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Erasmus+ KA3 “Teachers 4 Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture”

Impact Assessment Report For Teachers4Europe

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1 Introduction

The project “Teachers4Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture” is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. Teachers4Europe is aimed at teachers and students to further develop both their knowledge of the European Union and their understanding of European values. The main idea: teachers across Europe plan school projects and cooperate with each other. In this way, teachers can act as social multipliers and ambassadors for European values. They shape democratic school culture and promote democratic competences among pupils. The consortium of this project supported the realisation of these goals by offering trainings, activities for teachers and further educational material among other things.

This report investigates in how far the project "Teachers4Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture" was able to achieve these goals. As already mentioned, school projects are central in Teachers4Europe. For this reason, this Impact Assessment Report relies mainly case studies conducted with teachers. At least five teachers for each participating country took part. Furthermore, quantitative data was collected on the network to assess the quantitative impact.

In the course of this report, the following research questions and research interests will be worked through: On the quantitative level, it is asked how many people the project was able to reach. For this purpose, data on the teachers involved, the participating students, and the people reached in dissemination activities will be presented. On a substantive level, it examines which European values in particular were promoted in the teachers' projects. It also looks at how social inclusion has been promoted through the school projects and what impact the school projects have had on the students according to their teachers.

At the level of teachers' professional development, qualitative data will be used to examine the extent to which their own participation as Teacher4Europe was able to promote their own professional development. Furthermore, there is an analysis of how the training and professional development offers are assessed by the teachers. Finally, this report investigates which challenges the teachers faced during their work as Teachers4Europe.

Before the actual report begins, the underlying methodology of the report needs to be briefly addressed. This Impact Assessment Report is based on data gathered from two different surveys. Firstly, those members in the consortium were interviewed who are experts for a national network in the larger T4E network. Secondly, case studies were conducted to obtain qualitative data about the projects from teachers.

According to the research questions above, this data was analysed.

The first part of this Impact Assessment Report is mainly based on the information from the consortium and more on quantitative metrics. The second part of this report is mainly based on the teachers' responses in the case studies. The teachers were interviewed partly through a questionnaire and partly through interviews. Based on the teachers' answers, summary categories were formed to better structure the extensive data material and make it accessible to readers. This approach also serves to emphasise and highlight key findings and insights.

This report also serves as a basis for policy recommendations that could be derived from the case studies. These policy recommendations appear in a separate report and contain demands, possible measures and concrete suggestions from the practical experiences of the teachers in the networks, which will be passed on to political decision-makers.

2 European values addressed in school project



This Word Cloud was created based on the responses of the teachers surveyed. The values that appear in larger letters were named more often. The most frequently named value is democracy. The democratic foundation is of very high importance in Europe. It should be emphasised, however, that many of the values mentioned above cannot exist in isolation from each other. The individual values intertwine and are part of a larger framework.

The promotion of European values is the essential core of the school projects carried out by teachers. In the following, we will take a closer look at which didactic and methodological approaches the teachers chose to strengthen the values listed above.

An important approach is that of interdisciplinarity. European values touch many different areas of life. For this reason, a unifying view across disciplinary boundaries seems to be crucial (CY). Furthermore, various forms of cooperation were also conceived for the promotion of European values. For example, teachers and students cooperated with the local community and with parents, as well as developed joint learning across different age groups. Communication between students from different ages or between different groups of people was explicitly promoted in this way (CY).

Overall, exchange and dialogue are among the most frequently mentioned design features of the school projects. Other methodological approaches include theatre sessions, the use of digital learning materials (GR2), learning through gamification (GR7) and case studies on topics related to European values (DE1). Some teachers also reported using fairy tales as teaching materials for younger pupils, for example. One Greek teacher described this approach in more detail: by comparing different European fairy tales and identifying the core values in these, the students could see that there are important commonalities in terms of values between different European countries (GR6).

In addition to this analytical elaboration of values, the use of reflection was also important. For example, one Romanian and one Greek teacher reported that they combined historical learning with reflective tasks. The pupils made comparisons between historical conditions and the current conditions in order to see to what extent social life was changing (GR5, RO3).

Other teachers emphasised the importance of students developing their own learning products (GR8). This would promote their own ability to express themselves and intensify their learning (RO2). In addition to these methodological approaches, teachers used forms of research-based learning (GR3), expert interviews (RO4), simulations of political meetings (DE2, DE4) and created an overall student-oriented atmosphere (RO6). Cooperation that went beyond the countries of the project partners was also significant. For example, one teacher reported a project in which students learned about the value of clean water and cooperated with a school in Tanzania (GR3). Overall, there is a relative wide range of approaches and methods as can be seen from the above. A more detailed insight in this can be found compilations of best practices, which are also being developed within the framework of this project.

3 Realisation of school projects

Generally, there are two different possibilities for the implementation of school projects: One way is to realise a school project in one school subject. Another possibility is to combine school subjects and make use of different perspectives on a certain issue.

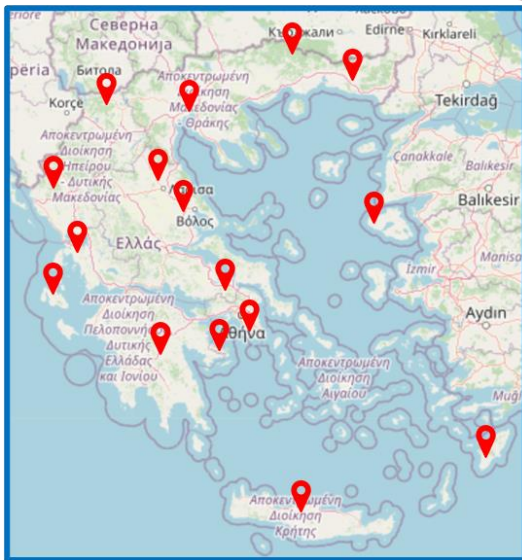
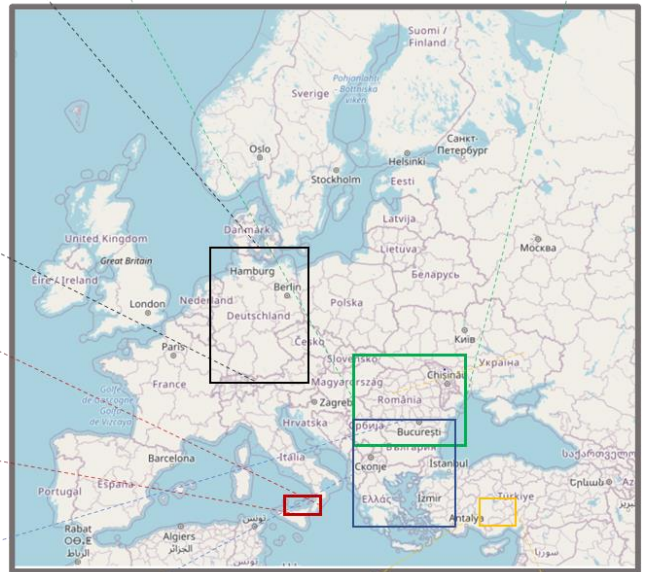
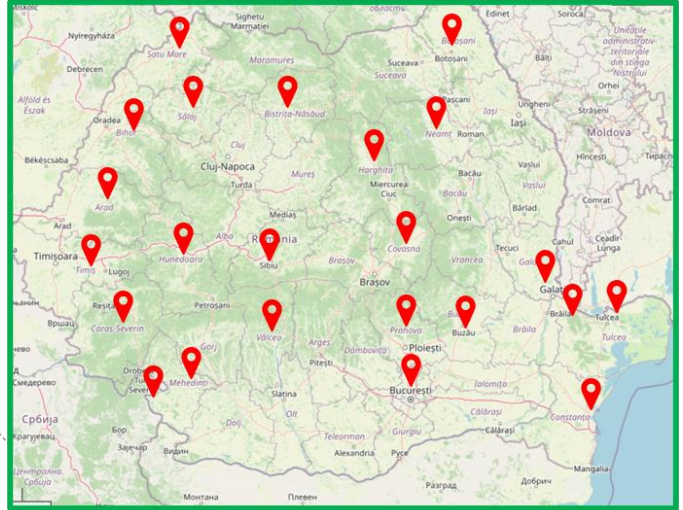
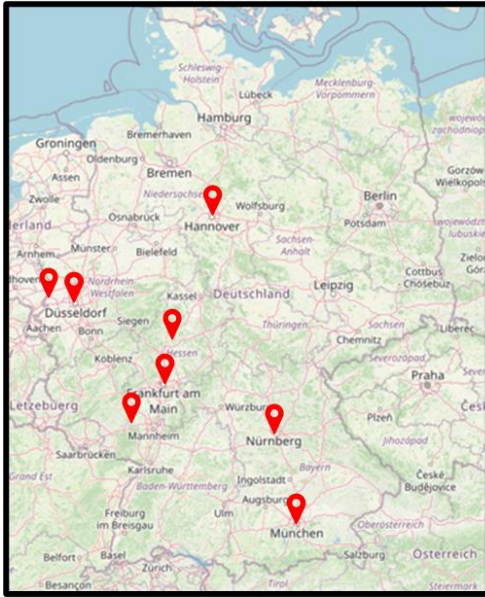
We asked the coordinators of national networks in which school subjects school projects were implemented. The following word cloud shows the results:



Unlike the previous word cloud, in this case the size of the words does not indicate how often a subject was named. However, from the frequency distribution of the subjects in which projects were carried out, it can be seen that projects were carried out more often in certain subjects. These subjects are language lessons, history and civic education.

This does not mean, however, that European values could not be promoted in principle in every school subject. This is indicated by the above overview, in which all common school subjects are represented. This is an important finding that can be drawn from the spectrum of school subjects mentioned.

The following map shows in which areas in Europe the school projects were implemented.



4 In-depth observations based on case studies

4.1 Assessment of the impact of school projects on pupils

This section explores the impact that the school projects have had on the pupils. The first step is to look at the total number of pupils who participated in projects or were trained by teachers from the network with a view to European values: In total, about 29,500 pupils were reached in all school projects together. The largest proportion of these are the pupils reached through the Greek network. This data is based on estimates provided by the project partners from the consortium based on their network data.

However, the quantitative data on the number of pupils reached is not sufficient in itself for a proper evaluation of the impact, which is why the teachers who participated in the case studies were also asked about the impact of Teachers4Europe on the pupils. Therefore, the second part of this section focuses on analysing the teachers' qualitative data and asking to what extent the school projects have succeeded in promoting European values among pupils.

To this end, various aspects of the effect that could be achieved through the projects are discussed. Firstly, the effect on the sense of belonging in Europe will be discussed, before looking at the promotion of the core value of democracy and other values. It then looks at the importance teachers attach to the opportunity for exchange that Teachers4Europe provides. Finally, the format of the project itself is critiqued because of its limited lifespan, as expressed by one teacher. The effect on general values education is presented by one teacher as follows:

I strongly believe that the programme Teachers4Europe is a true ambassador of all these values that Europe stands for today and that students benefit both cognitively and socio-emotionally (GR4).

Some teachers emphasise that this project was able to foster a sense of belonging among pupils in Europe. On the one hand, there was the opportunity to see what unites people in Europe and on the other hand, they could see that the divisive aspects only make life and exchange more exciting (GR1). The experience of a Cypriot project is summarised as follows:

Students realise that what unites us is much more than what separates us (CY).

In addition, the pupils were able to discover that the community in Europe offers more advantages than they had previously been aware of (M2). In this way, they could learn what it means to be a citizen of the EU (M4).

An important core of the European Union is the value of democracy. The democratic idea was also implemented in projects. For example, one teacher reports that participation in the school project explicitly promoted participation (evidence missing). Another teacher let the pupils have a say in the next stages and learning steps during the implementation of the project (R1). This allowed democracy to be additionally realised on a meta-level.

Thus, democracy makes the demand on people to get involved. It demands that people engage in constructive exchange about good solutions for society as a whole. In the project of a teacher from Greece, the pupils were able to implement this second perspective on democracy directly in class by voting and deciding on the individual project steps in a democratic way (GR2).

Critical thinking played an important role in promoting other values (R2).

An important goal that a teacher was able to achieve was that the pupils did not only learn about European values on an abstract or theoretical level, but could learn to live by them.

The role of Teaches4Europe is a very important one because not only it promotes the European values among students but it also gives them the opportunity to understand and apply them (R8).

For one teacher from Germany, it was crucial that the students were able to "broaden their own horizons" (DE3). In this way, they learned to think beyond boundaries and to compare their own concept of values with those of others (D3). From this comparison of values comes the learning opportunity to find out which values are central and unifying in Europe. The exchange was for several teachers the most important aspect of the project. Contacts and exchange with others would mean important learning opportunities (D4).

Overall, a positive conclusion can be drawn with regard to the assessments of how the school projects have affected the pupils. A teacher from Germany states:

The effect of Teachers4Europe has been really enormous! (D1)

This conclusion is based on an analysis of the teachers' answers. For this purpose, central sentences and formulations were analysed and semi-quantitatively coded in the sense that the formulations were used to assign whether the project had an effect, the effect was ambivalent or there was no effect.

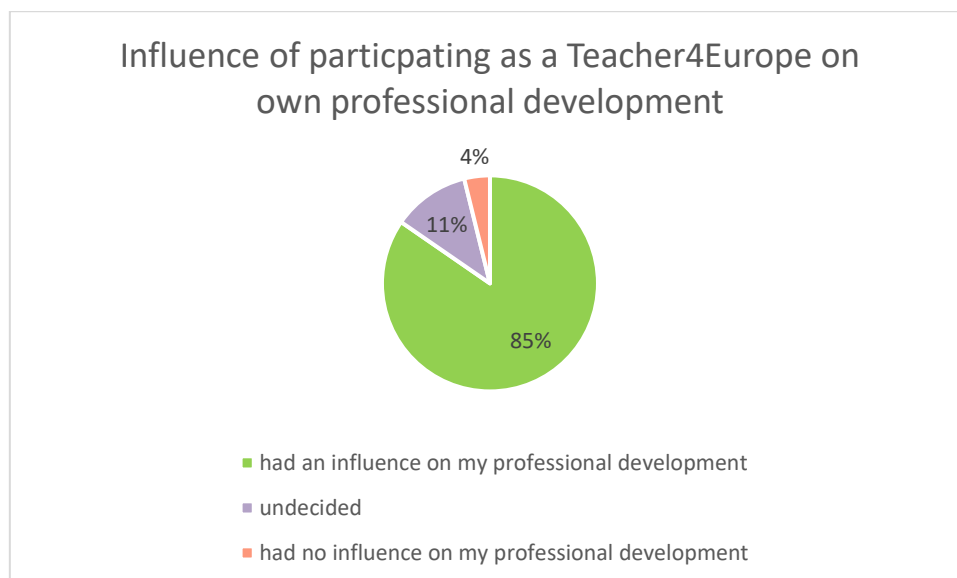
From the coding it can be seen that only one respondent considers the effect of the school projects to be ambivalent. The teacher makes the following argument in this regard:

However, I believe that similar projects should be done every year, in order to ensure that children are aware of European values and they practice them in their everyday life (Gr7).

The effect of projects is limited by the fact that the project duration itself is limited. Projects can provide important learning impulses, but they are not sufficient on their own to have a lasting effect. For this reason, learning about and living democratic values is fundamentally of great importance and should not be left to a temporary project.

4.2 Assessments of how own professional development was furthered

Having looked at the impact of the project on the students in the previous section, we will now analyse the extent to which teachers were able to enhance their own professional development through their participation as Teacher4Europe. For this purpose, a semi-quantitative evaluation was carried out similar to the previous evaluation of the statements about the impact on the students. The teachers' statements were coded in such a way that they could be assigned to a three-level scale. The scale consists of the assessments that the project had an influence on their own further education (1), undecided (2) or that it had rather no influence on their own further education. A greater differentiation of this scale does not seem to make sense, since the main focus should be on the tendency and the qualitative evaluation should be in the foreground in the second step.



After the semi-quantitative assessments of the respondents are considered in a first step, the concrete statements are examined in a second step and some example quotations are used. For this purpose, the statements are grouped as follows for a structured overview: First, the statements are described with regard to the area of subject competence, then with regard to the

further development in the area of methodological competence, then affective impacts are analysed before finally the formats that were particularly complimented by the teachers are presented. Overall, it can be said that the feedback is very positive, as this quote shows:

My participation to the Teachers4Europe family has been a real blessing for me, cause it broadened my European horizons in every aspect (DE1).

In terms of professional competence, one teacher from Malta states that she was able to gain a deeper insight into the structures and function of the EU (M2). Other teachers also mention an increase in knowledge: For example, a Romanian teacher gained access to higher education (RO7), another teacher says that the "project helped us greatly to enrich and further our understanding of European values" (RO2). From Cyprus, it is reported that participation in the project triggered reflection processes on European values (CY). A German teacher also reports that the experience reports of teachers from other countries were a very authentic help in gaining insights into other educational contexts and reflecting on their own settings (DE4). In terms of professional competence, some teachers report that they were able to expand their knowledge about Europe (e.g. M3). In addition to knowledge, the teachers also reflect that they were able to expand their methodological skills (GR6). Therefore, the statements on the professional development of their own methodological competence are considered in the following.

An important element of Teachers4Europe is the exchange of best practices.

My participation in the Teachers4Europe helped me to grow, professionally speaking. I have acquired a series of good practices that were very useful when it comes to promote the European values (RO8)

A Romanian teacher states in a case study that she was able to get to know a number of good examples of educational practice and that these also had a positive influence on her pupils when implemented (RO3). This view is supported by two Romanian colleagues who also say that they were able to get to know helpful activities (RO4) or expand their methodological skills (RO5). The applicability in practice is also emphasised by a Maltese teacher who stresses that the skills learned can be implemented well (M4).

However, criticism is also evident in the context of further development. For example, a Greek teacher criticises that despite the provision of materials by the consortium, she had to make and apply adaptations to her own teaching context (GR2). This criticism points to a fundamental problem that arises when teachers are to receive further training within the framework of a European project. The narrower the context, the smaller the number of those who can potentially benefit from the outputs. Although a better tailoring to a specific target group can then be achieved, this also brings disadvantages. For example, a broader project is better able

to facilitate cooperation between teachers because there is more freedom and connection possibilities. Therefore, the teacher's criticism is quite justified. The fact that a 1:1 tailoring to individual needs is not feasible is due to the fact that the materials should be useful to everyone.

Fortunately, the teacher reports in the follow-up to her criticism that she was also able to develop herself further when adapting the materials. In this respect, her overall conclusion, despite the justified criticism, can be rated as positive.

On the affective level, the further developments are primarily linked to experiences that the teachers themselves were able to make. Thus, European unity can be experienced through cooperation and collaboration in the network (DE 3), which makes Europe as a whole less abstract. Through the exchange with others, it can be seen that the EU is not an impersonal institution (DE1).

Furthermore, teachers report an effect on motivation and a sense of empowerment. A Romanian teacher reports that the project motivated her to create more learning opportunities for her students related to European values (RO7). A Greek teacher states that the project has empowered her in her role as a teacher in general (GR4).

A particularly positive statement made by several teachers in this field is that transnational friendships have been created through the work in the network (DE1, RO4):

[...] beyond this project, [work] relationships have also turned into friendships" (RO4).

Formats that teachers particularly liked were the conferences, workshops, working sessions and the simulation of the European Parliament for pupils (RO1), and also the exchange of best practices and professional cooperation with others (DE1, RO4). Now that this section has reflected the main feedback on their own professional development within Teachers4Europe, the following section will take a special look at the feedback on the training and professional development materials.

4.3 Assessment of training and further education material

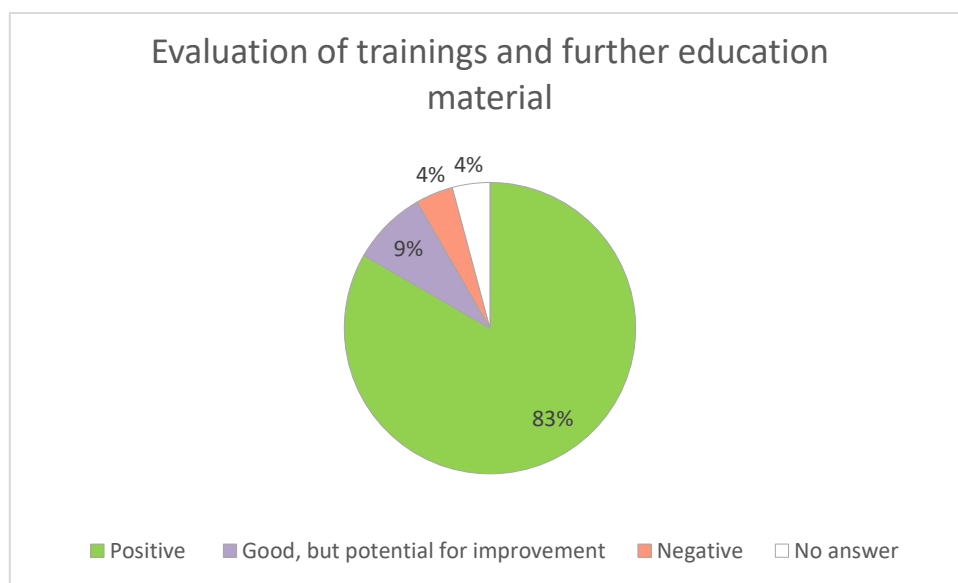
The evaluation of the training and further education materials is very positive overall, which is why it makes sense to classify them into three categories after the analysis. The first category contains evaluations that are exclusively positive. A total of 83 percent of the respondents' comments can be assigned to this category. The positive assessment can be seen in the following statements:

The materials and trainings developed during the project have a high scientific and pedagogical value (RO8).

The materials seem well thought-out and bring with them a variety of possible applications. The handbook in particular is an enrichment and offers new ideas for one's own lesson design (DE4).

I believe that the further education materials and trainings developed within this project were of excellent quality and greatly contributed to the successful implementation of our project. I have attended several seminars and I have used relative materials in my classes (GR2).

Nine percent of the respondents also rated the materials and training as good, but saw potential for improvement. One teacher complained that the cooperation with the Ambassador was difficult at first. Nevertheless, she was able to implement projects. Another teacher would have liked more training and a stronger overall specification of how European values can be implemented and taught in the school.



According to the respondent, the negative evaluation is based on the fact that they generally did not feel supported enough when the pandemic reached a peak. In the case of one person, it was not possible to deduce from their answers how they assessed the training and further education materials.

Finally, individual aspects of the Teachers4Europe training and development concept are highlighted. It was described above that in one case the support of an ambassador was characterised as not so good. In other cases, however, this aspect was highlighted as a positive one (GR1). It can be concluded from this that criticism always seems to depend on one's own context. Furthermore, the handbook (DE4), the training materials in general (DE1) and the fact that they are also very helpful for independent training (DE3) were mentioned with approval.

According to the project partners from the consortium, a total of 170 training days took place. This number includes both trainings by the members of the consortium and trainings conducted by the ambassadors.

4.4 Teachers' motivation to engage in European networks

One of the central research questions was also to find out how teachers are motivated to get involved in European networks. For this purpose, all partners in the consortium were interviewed and asked for an expert assessment.

The teachers in Greece are highly motivated and enthusiastic to engage in European networks.

In Greece, a strong and large network developed that was able to benefit from structures that were already in place before the project began. For about 10 years, there have been many efforts among teachers in Greece to exchange ideas and carry out joint school projects. In the course of the KA3 project Teachers4Europe, these cooperations were to be further strengthened and extended to the European level. The above quote shows the commitment and motivation of the Greek teachers. A similar level of motivation is reported from the Cypriot network.

For the other three networks from Romania, Germany and Malta, a more differentiated view is necessary. In this, based on the reports of project partners, the influencing factors of the Corona pandemic, communication in transnational networks, school structure as well as recognition for the work in the network. The Corona pandemic has an impact both professionally and privately, as shown in the Maltese assessment. For example, the pandemic increased the care work that parents had to do. This reduces the time available for teachers who also have their own school-age children. For this reason, the Maltese team made a firm decision not to put additional pressure on teachers in the network and require them to carry out projects. The idea behind this was that projects can only be realised in a meaningful way if teachers have the capacity to supervise them adequately. Nevertheless, according to information from the Maltese, fruitful projects emerged.

I believe that the project has sensitised teachers to the importance of networking. [...] It has definitely highlighted the need, for example, to reinforce networks even between local schools.
(MLA)

The limited capacities mentioned above are also found at the structural level in Germany. There is a lack of recognition for project work. The commitment often takes place in one's own free time. For this reason, the work in the project - as reported by both the German and the Maltese project team - is perceived as additional work.

There is no systematic recognition for engagement in teacher networks. (GER)

Like the Maltese and German project teams, the Romanian project team addresses the difficulties of the Corona pandemic. For example, the pandemic made everyday life more difficult for teachers due to school closures, as well as communication. Basically, the Romanian partners see communication as an important factor that can be improved. For example, some Romanian teachers reported that they had difficulties with digital tools to be able to network better. Another problem that made communication in the teacher network difficult was a language barrier. Some Romanian teachers were not so fluent in English, which made transnational work especially difficult. For this reason, the policy recommendations call for free language courses for teachers to make the exchange potentially possible for all teachers.

An important result that can be derived from the analysis of these factors is that these influencing factors are exclusively external factors. These factors influence the willingness of teachers from the outside. If, on the other hand, the internal influencing factors are considered, it becomes apparent that, based on the assessments of the project partners, there is a high willingness to engage in teacher networks. For this reason, it is important to create the basis and conditions so that teachers actually use their internal motivation for exchange. These aspects will be discussed in the Policy Recommendations. In summary, however, it can be said that recognition for the work in the network, the provision of working time for it, the removal of language barriers and the further training of teachers in the area of digital tools are central to improving the exchange.

4.5 Promoting social inclusion through T4E school projects

Democracy means that all people should have the chance to participate. Against this background, it is important to enable people with special needs to participate.

The survey in the consortium revealed that the following people were involved in various projects.

Refugees. An example is a project that was carried out with 20 female refugees in the refugee camp in Schisto.

- Pupils with special needs or disabilities
- Pupils who are in prison but are studying in a school that gives them a second chance.
- Pupils from rural areas or small islands
- Pupils who have a migrant background
- Pupils with a low socio-economic background
- Pupils who experience difficult situations at home

Having identified these groups, the second step is to look at selected examples of how the inclusion of these vulnerable groups could be promoted in order to meet the goal of an equal and inclusive society.

A major opportunity lies in the cooperation between pupils as well as between teachers. Thus, collaboration with others opens up alternative perspectives (GR1) and enables peer learning of students from different contexts (RO5).

The project has offered us the opportunity to involve students of different ethnicities or from different socio-economic backgrounds in the carried out activities. At the same time they had the opportunity to meet and interact with students from other European countries and other cultural areas (RO4).

Working together in groups had succeeded in integrating learners who were exposed to multiple problems into the activities (GR4). The students had fostered teams, which had also led to the involvement of those who were otherwise not so involved (GR8). Transnational cooperation could also serve to prevent racism (DE4). When learners get to know other people from other countries, stereotypes can be deconstructed. Another form of cooperation is inter-class collaboration:

Furthermore, all the students of the last three grades of our school participated in the project in their own way and regardless of their socio-cultural backgrounds [...] (GR3)

Some teachers have sought cooperation with other countries beyond the project's partner countries, including Poland, Tanzania and the United Kingdom (GR2). The composition of the learning group and the teachers made it possible to promote social inclusion. For example, teachers with different profiles and backgrounds come together (CY) and develop cross-class approaches to learning (GR3). Another teacher states that "all students participated [...]" (GR7). (GR7). This includes - as also stated in the list above - the active involvement of students from disadvantaged communities (RO2), the promotion of participation of students with special needs (RO3) and that students were able to bring in their different interests (DE1).

Pupil orientation and consideration of pupils' interests seems to be a significant criterion for teachers anyway. It is important to listen to pupils' opinions and suggestions for solutions in order to enable them to participate in their own social life (RO7). In this respect, a certain openness can prove to be very fruitful. The open design of the lessons can also result in a social openness of the students. In a way, the format and the way the lesson is designed co-determines learning (DE3). In this context, a German teacher emphasises how important it is that the students themselves learn to change perspectives. This can be achieved, for example, through

role-playing in class (DE4). Through the change of perspective, the pupils could become sensitive to exclusion mechanisms (DE4).

In terms of content, the following approaches can be identified that were used to promote social inclusion. One used materials that were highly sensitive to social inclusion (CY). In another project, students worked explicitly on themes of equality, social justice and inclusion (GR3). A Romanian teacher addressed the emotional intelligence of the students through her activity (RO1).

I'm really convinced that the implementation of projects can promote social inclusion through equal opportunities, elimination of discrimination and the promotion of diversity for the students that are usually excluded (DE1).

One German teacher worked in particular on anti-discrimination (DE1). The key learning objective of a Maltese teacher was to highlight that "everyone matters in the EU" (M1).

"The lessons carried out with our students emphasized that everyone matters in the EU" (M1)

In this way, the overall Teachers4Europe project with its individual school projects has the potential to promote values and shape attitudes conducive to social inclusion (GR6).

5 Dissemination of the project

Dissemination events were carried out as part of the project. At the time of writing this report, not all dissemination events had been completed, so there is no precise quantitative data on how many people from which target group could be reached. However, qualitative information is available on which groups of people and what kind of target groups can or could be reached: As an important target group, people from the practical sector and teachers have been reached in order to spread the project even further and to encourage more people to get projects going themselves in the future. As the project is also supervised academically by three universities, people from the academic community are and were also reached at the dissemination events. In addition, representatives from the local community and the local administration as well as representatives of NGOs and parents of students were reached.

Ultimately, the project also essentially aims to disseminate policy recommendations to decision-makers at different levels, which results in the last category of policy makers as the target group of the dissemination events, which was also reached.

In addition to these events, the project was also disseminated via the project's online channels. The project's Facebook page and YouTube channel are particularly worth mentioning here. In

addition, the project partners have other dissemination channels. The platforms can be reached as follows:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/teachers4europe>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/teachers4europe>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/teachers4europe>

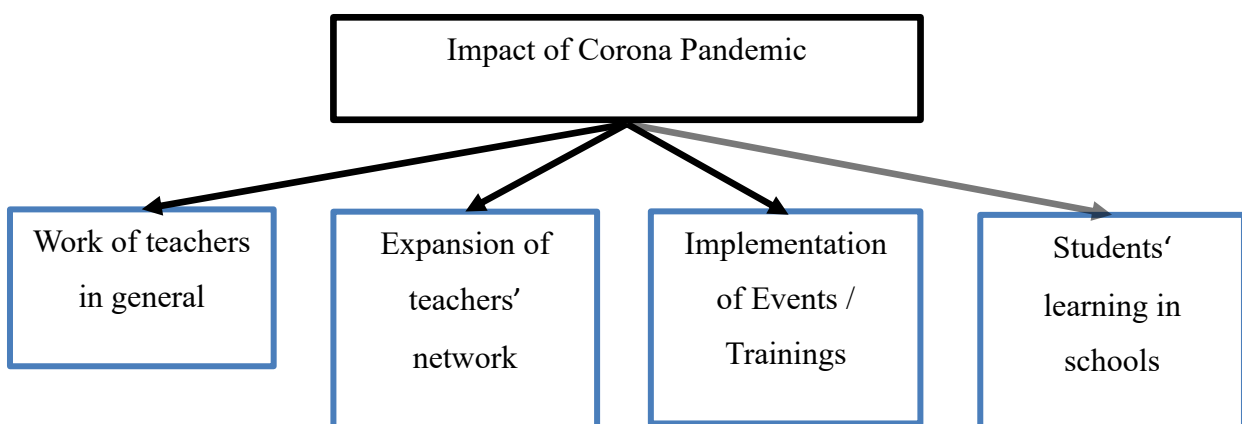
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/teachers4europe_/

The total number of followers on all these pages as of 30.06.2022 is: 3,486. The project's Facebook page proves to be particularly strong with 2747 followers. In addition, 20,000 views of the postings can be reported.

As described above, the partners also used their own channels and networks to disseminate the project. In this way, according to estimates of the respective partners, an additional 19,600 people were reached. These figures can be considered quite successful.

5.1 Influence of Covid-19 on the projects' outcomes

The Teachers4Europe - Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture project runs from 2019 into 2022. This shows that the project also took place during the pandemic period. In order to determine the impact of the project itself, it is also important to look at other influencing factors that were generally important during the project period. These include the Corona pandemic as a key influencing factor. The survey assessed the impact of the pandemic on four different areas, which are shown in the following scheme:



The four areas examined are the overall work of teachers (1), the expansion of the teacher network (2), the implementation of events and trainings (3) and student learning in school.

Based on the assessments of the project partners, it appears that the Corona pandemic had a very strong impact on the first three areas in particular. The change from face-to-face learning to distance learning has created many new challenges that have influenced the teachers' work. For example, according to both teachers and project partners, the workload has increased to such an extent that teachers have been forced to manage their own resources. In light of this, the perception of the project partners is that teachers who have not yet been involved in a teacher network were less willing to join it at pandemic times. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that the teachers' network would probably have expanded even more during non-pandemic times. This hypothesis is based on assessments and can therefore not be empirically tested in this framework.

The pandemic was accompanied by contact restrictions in all European countries in order to avoid overloading the health system with too many severe cases. These contact restrictions meant that in-situ training could not take place. Interactive in-situ trainings were thus not possible. A major challenge of trainings conducted online is that this prevented conversations from taking place away from the set programme. However, these can be very helpful for the development of new project ideas or for initiating new cooperations. With this in mind, the project partners also consider the influence of the Corona pandemic on the implementation of trainings and events to be very strong.

The fourth area that the pandemic had an impact on, and which is also considered in this study, is student learning. The impact of the pandemic on student learning was not considered to be quite as strong as the impact on the other three areas, but still strong. The reason for this assessment is that the pandemic did not make learning impossible altogether, but still limited it. Despite the pandemic situation and distance learning, the students were able to gain knowledge. However, the yield is not as high as in non-pandemic times.

5.2 Challenges

At the end of this report, challenges that teachers faced during the project are addressed. Three areas are addressed: Challenges

- Working in the network
- teaching and implementing projects
- and overarching challenges

Overall, it can be noted that a large proportion of the comments relate to challenges that arose as a result of the Corona pandemic. For example, it was difficult to hold physical meetings at pandemic times. This made it difficult to plan joint activities. In addition, there was some uncertainty as to whether the ideas could be implemented or whether implementation would be made difficult or impossible by an increase in the number of cases. The challenges mentioned below are also influenced by the pandemic, but can also arise independently of the pandemic situation. This section of the report will focus on these types of challenges.

With regard to the work in the network, the challenge arose to specifically recruit further teachers for the work in the project. Initially, it was difficult to create incentives for teachers to become involved in the Teachers4Europe network. Furthermore, there were also some teething problems in expanding the network at regional level, for example by involving teachers at the same or neighbouring schools. In addition, some teachers reported that it was difficult to find teachers from other networks for cooperation, especially during pandemic periods.

Having looked at these difficulties at the network level, it is now important to look at concrete challenges encountered in teaching. At the time of the pandemic, the implementation of the projects was made more difficult by the fact that it was not always possible to foresee exactly how many pupils would be in the class. In the case that the classes could only take place online, it was initially difficult for the teachers to create a fruitful online learning environment for the students. Other teachers report that it has been challenging, but not overwhelming, to develop tools and materials for teaching that on the one hand challenge the students, but on the other hand are also useful and profitable for further teaching. It is reported that the familiarisation with a new topic is initially connected with effort in order to create an appealing teaching unit. One teacher reports this using the example of the topic of fake news and the promotion of media literacy.

With regard to the promotion of concrete values, it was not always easy for these values to become concrete and not remain on an abstract level. The values should not be treated or discussed too much on an academic level, but translated into everyday practice, for example in school. One teacher reported that the values that are important in the European Union are not implemented in reality exactly as they are meant in the ideal. For example, pupils criticised that the value of equality could only be found to a limited extent, as stronger countries in the EU did not help weaker countries as much as they could. This made it difficult for the students to really understand how important some values are in the EU. Another example, criticised by another teacher, is that although participation is strongly encouraged, difficulties arise when it

comes to implementing project ideas. For example, every student's idea for a project would first have to be approved by the respective school administration. Although this hurdle is not particularly high in all cases, it is a potential obstacle to pupils proposing and contributing project ideas. Thus, the demand for participation and the actual opportunities for participation diverge to some extent.

The third area of challenges identified were those that can be located at a higher level. One of the most frequently mentioned challenges is the lack of time to carry out projects with pupils. Often, the preparation, follow-up and implementation of projects are shifted to leisure time. There is no systematic recognition for one's own involvement in networks. In addition, there is a high pressure to master the school curriculum as quickly as possible in order to work towards exams.

6 Conclusion

The focus of this report was the wider question of the impact of the Teachers4Europe: Setting an Agora for Democratic Culture project. Both qualitative and quantitative data were analysed. The main findings can be summarised as follows: A total of 1292 teachers from the countries Malta, Greece, Germany, Cyprus and Romania participated as Teachers4Europe. These teachers in turn have sought collaborations with teachers, some of which go beyond the countries concerned. In total, some 1255 school projects have been reported, reaching some 29,500 pupils. School projects were carried out in all school subjects. In addition, about 39,600 people were reached through postings on social media. These figures are based both on concrete data and partly on estimates.

The teachers' assessment of the impact on pupils, on their own further education and on the further education materials and trainings is positive. With regard to the effect on the pupils, it can be seen from the categorisation that all teachers, with the exception of one, assess the effect as positive. In her assessment, one teacher emphasises the fundamental problem that projects are limited in time and the impact is therefore also limited. Regarding the impact on pupils, the teachers state that a sense of belonging to Europe was strengthened, that participation and critical thinking were promoted and that the democratisation of school culture was advanced.

The project was able to reach the following vulnerable groups, among others: Refugees, pupils with special needs, pupils from rural areas, pupils with a migrant background or those who come from a family that has a low socio-economic status. In the more detailed report, there are approaches to how social inclusion was promoted, for example, that transnational cooperation

could serve to prevent racism, that special care was taken to ensure that the opinions of all pupils were heard and contributed to, and that opportunities were created for all to participate.

Much of the challenges encountered during the project arose from the impact of the Corona pandemic and the resulting school closures, reduced contact opportunities and shift to online learning. Those in charge of a national network rated both the effect on the work of teachers as a whole, the expansion of the network, the implementation of training or events and on student learning as strong. However, the last area was not affected as much as the others, according to the interviewees, as learning could still take place and teachers became creative in finding forms of teaching adapted to the situation.

Challenges beyond the pandemic can be identified as those related to network work, teaching and general circumstances. Overall, lack of time is a major challenge for teachers. There are few opportunities for extracurricular activities in the tightly scheduled curriculum. In addition, work in projects is perceived as extra work because it is not structurally recognised and remunerated. Another key challenge that arose in teaching was that European values need to be translated into practice. It is important that the values are not only addressed or dealt with on an abstract level, but translate into school practice. Overall, however, it can be said - as the qualitative and quantitative data show - that many teachers who are part of the Teachers4Europe network have succeeded in doing this.