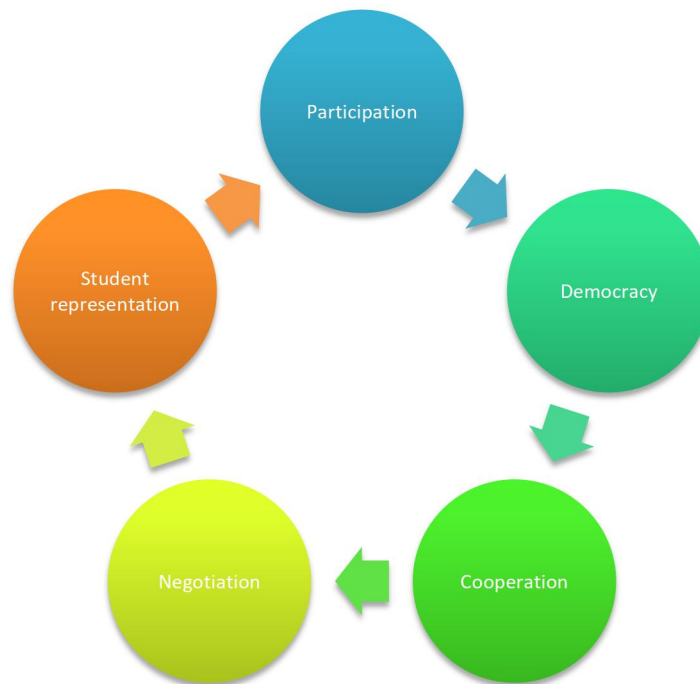


School Parliaments



School of Democracy II.



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Introduction

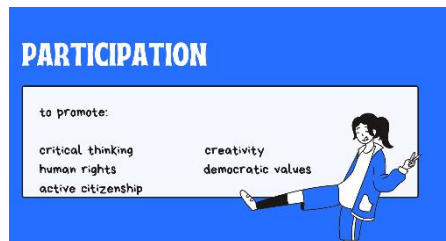
Dear school headmasters, coordinators, chairmen, vice-chairmen, and all members of the School Parliaments (formerly the coordinators of the pupils' school boards), pupils, students, and others who have taken the time to open this Handbook of Democracy.

School parliaments are a great tool that can help with the development of pupils - and also all those who are involved - in a safe school environment and teach them what democracy is, how to take on responsibility, what rights and responsibilities they have. It is a commitment to non-formal learning in a formal environment, which, if properly grasped, can have a really positive impact on all actors. I know from my experience that young people know how to transform the trust they are given into wonderful outcomes and can be a huge asset to their surroundings. Of course, it is up to us adults to lead and support them, and to help them on this path. However, I am aware that this is not an easy path and can bring many obstacles and difficulties.

That is why I would like to start this handbook by stating the values and guiding principles of youth work of the Europe Goes Local Charter, which are the output of experts in the field at the international level, and at the same time I perceive them as very comprehensive and beneficial for the activities and development of SP members.

I believe this handbook will help you in your activities and I wish you many motivated members, supporting coordinators of the SPs, cooperative approach of the management, the teaching staff, the management of the local government in the environment where you operate and the support of the whole environment. I wish you many experiences, beautiful impacts of your activities and recognition of the environment, whether you are a coordinator or you had the honor and the trust of your classmates in parliamentary elections has been placed into your hands, or you in any way support the process of democracy in your school.

Silvia Štefániková - the author of the handbook
"School of Democracy"



A school is a natural space where children and young people should be stimulated and motivated to actively participate.

They should be brought up and educated in matters of active citizenship, but also trained in the communication with the so-called "important adults" when promoting change.

An important tool for the development of participatory skills in the school environment is represented by student self-governing bodies, also known as student school boards (SSB) in the past (¹Youth Report 2018), and in operation since 1.1.2022 by amendment of the Act No. 488 of 25 November 2021 which amends and completes the Act of the Slovak National Council No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Establishment as amended by subsequent provisions and amending and completing certain other acts: Act no. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-government and on Amendments to Certain Acts as amended by subsequent provisions to **SCHOOL PARLIAMENTS**.



¹ Youth Report 2018 issued by Iuventa - Slovak Youth Institute, Bratislava

School of Democracy

Slovakia is a young state and even though we have been independent for many years, we still have a lot to learn about how to build a democratic state, how to participate in decisions, how to cooperate and respect the decisions of the majority, how to not only criticize, but also contribute to make a better life in our small but beautiful country. Young people are our future, what we put into them will come back to us multiplied. Therefore, it is necessary to teach them to **take responsibility** for their own lives from an early age, to **teach them respect, tactfulness, and solidarity**.



Supporting and developing young people is not just a job, but a mission, because if we want them to believe us, we must implement what we teach them. Teachers, professors, school parliament coordinators, educational counsellors, parents, mentors, and others can influence and help in the development of children's personalities significantly and steer them in the right direction. Each generation reflects the influence and is a product of the work of the previous generation.

If they can't communicate, why haven't we taught them better?

If they lack respect, what example did we show them? How do we show respect to them?

If they don't believe they can change something, what support and trust have we put in them?

Let's give them a chance to show what they can do. And what if they make a mistake, what if they don't fulfil the task according to our expectations? And why should they? Maybe they'll try even harder than we expect, maybe they'll achieve something we wouldn't even think possible. KomPrax - Competences for Practice was a national project that showed us what young people can do - from the renovation of the

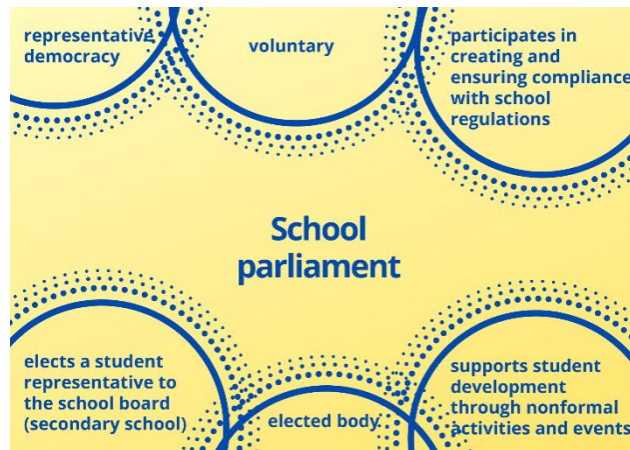
school to beautiful projects for the community. During the implementation of this project, the work of our young people showed us that they are not indifferent to the environment in which they grow up and that they are interested in changing things around them for the better. It has changed many young people, sometimes even guiding them in their future professions. There are more than 10,000 small "big" projects, the outputs of which can be found in the smallest village in Slovakia.

Let's trust young people.

The school parliament is the first great tool of the SCHOOL OF DEMOCRACY, where the young people can start learning it. They can begin to take responsibility for themselves and their actions in a secure environment, learning HOW - how does democracy, participation, cooperation, and solidarity work, how it feels for young people to be able to do something on their own, something that will help others ...



School Parliament



How to function properly?

What the Slovak legislation says:

Act No.488 of 25 November 2021 amending and completing the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Establishment as amended by subsequent provisions, and amending and completing certain other acts:

Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-government and on Amendments to the Certain Acts as amended by subsequent provisions.

§ 26

The School Parliament

- (1) The school parliament represents primary and secondary school pupils and represents their interests vis-à-vis the school headmaster, senior teaching staff or senior professional staff and externally.
- (2) The school parliament is established if at least 30% of the pupils submit a request for its founding to the school headmaster or if its founding is approved by the school board.
- (3) The school parliament has a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 17 members; the pupils receiving the highest number of votes in the elections will become members of the school parliament. The number of the school parliament members for the purposes of the first election shall be determined by the pupils who submitted the request for its foundation or the school board. The number of members for each subsequent election of the school parliament is determined by the statute of the school parliament and approved at the constituent meeting. A pedagogical representative appointed by the school principal, who does not have the right to vote, also participates in the school parliamentary session. The role of the designated pedagogical representative is to supervise the proper conduct of the meetings and the observance of the statute of the school parliament and to inform, together with the chairman of the school parliament, the senior teaching staff about the conclusions of the school parliament meeting.
- (4) The course of the elections is supervised by the school board, which announces the elections to the

parliament within 30 days since the establishment of the school parliament. The school will publish the election announcement, the minutes and election results on its website and on the school's official bulletin board. Elections must be by secret ballot. The school board will draw up the minutes of the elections, which shall be submitted to the school headmaster and the school board.

(5) At the first meeting of the school parliament, the chairman of the school parliament is elected by the school parliament members by secret ballot from among its members. The election of the chairman of the school parliament requires an absolute majority of votes of all members of the school parliament.

(6) If several candidates receive the same number of votes, and therefore the mandate remains vacant, new elections shall be held for the relevant mandate in which only the candidates concerned may run. The candidate who received the highest number of votes in the elections shall become a member of the school parliament.

(7) The School Parliament 488/2021 Coll. Collection of Laws of the Slovak Republic

a) comments on the essential issues, proposals, and measures of the school in the field of education,

b) participates in the creation and the observance of the school rules,

c) represents the pupils in relation to the school headmaster and the school management and submits their standpoints and proposals to them,

d) elects a student representative to the school board in case of a secondary school and a secondary school for students with special educational needs,

e) cooperates with the municipal youth parliament and the council of seniors, if they are established in the municipality,

f) recommends its members to the municipal youth parliament who may represent the school there, if it is established in the municipality,

g) cooperates with other school parliaments by means of the municipal youth parliament,

(h) supports the pupils' development by participating in the preparation of informal activities and events.

(8) The term of office of the chairman and members of the school parliament is determined by the statute of the school parliament. The term of office may not exceed 18 months.

(9) The School Parliament can pass a resolution if an absolute majority of all members is present at its meeting. A valid resolution of the school parliament requires the consent of an absolute majority of the present school parliament members. A valid resolution of the school parliament at a secondary school and a secondary school for students with special educational needs regarding the election of a student representative to the school board requires the consent of an absolute majority of all the school parliament members. In case of equality of the votes, the chairman has the casting vote.

(10) The costs of the school parliament activities are compensated from the school budget after the agreement with the school headmaster.

The transitional provision for amendments in operation since January 1, 2022: Student school boards established under the regulations in operation until December 31, 2021, shall be deemed to be school parliaments under regulations effective from January 1, 2022.

² ACT No. 177 of 14 June 2017 amending the Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-government and on Amendments to Certain Acts as amended by subsequent provisions, and amending the Act No. 524/2010 Coll. on the Provision of Subsidies within the Competence of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic as amended by subsequent provisions

³ ACT No. 488 of 25 November 2021 amending and completing the Act of the Slovak National Council No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal

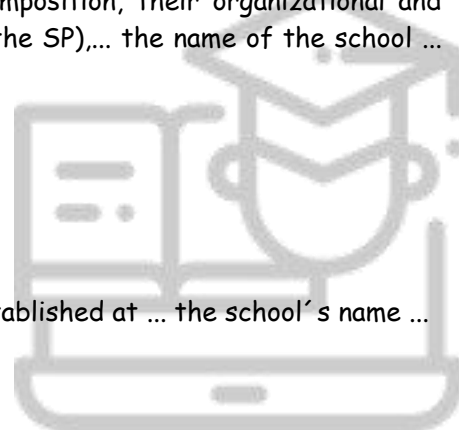
Model Statute of the School Parliament

Under the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 488 of 25 November 2021 which amends and completes the Act of the Slovak National Council No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Establishment as amended by subsequent provisions, and which amends and completes certain other acts, No. 54/2018 Coll. of 7 February 2018 amending the **Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-Government and on Amendments to Certain Acts as amended by subsequent provisions**, and in accordance with the provisions of the Decree of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic No. 230/2009 Coll. amending the Decree No. 291/2004 Coll. determining the details of the manner of appointing the school self-government bodies , their composition, their organizational and financial provision of the school parliament (hereinafter referred to as the SP),... the name of the school ... issues this statute of the school parliament.

Article I.

Fundamental provisions

1. The School Parliament (hereinafter referred to as the SP) is established at ... the school's name ...
2. The SP's residence is ... a school address ...



Article II

Scope and mission of the SP

1. The SP is established pursuant to the Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-Government and on Amendments to Certain Acts as amended by subsequent provisions of §26 and in accordance with the provisions of the Decree of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic No. 230/2009 Coll. amending the Decree No. 291/2004 Coll. determining the details of the manner of appointing the school self-government bodies, their composition, their organizational and financial provision within the scope of ...name of the school...
2. The SP is an initiative and advisory self-governing body that expresses and promotes the public interests of pupils in the field of education so as not to violate other laws in effect in the Slovak Republic.
3. It provides the contact between the pupils and the school management.

Article III

Activities of the SP

1. The school parliament represents the primary and secondary school pupils and represents their interests vis-à-vis the school headmaster, senior teaching staff or senior professional staff and externally.
2. The SP comments on important matters related to the operation of the school, comments on the proposals and measures of the school in the field of education and submits proposals for extracurricular activities and events which it also organizes.
3. The SP solves problems and complaints of pupils with the school management. It represents pupils in relation to school management. The SP presents its standpoints and proposals to them and represents

pupils externally.

4. The SP accepts, consults, and initiates proposals to enhance the school environment.
5. The SP initiates school extracurricular activities.
6. The SP participates in the creation and the observance of school regulations.
7. The SP elects the student representative to the school board.
8. The SP can pass a resolution if an absolute majority of all members is present at its meeting. A valid resolution of the SP requires the consent of an absolute majority of the present SP members. A valid resolution of the SP regarding the election of the student representative to the school board requires the consent of an absolute majority of all members.
9. The SP participates in events organized in cooperation with the municipality or region.
10. The SP cooperates with the municipal youth parliament and the town's senior council
11. The SP recommends its members to the municipal youth parliament who can represent the school there.
12. The SP cooperates with other school parliaments via the municipal youth parliament.

Article IV.

Composition of the SP and a Way of Election of the SP

1. The SP has ... members (from 5-17 members).
2. All pupils of the school are represented by the members of the SP.
3. The SP has a chairman, one / two vice-chairmen, a student representative on the school board and a representative (or more) in the municipal youth parliament
4. The student who will represent the other pupils on the school board is elected by the members of the SP by secret ballot.
5. The chairman and vice-chairmen of the SP shall be elected by the members of the SP.
6. The minutes are taken of each election and must be submitted to the school management.
7. A pedagogical staff member appointed by the school headmaster, who does not have the right to vote, also attends meetings of the school parliament, supervises the proper conduct of meetings and the observance of the statute of the school parliament and informs the school's senior staff of the conclusions of the school parliament.
8. The conduct of the elections is supervised by the school board, which announces the elections to the school parliament within 30 days of the appointment of the school parliament. The school will publish the election announcement, the minutes and election results on its website and on the school's official bulletin board. Elections must be by secret ballot. The school board will draw up the minutes of the elections, which will be submitted to the school headmaster and the school board.
9. At the first session of the school parliament, the chairman of the school parliament is elected by the members of the school parliament by secret ballot from among the members of the school parliament. An absolute majority of all members of the school parliament is required for the election of the chairman of the school parliament.
10. If several candidates receive the same number of votes and the seat therefore remains vacant, new elections shall be held for the relevant mandate, in which only the candidates concerned may run. The candidate who received the highest number of votes in the elections will become a member of the school parliament.
13. The term of office of the chairman and members of the school parliament is determined by the statute of the school parliament. The term of office may not exceed 18 months.
14. The School Parliament can pass a resolution if an absolute majority of all members is present at its meeting. A valid resolution of the SP requires the consent of an absolute majority of the present SP members. A valid resolution of the SP at a secondary school and a secondary school for students with special educational needs regarding the election of a student representative to the school board requires the consent of an absolute majority of all SP members. In case of equality of the votes, the chairman has the casting vote.

Article V

Rights and obligations of a member of the SP

1. A member has right:
 - a. to vote and be elected
 - b. to nominate candidates for representation on the school board, the position of chairman or vice-chairmen
 - c. to be informed of all the matters that are the subject of the SP's negotiations and to freely comment on them
 - d. to vote on all SP resolutions
 - e. to submit their own proposals, suggestions, or materials for the meeting of the SP
2. The member has duties:
 - f. is obliged to attend the meetings of the SP. Unexcused absence at the two consecutive meetings is assessed as a lack of interest in holding the post and a failure to comply with the duties of a member of the SP and results in automatic expulsion from the post.
 - g. is obliged to ensure the protection of personal data protected by general legally binding regulations
3. The minutes of each meeting shall be taken and archived together with the attendance register.

Article VI

Duties of the Chairman of the SP

1. The chairman of the SP is the statutory body that manages the SP's activities and acts on its behalf.
2. The chairman of the SP convenes, prepares, and runs the meetings of the SP.
3. When passing a resolution, the chairman of the SP has one valid vote, as does any other member of the SP.
4. The chairman of the SP is obliged to inform the school management about the upcoming events.

Article VII

Duties of the Vice-Chairman of the SP

1. The vice-chairman of the SP represents the chairman of the SP and assists their activities if necessary.
2. When passing a resolution, the vice-chairman of the SP has one valid vote, as does any other member of the SP.

Article VIII

Duties of the student representative on the school board

1. Represents the interests of members of the SSB on the school board.
2. Informs members of the SSB, if necessary, about the content and outcomes of school board meetings.
3. When passing a resolution, the student representative on the school board has one valid vote, as

does any other member of the SSB.

Article IX

Financial security of SP

1. The SP ensures its activities in accordance with the provisions of the Decree of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic No. 230/2009 Coll. amending the Decree No. 291/2004 Coll., determining the details of the manner of appointing the school self-government bodies, their composition, their organizational and financial security, in agreement with the school management (the school headmaster, the school board ...). The draft of a budget is submitted to the school management by the chairman of the SP for one school year and is compiled no later than ...
2. The SP does not have its own property.
3. The SP has the right to legally acquire its own property.

Article X. Final provisions

1. The SP meets at least once a month, always on a predetermined day.
2. This statute was discussed and approved at the meeting of the SP on ... (the minutes of the meeting no. ... are taken) and is in effect since this day.

In (city) ... on (date) ...

Chairman of the SP

Submitted to the school management

In on

School Headmaster

Benefits of the existence of the School Parliament

More "discipline"

If I am involved in making the rules, I understand them, I have agreed to them and I will respect them. I'm not going to contradict myself by ignoring them. I do not want to disappoint, the trust that has been placed in my hands and I appreciate it. They believe I can do it, so I'll do my best not to let them down.

Yes, rules are needed, but they should be based on the needs of everyone. If I understand the regulation that was issued, I also understand the context, why it was issued and, in essence, I respect that.

Reduction of conflicts

We are all different. Each of us has slightly different needs, different opinions, different backgrounds. Differences, lack of understanding and lack of information can often lead to bullying, cyberbullying, conflict, intolerance, discrimination, violence ... The school parliament is supposed to represent its members, pupils, their interests and needs, present them to the school management, seek solutions and supporting tools to resolve conflicts and problems before they arise.



Prestige

Many factors enter the decision-making process when parents are deciding in which school their child should enrol. In addition to the quality of education, they also think about the environment in which their child will spend many hours a day for several years. Respect and an environment that encourages the overall development of the personality is very important. Every parent wants his/her child to prepare for life and the labor market the best they can. If the school is an environment that creates the preconditions for the overall development of competencies, it has a significant impact on the development of the young person's personality and his/her readiness for the future.

Development of democracy in schools

Children are not used to doing things that we "tell them to do". They do things the way we do them. There is no point in talking about democracy at school if we do not practice it. What about starting with ourselves and the small things? From choosing the colour of the wall in the classroom to democracy. From passivity towards the environment to participation.

Active citizenship?

Why is it important to develop and engage young people from an early age? Parents and adults are afraid to leave decisions to young people. Why is that so? We are increasingly meeting young people, who, at the age of 16, have not yet had the opportunity to decide even on simple things concerning themselves. Their parents manage their lives, decide on every step, solve all matters for them ... Participation in the conditions of the school environment is the right of pupils to be elected, to vote, to have conditions, space, and tools for their own activities. It is important for them to be directly involved in the decision-making processes and to take responsibility for them as well.

The Pyramid of Participation of the School Parliament

Passive information - the school board / management informs about its decisions if the pupils request it.

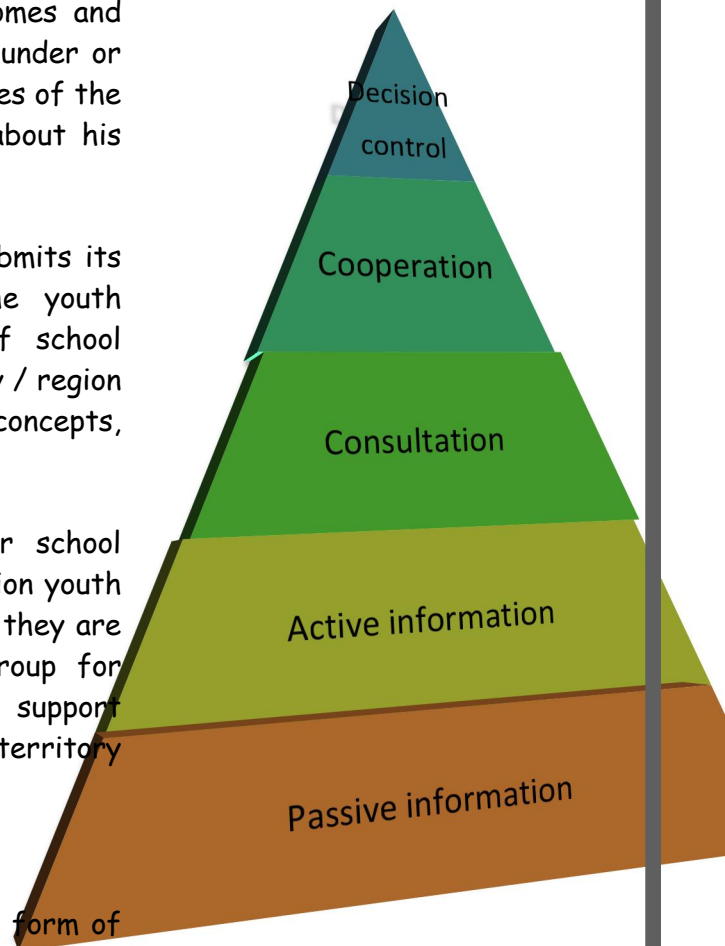
Active information - for example, at school parliament meetings, school management / the school board comes and informs members about its decisions. The Deputy Founder or deputy comes to a meeting composed of representatives of the School Parliament / Youth Parliament and informs about his decisions.

Consulting - e.g. The local or regional government submits its plans, concepts, strategies, and comments to the youth parliaments, which also include representatives of school parliaments. YP or SP has its representative in the city / region youth commission, and this person comments on concepts, strategies ...

Co-decision making - representatives of youth or school parliaments have one representative in the city / region youth commission who co-decides (has the right to vote) or they are represented in the TSK Intersectoral Working Group for Youth, which analyses, proposes, and approves support activities for the development of youth work on the territory of the Trenčín self-governing region.

The control of decision-making - this is the highest form of participation with the transfer of decision-making power. In the school year 2018/2019, a pilot year of introducing participatory budgets at secondary schools within the scope of the Trenčín Region was launched. The authors of the projects are the students at the particular schools themselves. They will not only propose them, but within the whole process they will get a chance to evaluate the best of the projects, decide which of the submitted ones the school will finally implement, or become their implementers directly in practice.

"The Trenčín self-governing region is the first region in Slovakia to sign a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development and launched a pilot year of participatory budgets at secondary schools under the jurisdiction of the county. This way, the county seeks to support young people's active citizenship and develop their abilities and skills." - Jaroslav Baška - President of the Self- Governing Region of Trenčín.



The School Parliament as a Tool for Developing Young People's Competences

What are competences?

Competences are composed of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

What does it mean? For example:

I'm learning English, I know the rules of grammar, I know the vocabulary and that's my knowledge. I know how to construct a sentence, to react fluently and to communicate in English - that is my skill. The want to travel, communicate, desire to use as many opportunities as possible to communicate in a foreign language is my attitude.

The chairman of the SP knows how to resolve the conflict situation in his/her team (he/she knows the management of the conflict, how to use communication to avoid conflict of interests of two groups, knows what feedback is ...), can also use it in practice (controls procedures and can communicate so as to solve the problem, controls non-conflict communication in practice, can give adequate and timely feedback ...) and at the same time he/she wants to solve the situation (wants to set value-oriented, democratic environment where the interests of individuals are subordinated to the interests of the majority, respecting the needs of pupils ...)

What competences do/can we develop in SP?

To be able to communicate with members of the SP, to be coherent and clear in relation to different grades, to be able to communicate with the school management, faculty, parents, negotiate and submit proposals, to communicate outside the school environment and to represent pupils' interests, promote school, create minute-books and other documents, acquire the ability to distinguish and use different types of texts, select information and to gain the ability to formulate and express themselves orally and in writing.

Literacy



Many schools, cities, regions, or organizations operating in its territory have international partnerships, and through projects, e.g. Erasmus+, students can exchange experiences in the international field, solve problems and challenges, express thoughts, feelings, understand others and be coherent in an international environment in another foreign language.

Multilingualism



What competences do /can we develop in SP?

- SP operates in school environment, city, county, and often national and international settings. Through every communication, cooperation and negotiation, its representatives enter into interaction with the environment in which they function. Knowledge - for example, if I want to deal with a pedestrian crossing in front of my school, I have to deal with an institution that has the competence to change something in this matter. I should know the connections between the social environment and the rights and my responsibilities as a citizen. The interest in the happenings at school, the city, the region, is developing its active citizenship. I do not criticize things around me that I do not like, but I change them and contribute to improvement. I am interested in the plans of the school, city, region management, I am interest in the quality of my future life here ...

Civic competence



- The SP can control and use different types of information technologies (whether for communication, sharing of information, databases, etc.). Also to create, edit and distribute various videos, photos ...
- At the same time, it can critically assess the relevance of information, ensure the protection of its members in the virtual world, and can develop these tools for the overall development of critical thinking, creativity, and the development of the entire environment of SP.

Digital competence



- To know how to find the best possible learning style, how to use it in my self-development, how to learn new things and know the aspects that help me most effectively in this process, or that disrupt this process. It is important to be able to optimally plan your self-development and, based on the set goals, to plan your learning progress. At the same time, it is very important to be able to deal with obstacles and possible changes during the acquisition of knowledge and the ability to use new opportunities.

Personal, social competence and the ability to learn



- The SP changes the environment, it contributes not only to the improvement of the school, but during the implementation, its members also learn how to cooperate, how to achieve common goals and include their creativity. They are motivated to look for new ways and solutions, and they learn to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.

Entrepreneurial competence



- The SP knows its own culture and environment; it can express itself creatively when presenting ideas. It knows and can represent its own culture and environment and therefore respects the differences and contrasts of other cultures.
- If I want to get to know other cultures, travel and develop, it is important to know my own culture well, to be able to represent my country and its culture and the connections on which it is based.

Cultural awareness and expression



- SP can compile and justify its own budget, the budget for the project and its connection with activities, can create graphs and tables, can statistically evaluate e.g. election results, voting, finding out the needs of its members, can calculate with money, has logical thinking.
- The SP can use the tools of science and technology for its activities, it can address its members and communicate with them through the use of various new ways of science and technology in the world, while respecting moral and ethical values in the process.

Mathematical competence and competences in science, technology, and engineering



The School Parliament and its Activities on the School Ground

If the conditions are suitable for the development of competencies and the handling of responsibility in schools, many SPs work very efficiently and are a great benefit for the running of

the school, the development of competencies of all students and the improvement of the school environment. Many activities are aimed at the improvement of atmosphere and improving relations not only between pupils themselves, but also between pupils and the school management, parents, and the teaching staff. Several SPs publish their own magazines or,



through their contributions, inform about various events for students, organize cultural events (Valentine's ball, inaugurations of freshmen, St. Nicholas Day, Day the other way round ...), sports events, volunteer activities in the school, charities, but also the "Wailing Wall", or post office, where anyone can solve their problem with the help of SP. The main purpose of the SP is to **represent its members, solve problems and help improve the school environment**. A common problem is the low awareness about this possibility at school, or the low confidence of the school parliament in their ability to solve the problem. It is ideal if the school has its own notice board, space on the school radio or on the school website, where it has the opportunity to inform about its activities and achievements. At the same time, it is very important to **cooperate with the school management** not only in working on suggestions and solving problems, but also in organizing events and activities in cooperation with the school. This often depends on the SP representatives and their ability to take responsibility for their actions and activities. If the school management knows that every agreement will be fulfilled and can confidently turn to the SP and work with them, it will gladly support many activities. At the same time, the **SP must respect** the school environment and regulations that ensure the safety of students and the quality of the educational process.

The School Parliament and its Activities outside the School Ground

Trainings, meetings, workshops, and the cooperation outside the school are excellent tools for exchanging experiences and improving the activities of the SP.

The founders of primary schools are cities and municipalities, in the case of secondary schools it is a higher territorial unit or another founder. The region is often dealing with serious changes regarding secondary schools in its territory, such as the rationalization of secondary education, the construction of gyms, building repairs, school boarding schools ... Many regions already have a platform to support participation and



cooperation between students through the high school / youth parliament, regional council, or other bodies that aim to develop awareness in both directions. A higher degree of development of participation is the involvement of student representatives in decision-making processes that affect them. For example, in the Trenčín self-governing region, the TSK Intersectoral Working Group for Youth has been created - it analyses needs, sets goals and the way of fulfilling them in the area of youth work development. Representatives of the high school / youth parliament made up of representatives of secondary school SPs also nominate their representatives to this group, where they have the opportunity to co-decide and participate in the fulfilment of youth work goals at the regional level.

"The presence of SPs in primary schools is important because pupils become full partners with the city, which, as the founder of primary schools, needs to know the needs and areas for improvement from the pupils attending schools. The SPs representing the views of the pupils will learn to communicate either with the school management or with the town hall, thus speeding up and streamlining the process of improving the school system or community life in the town."

Veronika Sučanská, Coordinator of youth work in the city Trenčín

In many primary schools, SPs are not yet developed or have only been in operation for a short period. It is necessary to support this process as much as possible and to help develop and stabilize the SPs.



This is where more support and "learning to participate" is needed, not only for the pupils, but also for the whole school. But for example in Prievidza, Handlová, and Trenčín it already became sort of a tradition and you can see beautiful outcomes, and the impacts on students. For example, through the coordinator of youth work, the city of Prievidza organizes regular meetings of representatives of primary and secondary schools and creates many activities to support the cooperation of all people actively involved in

the youth work in the city area. The city of Trenčín, through its youth work coordinator and in cooperation with the Trenčín Regional Youth Centre, supports the motivation and increases the competencies of

environmental representatives also through the international youth exchanges.

"The work of SP is important especially for young people. It allows them to express their opinions, feel that it also matters to them, helps them to develop competencies and to prepare for practical aspects and motivates them to take an interest in life - what happens in school, the city or society as a whole. And not only that, but they are also directly involved in this event and do a lot for their community. They organize events and volunteer in activities, involve, and connect other young people and show them other ways of spending their free time. And why connect various SPs? From my own experience, I know that such meetings help young people a lot, they exchange experiences, establish cooperation and can also take larger events outside their school and, of course, promote their views and attitudes at the city, county, or state level." Katarína Cifríková, Coordinator of youth work in the city Prievidza



"The high school / youth parliament is the official advisory body to the chairman of the TSK and creates space for the immediate interaction between the statute, the elected public official, and young people, who can learn more about the functioning and importance of regional self-government, its plans and legal possibilities, to positively influence the lives of citizens in its territory. Young people can ask questions that lead to the solving of problems which they see as important and thus contribute to a higher level of awareness of the requirements and needs of young people living in the region."

Vice President and Deputy of the Trenčín Self-Governing Region, Mayor of city Partizánske, Jozef Božik.

Coordinators of School Parliaments

To coordinate does not mean to carry out. Coordinators are the educators who help in developing the SP at their school. They supervise the election process, help in the first contact with the school management, the teaching staff, ensure that the entire know-how of the SP does not leave with the departure of the pupils, help the SP to proceed in accordance with the legislation... The coordinator's involvement is always related to the degree of autonomy and independence of the SP itself. If the SP is developed and



has sufficient competencies for its activities, it is ideal if the coordinator coaches the pupils only when necessary and leaves them as much responsibility and work as possible. The opposite is the situation when the representatives of the SP are new or do not have information, they do not know how to start... In this case, the coordinator of the SP must intervene more significantly in the process and help with information, good instructions for the development of the activities of the SP at school. The coordinators are often great educators who put not only their knowledge and experience into this activity, but also their free time and their heart. It is necessary to **create support tools for their work and a rewarding system from the national level**. Iuventa - Slovak Youth Institute - has an accredited "Refresh" training, focused on the support and development of competencies of environmental coordinators. At the same time, the Youth Councils of many regions, Regional Youth Centres and other organizations carry out many activities to support and develop the competencies of representatives and coordinators of the SP.

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