniki družbe ne delajo ničesar koristnega. Mnogi ljudje delajo, da preživijo, brezposelnim pa to ni potrebno.”

   “Unemployed individuals contribute nothing useful to society. Many people work to survive, but the unemployed do not need to.”

2. “Islam širi sovraštvo. Muslimani so teroristi in so zaslužni za povečanje kriminalitete. Pripadniki islama nam dajejo občutek strahu in negotovosti.”

   "Islam spreads hatred. Muslims are terrorists and responsible for the increase in crime. Followers of Islam make us feel fear and insecurity."

3. “Treba je ukrepati proti priseljencem. Priseljenci predstavljajo nevarnost za domače prebivalstvo.”

   “Action must be taken against immigrants. Immigrants pose a threat to the native population.”

4. “Predstavniki LGBTQ+ nimajo pravice postavljati zahtev za svoje pravice. LGBTQ+ izrabljajo javne finance za svoje namene.”

   “LGBTQ+ individuals have no right to make demands for their rights. The LGBTQ+ community misuses public funds for their own purposes.”

It is important to highlight that the statements mentioned above have been adapted into neutral and formal language, with the core message and content of the statements remaining intact. In their original form, these statements often include offensive language, insults, and a variety of slang and regional dialect expressions.

By "translating" them into more neutral terms, we aim to preserve their essential meaning without the use of vulgarities and colloquialisms that typically characterize the original comments. This approach helps maintain the focus on the substance of the statements rather than the tone or style in which they were originally expressed.

In addition to those already mentioned above, hate speech is also directed at other social groups of people from different backgrounds, such as the Roma people, members of non-governmental organizations, members of the Catholic Church, young people, the elderly, and others.

The frequency of these occurrences depends on which political faction (left or right) is currently in power and the prevailing circumstances. For example, as of autumn 2024, the Roma issue is particularly prominent due to a significant rise in crimes committed by the Roma in a region of the country, attributed to unsuccessful integration efforts.

Most of this hate speech occurs in online posts, reflecting the widespread presence of stereotypes in public discourse.

In the Slovenian language, derogatory and pejorative terms are often used, especially for representatives of minorities or political options/worldviews that differ from those of the speakers. Some specific names for those groups or individuals are:

Janšist: (association with "fascist, racist"): a member or voter of the Slovenian Democratic Party (a political party in Slovenia, generally associated with centre-right and conservative ideologies).

Komunajzer: (from a word for communist) a member or voter of left-wing parties.

Katoliban (mix of catholic and Taliban): a derogatory term for a Catholic.

Peder: A derogatory term for a gay man, often used to insult or demean.

Cigani or cigoti: A pejorative term for Roma people, often associated with negative stereotypes.

Rdečkar: A pejorative for someone associated with leftist ideologies, often implying communist sympathies.

Čefurji or čefurčki: A pejorative term for people from the former Yugoslavia, particularly those from the regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Serbia.

Türkiye

The following anti-democratic slogans play an important role in Türkiye:

1. “Tek millet, tek bayrak, tek vatan, tek devlet.”

“One nation, one flag, one homeland, one state.”

Slogan of nationalist movement in Türkiye. This slogan is often used by Turkish politicians and government supporters. The slogan promotes a singular Turkish national identity. It is used to justify policies that limit rights of ethnic minority groups who do not share this Turkish identity.

‘One nation’ refers to the idea that all Turkish people should be seen as united in one common nation; ‘One flag’ emphasizes that the Turkish flag should represent the Turkish nation; ‘One homeland’ states that the territory of the Republic of Türkiye is the common homeland for all Turks; and ‘One state’ advocates that the Turkish nation should unite around the unity of the Turkish Republic. In general, it is a powerful slogan that highlights the message of unity and solidarity in Turkish nationalism, alluding to its indivisible integrity. The slogan is also invoked to argue against dissenting opinions in the name of national unity.

2. “Çingene'den çoban olmaz, Yahudi'den pehlivan.”

“A gipsy cannot be a shepherd; a Jew cannot be a wrestler.”

A racist Turkish proverb denigrating Gypsies and Jews. Gypsies are assumed to have not the proper state of mind, physical attributes or personality traits to be shepherds. And Jews are assumed to lack the qualities to be wrestlers (Pehlivan). Looking deeper, this saying reflects some of the stereotypes existing in Turkish society:

Gypsies are seen as an unreliable people unable to adapt to a settled life. So, they are deemed unsuitable for a responsible job like shepherding. Jews, on the other hand, are stereotyped as

being cunning and intelligent but lacking physical strength and courage. So, they are not considered eligible for a strength-requiring job like wrestling.

Therefore, this saying reinforces stereotypes about certain ethnic groups and deems them inadequate for some occupations.

3. “Elinin hamuruyla erkek işine karışma.”

“Do not interfere in men's work while your hands are doughy.”

This is a Turkish idiom that belittles women by characterizing them as inadequate and incompetent compared to men and reflects patriarchal gender roles in Turkish society. "Doughy hands" refers to women's traditional role being mainly in the domestic sphere, occupied with tasks like making bread. The expression belittles women as being unfit and incompetent to participate in "men's work" outside of the home.

It originates from the traditional social structure in Türkiye where the male head of household is considered superior, while women are limited to childcare, housework, and other domestic duties. The idiom implies that women lack the capacity or qualifications to be involved in men's affairs or professional matters deemed outside of their capabilities.

When women do attempt to speak up on issues seen as men's domain, this idiom can be used in a derogatory fashion to put women in their place and enforce strict gender divisions. The separation between the domestic realm as female, and the public/professional realms as male, makes "interfering in men's work" unacceptable within traditional patriarchal norms.

The idiom narrowly confines women to child-rearing and domestic tasks, and discourages them from openly participating in matters outside the home.

4. ”Burası Türkiye!”

“Here is Türkiye!”

An anonymous expression commonly known among the Turkish people. This expression is a two-way slogan which has different meanings depending on the person saying it and the place and time it is said. For example, when a person with secular sensitivities says this to a person wearing a headscarf, it is understood that ‘Türkiye is a secular, democratic republic’, whereas when a person with religious sensitivities says this phrase to a person wearing a miniskirt, it is understood that ‘Türkiye is a religious, conservative country’. In both cases, it is an expression in which one side points out to the other side that he/she is in the minority and imposes that everyone should dress in the way adopted by the majority that he/she thinks is like him/her.

Commonalities of anti-democratic slogans

Anti-democratic slogans as we see above, are polarizing and convey negative prejudices. Groups of people are generalized and sorted into categories, the world is divided into a bad "them", contrasted with a good "us". Simple answers are given to the complex questions and challenges posed by our individualized and globalized world.

Problems that require differentiated considerations and solutions are reduced to pertinent and generalized messages. They are not thoroughly considered, but simply asserted. The anti-democratic slogan is a proxy term for unambiguous ideological, preferably political messages, Underrepresented social groups are targeted with sweeping slurs. The tirades are directed against refugee policy, asylum policy, development policy, social policy and many other policy areas.

The commonality of almost all of these slogans is furthermore that they are ‘loud’: they contain pointed demands, use drastic words; very often they are not reflective, but have a clear call to action. In this, they are also very emotional – they are not sober arguments or statements, but show that something is stirred deeply within those uttering them; something has been experienced which subjectively is not alright.

To start with, this is not a bad thing at all: emotions connect us to what it means to be a human being; calls to actions make concrete what seems to be missing. So in anti-democratic slogans we meet the human being as a whole. Civic education is often criticized for not touching these dimensions of the ‘heart and hand’ of human beings. In a way, working with anti-democratic slogans forces us to integrate these dimensions.

Yet the problem is that emotions are often uttered in anti-democratic slogans in the form of extremely bad feelings that can become a barrier for any further dialogue at one’s eye level. As they stem from (imagined) experience of injustice, they cannot be discussed as this would mean neglecting this experience of injustice. The self-affirmation, self-assertion and self-righteousness which is subjectively important for those uttering the slogan, would be destroyed.

Annex

European Partners

###maybe put logos like in WP 2 Joint National Report

Akademie Klausenhof gGmbH (Coordinator, Germany)

https://www.akademie-klausenhof.de/

The Klausenhof Academy is an international education and training center for young people and adults in Hamminkeln and Rhede. The Klausenhof Academy offers courses in (rehabilitation-specific) initial training for disabled and unemployed adults, language courses and further qualification courses, integration courses for young migrants, courses in German as a foreign language, seminars and workshops (focus: political education, youth work, professional training, management) as well as international, European and regional projects. It operates with its projects and offers both locally and regionally as well as nationally and internationally.

It is a recognized provider of youth welfare (inpatient and outpatient). Every day, around 600 to 1000 people visit the various offers of the house. Around half of these are young people and young adults. The Klausenhof Academy has 600 boarding school places and 350 employees. It is a non-profit GmbH under the sponsorship of a Catholic foundation and is certified according to DIN EN ISO 9001:2015.

Katolikus Ifjúsági Alapítvány - Catholic Youth Foundation (Hungary)

https://katolikusifjusagialapitvany.hu/

The Catholic Youth Foundation (CYF) was founded in 1991 in Szeged to support the education and community activities of Catholic youth in Southern Hungary. The Foundation carries out wide-ranging activities in the region to promote Christian values and to form a vibrant and authentic community of young adults. The Foundation focuses its activities on the following main tasks: Youth work - Youth work has always been at the heart of our mission. We have used the following main tools to realize innovative and widespread youth work in the Southern Region: Organization of cultural programs - The Foundation's mission is to promote and preserve Christian and Hungarian values in the Southern Hungary region. The "Millenniumi" café in the city center serves this purpose. In the 20 years of its activity, 3000 programs and events with 150 000 participants have been organized.

Social activities and volunteer work - Since the beginning of its activity, the Catholic Youth Foundation has had a mission to develop society, support disadvantaged groups and promote voluntary activities. For the last 20 years, the Millennium Café, operated under the supervision of CYF, has been the main base for cultural dissemination in Szeged. CYF has organized summer music festivals for several years (Millennium Jazz Days, Millennium Blues Session since 2014, Dugonics Square Summer Festival since 2006, participating in the Szeged Day celebrations).

Universitaet Augsburg (Germany)

www.uni-augsburg.de

The University of Augsburg was founded in 1970 as a reform university by the Free State of Bavaria. Initially focusing on law, economics, social sciences and humanities, the University of Augsburg has steadily expanded into promising fields such as natural and technical sciences and medicine. Its 20,000 students participate in around 40 undergraduate and state examination courses and 50 advanced master's courses. With numerous partnerships and cooperation agreements with over 80 universities worldwide and around 320 Erasmus exchange agreements, the University of Augsburg has a strong international network in both research and teaching. Centers currently being established at the university include the focus areas "European Studies" and "Teaching/Learning Research".

In keeping with its motto "Scientia et Conscientia", the University of Augsburg strives to increase, acquire and preserve knowledge in a conscientious and socially responsible manner and is committed to unrestricted freedom of research and teaching. The aim of its teaching is the ability to learn scientifically and to independently acquire scientific methods and knowledge. It encourages and demands that students learn and act independently. The course contributes to the development of mature, critical, responsible citizens who are committed to democratic values.

Doğa Schools (Türkiye)

https://www.dogakoleji.k12.tr

Doğa Schools is a chain of private schools, manages 90 campuses all around Türkiye and 1 in Cyprus, and educates 80000 students with its 7500 staff members. Based on these figures and the extensive network it has, Doğa Schools has an unrivalled potential to reach students, parents, educators, civil servants and stakeholders in national and international education field and also to disseminate across a broad area. In particular, Doğa schools enjoy a close relationship with various regional education departments in Türkiye and are therefore able to involve state schools to the projects as well.

Doğa Schools aims to provide pupils with competencies that they can become multi-directional, participative, creative and sensitive individuals of the future. The teaching and the management staff are actively engaged in the development and implementation of innovative teaching concepts such as MBA for teenagers (t-MBA), Project Based High School Education and Natural Learning Concept (NLC).

Doğa Schools serve for school education from pre-school to high school (3-18 years of age) to follow the curricular changes, improve the teacher training programmes, develop learning objects and online educational tools through collaborating with national stakeholders (provincial directorates, municipalities, universities, and NGOs) and international partners and stakeholders (universities, NGOs, and schools) and actively engaged in development and implementation of innovative teaching concepts.

Socialna Akademija (Slovenia)

https://socialna-akademija.si/

Socialna Akademija (Social Academy) is a non-profit institute operating since 2004 with activities in the fields of education, research and culture. The mission of the Social Academy is to promote, through education, training, research and promotion, a culture based on common values such as respect for human dignity, solidarity, justice and the common good, contributing to active citizenship and social responsibility of youth and young adults.

In the field of youth work, the Social Academy promotes active citizenship and media literacy, develops non-formal training of youth leaders and workers, offers activities in the field of multimedia production in its own multimedia centre and promotes intergenerational cooperation. Some recent international projects: strategic partnership ABC of youth work (applicant), European Wide Web of youth work, TeacHear, ILEAC, Young Faces of Europe, Enjoy Your Rights, Youth Worker and MotivAction.

InEuropa SRL (Italy)

www.progettareineuropa.com

InEuropa SRL is an Italian company founded in 2006 by experts who have been working on EU projects for more than 20 years, with the aim of helping public and private entities to access European innovation actions. InEuropa provides information, training and advice on EU policies and programs, promotes knowledge and interest in European opportunities and helps to develop transnational projects by providing technical support in both the planning and management phases. In addition to information and advisory services, InEuropa participates in its own European projects, either as a partner or as a coordinator. Education, training, youth, culture, environment, social, health, research and innovation are the main areas of work. In this framework, various projects aim to increase knowledge and awareness of environmental challenges and behavioral change and to develop experimental non-formal training pathways aimed at schools, young people and adults.

InEuropa has extensive experience in managing projects and developing training methods in the fields of education and training, behaviour change, culture and integration. InEuropa tests various non-formal training methods with young people and adults to promote their personal and professional growth, help them identify goals and reflect on the impact of their lifestyle on the world.

StandUp for Europe!

Argumentation training against undemocratic slogans: European extension and updating

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Partners

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akademie-klausenhof.de

Doğa Schools (Türkiye)
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Catholic Youth Foundation (Hungary)
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Socialna Akademija (Slovenia)
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