

Best Practice

Democracy: A Theatrical Exploration of Democracy in the European Union 1.

Basic Information

- **Title/Name of the Best Practice:** *Democracy: A Theatrical Exploration of Democracy in the European Union*
 - **Country/Region of Origin:** Netherlands
 - **Institution/Organization Implementing the Practice:** Theater Collective *Illustere Figuren*, in collaboration with Studio Maki and citizenship education teachers
 - **Kind of activity:** Interactive theater performance and parliamentary simulation game
 - **Target Audience:** Vocational education students (MBO level 3 & 4), ages 16–20
 - **Duration of the activity:** 60 minutes for the performance, additional time for preparatory and follow-up activities
 - **Accessibility:** Free or low-cost (depends on the institution's participation)
 - **Year of Implementation:** 2024–2025
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2. Description of the Practice

- **Objective:**

The aim of *Democracy* is to enhance students' understanding of democracy, decision-making, and the role of the European Union through an engaging theater experience. The project combines theatrical storytelling with an interactive parliamentary simulation game to encourage critical thinking, teamwork, and civic awareness among students.
- **Description of Activities:**

The performance takes students on a journey through European history, starting with the myth of the princess Europa and progressing to modern-day EU elections.

The actors, including students from the *MBO artist program* in Leeuwarden, bring historical events to life while integrating humor and thought-provoking dialogue.

- During the performance, students actively participate in a *parliamentary simulation game*. Divided into four groups, they represent fictional EU member states, each with different economic and social conditions (such as comfortable or overcrowded seating). Each group is allocated a budget of *trunisch* (the fictional currency of the union) and must democratically decide on investments to improve their conditions. These decisions directly influence the outcome of the performance, demonstrating the complexities of EU decision-making.

Implementation Steps

1. Pre-Performance Preparation

- Students receive an introduction to democracy and the EU through interactive videos and discussions.
- A classroom debate exercise introduces students to democratic decision-making.
- Teachers facilitate a Mentimeter quiz to test students' prior knowledge of the EU.

2. Theatrical Performance & Simulation Game

- Students attend the *Democracy* performance in a theater venue.
- They engage in the parliamentary game, where they must debate, negotiate, and vote on policies that impact their group's well-being.
- The play dynamically adjusts to students' decisions, reinforcing the impact of collective decision-making.

3. Post-Performance Reflection

- Students analyze the outcomes of their decisions and relate them to real-world politics.
- They discuss their expectations of European politicians and their role as future voters.
- A final classroom discussion helps solidify key takeaways from the experience.

EU Citizenship Focus Areas:

- EU Institutions

- Civic Participation
- Democratic Decision-Making
- European Values and Principles
- Political Awareness and Media Literacy

3. Pedagogical Details

- **Teaching Methodology:**

- Experiential learning through interactive theater and role-playing.
- Debate-based learning encouraging critical thinking and persuasive argumentation.
- Reflection exercises to connect the experience to students' daily lives and political awareness.

- **Resources and Tools Used:**

- Theatrical performances with professional actors and student trainees.
- Mentimeter quizzes for interactive learning.
- Custom-designed parliamentary simulation game with physical and digital materials.

- **Innovative Aspects:**

- *Democracy* uniquely blends entertainment and education to make democracy tangible and relatable.
- The interactive format empowers students to actively shape the storyline, making learning immersive and memorable.
- The game design, created in collaboration with professional game developers (*Studio Maki*), ensures an engaging and dynamic learning process.

- **Adaptability to VET Settings:**

- The concept can be adapted to different MBO study programs, emphasizing sector-specific EU policies.

- Schools can integrate the preparatory and follow-up materials into citizenship education classes.

4. Outcomes and Impact (if these data are available)

- **Measured Outcomes:**

- Increased student understanding of EU governance and democracy, assessed through pre- and post-performance discussions.
- Enhanced engagement with political topics, as demonstrated by student participation in debates.

- **Student/Teacher Feedback:**

- Students appreciate the interactive and entertaining approach to learning about politics.
- Teachers report improved critical thinking and communication skills among participants.

- **Evidence of Success:**

- The performance model has successfully engaged vocational students in discussions about democracy, showing increased interest in EU-related topics.

5. Inclusivity and Accessibility (if these data are available)

How Inclusive is the Practice?

- Theatrical storytelling makes complex political topics accessible to all learning levels.
- The diverse game roles ensure that every student actively participates.

Accessibility of Resources:

- Schools receive free educational materials for classroom integration.
- The theatrical experience is brought to regional theaters, ensuring accessibility for a broad student audience.

6. Alignment with EU Citizenship Education Goals (if these data are available)

Relevance to EU Citizenship Topics:

- Encourages active citizenship by simulating real political challenges.
- Demonstrates the impact of decision-making on European cooperation and policy.

Policy Alignment:

- Supports EU goals for youth engagement in democracy.
- Aligns with educational strategies for fostering critical thinking and participation in European governance.

7. Additional Notes or Recommendations

Challenges in Implementation:

- Coordinating theater visits with school schedules.
- Ensuring that students engage seriously with the parliamentary simulation game.

Suggestions for Improvement:

- Expanding the performance to include online interactive elements for schools unable to attend in person.
- Providing additional classroom materials for deeper exploration of EU institutions.

Additional Resources:

- *Democracy* Educational Package (videos, classroom activities, and debate prompts).
- [Mentimeter Quiz on the EU and Democracy](#)