



UNIVERSITÄT
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ESSEN

Offen im Denken

Evaluation report
SEMINAR#GAP

1. Introduction

EUROSOC#DIGITAL has successfully completed the educational measure “Mind the GAP” for young people unacquainted with the Common Agricultural Policy (AGRI-2015-0231, implementation period: September 2015 to July 2016). The grant agreement envisioned four phases of the project implementation, of which the evaluation was the final one. For the purpose of evaluation, questionnaires were distributed to school students during the seminars from April to June 2016. A total of 200 students responded to the survey, which accounts for reliable results. The survey contained 36 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.

2. Structure and outline

The first part of the survey was dedicated to the structure and outline of the seminar. It contained five closed-ended questions. The survey reveals that the goals of the seminar were made clear to a huge majority of the participants (91%). In addition, 89.9% found the seminar requirements transparently communicated. The majority of the students (53.5%) said that they had already felt familiar with the European Union and its institutions before the seminar. However, only one third of the respondents (31.8%) stated that they had already known something about the Common Agricultural Policy before the seminar. Almost every second respondent (49.2%) reported that s/he had not this topic in class before.

3. Presentation and processing of seminar contents

The second part of the survey examined the presentation and processing of seminar contents. It contained once again five closed-ended questions. The first question asked participants if the contents of the Common Agricultural Policy had been presented in an understandable way. An overwhelming majority of 89.4% agreed. In addition, 84.6% of the participants underlined that they could easily keep up with the presentation of the seminar contents and the related tasks. The simulation game – as a central part of the seminar – met the general approval of the students. More than two thirds of them (70.7%) agreed with the statement that there should be more simulation games in class. The reasons for this are two-fold. First, the majority of the respondents (55.4%) regarded the results of the conducted simulation game as relevant for real politicians. Second, the majority of the participants (54.1%) think that the achieved results of the simulation game are also interesting for the general public.

4. Lecturers

The third part of the survey focused on the lecturers of the seminar. It contained seven closed-ended questions. Almost every respondent (97%) perceived the lecturers to be well prepared. An overwhelming majority of the participants (91%) found that the lecturers showed real interest in the students' learning success. Asked if the lecturers encouraged the students to ask questions and to activate their participation, the vast majority of the respondents (91.5%) agreed with this statement. Another 92% stressed the point that the lecturers reacted appropriately to the questions or the remarks of the students. Respondents also overwhelmingly agreed (82.9%) with the statements that the lecturers established a quiet working atmosphere and that they managed to create a constructive learning environment (85.5%). Finally, almost every participant (96%) found that the lecturers were sufficiently available for queries or additional advice when needed. These findings clearly show that most participants felt satisfied with the lecturers' performance.

5. Students

The fourth part of the survey asked the students to reflect on their own performance in the seminar. It contained five closed-ended questions. Almost two thirds of the respondents (65.2%) found that their peers followed the seminar with interest and attention. When questioned on the impact of the seminar, more than two of three (67.8%) stated that their fellow students felt well prepared for the simulation game. More than two thirds of the respondents (68.3%) also claimed that most of the students participated actively as far as possible and that they played their roles seriously (75%). In general, 71.1% percent of the participants found that the majority of them contributed sufficiently to the simulation game's success. It can be concluded that the vast majority of the students were willing to work hard and give their energy to the seminar.

6. Competencies

The fifth part of the survey concentrated on the acquisition of competencies. It contained six closed-ended questions. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (84.9%) stated that the seminar helped them to better understand the functioning of the European Union. With regards to the Common Agricultural Policy, exactly 71.7% of the participants said that they now better understand the goals and challenges of this specific policy and the positions of different actors in this field. Precisely every second respondent reported that the seminar raised her/his interest in this subject area. Students also improved their overall competencies. More than two third of them (67.9%) said that the seminar has improved their ability to better argue and discuss in political debates. More than two of three

school students (67%) also pointed out that they now feel more comfortable about coping independently with politically controversial issues and in forming their own opinion on complex facts. Finally, the majority of the respondents (57.4%) stated that the seminar improved their self-regulated working and learning competencies.

7. Tools

The sixth part of the survey contained only one closed-ended question. It asked the students to make a judgement about the quality of the provided information and tools for preparation of the simulation game. A vast majority of the participants (79.3%) found them useful.

8. Learning environment

The seventh part of the survey addressed the arrangement of the seminar's learning environment. It contained two closed-ended questions. The results reveal that the equipment of the learning area (furniture, media technology etc.) was experienced as useful by a vast majority of the students (78.9%). More than eight of ten respondents (83.2%) found the design of the learning platform appealing.

9. Workload

The eighth part of the survey focused on the workload of the seminar participants. It contained two closed-ended questions – one 5-point Likert scale and one multiple-choice question with eight alternatives. Generally, a vast majority of respondents (80.3%) confirmed that they could complete the required preparation and post-processing for the seminar within their time schedule. A third of the students (33.9%) declared that they did not have to spend extra time on preparation and post-processing of the simulation game in addition to regular attendance in the seminar and in school. Less than one hour is in second place and has been chosen by more than a quarter of the respondents (26.9%), while one to two hours is in third place (17%). Two to three hours were invested by 9.4% of the students and five to six hours by 5.8%. Exactly 4.1% of the respondents spent more than six hours on preparation and post-processing. Between two and three hours were invested by 2.3%, while four to five hours were invested by only marginal 0.6% of the respondents. Clearly, the seminar matched up well with the students' schedule.

10. Social demographics

The ninth 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 academic year with nine respectively three options. Finally one gender question was posed with two options. The majority of the participants was female (59.7%), while 40.3% were male. More than two thirds of the seminar participants (70.4%) came from a grammar school (Gymnasium). Almost one third (28.6%) attends a vocational school (Berufsschule). Middle school (Realschule) and secondary school (Sekundarschule) share third place but both school types are mentioned only by 0.5% each.

11. Overall evaluation

The tenth and final part of the survey asked the participants for an overall evaluation of the seminar. It contained three closed-ended questions with 5-point Likert scale and two open-ended questions. Asked if the requirements of the seminar were appropriate, the approval rate was 92.4%. More than two thirds of the respondents (68.4%) said that the seminar helped them to significantly improve their knowledge. Finally, an overwhelming majority of the participants (87.1%) evaluated the seminar positively. More than six of ten students (60.8%) regarded the seminar as good, while more than a quarter (26.3%) found the seminar being very good. The answers to the open-ended question, what aspect of the seminar the participants did like most, reveal the outstanding importance of the simulation game. Among 98 different items, the simulation game was referred to 36 times. Students also highlighted the discussions in the seminar (referred to 16 times), the provided information (13 times) and the given explanations (8 referrals). Finally, the participants also gave 65 different answers to the question of what could be improved in the future. In first place with 20 referrals were time management related aspects. Further eight participants mentioned that they would have preferred to have only one round of discussion in the seminar. Finally, six referrals asked for a better preparation.

12. Final conclusion

Generally speaking, the impact of the seminar was quite significant, judging by the feed-back received from the participants. An overwhelming majority of the school students welcomed the opportunity to participate in the seminar. In particular, they found it very useful to discuss the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union and to conduct a simulation game on issues related to this field.

The educational measure was therefore deemed satisfactory. The participants gained deeper insights into the functioning of the European Union. They now

Evaluation report
SEMINAR#GAP

better understand the goals and challenges of the Common Agricultural Policy and the positions of different policy actors in this field. The experience of the seminar also significantly increased the students' interest in the subject area. Finally, the seminar also improved the participants' overall skills and abilities.

All the objectives of the project were fulfilled. The combination of workshops with an integrated simulation game and the use of an interactive online platform constitutes an innovative approach to dealing with a topic that normally does not fill young people with enthusiasm.