

Measuring VET learners' democratic competences

Germany

DESCRIPTION

The project was launched in 2022, at the Vocational Education and Training (VET) school in Boppard, located in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany. Developed in cooperation with the University of Mainz, the initiative focuses **on strengthening learners' voices and participation** by involving both students and teachers in the development of a **tool to measure democratic competences among VET-learners, based on self-assessment**. The tool consists of a **questionnaire** that is **built on the Council of Europe's model of Competences for Democratic Culture** (the "butterfly-model") with its four analytic components of **values, attitudes, skills, knowledge and critical understanding**. The school has added a fifth dimension, "**trust**", with **13 additional statements**.

It aims to:

- a) address the relevant competences,
- b) raise students' awareness of their personal democratic competences and
- c) make these competences visible to all those involved in school life.

A core concern of the project was **to develop students' democratic competences** already in the development and implementation phases. When the project was presented at the Council of Europe Expert Forum in September 2023, the moderator of the forum summed it up as follows: "***You didn't work for the students, you worked with the students.***"

The tool can be used by schools to establish a **baseline of current competence levels among learners and** can also **identify areas where gaps exist**. It forms a valid basis for setting priorities and targeting efforts where they will have the biggest impact. It can be used in the first phase (the analysis phase) in the process leading up to the **development of an institutional strategy**. The tool has been developed in a paper-version, but a web-based version is in the pipeline (2023).

IMPACT

A **survey** was conducted throughout the school in 2022 and later presented at several specialist forums and scientific symposia.

A **detailed scientific project** is available online at <https://openscience.ub.unimainz.de/handle/20.500.12030/8283>, along with a **journalistic summary of the project** published in the specialist journal "*Schulverwaltung spezial 1/2023, S. 44–46*".

The final version of the measurement tool is freely accessible via the digital evaluation tool Rheinland-Pfalz at: https://schule.eva-rlp.de/de_DE/start/ablauf.html. After a simple registration, schools and organisations can use the questionnaire, with results automatically analysed and graphically presented. The tool enables the **collection of reliable, empirically measurable data on pupils' democratic orientation and competences**, making them visible and supporting schools in initiating needs-based processes.

REFLECTIONS

The RFCDC is an important support for **measuring democratic competences**. The questionnaire developed by

teachers, students in cooperation with the University of Mainz (Rhineland-Palatinate) makes democratic **competences visible and understandable** for students, teachers and parents – all stakeholders of the school. **The project embodied a truly participatory approach.**