

EUDEC Newsletter



20 February 2010

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News and Events

EUDEC Annual General Meeting 2010



The next annual general meeting (AGM) EUDEC 2010 will be held in Roskilde, Denmark, from 3 to 7 August 2010. Three days will be planned for

meetings (4-6 August) and one day for optional activities (7 August).

The meeting is being organised and hosted by two Danish member schools: Den Demokratiske Skole (<http://www.dendemokratiskeskole.dk/>) and Det frie Gymnasium (<http://www.detfri.dk/>)



Last year's event attracted more than 80 members from all over Europe.

The annual meetings give members a chance to connect with one another, share experiences and play an active role in the development of the organisation. An agenda is sent out to all EUDEC members approximately one month in advance.

For more information, contact David Simonsen at da@detfri.dk



IDEC 2010 in Bethlehem/Tel Aviv

The 18th International Democratic Education Conference will take place on 3-13 April 2010.

The Bethlehem portion of the conference at Hope Flowers School will be the first three days and will be followed by the Tel Aviv portion starting on 6th April.

IDEC 2010 will be an opportunity to meet heads of courses, school staff members, students, parents

and others from around the world and to share achievements, dilemmas and even daily life, with all the crises and obstacles that confront groundbreaking activity.

For more information about the schedule and registration for 3-5 April (Bethlehem), please contact

Ghada Issa Ghabboun

Email: ghada712@yahoo.com

Tel: +972 598 816 516

Website: www.hopeflowersschool.org

For more information about the schedule and registration for 6-13 April (Tel Aviv), please visit

www.2010.e-idec.org

IDEC@EUDEC 2011 - in England!

Hurray! European fans of democratic education have two big reasons to look forward to the summer of 2011. **One:** EUDEC is holding its next conference, meaning an inspiring and educational (not to mention fun-filled) week packed with informative lectures and dynamic seminars and workshops offered by and for participants.



And two: the event will also be that year's IDEC, meaning the

students, teachers, families and other guests will be coming to Devon, England, from all over the world to talk about democratic education and contribute their unique experiences.

This event will be the 2nd EUDEC conference and 19th annual IDEC (International Democratic Education Conference).

The joint conference is being planned by Sands School. We will be keeping you updated through these newsletters and members' bulletins.

For more information, please contact Chloe Duff (cduff@eudec.org).

Logo Development

EUDEC is working on a new corporate identity. The artist is Carlos Patiño Markina, from Pamplona, Spain. He is a graphic designer and father of Ainhoa at Tximeleta (see page 7), a EUDEC member school in Pamplona.

Carlos has agreed to develop a corporate identity for the organisation and help us apply this new identity to our stationary, website and flyers. The final design will be put to vote for approval by the EUDEC membership.

Website Development

In the past few weeks, we have been working hard on restructuring the EUDEC website: www.eudec.org.

Some of the new features you can already see are more photos, [articles](#), an easier [membership application](#) process, and a listing of [member schools](#) and [start-ups](#).

Soon to come: a EUDEC blog, a map of democratic education in Europe, an online handbook and much more!

If you have ideas, photos or texts to contribute please contact Leslie Ocker (locker@eudec.org).

Regional News

Mitgliederschulen EUDEC-Schweiz



EUDEC Switzerland

The Swiss regional chapter of EUDEC began its first year as a registered, non-profit organisation with four member schools: the [Primaria](#) in St.Gallen, with more than 60 students, is the largest. The German magazine Geo Wissen (No. 44, Nov. 2009) called Primaria one of the most advanced schools in Switzerland. The [imPuls Schule](#) in Schindellegi and the [Lernstatt Gerlafingen](#) are the two schools that joined together to found the Swiss chapter of EUDEC. The fourth member school is still in its founding phase and plans to open its doors in the summer of 2010: "[Das offene Gymnasium am Alpstein](#)".

We are also communicating with other schools and hope to gain several more members in the coming year. We recently added a section on our website for "Marketplace and Jobs". Member schools can use this platform, for example, to list any materials or furnishings they need or can offer. The site can also be used by teachers who are looking for a job at a democratic school as well as by schools seeking new personnel.

This year we will be working on outreach to other potential member schools in Switzerland and promoting the idea of democratic education through several public events. The new member schools are also planning activities to get to know one another better, such as visiting other schools with groups of students and staff members. Schools will also be discussing how the chapter can best meet the needs of its members.

For more information: www.eudec-schweiz.ch



Germany

Germany has a growing EUDEC chapter that meets regularly and is planning many projects and activities.

The next meeting will take place in Jena on the weekend of March 5-7, 2010, at the LEONARDO Ganztagschule.

Many interesting topics are on the agenda, including teacher training, an Institute for Democratic Education, the "INSEL" project, IDEC preparations, outreach and public relations

The school will provide inexpensive accommodations and food. If you would like to attend, please contact Arno Lange:

arno_lange@yahoo.de

For more information about the regional chapter: germany@eudec.org

Austria

Welcome to Coolsville!

On 2 July 2009 the nonpartisan school-student association "Coole Schule" ("Cool School") became the first ever group of school students to introduce a citizens' initiative in the Austrian parliament.

This represented the organisation's first major step towards the initiation of a parliamentary hearing on student voice in their country.

Coole Schule at the parliamentary hearing: "718,000 school students in Austria are currently being deprived of their rights."

Igor Mitschka, Chairman of "Coole Schule" gave a speech to the "Committee for Petitions and Citizens' Initiatives", making their case for more co-determination for all school students, regardless of age.

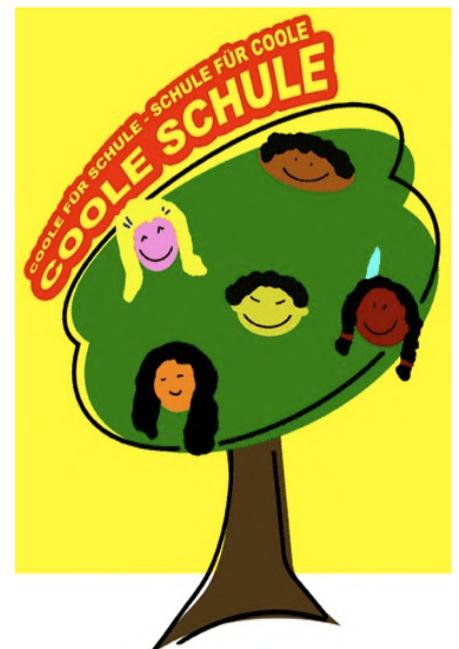


He appealed to the politicians: "There are currently 718,000 school students in Austria with no representation. Policy-makers can put an end to this negligence of democratic policy by accepting our citizens' initiative and finally giving every school student in Austria the right of co-determination."

Following the hearing, the citizens' initiative was passed on to the Parliamentary Committee on Education, where it will be considered in detail. Now it's up to the representatives of the Parliamentary Committee on Education to put the demands made by "Coole Schule" into an actual bill in the interests of all school students in Austria.

"Coole Schule" was founded in October 2003 by a group of school students, ranging in age from 12 to 14. Since then, they have been working hard to promote student voice in schools and politics in Austria.

For more information on Coole Schule and the citizens' initiative visit www.coolschule.at. (in German)



Articles

The Cube

Opening speech at EUDEC 2008

by Leonard Turton

Over 100 years ago we started to line up 30 children inside small rectangular boxes. Kind of like stuffing biscuits in a conveyor belt tin. Today? Well today we pretty much still line up 30 children or more in rectangular boxes. Kind of like stuffing Smarties into a box.

In 2008, we definitely give zoo animals better habitats to live in than we do our own children. I'm not exactly sure what this says about our culture. It can't be good.



Freedom and democracy should be the first components of any democratic state's educational agenda. Not economics. The present system seems very efficiently bent on producing little economic warriors for the GNP, for the global economy's economic wars. Surely, a democratic state wants more from its citizens than millions of obedient economic warriors.

And let's stop with this education as religion nonsense ... with our children having to learn the proper sets of mostly irrelevant academic scripture lest

they be cast into some horror of economic hell. Let's stop using such fear, smear tactics on the good parents and children of this world.

It's very simple, all of this. Let people be free adults by letting them be free children. Let people know what a real democratic life is by letting children practice real democracy. Trust the children and the citizens of a state to be intelligent, to make choices for themselves, to create the state they want to create. Instead of having others create it for them, through them, one dysfunctional educational year after another.

In our Clubhouse Democracy we had a booklet we used for new classes ... to explain what we were all about ... this bit is called The Cube ... and I would read this out to 12 year olds. You might think that it would be a dangerous thing to do, to describe their habitat this way ... that it might incite or depress them. It did neither ... because they already knew the facts... what they were, instead, was greatly relieved ... that the adults who taught them, had finally, admitted the truth.

The Cube

For some reason many years ago adults decided to put children of the same age into Cubes all day for 190 days a year in order to get them ready for life. Then they put an adult into the Cube with the children and the adult's job was to try and stay alive while he got the children ready for life.

Now the adults just didn't put a few children in the Cubes, they crammed as many as forty into each. And it didn't matter that the

children grew bigger ... for some reason the adults still gave the same sized Cubes to 6 year olds as they did to 14 year olds.

Go figure.

Then the adults made a big list of what they thought the children should have to know to be successful when they grew up. Often the adults would discuss and argue about this. And every few years they often changed their minds.

But one thing stayed the same. The students were never asked their opinions of anything. They weren't asked if they thought the Cube was a good idea in the first place or, once there, what they thought they should do all day while they were in it.

The only thing the children could do to show how they felt about being in the Cube was to misbehave and take revenge on the adult who was crammed into the Cube with them.

Some students became very good at this. The adults called them troublemakers.

Actually, they were just children who didn't like the Cube.

Some teachers invented democratic education. Adults called them a bit ... odd. Actually, they were just people who thought education, and children, deserved something better.



[>>complete speech](#)

Open Learning

An introduction to the work of Falko Peschel

by [David Gribble](#)

Falko Peschel, the originator of the theory of *Offener Unterricht* (Open Lessons, or as it is more generally known, Open Learning) did not become a teacher until he was thirty years old. Before that he was an audio-engineer who ran his own company.

During his training as a primary school teacher at Cologne university he longed to find an ideal way of teaching which would not erode the young child's natural desire to learn.

He started looking in the ordinary primary schools which had taken an active part in the school reforms in North Rhein-Westphalia between 1981 and 1985. Compared with his own time at school a lot had changed. "Adults and children sat together in circles," he wrote in the introduction to his two-volume work, *Offener Unterricht*, "and celebrated birthdays and other festivals together. Individual children were given special help by teachers or remedial assistants, the classrooms had become more cheerful and stimulating with much attractive material. The children could arrange their own school day, they did not all have to do the same things at the same time. Sometimes there were even timetables which allowed them to arrange whole days for themselves or even the whole week. In my opinion school was developing in the right direction."

In spite of all this, however, the teachers themselves did not

seem to have changed – many of them were still the same people. They still kept the reins firmly in their own hands. Communication had become much friendlier, but it was still one-sided. For the children school was still hard work. They seldom preferred school to other activities. Peschel did not find the happy children, eager to learn, that he believed would characterise Open Learning.

Next he visited two kinds of free schools, outside the state system. Some, like Summerhill, offered traditional lessons but allowed the children to decide whether or not to attend, and others used systems like the Dalton plan, where the children rather reluctantly tackled weekly programmes of work in their own time. The teacher-student relationship was better, but the enthusiastic learners were not to be found here either.

His next hope lay with Montessori and Petersen schools, where he found bright classrooms arranged appropriately for children, a rich choice of learning materials and school grounds full of opportunities for investigation. Unfortunately he also met classroom atmospheres which made him shudder. He saw teachers deliberately humiliating children in front of the whole class and exercising a psychological pressure on the supposedly eager learners that seemed to him to border on physical abuse. In other classes there was perfect chaos. "The children were supposed to work independently," he wrote, "but had no plans of their own, did exercises reluctantly and wrong,

got bored, pulled themselves together again and tried somehow or other to create a more or less satisfactory programme for the day. Everyone seemed to be fighting for himself, many had no idea why they were at school, why they were 'doing school'."

He began to feel bored when he visited schools, and he thought that the children were probably bored too. His last hope was in a state primary school near his home, where there was a teacher who had impressed him with her talk at a symposium on maths teaching. This is how he described his visit:

I will never forget that day. I found a class which for the very first time allowed me to see Open Learning in the way I imagined it myself. The children were great. They worked completely independently at stories they had thought out, did tricky mathematical exercises, looked up the information they needed for the work they were planning in reference books, made up exercises for other children to do, skillfully transformed their stories into plays and illustrated their poems artistically. On top of that, the level of achievement in this second-year class was far higher than in the other second-year classes in the same school. It was as if the lid had been taken off, and the children were "reaching for the stars."

[>> read more](#)

Spotlight on Schools



Tximeleta **Pamplona, Spain**

Website: www.Tximeleta.org

Year founded: **2002**

Tximeleta is Basque word meaning butterfly. This name was given to this educational experience which is constantly under construction, since we got it moving eight years ago. Tximeleta is not only for children, but also a non-partisan, non-religious network of very diverse people - children, parents and educators - who share a similar understanding of what learning and learning relationships are, in a way different from the mainstream society we live in. That is precisely one of its main features: It was created, managed and funded by all mothers and fathers. The learning space itself is at the heart of this community.

We try to keep ourselves away from too heavy conceptual baggage in Tximeleta. This way we allow

for a more open perception of what's going on around us everyday, and our approach to children is much more laid back, giving them the opportunity to enjoy a direct and rich life experience. We don't follow any particular pedagogic model. Instead we create and experiment, develop our own way of making it up as we go along by observing and listening to children.

Tximeleta is a learning place for both adults and children. Behind the apparent simplicity of the daily reality there is hidden, intense and ongoing personal work done by adults. In addition we thoroughly prepare the physical environment (materials, spaces) and create conditions for natural learning to occur.

Our goals are to allow the development of magnificent learners and implicate everyone in the decision making process.

[>>more schools](#)

My experience...

My experience at Summerhill

by Chae-eun Park



I went to [Summerhill](#) at the age of 7 and I left when I was 16 - spending nine years there. There is so much about Summerhill, or democratic education for that matter, that has given me a unique life. I suppose first of all, being at Summerhill with all the freedom gave me a happy childhood. I could choose to do whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted and wherever I wanted to do it. I wasn't forced to do anything but I did plenty. Running around, playing games, hanging off the arms of big kids and climbing trees. Eventually I grew out of those activities, started going to lessons and began taking some

responsibilities in the community, which I did out of pure interest and joy. While I was at Summerhill I took everything I did for granted. Chairing a meeting, not going to lessons or going up to ask a teacher to teach me history was just a part of daily life. Naturally, I always knew exactly what I wanted and how to approach it solely under my own initiative. As a bigger kid who took much responsibility for the community (chairing meetings, problem solving in minor to large disputes, organising events etc..) I became more confident.

Summerhill being a boarding school made the community closer. The pupils and the teachers were like family members rather than just people I knew at school. Living with friends could bring about personality clashes, but now I feel that it was all part of the lessons I needed to learn in life - to work and live with people. We had great relationship with the staff. The teachers were more like friends and family and it felt easy to approach them. And because it is a small school I felt they could customise the classes or any outside activities to suit me and others who required them. Also, because we were equals and there wasn't a clear formal barrier between students and staff members,

we could share friendly intimacy and talk about anything. I personally found it fascinating talking to staff members because I could hear about their life experiences before Summerhill. I still keep in touch with some even after having left Summerhill almost 2 years ago.

At Summerhill I learnt responsibility, the confidence to take action independently and the ability to work and live with people. The value of these lessons has been especially evident in the past year of my life in London in a state education system as well as a flat full of different people. I have found that such a transformation of independence from Summerhill to London life has been relatively smooth because I had been well prepared from my time at Summerhill. By the end of this year I will have the same qualification as every other 18 year old in England, and I will proceed to university, even after all that time I spent at Summerhill not preparing for the next exam. Summerhill has not only given me an opportunity to explore in my childhood but it also gave me a good base of friends who are like family and a sense of independence and self-sufficiency that I will have with me for the rest of my life.

[>>read more stories](#)