

FOLKE VIRKE



August - September - October 2014



www.folkevirke.dk



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How has democratic dialogue changed your way of thinking about the democracy?

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Chairman of the Danish parliament*



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FOLKEVIRKE

Social, kulturel og politisk oplysning

Udgivet af oplysningsbevægelsen
FOLKEVIRKE

Oplag: 1.200
ISSN 0015-5845

**Deadline for next issue:
October 10th 2014**

Bladet kan kun bestilles ved direkte
henvendelse til:

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Dette nummer koster i styksalg
kr. 50,00 + porto.
Særpris for klassesæt.
Årsabonnement,
kr. 210,00 pr. år (incl. porto)

Redaktion

Annemarie Balle (ansvarshavende)
Reventlowsgade 18, 4. sal tv
1051 København V
Tlf. 51 51 24 20

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Tryk og layout

Aars Bogtryk & Offset, tlf. 98 62 17 11
E-mail: aarsbogtryk@aarsavis.dk
Layout: Louise Christensen

The Nordic Council of Ministers has
sponsored the publication of this
issue.



FORENINGEN AF
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TIDSSKRIFTER



New and old democracies

»What I want is to get done is what the people would have me to do. The problem for me is how to find out what that is exactly«.

Abraham Lincoln, American president 1861-65

Over the past two years Folkevirke, a Danish organization for social, cultural and political information, has coordinated a Nordplus-project »New and old democracies«. The partners in the project include people from similar organizations in Norway, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The partner groups have engaged in a wide range of activities and meetings. There has been a meeting in each of the partner countries.

It has been an exciting experience to dig deep into the engine room of democracy. Throughout the project period from 2012 to 2014 the groups have been involved in lengthy and substantial discussions which have revealed quite different ways of practicing democracy in the five countries.

It has been quite clear from these discussions that Hal Koch, a Danish theologian and church historian, was right when he said that »democracy is a lifestyle«.

It is not enough to lay down rules for democracy. Real democracy requires that people adopt it as a way of living and thinking.

The Chairman of the Danish Parliament, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, writing in this issue of the Folkevirke magazine, points out that »democracy is really a culture« and that »a functioning democracy can only exist with well informed people who have real access to information from a great many sources«.

The substantial debates over the project period about issues such as history, minorities, family and equality have exposed many different ways of democratic life. Differences that would not have come to light had we focused on the content of constitutions or legislation in relation to democracy only.

Read more about the project and the activities involved at www.node-democracy.eu. Finally my thanks to all groups in the partner countries who have contributed to a successful project and to Nordplus for the economic support that made the project possible.

Annemarie Balle,
editor of Folkevirke magazine

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Top: The Danish parliament Christiansborg. Photo: www.ft.dk, Henrik Sørensen.

Below center: Prime Minister of Denmark Helle Thorning-Schmidt. Photo: Agnete Schlichtkrull.

Below right: A view of the remaining blockade-stones used in the Lithuanian liberation from the Sovjet Union.

The way to global democracy is long



The president of the Danish parliament is writing about the development of democracy in Denmark and in other countries. He notes that the democracies which are most developed must be attentive to fight every tendency towards retrogression in their own countries and continents.

*By Mogens Lykketoft (S),
Chairman of the Danish parliament*

Democracy as an electoral system is not unambiguous.

We are talking about democratic city-states in ancient Greece, but they differed fundamentally from our representative democracy by being exercised through attendance at the Market and included only the minority of free, adult males whereas the majority of women and slaves were left outside.

We usually say that the Danish democracy was founded in 1849. This is wrong. At that point, a minority – independent males over 25 years with permanent address in the country – obtained voting right to the legislative assembly. Women, servants, paupers, idiots and inmates in prison were left outside.

After 1849, the elected parliament was legislative but it had no influence on the composition of the government. Parliamentarism, where the majority of the Parliament decides the colour of the government, was not recognized by the King until 1901 and was not entered into the Constitution until 1953.

Democracy seen as ordinary voting right for men as well as women,

rich as well as poor, was only adopted with the Constitution of 1915. Therefore there are plenty of reasons to make a special celebration of the Constitution anniversary next year.

But even with general voting right and recognized parliamentarism, the organization of the election systems may lead to very different results. It does not necessarily mean that the majority of the voting constituents will also finally be the ones to decide the majority in the parliaments and hence the colour of the government.

Threshold rules have great impact

Threshold rules may here be very

defining. A government majority with a split opposition could have an interest in imposing very high threshold rules to secure themselves a solid majority in parliament on a minority of votes. This has been observed most distinctly with a threshold rule of 10% in Turkey, and now also in Hungary. But the results can also be very different, even with threshold rules of just five, four or two percent of the votes.

Germany operates on five percent and by the latest Parliament election it meant that the Free Democrats – one of three old democratic parties of the German Federal Republic – fell out of



The Chairman of the Danish parliament, Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, says that in a functioning democracy the people must have easy access to information from all parties. Photo: www.ft.dk



In the 2000 US presidential election George W. Bush's opponent Al Gore received half a million votes more than Bush nationally, but Bush was declared winner in The Electoral College, because he won more states than Gore. Photo: Telfair H. Brown, Sr.

Parliament. Such a threshold rule would also have sent the Conservative Party out of Parliament by the latest election in Denmark. In Sweden, it can be decisive of which side will get the government power whether one of the smaller parties will fall below the threshold rule of four percent. Previously, when the stable Social Democratic government with 45-47% of the voters behind them was based on passive support from the old communists, a part of the Social Democratic electorate was summoned to vote communist to prevent the support party from falling below the four percent. They were called the »comrade-four-percent-people«!

At the election in Denmark in 1987, the conservative Poul Schlüter's non-Socialist four-party government regained the power through support from the Radikale and Fremskridtspartiet, even though over 50% of the electorate voted for the Social Democrats and parties to the left of S. This was because neither the Venstre-socialister nor the Communists reached above the threshold rule of two percent. A few years later, this experience led to the establishment of Enhedslisten as a fu-

sion of the non-represented parties on the outer left-wing. So the threshold rules can decide majorities and in reality also decide how divided the parliaments will be between many parties. With high threshold rules, the parties are forced to create coalitions of various groups and many differences are united within bigger parties instead of leading to foundation of independent parties.

Absolute majority with less than half of the votes

This is also very much the experience from countries where the representation is not proportional, but where parliamentarians are elected in secluded constituencies where those, who gain relatively most votes, are the sole representatives of the constituency and the rest of the votes are wasted. This is called election in single-member constituencies and was originally the British system. But with different variations it has spread onto many other parts of the world – not USA or other countries which were once British colonies. In Great Britain this election system has only given room for

two large and one smaller party and in USA there are only two parties which each embrace substantial interior differences of opinion. With an election system after the British model, a party can obtain absolute majority with much below half of the votes, as long as the rest is spread on several other parties. Therefore Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives in Great Britain had absolute majority in the House of Commons but never exceeded 42% of the votes; Tony Blair's New Labour managed in later rounds to gain majority in the House of Commons with an even lower share of the votes.

Manipulation with constituency rules

Depending on how concentrated the parties' votes are in the single constituencies, the British system may also give the government power to a party winning fewer votes than another. An example: Winston Churchill's Conservative Party retrieved the government from Labour in 1951 with fewer votes than Labour in Great Britain as a total. We saw the same phenomenon when George W. Bush was declared the winner of the American Presidential Election in 2000, although his rival candidate Al Gore actually obtained half a million more votes nation-wide. We saw it

again in USA as late as in 2012, when a majority of the votes for the House of Representatives went to the Democrats, but where the election system gave a majority of Republican representatives in the House. This was the result of a very complete manipulation of the constituency rules in Republican-governed constituent States, so that Democrats were elected in constituencies with sweeping majority (= superfluously many votes) whereas many Republicans were elected on slender majorities. Thus a larger waste of votes for the Democrats than for the Republicans, as f. inst. constituencies with a huge black population majority voted 80% Democrat without the last 30% resulting in additional representation!

In addition there are the consequences of having a federal system and two differently elected legislative assemblies who both have to approve the laws.

This is also known from USA where the number of representatives for each constituent State in the House of Representatives is decided proportionally by the population number of the State, whereas all States have two delegates in the powerful Senate, regardless if the population number is 40 millions (California) or 0,6 millions (Wyoming).

Historically, the tendency gives a majority in the Senate, more influenced by small rather conservative communities in the countryside and with underrepresentation of larger, more liberal and progressive urban communities. And that

certainly means that most probably there are differing political majorities in the two chambers of the Congress.

The advantages and disadvantages of the bicameral system

Even though it far from always enables the majority to rule, a bicameral election form like in USA may be necessary to keep a voluntary union of small and large states together. And it can be a possible way for a hopefully future peace and democratization of ethnically and religiously split countries as f. inst. Syria and Iraq, because it guarantees the minorities from being run over by one of the larger groups.

But as we see it in USA these years, the bicameral system combined with majority elections in single-member constituencies may also lead to paralysing the resolution power and/or blocking the work for a president, incidentally directly popularly elected, from parts of a legislative assembly who only

obtained their mandate from a minority of electors.

The Danish experience from before repealing the bicameral system and the abolition of the Landsting in 1953 was also, that the differences in electoral age and the length of the electoral period in the two different chambers of Parliament often led to differing majority models in the two chambers and thereby weakened the speed in the legislative work of the government.

The national Danish compromise from 1953 was that, yes, the Landsting was abolished, but other ways were opened for minorities in the Parliament to demand that certain laws only became valid when – other than being passed in Parliament – also had found majority through a referendum. The ancient direct democracy was therefore revived in a new form by the Land Law Vote in 1963 and repeated referendums on the parameters for Denmark's participation in the European Community,



The US Congress with The Senate and The House of Representatives often poses a challenge for the political ambitions of the president.

which in 1992 with the Treaty of Maastricht as well as in 2000 with the Euro resulted in a rejection from a majority of the voters to follow the recommendation of a large majority in the Parliament.

Referendums and the representative democracy

This turns focus to another debate on the substance of democracy – namely the often heard argument from EU-opponents that resolutions by referendum are more genuinely democratic than resolutions as a result of the representative democracy, where a popular elected assembly with a mandate for up to four years assumes the responsibility for the coherence in the resolutions and will have to account for the coherence at the following Parliament election.

Personally, I am a devoted adherent of the representative democracy as the answer to the huge pressure of making decisions which can secure our society a sustainable future. Referendums are often conservative in the original meaning of the word. And if the theme of the referendum is very technically complicated, there is a risk – and often seen examples – that the result is determined by the popularity or lack of same of the actual government at the time of the referendum (or by discussions about issues which actually are not included in the referendum: When f. inst. the future of the old age pension became a theme in the Euro-vote). In Switzerland, where everything

can be required for referendum, it was not until the beginning of the 1970'es – after several fruitless attempts – that the women were given voting rights by the men who had these rights.

The polls over many years up to the end of the 1990'es show that Denmark would never had had the bridges across Storebælt or Øresund if the matter should have been resolved through a referendum.

Democracy is fundamentally a culture

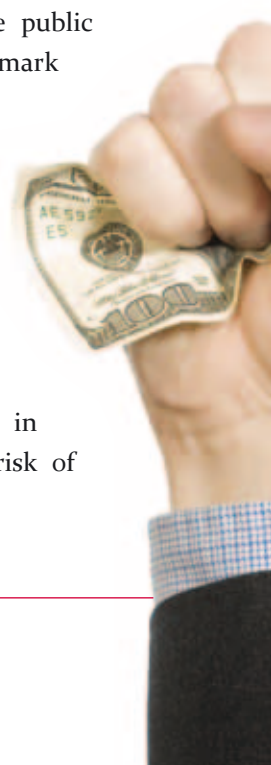
Democracy is not merely an election system where everybody, directly or indirectly, has a voice in the composition of the Parliament and the political colour of the government.

Democracy is fundamentally a culture which can only thrive on well-defined individual rights of freedom, involvement of the people, popular rooted political parties who understand the art of cooperation and strong institutions, which can resist the pressure of sectional interests, prevent corruption and deliver legal rights for the individual. And a well-functioning democracy is depending on a well educated population with open access to information from all sides.

When the Danes live as the happiest people in the world in one of the »purest« democracies, it is the result of a long historic development which began already, when the rulers of the absolute monarchy built up a rather non-corrupt Civil Service and prior to the

Constitution of 1849 allowed experiments with advisory Assemblies of the Estates of the Realm, where the voice of the people was heard. And the democracy was formed by strong popular organizations in the co-operative movement, in unions and in political parties which during the first half of the 20th century organized 25-35% of the electorate as members and were backed up by local party newspapers.

The democratic institutions are strong, and Denmark is still one of the two countries in the world with the least corruption. The population is well informed and the media are versatile, compared to most other countries. But the parties are weak and in risk of turning into mere nomination machines, increasingly dependent on affluent private sponsors with hence stronger cross winds from sectional interests. Economically, the balance has been more distorted to the advantage for the non-socialist parties who are receiving increasing support from the corporate sector, whereas a weakened Trade Union Movement is delivering fewer resources to the left wing. And the public party subsidy in Denmark compensates much less for this than in our neighbouring countries Norway and Sweden, where the public party subsidy is three kroner per voter for each one kroner given in Denmark. We are in risk of



For almost 20 years political life in Italy was dominated by Silvio Berlusconi. During that period his methods were often challenged by the Italian courts to no avail, but the people finally got tired of him. Photo: Jos van Zetten.



being affected by the same obliquities which other western democracies have already experienced plentifully, when private financial interests and the power over private media have provided some parties with much larger megaphones than others.

»Only the best governments that money can buy«

In USA, private rich men's »super-pacs« to promote their political friends have great impact on the results of the elections, and lobbyists for the wealthiest affect the legislation preposterously much. There is a risk – as the Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz told me – that America only has the best government that money can buy, not the best for the nation and the large majority of the population. In Great Britain, Rupert Murdoch's media empire with dubious methods and means has definitely affected the electorate's impressions and maybe also their voting:

Murdoch was for Blair, against Brown and for Cameron as British Prime Minister. Blair won, Brown lost and Cameron won!

For almost 20 years, the political life in Italy has been

dominated by Berlusconi, who founded his enormous fortune on connections to the mafia; and who by a corrupt prime minister was permitted to establish a private TV-monopoly, which he then used as a starting point to win the government power and to monopolise also the dissemination of news and opinion formation of the governmental TV channels. Did that provide acceptable conditions for democracy?

There are many disturbing incidents which, however, must not shade the victories of democracy in Eastern Europe after the Soviet Empire's downfall.

Only sad, though, that the victory has only been consolidated in the countries which made it into NATO and the EU, and not even all of them. In Hungary, f. inst., Prime Minister Orban is trying to consolidate his monopoly of power by tailor-making the electoral system, the courts of justice and the degree of freedom of the press to suit his own purpose.

Also in Latin America, the last 25 years is the history of the victory of democracy and the elimination of the previously so dominating

military dictatorships. Democracy is sprouting in many places in Africa. The most populous democracy in the world – India – has just implemented a painless change of government with the participation of six hundred millions of voters. The democratic framework is still standing, but staggeringly, in huge Muslim countries like Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia, but has collapsed and has been replaced by bloody conflicts and suppression in places, where three years ago we had hoped for an Arab spring. Burma is on its way out of the shadows of military dictatorship while the democracy in Thailand has been broken by a new military junta. In Russia, the democratic sprouts from the 90's have been trampled down by Putin. And the authoritarian one-party states in China and Vietnam are unaffected by democratic experiments elsewhere in Asia. The way to global democracy is very long. But therefore it is so very important that we, who have achieved most, are attentive to fight every tendency towards retrogression in our own country and on our own continent.

The Constitution needs MODERNIZATION

This seen not at least in relation to the extensive surveillance of the population, says Eva Smith, professor of law

At Folkevirke's debate event at this year's Folkemøde at Bornholm, Eva Smith, professor of law at the University of Copenhagen and former chairman of Det Kriminalpræventive Råd for 16 years, spoke up for a modernization of the Constitution.

The Constitution is still based on the principles determined in 1849, with later amendments, though; the latest in 1953 when the Lands ting was abolished and the Faeroe Islands and Greenland obtained home ruling, and a Law of Succession was attached.

It is particularly the extensive surveillance of the electronic proceedings of the citizens and the presence of surveillance cameras everywhere in today's society which makes Eva Smith sound the alarm and argue in favour of adjustments to the Constitution. In her opinion, the surveillance is an invasion of privacy.

»You have to be extremely careful when passing laws which intervene with everyday life of the ordinary citizen. This includes not only the surveillance of all citizens' electronic proceedings but also legislation which f. inst. has given the police the possibility of turning entire Copenhagen into a



Eva Smith, professor of law, the University of Copenhagen.

visitation zone. There must be a basis for searching people in the street, and the same goes for the logging of people's actions on the internet and on mobile phones«, says the professor of law in her introduction to the debate.

She finds it sad that the Parliament, through its legislation, has made it possible to implement such an extensive surveillance of the behaviour of ordinary citizens. The Court of Justice of the EU has also stated that it is inconsistent with basic rights of freedom. In a judgement of April this year, the CJEU declares the EU logging directive of 2007 invalid with reference to the fact that basically it is invasion of privacy and hence inconsistent with the EU Charter

of basic civil rights. According to the EU logging directive, the telephone companies must save large quantities of information about the people's use of internet, SMS and telephone.

How the EU-countries will react to the verdict of the CJEU is still not known. »But it is embarrassing that the EU has to inform us that the surveillance is against basic rights«, she said.

Eva Smith sees a tendency that the Parliament will more frequently pass laws without taking the time for a necessary dialogue with the experts about the consequences of the laws; this may lead to slovenly legislation and consequently quick amendments of laws, where the consequences had not been sufficiently considered from the beginning. As an example: The much disputed knife law, where the Supreme Court had to state that it cannot have been the intention of the legislators that a grandfather, who had used a penknife to peel an apple for his grandchild, had to be punished.

The professor of law informed us that the Anti-Terror Act was passed without consulting judges and university staff specialized in the rule of law. Only the police and

the crown prosecution were consulted, which is highly unusual in the preparatory stage of legislation.

The Constitution was created in a way that it is immensely complicated to amend (see fact sheet), which is also the explanation why it rarely occurs. Since the Constitution was passed in 1849, it has only been amended in 1866, 1915, 1920 and 1953.

Eva Smith feels that the Parliament missed an opportunity to amend the Constitution in connection with a referendum on amending the Act of Succession in 2009. The referendum on the Act of Succession took place on the 7th of June 2009, the same day as the election for the European Parliament. The referendum was about an amendment, meaning that the throne must be passed to the deceased sovereign's first-born child, regardless of gender. In her opinion, the connection



to a »popular case« could have been an excellent opportunity to modernize the Constitution on other vital points.

The professor of law also mentioned other reasons, why an amendment of the Constitution is imperative; among others, it is not written in the law that everybody should be treated equally.

She also pointed out that according to the Constitution, the right of property is inviolable, but on the other hand the authorities sometimes need to implement regulations without compensations.

In the debate after Eva Smith's introduction, which took place at Allinge Library, the focus was mainly on the surveillance of the electronic proceedings of the citizens. Questions also came up about the limits between freedom of speech and insult, apropos of the incident with the Mohammed-drawings some years ago.



HOW TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION:

- First the Parliament has to pass bills on amendments of the Constitution.
- Then there must be a general election.
- After the election, the Parliament has to pass the amendment of the Constitution again.
- Subsequently the passage of the Parliament is put to referendum. Here a majority have to vote yes, and only if the majority constitutes at least 40% of all those entitled to vote, the amendment of the Constitution has been passed.

Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt: - Danish democracy is in good shape and that is due to the fact people care about it.

Photo: www.ft.dk, Henrik Sørensen.

Helle Thorning-Schmidt

about the Constitution and democracy

Because Denmark is an old and firmly established democracy, we also belong in the European cooperation, declared the Prime Minister in this year's Constitution speech.

In her speech on Constitution Day this year, Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt spoke, among other subjects, about the establishment of the Constitution, the development in the Danish democracy and Denmark's role in the European cooperation. Folkevirke prints here an extract of the speech: »Denmark is one of the countries in the world with the best and most peaceful experience of implementation of democracy. And we must be thankful for that. One of the greatest strengths of our Constitution is that in spite of political differences, we agree on that. We disagree on many subjects but acknowledge the common ground rules. When the votes are counted, they are counted. There is only the Prime Minister which the majority in the Parliament nominates. We may fight over the free and equal access to health. We may be opposed to granting unfinanced tax reliefs. But we agree that the very basic freedom rights for the citizens are inalienable.

And even though some people always think that democracy is in

crisis, I, as the Prime Minister, am happy that we saw an increase in the poll at the last municipal elections. And I am happy that Denmark is one of the countries with the most voters for the EU Parliament election.

The Danish democracy is in good shape. That is because the Danish population is protecting it. And therefore Constitution Day is a day of joy.

Many of us see the Constitution of June 5 1849 as something particularly Danish. This is only partly correct. Right, it is not seen in other variations in the world. It has not been copied from our neighbours. It has grown out of long debates, battles and conflicts. And it has been amended substantially along the way.

Yet you cannot understand the spirit of the Constitution without knowing its origin and the world in which it was created.

A wave of revolutions

In 1848 Europe experienced a wave of revolutions.

The world of absolute monarchy and aristocracy succumbed to the pressure from a strong and self-conscious bourgeoisie, well assisted by a sprouting but impoverished working class. From Sicily to Zealand, the demands were heard for equality before the Law, the freedom of speech, the right of popular participation and for terminating the privileges of the high ranks.

In several of the European capitals, the citizens made open revolutions in the streets. But in far the most cities they were fought back by the reactionary State. In Paris, which was the European epicentre for social unrest, it was decided consequently to tear down the old city and build up a new with broad and straight streets.

This way the canons of the regime could crush a rebellious crowd faster and more efficiently.

A lot can be said about modern Copenhagen. But the city is not constructed to defend itself against its own citizens. Even though many road users could have this thought in the morning...

Denmark was among the few countries where the big European year of Revolutions, 1848, was actually the beginning of a peaceful transition to democracy. The bourgeoisie, the Crown, the peasants and the nobility found their way to a political compromise. The will to reach an agreement was bigger than the will to win at any prize.

We have benefitted from that ever since.

Oh yes: Along the way, the common population also obtained voting rights. Even we women were included 99 years ago. But from every thinkable dimension, Denmark is an old and firmly established democracy.

We have a strong voice

Therefore we also belong in the European cooperation. Denmark belongs in the European Union.

We have participated for over 40 years. A lot has happened since then. When we became members, the Community increased from six to nine countries. Today there are 28. And even more wish to join.

It was not an easy decision for us. It had to mature through many years of analysis and debate. And that was wise. For the framework of our political lives is affected by joining such a tight cooperation with the countries around us.

In my world picture it will always be an advantage for Denmark to be a part of the decision-making which affects us.

Looking back at the history of Europe, it is no novelty that the big nations have a lot to say. The news

is that the small countries also have a strong voice. That we are voting instead of fighting. And that we are all committed to the decisions we make. Big nations as well as small. We take part in solving barrier-breaking problems.

Without the EU, the battle against pollution would be almost hopeless. Without the EU, the battle to avoid a climate disaster would be even more complicated than it already is. And without the EU, the battle against trans-frontier crime will stop – at the border – and not like now where we cooperate to fight the criminals all the way.

Via the Internal Market, Danish enterprises have access to the most important close markets. That secures jobs.

Our young people travel abroad to study and work. That gives them skills and possibilities which no generations before them have had. And quite basically: Without the EU, peace between the European countries would not be as consolidated as it is today.

The EU is not perfect

Those who think that Denmark would be better off outside the EU or should seek a looser affiliation still owe us to present a proper alternative.

We who are warmly in favour of the European cooperation must never commit the error to say that the EU is perfect and without faults. That would be impossible with 28 countries who must agree.

There will always be a debate whether there is too much or too little cooperation? Whether the speed is too high or too low? Yes, where will it all end?

The truth is that there is no cocksure answer. There seldom is in politics.

The Danish Social-Democratic statesman Jens Otto Krag understood this better than anyone. The day after the referendum in 1972, he stated:

»The development of the European Community has not been determined once and for all.



The future model of cooperation and the tasks on the EU agenda will be decided by the strength of the various social and political powers in each of the member countries.«
I agree.

Our biggest challenge

The biggest challenge which our generation has met is no doubt the serious economic crisis. The worst since World War II.

In Denmark. As well as in Europe. Enterprises have been closing down. People, who had expected a secure old age, saw their savings vanish like dew before the sun. Thousands and thousands have lost their jobs.

Especially the young people have been seriously affected.

We are at great risk of having a generation of young people who will not get a real foothold on the labour market.

This must not happen and we Social-Democrats will fight with all our strength to provide the young generation with an entry to the labour market.

We invest in education. We invest in people.

And finally it seems that the wheels of the European economy have started to turn faster again.

This also goes for Denmark.

We got out of the increased economic control from the EU which the previous government had brought upon us. The unemployment numbers are the lowest in four years. We are back on the track.

Along the way, the EU has been blamed for this and that.

The European cooperation was first blamed that the demands on the member countries were too vague and imprecise. Why did they not interfere against the huge indebtedness? Why did they not take more action on the financial sector?

When the crisis was biting, the EU was given the responsibility to make each member country tighten up and economize. And now it was said that the demands for the financial sector were too tough.

So at the same time, the critics have claimed that the EU has been too slack and too sharp. At the same time has ruled too little and too much. That way you are always right.

The fact is that each member country is responsible for its own economic politics.

If a country has chosen to be a member of the Euro – then of course there is a demand to be in harmony with those with whom you share the monetary standard. When a large majority in the Parliament adheres to the enormous advantages which the fixed exchange rate on the kroner gives the Danish economy, this also has consequences.

But the choice is ours. Not others.

Marks and bruises

And now we are back at democracy.

We, the popular elected politicians, will fail our duty if we bow the neck and say that actually others are making the decisions. We disclaim our responsibility if we do not make the difficult deci-

sions in time. Even though it might not be popular and gives marks and bruises in the short run.

Therefore I stand by the direction, the government has chosen.

The crisis has shown us that in Denmark, we have managed in solidarity to find our own way.

We have brought balance to the public finances at the same time as we in the following years will be able to afford investment in welfare.

We have given tax reliefs to ordinary employees at the same time as pensioners with the lowest income will have an increase to their pension.

We have given better conditions to the industry at the same time as we have the greenest climate objective in the world.

We have never spent as much money on educating our young people as now at the same time as we have found 1,6 billion kroner to improve treatment for people with a mental disease.

Politics are to create results. We have done so jointly. In Europe as well as in Denmark.

Now we need to leave the crisis entirely. And with the faith in future which has always characterized the Danes, I am convinced that we shall succeed.

It provides great security to know that in the end, we decide. That is how it should be in a democracy. Those who fought before us and for us have not fought in vain.

Therefore we highly appreciate our Constitution today.«

What we can learn from the Baltic view of minorities

Folkevirke takes stock on the project New and old democracies, which has been undertaken over the last two years together with the Baltic States and Norway.



By Jeanne Bau-Madsen,
vice chairman,
Folkevirke

A democracy is known by the way which the minorities are treated, the saying goes. But are all minorities alike, how have they become minorities, and is it at all possible to treat them in the same way?

Over the last two years, Folkevirke has visited the three Baltic States and has made good friends there. Every time we have been together, minorities have been a topic. These groups take up much space in the Baltic everyday life.

The Baltic countries are very different and also have different minorities, a different view of them and do not treat them the same way. Therefore it is reasonable to discuss the three countries separately. Like one of our Estonian friends said: »During the Soviet regime we were alike, but through participation in the project New and old democracies, I have discovered that today, we are totally different.«

The Baltic States have been hit by the Stalinist deportations. The first ones took place in 1939-40. The second round was 1945-46

and the final deportations occurred in 1949. Hundreds of thousands of Balts were sent to Siberia. In 1948 all deportations, performed during the war, were made permanent. This meant that the deported could not return home, and the same applied to their children.

Estonia

After World War II, 80.000 Estonians emigrated to the western countries.

In Estonia, the deportations had emptied the third-largest city in Estonia, Narva, of inhabitants. It is an industrial city with, among others, a huge industry of oil shale. Because the Estonians were prevented from returning home, the Russians settled down in Narva. There was plenty of room and employment for all. Today, with an independent Estonia, there are 93% Russians in the city. This has created and still creates problems. About 26% of the population in Estonia belongs to the Russian minority, and they mainly live in the eastern part and particularly in the cities. Many Russian-speaking are stateless. They live in Estonia, their children were born here, but the Estonians demand that they take a test in Estonian language and culture to obtain Estonian

citizenship. Many, mainly the elderly, do not speak Estonian well enough to pass the tests. A good deal (and some are ethnic Estonians) refuse to take these tests. They have lived in the country for generations and do not find it reasonable to have to take a test to obtain citizenship in their own country. This is a problem for democracy as they naturally cannot vote at the national elections.

Apparently a change is happening regarding the Russian minority. Until now, they have taken their education in Estonia and have then left the country. Today the birth rate in Estonia is low and the country needs young educated people. Estonia is therefore working actively to make the young Russian-speaking people remain. Furthermore, the young people were born in Estonia and speak Estonian.

In Estonia, there are very few other minorities. Like one of our Estonian partners said: »Estonia is so poor that nobody wants to come here!« To this must be added that the Estonian language is very complicated. It is the same family of languages as Finnish and Hungarian and is not understood by the population in the other Baltic countries.



Latvia

Latvia has fought for their independence against the Swedes, the Germans and in 1917 against Tsar-Russian administrators and the German Nobility. Between the two world wars, all the Baltic countries were independent. From 1941 to 44 Latvia, together with the other Baltic States, was subjugated to Germany as the German province Ostland. After the war, Latvia became a part of the Soviet Union. In 1945-46 105.000 Latvians were deported to Siberia and in 1949, another 70.000 were deported because of their rebellion against the compulsory collectivization of agriculture. 65.000 Latvians emigrated to the West after World War II. The resistance against the Russian regime was finally crushed in 1952. After this, Russian was implemented as national language and a systematic immigration of Russians and other nationalities from the great Soviet-Russian Empire was initiated to minimize the influence of the Latvian population. The Latvian nationalists saw this as colonialist politics.

Today Latvia is a multi-cultural state with just 52% Latvians. There are 34% Russians and the rest of the population is from Belarus, Ukraine, Poland and Lithuania. Furthermore, there is a small minority called the livers. They have their own language which is spoken only by a very few old people. The livers have been in Latvia since the Middle Ages. The capital of Latvia is Riga which was one of the largest cities in Tsar-Russia. After World War II, 1,5 million people from all over the Soviet Union immigrated to Riga and the city had an important position in the Soviet-Russian industry. Like in Estonia, a part of the Russian minority is stateless. These inhabitants are precluded from being state-employed, from establishing a political party and from owning land. Many of them, however, have become citizens and have great influence in the Latvian Parliament. In Riga there is an entire quarter with Russian churches, schools and shops. Only Russian is heard here.

In Latvia there are laws like in the rest of the EU about how to treat minorities and which rights they have. When you look at the Latvian history, you can see how they have fought to preserve their language and culture for centuries, and still only half of the population is ethnical Latvian.

Lithuania

Also Lithuania was severely affected by Stalin's deportations. Yet 84% of the population in Lithuania is ethnical Lithuanian. Furthermore there are about six percent Poles and five percent Russians. Tsar-Russia regarded Lithuania as an integrated part of Russia and called it the Northwest Territory from 1832. From 1864 till 1905 an intensive »russification« was implemented – Lithuanian texts were translated into Russian and written in the Russian alphabet and the Roman-catholic church was persecuted. It was not until 1905 that the border between Russia and Lithuania was marked. In 1920 the region Vilnius was

occupied by Poland. This occupation lasted until 1939 when Poland was divided between the Soviet Union and Germany and in reality ceased to exist. This occupation implied that there are about 80% Poles in this region today.

We visited the Polish club in Druskininkai, which has existed for 25 years. The members of the club were mainly elderly people who attended the club for the social purposes. The young people had often left for other EU-countries. Our hosts told us that many Poles were angry because the Lithuanians did not give back land which originally had belonged to them. Some had taken this to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and had in some cases been proven right. The Poles also resented that their names were changed, as some Polish letters do not exist in the Lithuanian alphabet. Last year there had been extensive strikes

among the Poles, because the State had demanded that all school children had to pass their exams in Lithuanian language.

All over Lithuania, tolerance centres have been established. Here they work on analyzing the deportations in 1940 and the Holocaust in Lithuania. Out of the 200.000 Jews, who lived in Lithuania before World War II, 20.000 survived. These fled to Russia and have later emigrated to Israel. There are 95 centres spread all over Lithuania. Volunteers are working here, often adolescent students. The idea of letting students work at these centres is that through the work they themselves will become tolerant.

Conclusion

A democracy is known by the way which the minorities are treated. This project has taught us that it is important to know the history of how certain minorities have become residents in a country.

To treat a minority with a basis in an occupation not older than 25 years, in the same way as a minority who has lived in the country since the Middle Ages, is not without problems. An EU member country of course has the formalities in order, but that does not mean that the population is familiar with the legislation concerning minorities.

Folkevirke has learnt from the Estonians to look forward. Minorities can be an active for a country. We have seen that the Latvians have managed to set the country right again after the independence. This would not have been possible without cooperation between all citizens.

In Lithuania we were told about the tolerance centres. To involve young people in the work to respect other people with another cultural background, as you do in these centres, is a good idea which we could profit from.



The parliament in Tallinn, Estonia.
Photo: Samuli Lintula.



The freetown
Christiania,
Copenhagen.



Haugesund, Norway.



Town Hall Square in Vilnius, Lithuania.
Photo: Marcin Białek.



Latvia
– the capital
of Riga
at sunset.



What impact is necessary to get the democratic development in the society?

Estonia gives a take on this after having participated in the project »New and old democracies«.



*By Sulev Valdmaa,
Head of the Civic
Education Centre,
Jaan Tõnisson
Institute, Estonia*

The Jaan Tõnisson Institute from Estonia was one of the partners in the two-year project »New and old democracies« (NODE). The idea of the project was to bring together old and young democratic countries in the Nordic-Baltic area to learn from each other about democracy. Actually each project that an organisation comes through has a great value and teaches several lessons for the future. So was the story with NODE.

One common pre-condition for the partners from Denmark, Norway, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia was the established and functioning democratic society that could be introduced and learnt. As we know – despite the common characteristics of democracy as such, it has usually local features. Just about discovering the exciting country features of democracy was in my mind our project.

After finishing all the project seminars and activities I would like to start this short article with a conclusion-like statement:

In we did not discover so many differences between the democracies in the sense of their »age«, but

we just experienced local strong sides of functioning of it. Already what is old, what new democracy, is questionable.

In Estonia for instance in 1866 was constituted local government reform that launched rather wide peasants' self rule. In 1918 young Estonian Republic adopted one of the most democratic constitutions in the post WW1 Europe and entire World. Cultural Autonomy Law of 1926 gave to the national minorities living here rights and freedoms that were unprecedented not only for that time but are to many countries in the present World as well. So – is Estonia really a young democracy? But no doubt, the longevity of democracy of the society has meaningful importance. We experienced it during our Project seminars and meetings.

»Taste« and learn

From the point of view of the aim and goal of NODE it was nevertheless not measuring and comparing the age of democracy in the partner countries. The Jaan Tõnisson Institute wanted most to take a look and »taste« partners' everyday life and to learn on the basis of it from each other's democracy.

In Denmark the solid background and basis of democracy was felt in each step that we took there.



During the Nordplus-project the participants learned a lot about daily life and democracy development in the partner countries. Pictured here is The Occupation Museum in Tallinn, Estonia, with posters and sculptures from the time of Sovjet occupation.

Sulev Valdmaa, seen here talking to the vice chairman of Folkevirke Jeanne Bau-Madsen: - The project has been useful for all the participating organizations and individuals.

Values that were set and followed by everyone became visible for instance via multiculturalism of the country. We saw how the people from the other cultures settled in Denmark learned how to be a proud part of Danish society and how the Danes welcomed and supported it. We met people in Christiania, country in the country, which freely exists with its own rules differing from the rest of the society and was nevertheless accepted by everybody. In Denmark everybody can be just freely himself/herself! And this is not a wild assertiveness but an art of being equal among equals.

In Norway the nature sets many preconditions and maybe even rules also for democracy. Very important, as it seemed to me, is local community life that is often determined by separation by fjords, mountains and rivers from the neighbours. We explored especially how the young people are brought and involved into the local life. In Sveio commune we followed for instance the Youth Council sitting, where youngsters made practical, including financial decisions. Bringing people already in their young age into responsible decision-making in the community was impressive. Visiting the museum of resistance underlined for me the meaning of local people's arts and braveness to come through the hard times and keep your democratic values.



Baltic differences

Latvia is a close neighbour to Estonia. One may think that it means first similarity with your own society. In a way of course it is so. From the other hand, way of Latvia to democracy that the country has passed after the collapse of communism differs from ours. It was interesting to experience how works the Parliament of our Southern neighbour, how the society deals with the issues of family, how the family life is valued.

It should be mentioned that one essential element of each our seminar was learning something new for adult education in methodical and practical means. Practical approach of Riga seminar was especially influential as it taught us skills of applied arts that the participants didn't have before. And it was done in the frame of learning about democracy!

The final seminar in Lithuania was dedicated to the minorities. It was an interesting coincidence that the partner country that is less

multicultural from all of the others touched this particular topic. Despite rather monoethnic country that keeps strongly so to say classical values, we got informed, how the ethnic Lithuanian majority guarantees the rights and freedoms to the smaller ethnic groups of Poles, Russians, Byelorussians... The project in general gave to each participating organisation and person much information and emotions to analyse. Most important – by learning mutually from each other, we all were guided to self analyse, and for sure, learning-by-doing was strongly included to everything that we did.

Answering the question asked in the heading of my article, I believe that the project taught us one very important thing:

For democratic development openness, mutual respect and readiness for cooperation are essential characteristics to make an impact.

The Jaan Tõnisson Institute thanks the Nordic Council of Ministers for supporting of the Project and all the partners for wonderful cooperation.

How has democratic dialogue changed your way of thinking about the democracy?

Lithuania is a new democracy on the fasttrack after many years of suppression from the former Soviet Union. The Lithuanian group tells about their benefit from the Nordplus-project.



Danguole Cesaityte-Rutkauskiene, EFL and History teacher, MA, Nordplus Adult project »New and old democracies«, local coordinator, Druskininkai education centre, Druskininkai, Lithuania

It is quite a complicated question to answer, but getting into a deeper analysis of the answer to this question takes me back to the roots of appearance of a democratic dialogue. The question »What is a democratic dialogue?« arises immediately and its explanation is significant in realizing the effects on how democratic dialogue has changed my way of thinking about the democracy.


According to Danish coordinators of Nordplus Adult project, »New and old democracies« implemented in 2012-2014, Jeanne Baumadsen and Annemarie Balle »In Denmark there is a tradition for the democratic dialogue dating back to the 19th century. In 1849 Denmark got a free constitution. It was the result of a cooperation between well-educated citizens who wished to have a share of the powers held by the King. The King yielded the powers voluntarily, and on June 5, 1849 Denmark became a democratic state. Parallel to writing the new constitution,

the fathers of the constitution were discussing how to educate the Danes to become active citizens and democratic people. Many of the ideas originating from these deliberations form the basis of the teaching and education as it is practiced in Denmark today. In the 19th century 80 percent of the Danish population were country people. The ideas of N.F.S. Grundtvig regarding education of the Danish country people were of great significance to the democratic development in Denmark. In Grundtvig's opinion, a free and active adult education should not build on books and teachers' authority, but on the interaction of equal conversation between student and teacher – the democratic dialogue. At these schools the Danish youth gathered and received an education that made them active citizens in the Danish democracy. Folk high schools still exist all over Denmark. Here Danes congregate from country and towns and take part in lectures, discussions and study circles dealing with a wide spectrum of subjects. Today Danes from all social classes and of all ages attend the folk high school education. They live at the schools and the courses last from one week to one year«.

Taking into account these historical facts and Danish historical

experience of a democratic dialogue, Nordplus-project »New and old democracies« had the main purpose – to exchange experiences between old and young democracies. The theme for the work in the project has been democracy. Citizens in old democracies know that democracy is not only a means of control and government, it is a lifestyle. In young democracies the older generation is often brought up under totalitarian regimes and therefore, is not used to the democratic way of life. The younger generation is more used to it because they are brought up in a democratic society.

Furthermore, they are more or less familiar with foreign languages, they surf on the internet to find other and more differentiated information and they often travel a lot and thereby, acquire more differentiated pictures of other societies and ways of government. During the 2 years of the project there have been 5 project meetings where the democratic dialogue had been developed a great deal. All 5 meetings in 5 participating countries – Denmark, Estonia, Norway, Latvia and Lithuania – had an impact on my way of thinking about the democracy and how it works in old democratic countries – Denmark and Norway. Besides, there is always good things to



learn from new democracies as well and share our experiences in this way developing our democratic views. Developing democracy means changing people's attitudes towards a lot of things in society and politics.

First of all, it was surprisingly interesting information that I gained during the first meeting in Copenhagen in 2012. The line of democracy in Denmark is going from the Middle ages; moreover, it is already in people's minds, thoughts and activities whereas 3 Baltic countries have been affected by soviet occupation and democracy is still developing rapidly. The second thing that changed my way of thinking about democracy was our visit to a controversial region – Christiania (freetown).

One more thing that was unusual for me – respect to work, diligence and not time – wasting for unnecessary things or discussions. Time is valued in a great deal. Thus, real encounters with a democratic way of life in Denmark have had a great impact on changing my attitude towards people with different opinions, thoughts and lifestyle. Tolerance at a high level in Denmark have developed tolerance inside me.

Secondly, the meeting in Tallinn, Estonia, was marked by the problem solution activities on gender equality issues common in all 5 participating countries. Three issues have been raised for the three participants' groups:

women's raising children participation in municipal life, disability issues and discrimination based on age. The solutions to the problems had to be presented. The second meeting gave me the common and different view on gender equality in five participating countries. I have learned how to see a problem and find the most significant ways to solve it. We have worked in mixed groups in order to find common ways of equality issues in Europe. After this meeting I have found out a lot about Danish and Norwegian society, about different attitudes towards people with different sexual orientation, not being discriminated at an elderly age. It has also changed my view towards democracy in old democratic countries. There is a lot to learn, but a lot of things might not get their place in our society.

Thirdly, during the third meeting that was organized in Sveio, Norway, I got acquainted with the work activities of Sveio municipality students' council. The students are highly motivated and creative. The observation of the Norwegian Constitution (Independence) Day parade, which is the largest celebration of the year, proved the high level of democracy. All, big and small, were dressed in national costumes, waving national flags or having the flag color ribbon lapel. I have experienced the wind of democratic way of living in Norway, the attitude to migrants

and high respect to national democratic values.

Moreover, the fourth meeting held in Riga, Latvia in October 2013 under the title »Democracy in a family« gave a colourful picture of a family in participating countries. Excursion to Latvian Parliament (Saeima), a meeting with a parliament member Daina Kazaka, discussion on the state policy in family matters gave me a common view about a family policy in Latvia. Family traditions in each country are different, but the common things unites them – love of parents to their children.

Finally, the last meeting held in Vilnius and Druskininkai, Lithuania, under the title »How do we treat national minorities in our countries?« developed tolerance towards other nationalities living next to us.

In conclusion, a democratic dialogue that has always been a key form of communication during all 5 meetings has changed my attitude towards democracy and highly developed such features as tolerance, respect to other people's opinion, different thinking and problem solving. I would like to point out that democracy should start from an early childhood, be developed in a family and flourish in our societies. It should be a process and a way of living and thinking, not only declaration or just articles in our constitutions.



The visit to Norway coincided with the celebrations of Independence Day to mark an old democracy.

NODE – a project, learning about democracy in The New Nordic Area

New and old democracies in Nordic countries – Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Denmark and Norway



*By Olav Bergmål,
the municipality
of Sveio*

What have I learnt?

After being together with the group five times in Copenhagen, Tallin, Haugesund/Sveio, Riga and Vilnius/Druskininkai has it changed my opinion about democracy in Nordic Countries?

With my background as employed at the town hall in a small rural municipality I was curious what I would learn. I have been teacher in society subject in lower secondary school, principal for 18 years, local and region politician since 1987, I have done a lot of European and some Nordic projects. So here are my impressions:

People I met

Thank you for your hospitality in Tallinn, in Riga, in Druskininkai and in Copenhagen. You are all representing a kindness and attitude to democracy that gives hope for a good future for people in your countries. Because democratic value comes from every single person who believes in rights for every individual person to take part in life as equals. One person, one vote. It is based on the opinion that we are equal.

Democracy and human rights

Democracy is based on respect for human rights without any compromising. It is so easy for the majority to use power. When it comes to ethnic, gender, language or religious questions, it is so easy to make rules that take objective rights from the individual. Human

rights is an individual right, not a group right. So the right to belong to an ethnic, a religious and language group is not a group right but an individual right.

Democracy in macro politics

Visiting the parliaments in the Baltic countries taught me that the Nordic way of thinking is the right way to make good democracy in countries with a tradition of dictatorship and occupation for many generations. Turning the face to Nordic countries is also a way of turning your back to dictatorship. A dream of freedom and better life connect Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to Denmark, Norway and the other old democratic countries.

Democracy as an attitude

I have learnt that it is difficult to

change from lifestyle to a free and democratic country when you come from a totalitarian state where taking local or individual initiative to changes in society is perceived an almost criminal activity. But this is the process people in the new democracies have to go through. Because they don't have many good domestic role models in their own countries, role models in lifestyle in old Nordic democracy can be useful. I think that more contacts between persons in the Baltic and Scandinavian countries can enhance the democratic attitudes among ordinary people in the new democracies. On the other hand, people in Scandinavia can learn that democratic values are something we have to work for always.

Democracy in local life

Family life, equality in society, minorities and how to involve youth in democracy have been the main topics to study. We all gave short overview over these subjects. Through meetings we learnt how different it can be, and that we all have the same goal. It was interesting to learn that for instance sexual freedom which we take for granted in Denmark and Norway is almost forbidden in the Baltic countries. On the other hand we see that the Baltic countries have an agenda to build their nations to be Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania after long time occupation. This agenda does not exist in Denmark and Norway. This has a big influence on local life for the individuals.

Lifestyle, democracy and living standards

It is obvious that the economic situation in the new democracies is very different from the old ones. Lack of work is a big problem in the Baltic area and a big challenge to democratic development. But people seem convinced that the Nordic democratic way is the best. I agree, of course. In Denmark and Norway we can see that less caring for democracy can be a challenge. We see it in human rights thinking and writing in the social media. It is not in any position to destroy democracy. But based on the living standards we enjoy in Norway and Denmark I would expect that people did not complain so much.

Value of visiting each other

For me it has been of great value to visit Copenhagen, Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius and Druskininkai. Visiting a museum for the occupation in the Baltic area and parliaments in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius taught me a lot about how life had been during occupations by Nazi Germany and the Sovjet Union. No wonder that democracy is so important in the Baltic states. Visiting the National Bank in Riga and talk about the Euro and the connection to Europe was also very interesting. To see the capitals in the partner countries with my own eyes has made me understand a lot. And it is very much on my mind. Meeting important persons working with human rights in Tallinn, Polish minorities and see the class learning about mino-

rities at school in Druskininka was also very interesting.

Local outcome

When we hosted the project youth democracy was the subject. Our youth council conducted a meeting in English language for our guests. In fact they have done the same later for Polish youth that want to establish a youth council in Poznan. I think the meetings in the NODE-project made it possible to do so once again. Showing Norwegians celebrating our Constitutional Day on May 17 to our guests was also a good experience. The culture department at our town hall have now done a Nordic project and got experience to go to other countries, to make website and to make network. I think it has been a project for learning for our organization that can be useful in the near future.

Thank you

During the project we have met a lot of people who have taught us valuable stuff. Thank you all. Everyone has made great efforts to host the project groups. Thanks for good planning and programs and to our Danish friends Annemarie Balle and Jeanne Baumadsen for invitations, administration and coordination.

Thanks also to the Nordic Council for supporting this project. It is important that people on grass root levels can meet. We now know more about each other's lives and countries in a democracy perspective. That is important because I think we now are ambassadors for the Nordic model for democracy.



Latvia is having difficulties in dealing with minority issues

In the Nordplus supported project »New and old democracies« the group from Latvia has focused on social conditions, protection of minorities and healthcare



*By Jelena Suhova,
Radosas Iniciativas
Centrs, Latvia*

In the modern world the acknowledgement of the value of democracy has become a widespread phenomenon while in the Western world – a generally accepted standard. Democracy as a way of governance and the order of life management exists for people and serves for their satisfaction in all aspects of social life.

The attempt to compare the democratic development of different social environments starts with the question: *How in general the democracy can be evaluated in society?*

Here is represented our vision which we have drawn out of the project activities in Nordplus-project »New and old democracies« and on the base of studied materials on the subject.

What is democracy?

Not always positive attitude toward democracy and its values have been dominant. For two thousand years, the majority of

politicians and political thinkers considered democracy as inferior way of public administration, which sacrificed higher values and the general public good in favor of group (the masses) interests. The distinguished ancient Greek thinker Plato called democracy »the madness of the majority«. Even in the first half of the 20th century outspoken opponents of democracy had rather considerable influence – to remember the denial of democracy during 20s-30s by the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, in most of Europe, including Latvia.



Jelena Suhova: - The partners in the project »New and old democracies« have strived to study, understand and evaluate how democracy works, and we still have a lot of work to do.

Nowadays no one questions whether democracy is necessary. Instead the question is:

What democracy is needed?

The letter is also important because there is no single universal »democracy«, which is equally applicable to any society. In different societies depending on the specific character of their historical development, cultural traditions and other factors, the universal values of democracy materialize differently. Thereby the issue of the nature of democracy, of the dividing line between a democratic and non-democratic public administration, of the opportunities to access the degree of democracy development and to formulate recommendations for its further development becomes significant and politically sensitive. Therefore it is natural that the amount and diversity of literature devoted to problem of democracy have been increasing. According to the U.S. President Abraham Lincoln who characterized the democracy as »the government of the people, by the people and for the people«, the democracy is described as »political power originating from the people, self-government of the people and government in the interest of the people«. In ancient Greece – the birthplace of democracy – it was understood as a political system where the interests of the poorest part of society were placed above the interests of the wealthy and aristocrats.

The democratic development of Latvian state and accordingly the

comparison of the success on that way with countries of so called »Old democracy« are to be considered in different aspects.

As the frames of evaluation of the democratic development we considered following aspects of social life.

The history of democratic state, nationhood and identity

Article 2 of the Latvian Constitution – Sātversme – establishes that the sovereign power in the Latvian state belongs to the Latvian people defined

as a community of citizens. The Constitution thus determines the membership of the political nation without any reference to ethnicity. The possibility to become a member of the political nation is in principle open to persons of any ethnicity or nationality, although there are in practice several state-determined limitations to this openness. In Latvia no more than 80 percent of residents are citizens of Latvia.

Equality

The base of it is equal protection by the law of all any society member regardless backgrounds. Laws must be formulated clearly enough for a person to be able to anticipate consequences of his/or her actions and the laws must be available to the public.



The Lithuanians are acutely aware of their dramatic history and their new won freedom after the Soviet occupation. Here is a memorial for those who fought and died in the battle for freedom.

In Latvian Republic in 1996 the Constitutional Court was established which should be considered a separate, independent institution of the judiciary. The independence of the courts is secured constitutionally by Article 83 of the Constitution and also guaranteed by laws and treaties which Latvia has ratified after the restoration of independence.

Acknowledgment of cultural differences and protection of minorities

The large number of minorities as a share of the population distinguishes Latvia from most other countries and gives special importance to the question of minority rights. There has been substantial progress in the area of minority rights in Latvia and also some in the level of state support for the development of minority cultures.

Soon after the independence Latvia acceded or signed binding international human rights documents which define a large part of the international norms in relation to the right to preserve and promote one's ethnic identity, culture and language. The Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was signed by Latvia in 1995, although ratified by Parliament only more than 10 years later mainly regarding for a definition of national minority. There are also norms in national law which acknowledge cultural differences and guarantee minority rights.

It is pointed to a relatively high ethnic tolerance level in Latvian society among majority and traditional minorities. However, the state language policy, namely limits of the use of minority languages, unpopular among the representatives of the minorities education reform in Latvia and implementation of the bilingual educational methods, the issue of effective participation which has not received attention in Latvia, insufficient attention given to the field of anti-discrimination are the points of serious concern. As society becomes more diverse with global mobility, there is a reason for doubts about the preparedness of the Latvian society if these issues continue to be ignored.

Public activity of the inhabitants and particularly youth activity in political life

Non-governmental organizations and the youth councils are active in Latvia in almost all areas through-

out all of country, but their territorial distribution is uneven. They are more common in economically active municipalities – Riga, Cesis, Valmiera and areas surrounding these cities. As the social surveys show, due to both external conditions and subjective factors the number of people participating in political and social activities and voluntary work is increasing. And the level of acknowledge about the role of NGOs in policy making is increasing too.

Protection of the health of the population

The health of people in all spheres and stages of life is protected under the LR law »On Social Security« which includes the section »The right to healthcare«.

Latvian government has accepted and in 2003 the Minister for Welfare signed The Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM) which eva-

luated the overall situation of Latvian society by lifespan and mortality indicators.

Many factors limit the right of the people to receive good quality healthcare, including:

- A lack of understanding and information on the minimum state-guaranteed medical services.
- Social care and rehabilitation services network is insufficiently developed.
- Incompatibility between available healthcare funding and the actual prices of services.
- Shortage of medical personnel.

The role of participants of the Project »New and old democracies« in our vision put a task of not so much comparison of the democracies but rather studying, understanding and evaluation of the democratic level of public life and

governing in our own society on the ground of awareness about these in partner countries, and the drawing out our own conception and get an idea what can NGOs do in this matter. From our opinion the task was accomplished completely, and there are many issues of people's social activity in our country.



During a Latvian meeting in the Nordplus project »New and old democracies« the participants were asked to work with Folkevirke's »Cultural Mosaic«.

Methods

The following methods are part of the result of the work made of the participants in the Nordplus supported project »New and old democracies« from September 2012 to September 2014. We have chosen the most important methods used at our partner meetings. Because the project has been involving 5 different partner countries with different pedagogical traditions the methods will appear in a different way. All the methods have been tried during the project and the participants have found them usefull.

The Cultural Mosaic

The purpose – Why?

- Sometimes when we talk we misunderstand each other despite using the same words.
- The same words may give different associations to different people.

Hence the purpose is

- To facilitate debate speaking from images discussing our associations/point of view.
- To bridge gaps and promote dialogue/better understanding between or within groups.

The Cultural Mosaic is a debate game, which bridges and enhances dialogues through the creation of a common understanding. Despite we use the same words we may have different associations and by using the deck of cards the participants will be inspired to initiate a debate starting from individual or common associations through images.

How to use The Cultural Mosaic – A Quick Reference Guide

1. Choose the theme(s) you wish to focus on.

2. Pick a deck of either the printed debate cards from Folkevirke or the free online version to download and print.
3. Divide the participants into groups of 4-6 persons.
4. Introduce the questions the group(s) should focus on.
5. Each participant chooses 2-3 debate cards they find fitting the theme and question.
6. Each participant tells the other group members about the chosen images (e.g. associations or experiences and/or traditions linked to the image and theme).
7. While the images are being discussed all group members can add their own experiences and associations linked to the various images.
8. The group agrees on 3 cards they feel covers and illustrates the group discussions within the theme/question.
9. The group shares the chosen images with the other groups and explains why the cards were chosen and the link to the question(s) debated (as a tool to share the main points of the

various group discussions between the groups).

10. A common discussion between all groups may be facilitated to share points of views, ask questions and elaborate on the individual group discussion.

Ideas for setting up for the debate

There are many ways to use the material and below you will find a few suggestions for the various themes – but you may as well yourself add more or amend the below to fit your need and purpose.

- Invite for a study circle to debate the theme: »What is typical Danish« using the poster as invitation and the flyers for the participants to ensure all has a common understanding and knowledge of the theme. The questions listed in the flyer can be used to kick start the debate. If you wish to study and explore the theme further the flyer contains a list of literature.
- Place the full amount of cards from the theme: »Solidarity« (or any other theme chosen) with



the image facing up on a large table. Initiate a debate using the questions from the flyer. This way of using the material may be beneficial for use in larger groups and/or workshops.

- Kick start a debate during for instance parent-teacher meetings at school, kindergarten or youth clubs. Initiate the debate asking the participants to pick images they find relates to their image of »family« and discuss using the questions of the flyer or other themes relating to family and family life.

- Exhibit the posters at the local library and share the flyers with the guests to encourage spontaneous discussions among visitors.

- Language schools and organisations working with integration and culture may find the »Culture« and »Tradition« themes useful to facilitate and initiate discussions. It is important to know, understand and discuss the traditions and culture of any new society one may become a part of. Opening up for dialogue and discussion will

as well allow room for pointing out both similarities and differences from own cultural background.

- The theme »Tradition« can be useful when facilitating dialogue and debate among and between generations. How many and which type of traditions are important to keep and pass on and do we allow room for creation of new traditions? Use the cards as starting point when initiating debate between different generations.

Decision making Tree

Goals of the activity are

1. Elaborating learners knowledge about the issues chosen for analyse.
2. Developing learners teamwork and analytical skills.
3. Enhancing learners presentation skills.

The activity can be arranged with the groups of 3-30 participants. The time needed for the activity depends on the number of participants but cannot be less than approximately 30 minutes even if there are only 3 participants.

Participants do need prepared »Decision making Tree handout« or they can draw it following facilitator's instructions by themselves.

Description

1. Facilitator will formulate together with the learners/partici-

pants a problem that needs a solution.

2. The participants will form discussion groups consisting of 3-10 people.

3. All the groups will discuss three alternative ways for solving the same formulated commonly problem.

4. Each group will »document« on the »Decision making Tree handout«

[1] their three alternative ideas for solving the problem, so that the strengths and weaknesses of each solution will be listed on the handout. So all together – three alternative ways of solutions to solve the problem will be examined by each group on the handout in written form.

5. Out of three alternatives one will be voted by the group-members as the best solution.

6. The groups will introduce all the alternative ways offered by the group to the other groups explaining the strengths and weaknesses of each solution and summarizing why the winning solution was voted in the group to be the favorite solution.

7. Finally – general discussion about the process of the work done in the groups and about the offered by the other groups different solutions will follow. *[1] NB! The handout should be large enough and preferably in landscape format offering sufficient space for analyzing each solution's strengths and weaknesses.*

The democratic dialogue

Goal of the activity

Educate people to be good democrats.

Description

In Denmark we have a tradition for the democratic dialogue dating back to the 19th century.

In 1849 Denmark got a free constitution. It was the result of cooperation between well-educated citizens who wished to have a share of the powers held by the King. The King yielded the powers voluntarily, and on June 5, 1849 Denmark became a democratic state. Parallel to writing the new constitution, the fathers of the constitution were discussing how to educate the Danes to become active citizens and democratic people.

Many of the ideas originating from these deliberations form the basis of the teaching and education as it is practiced in Denmark today.

In the 19th century 80 percent of the Danish population was country people. The ideas of N.F.S. Grundtvig regarding education of

the Danish country people were of great significance to the democratic development in Denmark.

N.F.S. Grundtvig lived from 1783 to 1872. He was educated in theology and acted as a clergyman at various places in Denmark. He spent his last active years as a vicar at Vartov, a parish in Copenhagen. He has written several hundred hymns, which are still being sung in Danish churches and at high festivals in Danish homes and schools. Besides his religious activities he was a politician and a member of the Danish parliament. In his speeches and writings Grundtvig worked actively to educate good Danish democrats. He claimed that it was easier to acquire new knowledge in one's youth – not in one's childhood. The way to educate was through »the living word«. In Grundtvig's opinion a free and active adult education should not build on books and teachers' authority, but on the interaction of equal conversation between student and tea-

cher – the democratic dialogue. These ideas and thoughts were realized at numerous folk high schools which sprang up all over Denmark, the first one in 1844 close to the Danish/German border in Rødding. At these schools the Danish youth gathered and received an education that made them active citizens in the Danish democracy. Folk high schools still exist all over Denmark. Here Danes congregate from country and towns and take part in lectures, discussions and study circles dealing with a wide spectrum of subjects. Common to all the folk high schools is that the education is liberal. The education is non-formal meaning that the students do not pass an examination at the end of the course. Today Danes from all social classes and of all ages attend the folk high school education. They live at the schools and the courses last from one week to one year.

Description of Educational methodology Debates

Goal of the activity

To practice debates for learning.

Description

Debate is the educational program teaching a culture of speech, application of psychological laws, prin-

ciples of logic. Debates are useful both for teachers and for students in gaining the experience of speaking up and listening. Making beforehand researches on interesting and important debate topics debate participants deeply study a

new knowledge and get a lot of information for everyday use.

Debating by students on educational context is the conversation in time frames between two teams of participants (supporting and contradictory ones). An estimation of



arguments makes a court consisting of one or more judges. The task of participant team is to persuade the court in advantage of its arguments over ones of the opponent team. Each team is prepared for debating both on the supporting and contradictory view of discussing item. Thus they train to lead the debates as the argument of opinions but not of persons.

Debates are here hold in three languages – Latvian, Russian, English, which gives an advantage of improving language skills along with developing the skills of speaking out and gaining new information. The participation in debates of the representatives of national minorities in Latvia provides the process of integration in

Latvian society and creates an advantageous environment for cooperation.

The participation in debates helps

- To present, reason and defend one's opinion.
- To be tolerant and respectful to opponent's point of view.
- To develop critical and analytical way of thinking.
- To improve communication skills and attentive listening.
- To work with different information sources and materials, to perform a research work.
- To develop skills of arranging of materials and ideas.
- To develop public performance and persuasion skills.

- To develop language skills and speaking other language.

The main principles of the educational debates are

- To practice debates for learning!
 - Developing is most important than triumph. Debates provide the developing of necessary skills for living in modern democratic society.
- To debate with respect to the opponent! – Respect is an overall idea of the debates. The debates as an action start with human's curiosity. Debaters on different opinions are searching together for true answers, and they have to be proper in arguments, substantiation and interrogation answers.

Intercultural Group work

Goals of the activity are

To enhance students' cross-cultural capability and increase their sense of belonging.

Description

If teachers ask students to tackle assessment tasks and projects in

groups, it can lead to rich learning experiences. Group work in culturally diverse groups can enhance students' cross-cultural capability and increase their sense of belonging. However, these outcomes are neither inevitable nor easily achieved – they rest on tea-

chers' pedagogic interventions (Montgomery, 2009) and when these are absent, much less positive outcomes are common as Australian researchers Summers and Volet (2008) found when they surveyed home and international students.



S-G-T analyzing

Goal of the activity is

To develop an organization.

Description

S-G-T ANALIZING.

S = situation here and now in the organization.

G = goal for our developing.

T = tasks and tools to reach the goal and improve the situation.

General description

The group /individual describe the situation as best as possible.

Then it's time to describe the realistic goal.

And see what tools that is available and what tasks that must be done.

Thought discussion and analyzing the participants see what is realistic and what is not realistic to

work with. This is also the normal basic way to write a political case from administration to political, democratic treatment in local council and committees in Sveio and Norway.

Method we use in developing of organizations.

The study circle as the workshop of democracy

Goals of the activity are

The participants will acquire a knowledge which enables them to partake in the democratic process and thereby influence their own life conditions.

Description

A study circle can be defined as a group of people who, by the independent efforts of each participant, look at various subjects based on specially selected study material.

The participants of a study circle get the opportunity of learning to know themselves and recognize own talents and limitations in interaction with the other members of the group, despite the differences of social classes and age-groups that may exist. During the process many talents are brought to light. The aim of the study circle work is to examine a common sub-

ject which is of interest to all the group members. In this way they acquire knowledge and understanding of political, cultural, and social connections. The participants will acquire a knowledge which enables them to partake in the democratic process and thereby influence their own life conditions.

The tools of the study circle are dialogue, discussion and argumentation – all of these being expressions of conversation which form part of the democratic way of life.

Dialogue. Conversation between two parties expressing their views on a well-defined subject. Remember they do not have to agree on the subject!

Discussion. An exchange of opinions between several parties.

Argumentation. A demonstration of proof to be used in the

dialogue and discussion. An argument is said to be logically valid if the conclusion is built on premises – conditions – that are all true.

The purpose of a study circle is to motivate the participants to put in an independent effort, as well as to learn how to analyze and evaluate. The total benefit of the efforts of the group cannot be measured, since the results and conclusions of the work will be different for each member of the group, even if they are based on the same facts, because the members have different personal experiences, attitudes and backgrounds. It is natural to assume that a study circle will be more dynamic the more different its members are. On the other hand, the members should not be so different that they do not understand each other. This could be the result if their backgrounds are culturally different, if for



instance they come from different countries or profess different religions and thereby have different social and ethical norms.

In a well-functioning study circle all contributions have equal value,

and the conversations take place according to a fixed set of rules that leaves room for each member of the group. On top of the experience, the members increase their self-worth and ability to formulate

own views. They get the experience of navigation which is necessary for taking part in the social life.

The study circle may be called the workshop of democracy.

The »Zoom-method«

Goal of the activity is

Co-operation.

Description

Explanation of the methods »Zoom and rezoom«.

This method is a hands-on visual group activity that focuses on collaboration, communication and problem solving.

This activity can be applied to a diverse group without a common spoken language.

- This game is based on the intriguing, wordless, picture books »Zoom« and »Re-Zoom« by Istvan Banyai which consist of 30 sequential »pictures within pictures«. The Zoom narrative moves from a rooster to a ship to a city street to a desert island and outer space. Zoom has been published in 18 countries. The Re-Zoom narrative moves from an Egyptian hieroglyphic to a film set to an elephant ride to a billboard to a train.
- To create the game from the book, separate the picture pages of the book into one page sheets and laminate or place in clear plastic sleeves to protect them and prolong usage.

- Hand out one picture per person (make sure a continuous sequence is used).
- Explain that participants may only look at their own pictures and must keep their pictures hidden from others.
- Encourage participants to study their picture, since it contains important information to help solve a problem.
- The challenge is for the group to sequence the pictures in the correct order without looking at one another's pictures.
- Participants will generally mill around talking to others to see whether their pictures have anything in common. Sometimes leadership efforts will emerge to try to understand the overall story.
- When the group believes they have all the pictures in order (usually after ~15 minutes), the pictures can be turned over for everyone to see.

Facilitator's notes

- Works with any age group, including corporate groups.
- Can be done indoors or outdoors.
- Once the challenge is finished, allow everyone to see the pic-

tures and encourage participants to sort out any mistakes in the order (can be done on a table or the floor), then let everyone walk around view the pictures in sequence so they understand the full story.

Variations

- Use as a novel icebreaker by handing each participant a picture on arrival. When everyone has arrived, explain that each person is holding part of a story and that the group task is to find out what the story is by putting their pictures in sequence.
- Use a time limit to increase difficulty and enhance focus on teamwork.
- Team performance can be measured (e.g., for a competition) by counting how many pictures are out of sequence.
- If there are a few more people than cards, then pair people up.
- For larger groups, if there is enough people then have 2 or more groups running the activity at the same time or use a sequence of cards to suit the group size.
- For smaller groups, try disallowing talking. This increases the difficulty and creates the need

for expressive sign language. In general, allow large groups to talk because there is enough complexity sorting out all the pictures.

- Another way to increase complexity with small groups is to give each person more than one picture.
- To reduce complexity for young groups (e.g., pre-school), allow a small group to look through all pictures and organize the story from beginning to end.

Processing ideas

- There is usually much potential for debriefing and discussion.
- Why was it hard to get the story together?
(Everyone had a piece, but no-one had the big picture).

- What type of communication was used in attempting to solve the problem?
- What communication methods might have worked better? e.g., Imagine if, at the outset, the group had taken the time to let each person describe his/her picture to the rest of the group. What would have happened then? Would the solution have been found faster? What prevented such strategies from being considered?
- Did you try to »second position« (i.e., see one's communications from the perspective of others)?
- What kind of leadership was used to tackle the problem?
- Who were the leaders? Why?
- What style of leadership might have worked best?

- If you were to tackle a similar activity again, what do you think this group could do differently?
- What real life activities are similar to this activity?

References

- Banyai, I. (1995). Zoom New York: Viking/Penguin.
- Banyai, I. (1998). Re-Zoom New York: Viking/Penguin.

The activity often takes around 15 minutes (depending on the selected approach and number of participants).

The method is fun and very effective on condition that all elements of the method description are respected.





FOLKEVIRKE

Social, kulturel og politisk oplysning