

JuniorVoting 2009



1. The Concept

Alongside the European Election 2009 a Europe-wide JuniorVoting is carried out. This is the largest European school project ever! JuniorVoting aims at experiencing and practising democracy. Elections are prepared and implemented during lectures, and for one month students (adolescents aged 12 to 20) of various forms of schools are involved in the project.

Primarily JuniorVoting focuses on political education. To get inspired teachers have access to a variety of proposals as to the possible content of lessons – all focusing on the topic of European election. The highlight of the project is a simulated election carried out amongst schools all over Europe one week prior to the European Election. Results are disclosed at the same time than those of the European Election.

In schools, two main pillars carry the project: the lectures and the actual election. On the one hand, the teachers deal with the subject in their lectures, and on the other hand the students organize the election themselves.

JuniorVoting is not merely an election; it is a practical concept for political education. Instead of writing an exam at the end of the project, a real election is carried out.

2. The Goals

JuniorVoting aims at encourage and enable adolescents to take democratic responsibility: the participation in democratic and political processes within Europe should be experienced in a positive way and adolescents should feel comfortable to do so.

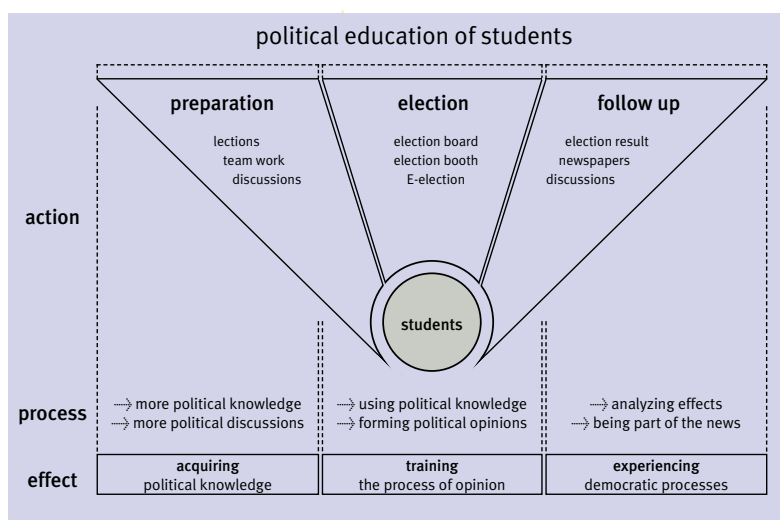
The youth has to grow up experiencing democratic processes and practise how to form a political opinion. The election forms the climax of the project, however, from an political educational

point of view its preparation and follow-up during lectures is of primary importance because this imparts knowledge and the ability to participate to the students.

The emphasis lies on practising how to take decisions and form opinions.

Goals of the JuniorVoting project are to raise awareness amongst the younger generation of the significance of Europe and to make a lasting contribution to encouragement to participate in elections.

JuniorVoting creates educated voters – not blind-ed voters.



3. The Lecture

The most important element of JuniorVoting is to prepare as well as follow up the lessons. As an addition to the wealth of experience of the teachers' all schools are provided with comprehensive and up-to-date study material about the European Elections.

How the topic is approached depends on the learning goals stipulated in the education guidelines. However, primarily schools aim to present a possibility to the students of how to perceive and get involved in democracy and Europe.



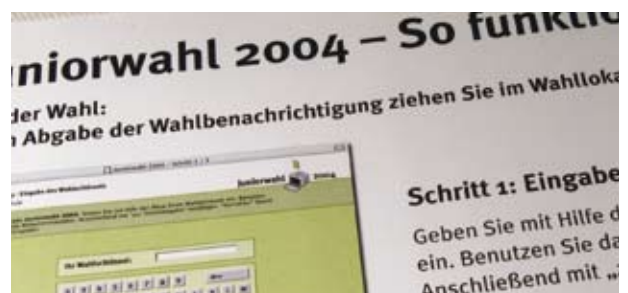
Some examples of topics dealt with in lectures include: the election system in Europe or the election systems of the various member states, the functioning of the European Parliament, the structure of the European Parliament and its parliamentary parties, the different parties and their candidates etc.

Experience shows that roughly half of all participating schools begin with the lessons 3 to 4 weeks prior to JuniorVoting, another quarter even 5 to 6 weeks before. About 70% of all schools use about 8 hours to cover the topic, another 25% of all schools make 10 hours or more available by discussing the topic in other lessons as well; sometimes even so-called 'project days', podium discussions as well as news board are dedicated to subject of elections.

4. The Election Procedure

The actual election is the second component of the JuniorVoting project. Students are now able to make use of the knowledge acquired in the most practical way. Whoever is in charge can choose whether to carry out the voting procedures on-line or on paper.

In Germany JuniorVoting is carried out as an on-line election with the help of the electronic election system POLYAS, which is also used during legally binding elections. Its concept is similar to that of on-line banking – the so-called PIN and TAN procedure. The election board has to activate the computer election system of the school by using a PIN number – this is called "Four-Eyes-Principle". Only then can students deliver their vote by using the TAN code.



Regarding the technology, two aspects are of main importance: safety and an easy application. The advantage of the system is that it can be applied easily in every school without any additional installations.

Participating organizations appreciate this type of voting system thanks to easy, simple, nationwide organization and implementation of the election.

5. The Organization

Implementing JuniorVoting as a concept for political education can be done in various ways. Looking at how the project has been realised in the various member states that has been clearly demonstrated in practise.

In Germany JuniorVoting is a project offered to schools free of charge and on voluntary basis. JuniorVoting becomes alive only through the teachers' dedication in team work with the students. The successful preparation and follow-up of the political study material depends greatly on the teachers' experience. They are the fundament of the project. The realisation of the actual election though is in the hands of the students.



To enable an easy implementation of JuniorVoting, the project provides schools with comprehensive study material and supportive facilities such telephone hotline, election announcements, election directories, information leaflets, directories, videos, seminars, polling booths or an on-line election platform.

This concept whereby the school is seen as independent organizational unit in combination with all the support and study materials has proved very successful over the years. It ensures a high level of quality as well as a smooth realisation of JuniorVoting – regardless of the location of the school.

6. Scientific Effects

In the past scientists have gone through the project JuniorVoting with a fine-tooth comb. For instance scientific research took place alongside JuniorVoting in Germany, and a similar project called 'Kids Voting' – involving more than 6,000 schools and 5 million students – has been carried out in the USA since more than fifteen years.

Effects from a scientific point of view:

-> voter participation amongst parents increased by 4% on average, at times even up to 9%
-> more political discussions between family members
-> the number of adolescents reading newspapers has trebled
-> the interest in political events has increased
-> main beneficiaries are students of schools with a lower level of education such as secondary schools

Source: Study JuniorVoting 2001, University of Stuttgart and Study KidsVoting 1996, Stanford University

It was revealed that the knowledge about democratic procedures as well as political coherences has dramatically increased following those projects. Students benefiting the most are those who attend schools with a lower level of education (secondary schools), as the gain in knowledge is the highest here.

Apart from that it was established that students inspired their parents to participate in elections as students increasingly dealt with the topic of election and promoted political discussions within the family. A study shows that the number of parents going to real elections increased on average by 4% (in some cases even up to 9%). This indicates the project particularly appealed to those families that already had distanced themselves from any kind of political involvement.

7. Experience shows

Since a few years the idea of the JuniorVoting project has been carried out in several countries.

For instance, in Germany JuniorVoting has been taking place since 1999 alongside the election of the Lower House of the German Parliament, election of the parliament as well as the European Election. More than 365,000 adolescents have participated so far.

Experiences gathered in Germany at a glance:

- Since 1999 more than 365,000 adolescents have participated
- Both teachers as well as students appreciate the project highly
- Voters' participation is about 90%
- Costs per school amount to about €1,000

Alongside the 2005 election of the Lower House of the German Parliament a JuniorVoting was carried out under the auspices of the German president Horst Koehler and in cooperation with the German Central Office for Political Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung). 70,000 adolescents participated in the project and the percentage of students voting was 90%.

One year before that in 2004 German schools abroad had been integrated in JuniorVoting for the first time when voting alongside the European election. The project had been carried out in Poland and Austria.

8. Europe – A new Approach

JuniorVoting aims at creating a European network of and close cooperation between all institutions and organizations that are implementing the JuniorVoting project in their countries alongside the European Election 2009. JuniorVoting gives new meaning to word 'European Union' by realising the largest European school project parallel to the European Elections 2009.



On the one hand this means introducing organizations to one another that have already successfully implemented this project in the past, and on the other hand encouraging new organizations and institutions in the various countries that have not yet participated in the JuniorVoting project.

This project can only happen if all participants combine their strengths and energies. This requires the willingness and commitment of all parties: the institutions and organizations in all European countries that want to implement JuniorVoting just as much as the European Parliament, the European Commission, governmental institutions or foundations.

Only through joint effort can the idea be realised!

9. The Schedule

The implementation of JuniorVoting 2009 parallel to the European Election is divided into several phases:

Phase 1 – Encouragement:

During this phase organizations and institutions in various member states are being encouraged to participate in the European Election 2009. Prerequisite is that those organizations and institutions are capable of realising the project individually in their own country. Organizations, which have carried out JuniorVoting in previous years as well as new institutions, which have not participated in the project before need to be integrated into the JuniorVoting project.

Phase 2 – Networking and Financing:

During the second phase all participation organizations link up with one another on a European level. The aim is to form an alliance of institutions that would like to realise this European wide project together. At this point, finances are being discussed with the European Parliament or the European Commission as well as with the governmental institutions or foundations of the respective countries.

Phase 3 – Start off Conference:

The entire project will be started off with a European conference lasting several days at the beginning of 2008. All organizations that want to implement the Project 2009 parallel to the European election are meeting here. Focus will be an exchange of experiences about the various possibilities of how to realise the project and the development of a detailed plan of action. This builds the foundation for a successful cooperation in implementing JuniorVoting. Following the conference, each organization realises the project independently from all others in their own country.

Phase 4 – Preparation of JuniorVoting 2009:

During this phase the various organizations in the member states prepare themselves for the implementation of JuniorVoting 2009. This involves forming networks that enable synergies between institutions in the respective countries.

Phase 5 – Implementation of JuniorVoting 2009:

During the fifth phase schools are being encouraged to participate in the JuniorVoting 2009 project. This obviously depends on the financial situation. Once involved in the project the schools are being set up for the election, lectures are being prepared and support for the election is being offered.

Phase 6 – Election Procedure:

One week prior to the European Election 2009 JuniorVoting will be carried out at participating schools in all countries. Results are being announced simultaneously to those of the European Election.



Phase 7 – Follow-up:

The project is being evaluated. Goals that were set prior to the project are being compared with the goals achieved. On the basis of this, joint plans of action are being developed.

2007	January	Phase 1 – Encouragement	
	February		
	March		
	April		
	May		
	June	Phase 2 – Networking and Financing	
	July		
	August		
	September		
	October		
	November		
	December		
2008	January	Phase 3 – Start off Conference	
	February		
	March	Phase 4 – Preparation of JuniorVoting 2009	
	April		
	May		
	June		
	July		
	August	Phase 5 – Implementation of JuniorVoting 2009	
	September		
	October		
	November		
	December		
2009	January		Phase 6 – Election Procedure
	February		
	March		
	April		
	May		
	June	Phase 7 – Follow-up	
	July		
	August		
	September		
	October		
	November		
	December		

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