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Offen im Denken

Evaluation report
Many Perspectives – One Policy

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Introduction

EUROSOC#DIGITAL has successfully completed the project “Many Perspectives – One Policy. The Common Agricultural Policy between Economic, Social and Ecological Interests” co-financed by the European Commission. The project comprised two different seminar types: First, 16 project days were conducted to introduce pupils to the European representation of interests. Second, four trainings were offered for teachers, teachers in training and university students with regard to European political education. Furthermore, the project developed a flexible teaching module, which explains European politics using the steps of the policy cycle. For the purpose of evaluation, a questionnaire was distributed to the project participants during the seminars held from August 2017 until July 2018. The questionnaire is attached to the appendix (in German). A total of 382 participants responded to the survey, which accounts for reliable results. The survey contained 23 closed-ended and two open-ended questions and additional three closed-ended questions on social demographic information. The majority of the closed-ended questions was answered with a 5-point Likert scale. “Prefer not to say” answers were treated as missing and excluded from the data. The following report summarises the participants’ responses. For the complete results, please refer to the appendix (in German).

1. Structure and outline

The first part of the survey was dedicated to the structure and outline of the project days. It contained four closed-ended questions. The survey reveals that the goals of the project days were made clear to a huge majority of the participants (87.8%). Nearly four out of ten respondents to the survey (38.7%) said that they had already felt familiar with the topic of the European Union before the project days. However, almost three-fifths of the respondents (59%) also stated that s/he had no background knowledge about the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) of the European Union. Accordingly, only one-fifth (20.4%) reported that s/he dealt with agriculture as a topic in class before.

2. Introductory workshop

The second part of the survey examined the course of the introductory workshop. It contained two closed-ended questions. At first, the participants were asked if the content of the introduction had been presented in an understandable way. An overwhelming majority of 91.7% agreed. In addition, almost three-quarters of the participants (74.8%) underlined that the introductory exercises were rich in diversity.

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3. Simulation game

The third part of the survey examined the course of the simulation game. It contained three closed-ended questions. Nine out of ten participants (90.8%) were of the opinion that the content of the simulation game had been presented in an understandable way. In addition, a large majority of the participants (88.4%) underlined that they could easily follow the course of the simulation game. Seven out of ten respondents (71.9%) agreed with the statement that there should be more simulation games in class.

4. Teaching staff

The fourth part of the survey focused on the speakers and moderators of the project days. It contained three closed-ended questions. The majority of the participants (97.4%) perceived the teaching staff to be well prepared. Nine out of ten respondents (93.5%) also agreed with the statement that the speakers and moderators showed strong interest in the participants' learning success. In addition, a huge majority of the respondents (96.3%) also found that the teaching staff was sufficiently available for queries or additional advice when needed.

5. Participants

The fifth part of the survey asked the participants to reflect on their own performance during the project days. It also contained three closed-ended questions. Six out of ten respondents (60.4%) found that their peers followed the workshops actively. Almost the same amount of respondents (62.4%) also claimed that most of the participants took part actively in the simulation game. Finally, seven out of ten respondents (71.5%) agreed that most of the participants had taken their roles seriously.

6. Competencies

The sixth part of the survey concentrated on the acquisition of competencies. It contained four closed-ended questions. Eight out of ten respondents (80.4%) said that the project days helped them to better understand the European policy cycle. With regards to the specific topic of agriculture, seven out of ten respondents (71.7%) said that they now understand this topic much better. Participants also improved their overall competencies. A huge majority of them (65.8%) said that the project days have improved their ability to better argue and discuss in political debates. Finally, eight out of ten respondents (81.8%) stated that they now understand the role of interest groups in the political system of the EU better.

7. Working materials

The seventh part of the survey asked the participants to make a judgement about the quality of the provided materials for conducting the simulation game. It contained only one closed-ended question. Six out of ten respondents (63.5%) stated that the role cards allowed them to actively take part in the simulation game.

8. Social demographics

The eighth part of the survey focused on social demographic information. It contained three closed-ended questions. Two multiple-choice questions for information on school type and year with eight respectively two options. Finally, one gender question was posed with once again two options. Six out of ten participants (61.3%) came from a grammar school (Gymnasium), while more than one-third (36.1%) attends a vocational school (Berufliche Schule). At great distance follow pupils from middle school (Realschule) with 0.8%. Secondary school (Sekundarschule) and secondary modern school (Hauptschule) are also mentioned, but both with a share of 0.3% only. The answers reveal that more than three-thirds of the respondents (76.1%) are in years five to ten of lower secondary school (Sekundarstufe 1). More than one-fifth of the respondents (23.9%) said that they are in years 11 to 13 of higher secondary school (Sekundarstufe 2). Regarding gender, the majority of the participants was female (53%).

9. Overall evaluation

The ninth and final part of the survey asked the participants for an overall evaluation of the project days. It contained three closed-ended questions and two open-ended questions. Asked if the requirements were appropriate, the approval rate was 92.4%. A clear majority of the respondents (74.2%) said that the project days helped them to significantly improve their knowledge. Finally, eight out of ten participants (84.5%) evaluated the project days positively.

The answers to the open-ended question, what aspects of the project days the participants liked most, reveal the outstanding importance of the simulation game. Among 160 items, it was mentioned 43 times. For example, one participant's statement reads as follows: "The simulation game was very creative and well prepared. We had many materials that helped us. It was great fun playing the role of a politician, especially because I like discussions." The respondents positively assessed the interactivity and inclusiveness of the simulation game as can be seen in one participant's statement: "Everyone was able to get involved." Another participant summarised the value of the simulation game in this way: "It was a different way of learning." Finally, the participants also gave 134 answers to the open-ended question on what could be improved in the future. Here, mostly organisational issues and issues concerning the schedule were mentioned. For

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example, individual participants asked for more breaks and a shorter introduction to the topic of the project days. Others requested more time for discussion and additional information on the roles to play in the simulation game. For example, one participant left the following remark: “Background information, such as pesticides in our case, should be further explained and defined in order to enable the participants to come to an informed decision from the perspective of a specific role.”

Final conclusion

On the basis of the survey results, the impact of the project was quite significant. Especially the simulation game – as a central part of the project days – met the general approval of the participants.

The one-day training were therefore deemed satisfactory. Pupils, teachers, teachers in training and university students got to know new and innovative methods for teaching European Politics. Participants took part in a stimulating simulation game and received valuable learning and teaching materials. The experience of the project days significantly raised the participants’ knowledge on the functioning of the European Union and improved their understanding of the complexity of the EU’s agricultural policy. Finally, they now better understand the role of interest groups in the political system of the European Union.

To conclude, the central objectives of the project have been achieved thanks to a well-designed teaching module with a highly interactive simulation game that engages young peoples’ attention in a topic which they may not be initially interested in.

It is worth highlighting that the teaching module, which transmits the starting point, the implementation and the evaluation of EU policies, will soon be available for free on www.politikzyklus.eu.