

Student Parliament in Labyrinth School

How the Parliament was founded: from general assembly to parliament

Since its founding (2016) the Labyrinth school, has been identified with the ideas of John Dewey, who wanted to bring the school as close to the real life as possible. He saw school as a kind of "training field" for democracy. As in democracy, every man has the right to **participate** in and influence public affairs, at school also children should have the right to participate.

At the beginning of the Labyrinth School, due to the number of children, we were able to deal with various issues and decide on matters through a **general assembly**. E.g. the whole school community – e.g. children and teachers were meeting to discuss the issues, and everybody had a right to vote.

The establishment of the **Children's Parliament** was a PROCESS. We reached the need at the beginning of the school year 2021/2022, e.g. in the 6th year of the school's operation, which was related to the increase in the number of children and the strengthening of the number of children at the upper primary level.

In the first phase, it was important to provide **coordinators** from the rank of teachers. We also used some support from the Centre for Democratic Learning (**CEDU**), which has a patronage over children's parliaments all over the Czech Republic and is offering training to parliament coordinators and to children's parliaments too. We also had an opportunity to get inspiration from other local Children's parliaments that have longer experience. In this point we used network supported by Local Action Plans (MAP Tišnov) in the Tišnov Region and also, we got some inspiration from our partner schools within the network of Labschools Europe.

Although the trigger idea of Children's parliament came from the adults, the responsibility to establish it went behind children themselves. The pupils of the eighth grade were picked-up as those who can elaborate and spread the idea of democracy at school. They worked on a week project focused on identity, participation and authority in autumn 2021. They discussed such topics as human identity, human rights and obligations in the democratic society, as well as power and its various forms. In an intensive project week, they explored the possibilities of participation and prepared presentations for individual classes on how it is possible to participate in the life of the school and influence what is happening in it. They explained what the Children's parliament is and how children can get involved. Subsequently, **elections** for the Children's parliament took place in individual classes - 2 representatives from every class were elected. Finally, a group of **32 parliament members** was established. The parliament is also supported by three adult coordinators.

It was necessary to organize an intensive half-day meeting of the parliament at the beginning. We took the children to a „secret place“ – Bergler Palace in Brno. We wanted to make the session special so the children could experience the building, have some refreshment and enjoy some ice-breaker games. Afterwards we discussed the aims of the parliament and had a discussion on different roles in the parliament. Children could pick-up the **roles in parliament** (e.g. chairman, vice-chairman, reporter, editor etc.) they felt mostly comfortable with.

Next meeting has been organized in a 14-day periods. Every time we have had an hour session, in case of a burning issue it could be even longer.

The members of Children's Parliament are bringing the burning issues from their classes to the field of parliament and vice versa. They are using their diaries to make notes and follow-up discussions. In the classes they usually discuss the questions or outcomes during the morning class sessions. Every member of the parliament serves as a mediator between his or her class and the parliament.

At the parliament meetings the coordinators together with the 2 chairmen and 2 vice-chairmen introduce the agenda and are coordinating the meetings together. They also meet in the meantime to plan the agenda for the next meeting.

For communication we use Google classroom. There is also a noticeboard on the 6th floor of the school which is operated by two people from the parliament.



Members of parliament 2021/2022



Aid for Ukraine project



Discussion about school canteen



Fairtrade breakfast

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With the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

The creation of these resources has been (partially) funded by the ERASMUS+ grant program of the European Union under grant no. 2019-1-DE01-KA203-005003.

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