



UNIVERSITÄT
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ESSEN

Offen im Denken

Evaluation report

#FutureLabEU – Future Labs on Europe at School

Introduction

EUROSOC#DIGITAL has successfully completed the project “#FutureLabEU – Future Labs on Europe at School”, co-financed by the European Commission. The project comprised two different events that took place throughout Germany: First, 15 project days were conducted to introduce pupils to the question of the future viability of the European Union. Second, five training courses were offered for multipliers in different educational contexts such as active teachers, teachers in training and university students. For the purpose of evaluation, a questionnaire was distributed to the participants during the future labs held from August 2018 until July 2019. The questionnaire is attached to the appendix (in German). A total of 573 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 missings and excluded from the data. The following report summarises the participants’ responses. For the complete survey results, please refer to the second appendix of this report (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 (76.8%). However, only four out of ten respondents to the survey (49.6%) said that they had already felt familiar with the topic of the European Union before the project days. Only one-third of the respondents (32.9%) stated that she/he dealt with the future of the EU before the project days. Accordingly, almost the same number of participants (33.0%) reported that she/he had the topic in class before.

2. Introduction

The second part of the survey examined the course of the introductory presentations and exercises. 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. A huge majority of the respondents (83.2%) agreed on this question. In addition, six out of ten participants (64.4%) underlined that the introductory exercises were rich in diversity.

3. Future labs

The third part of the survey examined the course of the working laboratories. It contained four closed-ended questions. Eight out of ten participants (86.4%) expressed the opinion that the content of the future labs had been presented in an

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easy-to-understand form. In addition, almost the same number of participants (80.5%) underlined that they could easily follow the course of the future labs. Seven out of ten respondents (73.3%) agreed with the statement that there should be more project days in school life. Finally, seven out of ten participants (71.9%) found the conversation with the political decision-maker interesting. However, the high number of missings and “Prefer not to say” answers (374) suggest that not at every event politicians from the region were present.

4. Teaching staff

The fourth part of the survey focused on the teachers and trainers of the project days. It contained three closed-ended questions. A huge majority of the participants (89.3%) perceived the teaching staff to be well prepared. Almost the same number of respondents (84.6%) also agreed with the statement that the teachers and trainers showed strong interest in the participants’ learning success. In addition, nine out of ten respondents (92.0%) 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 (65.2%) found that their peers took part actively in the group work. Four out of ten respondents (45.5%) also claimed that most of the participants were actively engaged in the open discussions. Finally, seven out of ten respondents (70.9%) agreed that most of the participants had developed solutions to future challenges of the European Union seriously.

6. Competencies

The sixth part of the survey concentrated on the acquisition of competencies. It contained three closed-ended questions. More than two-thirds of the respondents (69.7%) said that the project days helped them to better understand important factors that will shape the future of Europe. Participants also improved their overall competencies. A huge majority of them (75.2%) said that the project days have improved their overall ability to draw conclusions regarding future developments. Finally, more than two-thirds of the respondents (67.1%) stated that they now understand better how to develop their own solutions for the challenges of European cities and regions.

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 con-

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tained only one closed-ended question. Seven out of ten respondents (72.0%) stated that the city and regional profiles allowed them to actively take part in the future lab.

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 three options. Six out of ten participants (60.9%) came from a grammar school (Gymnasium), while one-third (30.2%) attended a vocational school (Berufliche Schule). At great distance followed pupils from middle school (Realschule) with 1.0% and secondary modern school (Hauptschule) with 0.7%. Integrated school (Gesamtschule) and secondary school (Sekundarschule) and were also mentioned, but both with a share of 0.3% only. Finally, 0.2% of the respondents said they visit a private school. The answers regarding the school year show that a majority of the pupils (60.9%) visited higher secondary school (Sekundarstufe II), while the rest (39.1%) was from lower secondary level (Sekundarstufe 2). Finally, asked for their gender, a slight majority of the participants was female (49.2%), while the rest was male (45.6%) or chose “diverse” as gender option (4.9%).

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 high (76.0%). A clear majority of the respondents (60.6%) said that the project days helped them to significantly improve their knowledge. Finally, seven out of ten participants (71.6%) evaluated the project days positively.

The answers to the open-ended question, what aspects of the project days the participants liked most, reveal the importance of engaging group work activities. Among 411 items, this feature of the project days was mentioned 107 times. For example, one participant’s statement reads as follows: “It was very exciting to deal with the future, economy and challenges of the EU, because normally we do not learn much about this and cannot work creatively on solutions. The teamwork was fun and the perspectives of the other team members were recognised and reconsidered.” The respondents positively assessed the interactivity and inclusiveness of the workshops as can be seen in one participant’s statement: “Today was a varied day and it was very interesting to be informed. I also liked the working tasks.” Another participant summarised the value of the project days in this way: “I liked that the groups were mixed and that no long lectures were held. It was all well-structured. Interactive and creative is good!” Finally, the participants

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also gave 241 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 example, individual participants asked for more but shorter breaks during the project days. Others criticised that they were assigned to the individual workshops by the teaching staff and expressed their wish to decide on their own which of the workshops to attend. For example, one participant left the following remark: “I would have preferred that we could have chosen our own groups and that the groups would not have changed so often.” Other respondents had some difficulties with the concept of “fantasy” as a methodical step during the workshop activities. One comment reads as follows: “Real feasible solutions might have been better because we could actually change something (although fantasy was quite fun).”

Final conclusion

On the basis of the survey results, the impact of the project #FutureLabEU was quite significant. Especially the working laboratories in which the pupils dealt intensively with a specific topic met the general approval of the participants.

The one-day events were therefore deemed satisfactory. By participating in various interactive workshops, the pupils received detailed information about the functioning of the European Union and shared their ideas about the challenges of European society and other pressing issues like climate change, global warming and digitalisation. Those pupils who participated in a round-table with a local politician (was not everywhere the case), could also directly apply their newly acquired knowledge and visions to a discussion with a real political decision-maker.

To conclude, the central objectives of the project have been achieved. The vocational training has significantly raised the participants’ attention to future challenges of the European Union and improved their overall problem-solving capacity and ability to take appropriate action.