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Evaluation report
CORE – Cohesion in your region

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Introduction

EUROSOC#DIGITAL has successfully completed the project “CORE – Cohesion in your region”, co-funded by the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (GD REGIO) and the Beisheim Foundation. CORE comprised of 16 one-day future workshops on Europe in the respective home region throughout Germany as part of “Cohesion in your region”. The workshops pursued the goal that the students deal with the future of their home region. The project also included five training courses for multipliers in different educational contexts that provided basic knowledge about European Cohesion Policy and are based on an interplay of theory and practice. The project days took place between August 2021 and July 2022, whereby the practical implementation was carried out under difficult conditions due to the Corona pandemic. For the purpose of evaluation, two questionnaires were distributed to the participants of the project: one for the students and one for the multipliers. The following report summarises the results of both surveys.

I. Students

A total of 466 participants responded to the student survey, which accounts for reliable results. The questionnaire is attached to the appendix (in German). The survey contained 25 closed-ended and two open-ended questions. The majority of the closed-ended questions was answered with a four-point Likert scale. “Prefer not to say” answers were treated as missings and excluded from the data. For the complete survey results, please also look at the appendix (in German).

1. Content

The first part of the survey was dedicated to the content of the project days. It contained three closed-ended questions. The survey shows that 50.7% of the students were already interested in the future of Europe before the project days. In contrast, only a few had previously dealt with the cohesion policy of the EU: 78.6% stated that they had not yet dealt with this policy field. The development of their own region, on the other hand, is of high interest to the students: 71.1% said they were concerned about this topic.

2. Media usage

The second part of the survey investigated which media the students use when they inform themselves about the topic of Europe. It contained one closed-ended question. The results show that the search engine Google is the most frequently mentioned information medium by the students (18.8%). This is followed by the classical media. Television and printed newspapers and magazines are each

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used by 14.1% of the respondents. YouTube follows with 9.5% and news sites on the internet and apps come to 8.3%. Private messenger and Wikipedia and other online encyclopaedias were each mentioned by 7.7% of the respondents. School or school lessons follow only a short distance away with 7.6%. Snapchat is used by 6.5% of students. Less frequently mentioned are radio (4.6%), personal conversations (4.5%), TV programme websites (3.4%) and Facebook (3%). Only 1.1% of the students use TikTok. Instagram (0.7%) and Twitter (0.4%) hardly play a role in preparation. Only 0.4% of the respondents said they use other media than those available for selection.

3. Interests

The third part of the survey examined the interests of the participating students. It contained two closed-ended questions and one open-ended question. When asked which content of the project days was most interesting for them, 35.5% of the students stated the problems from the regional profiles. Another 28.3% of the students were interested in the impact of European objectives on the regions. Information on EU funding opportunities was cited by 19.2% of respondents. Finally, 17% were interested in the cohesion policy of the European Union. When asked what the students would like to know more about, the problems from the regional profiles were mentioned most often: 34.4% were in favour of this item. 32.2% of the students would like to know more about the impact of European objectives on the regions. For the information on EU funding opportunities, the figure is 24.9%. EU cohesion policy is again slightly behind, with only 13.1% of respondents wanting to know more about it. When asked what other socio-political issues interested them, an encouraging number of 175 students gave an answer. The topic of climate and environmental protection received the most mentions (27). This issue was closely followed by the topic of cannabis legalisation (18). The third most frequently mentioned topic is digitalisation (12). Racism (8), education (7) and Corona (5) follow.

4. Transfer

The fourth part of the survey examined the transfer of knowledge during the project days. It contained seven closed-ended questions. 90.4% of the students felt that the presentations were well designed. In addition, almost the same number of respondents (92.5%) underlined that the content was easy to understand. For a large majority of students (90.4%) the regional profiles were well comprehensible. Further 87.3% of the respondents found the graphics on the handouts appealing. When asked whether the future labs had been a suitable method for them, 81.5% of the students responded positively. 80.8% of the participants stated that they felt appropriately challenged on the project days. Finally, 87% found the conversation with the political decision-makers interesting

5. What are your takeaways?

The fifth part of the survey asked the participants to reflect on their takeaways from the project days. It contained four closed-ended questions and one open-ended question. 64.1% of respondents said they were now better informed about developments in Europe. In terms of EU cohesion policy, 61.1% answered in the positive. 60.3% of the participants would like to continue to be informed about developments in Europe and their own region in the future. The intention to get more involved also increased after the project days: 48.5% of the participants want to become more engaged in Europe and their own region. Asked what the students took away from the project days, 158 respondents gave an answer. Many students expressed their pleasure at their newly acquired knowledge. The project days seem to have cleared up the reservation that the EU is an overly complex topic. For example, one participant said: “The project day made me realise that the topic of Europe is more exciting than I had previously thought. In the future, I will probably get more involved with the EU.” Another comment shares this insight: “That all this is not as abstract and distant as one might think.” Many students also seem to have realised through the project days that personal involvement in politics is worthwhile. For example, one comment reads as follows: “I take with me that as a citizen you have to show more commitment in order to be able to achieve certain goals.” Another participant comes to a similar conclusion: “Even as a student you can make a difference. If you have a good idea, all you have to do is say it and present it. The more you work on it, the more ideas come to you.”

6. Social demographics

The sixth part of the survey focused on social demographic information. It contained three closed-ended questions. Most participants (59.8%) came from a grammar school (Gymnasium) 30.1% attended a vocational school (Berufliche Schule). A further 7.8% stated that they visited a comprehensive school (Gesamtschule). 1% of the respondents said they would attend middle school (Realschule). Secondary school (Sekundarschule) and private school were named by 0.7% each. The answers regarding the school year show that a majority of the students (69.3%) visited higher secondary level (Sekundarstufe II), while the rest (30.7%) was from lower secondary school (Sekundarstufe I). Finally, asked for their gender, a majority of the participants was female (55.6%), while the rest was male (38.4%) or chose “diverse” as gender option (6%).

7. Overall evaluation

The seventh and final part of the survey asked the participants for an overall evaluation of the project days. It contained one closed-ended question and two open-ended questions. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (86.1%)

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evaluated the project days positively. A pleasing number of respondents (158) answered the final open-ended question about what they particularly liked about the project days. The mentions highlight the particular satisfaction with the staff who carried out the project days. The organisers and presenters are mentioned a total of 22 times, some even by name. Other answers reveal the importance of engaging group work activities. This feature of the project days was mentioned 19 times. The interactive future workshops also received 17 mentions. Finally, the participants also gave 38 answers to the open-ended question on what could be improved in the future. Here, mostly organisational aspects and issues concerning the schedule were mentioned. Some participants would also have liked to deal with the contents of the project days in greater depth.

II. Multipliers

A total of 15 multipliers responded to the second survey that accompanied the training sessions for multipliers. The survey contained nine closed-ended and five open-ended questions. “Prefer not to say” answers were treated as missings and excluded from the data. The survey was conducted exclusively online, which is why no questionnaire is included in the appendix. For the complete results of the survey, please refer to the appendix of this report (in German).

1. School practice

The first part of the survey was dedicated to the school practice of the multipliers. It contained three closed-ended questions. When asked about the type of school, the majority of participants (61.5%) stated that they teach at a grammar school (Gymnasium). 23.1% of the respondents taught at a comprehensive school (Gesamtschule). Vocational school (Berufliche Schule) was mentioned by 15.4% of the participants. A majority of the multipliers (61.1%) stated that they work in upper secondary education (Sekundarstufe II). 38.9% worked at lower secondary level (Sekundarstufe I). When asked about the subjects that the participants teach, social studies (politics, social sciences, economics-politics) was by far the most frequently mentioned item (40.7%). Foreign languages were also mentioned in the double-digit percentage range (18.4%). Geography, history and religious education/philosophy follow at a greater distance (7.4% each). German, art/music, mathematics and natural sciences (biology, chemistry and physics) are also mentioned with 3.7% each. Finally, 3.7% of the respondents said they would teach other subjects than those available for selection.

2. European Union

The second part of the survey took a closed look at the European Union as a subject of teaching activities. It contained one closed-ended question and one open-ended question. 71.4% of the respondents said they teach often on the topic of the EU. When asked what EU topic is specifically covered in class, a total of nine participants gave an answer. Basic information on the institutions and legislation of the EU were mentioned most frequently by the participants. In addition, there were certain policy areas such as the economy, the monetary union and the internal market. The current challenges and the future of the European Union also played a role.

3. Teaching resources

The third part of the survey examined the teaching resources of the multipliers. It contained two closed-ended questions and two open-ended questions. When asked which sources are usually used for lesson preparation, eight respondents gave feedback. In the responses, specific textbooks are most frequently mentioned. The respondents also regularly make use of online resources from educational providers or the EU institutions themselves. The multipliers obviously feel well equipped for their lessons. A total of 90% of the respondents feel that the sources available to them were sufficient. Notwithstanding this, 36.4% of respondents said that differentiated teaching materials would help them in teaching the topic of the EU. Another 31.8% wanted easier access to external materials. The items more time or relief hours for lesson preparation and the possibility of interdisciplinary teaching were both ranked at 13.6%. More recognition in school for the topic was important for 4.5% of the participants. Finally, it was asked what else would help the participants for their teaching. A total of 10 participants gave an answer to this question. Among the responses, there was a high demand for external teaching materials that were oriented towards the reality of students' lives. More time for lesson preparation was also mentioned here.

4. Methods

The fourth part of the survey focused on the methods and materials presented in the training. It contained one closed-ended question and two open-ended questions. First of all, the participants were asked where they saw the difficulties in teaching about the European Union in class. A total of six participants gave an answer to this question. Here, the abstractness and complexity of the topic were mentioned most frequently. The students' lack of background knowledge also played a role. The participants were then asked how they would evaluate the methods and materials presented in the training. 69.2% rated them as activating. Further 30.8% chose appealing as an answer. When asked which of the presented materials and methods the participants would use themselves in their teaching

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on the topic of the EU, the future workshop was mentioned most frequently (39.1%). The ball bearing method scored 21.7%. This is followed by the analysis of memes (17.4%) and the worksheet on populism (13%). The budget plan and the concept of building a politician are each named by 4.3% of the respondents.

5. Overall evaluation

The fifth and final part of the survey asked the participants for an overall evaluation of the training. It contained one closed-ended question and one open-ended question. Without exception, all respondents rated the training positively. 40% rated the programme as “good”, 60% even as “very good”. Finally, three participants took the opportunity to answer the question: What else would you like to tell us? The responses were positive without exemption. For example, one person said: “I find the possibility of conducting the future workshop with external staff who have dealt with this intensively excellent.” Another respondent stated as follows: “Great material and inspiring ideas for the classroom!” Finally, one participant expressed the wish to offer another training that would cover the topic of the EU in several short 45-minute lessons.

Final conclusion

Both the teaching for the students and the training for the multipliers were evaluated very positively by the participants. While eight out of ten students rated the project positively, the multipliers’ approval rate was a remarkable 100%.

On the basis of the evaluation results, the central objectives of CORE have been achieved. By participating in the future workshops, the students received detailed information about the EU cohesion policy and developed innovative project ideas. The additional discussions with politicians gave the students the possibility to share and discuss their ideas with real decision-makers. To implement the project smoothly in the schools, the multipliers were systematically trained. For future use, all materials remain freely available online.

The project has significantly raised the participants’ awareness of the long-term challenges facing the European Union and its regions. It has also improved their willingness to engage politically and to articulate potential solutions.