

## **Mission statement and educational mandate of IKAB-Bildungswerk e.V**

IKAB-Bildungswerk was founded in 1978, driven by the motivation to contribute to democratizing Europe through non-formal political education – and is still committed to this guiding principle today. Today's socio-political context requires a reorientation of political education.

Democratic civil society is under pressure today. Illiberal and undemocratic attitudes and attacks on democratic structures – also reinforced by social media – are on the rise in party political discourse and are thus becoming normalized in society.

This development is also noticeable in political education work and further adds to the long-standing trend toward depoliticising youth work at the local, national, and European levels.

At the same time, global and multiple crises such as wars, pandemics and climate change create uncertainty and fear and increase social inequalities. Confidence in institutionalized politics and democratic structures is declining among citizens. Spaces for active citizenship are becoming increasingly restricted.

### **1. Our guiding principles**

We advocate the idea of a democratic, solidarity-based, fair and peaceful European society where human rights and dignity are respected and provide the basis for how people interact with each other.

An active, independent and competent civil society is the centrepiece of the European society and of a democratic system that functions in accordance with human rights.

Political education should contribute to raising (again) political awareness in local, European and international youth work thus fostering civil society.

We see it as our goal and duty to further the advancement and the democratization of the European society by offering non-formal political education programs in co-operation with various partners.

### **2. Our values**

We live in a pluralistic society where people have differing experiences, perspectives and biographies.

Social inequalities are a structural feature of our society. Individuals and social groups are associated with certain positions in society that can either encourage or discourage active participation. We are committed to fair access and participation opportunities.

We support anti-discriminatory practices and actively fight any forms of discrimination and misanthropy. For us, this means valuing the diversity of human lifestyles, recognizing pluralism as social norm, revealing mechanisms of exclusion, and developing options for action.

We see Europe as a project for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and as an opportunity to overcome nationalism. We believe that this also requires a view of Europe that is critical of power and domination and takes into account both local and global perspectives.

A sustainable society requires climate justice: ecological awareness, sustainable use of resources and respect for planetary boundaries are essential for us.

### **3. Our mission – political education**

The educational practice of political education cannot replace politics nor is it an implementation tool for political decisions. However, in our understanding, it can create and promote interactions between people's everyday lives and the political decision-making structures and processes that influence and shape these everyday lives.

Political education can enable people to actively and competently get involved in shaping society and as a result inspire them to influence politics.

Our understanding is that political education as a purposeful and structured contribution to continuously democratizing democracy focuses on asking questions rather than delivering pre-packaged answers; it reflects on power structures and relations, takes into account inequality and experiences of exclusion and focuses on values that bind people together. It will also have to cater towards the development of attitudes that help address the democratic deficit and barriers to democratization.

In our opinion, we need to welcome the challenges and multiple perspectives that are associated with the progressive pluralization of lifestyles and living conditions that characterize today's societies, while acknowledging human rights as the binding legal standard for social interaction.

The concept of intercultural political education, coined by IKAB-Bildungswerk, can help tackling these challenges. Among other things, the concept is based on the assumption that intercultural learning affects all people and is a lifelong process. In order to do justice to a pluralistic society, intercultural political education must focus on the political sphere rather than cultural identities. We believe that it is vital to recognize the other in their otherness and the other in ourselves. And we have to discuss aspects such as othering mechanisms, transculturality and power structures and relations.

Transnational mobility measures aimed at providing political education are a particularly suitable, preparatory and exemplary learning arena. They have been a

focus of IKAB-Bildungswerk ever since its foundation and will continue to be one in the future.

To the principle that “democracy must be learned in order to be lived”, we would add that it must also be “experienced in order to be learned”. We see our educational mission as creating learning situations in which democratic behavior can be experienced, practiced and reflected upon. These situations can create motivation to learn more and they can foster self-stability, proactivity, solidarity and the sense of responsibility.

Our educational work is based on specific basic principles that define non-formal education. They include voluntary and active participation, orientation toward values and human rights, participant orientation, action orientation, relevance to the real world and diversity, as well as implementation in extracurricular learning locations.

#### **4. Political education from the perspective of young people**

For IKAB-Bildungswerk, strengthening the social participation and political agency of young people as agents of social change is a key goal. The focus here is on young people who find it difficult or even impossible to access political education.

Young people from all walks of life are particularly affected by inequality, as social and political participation is often made difficult or even impossible for them. This also impacts their ability to act politically. It is therefore important to support young people both in further developing their skills and to create framework conditions and prerequisites that enable them to act politically at every level.

In the context of non-formal political education, IKAB-Bildungswerk defines “gaining skills” very broadly: it includes skills such as critical thinking and judgment, maturity – particularly digital maturity, tolerance of ambiguity, and taking responsibility – for oneself and in society.

Our educational programs are also aimed at professionals working with children and young people (youth work) and at multipliers in non-formal education, with the aim of supporting them in their professional self-image as political actors. These professionals play a decisive role in either strengthening or limiting young people's political agency. Their work influences how young people understand politics and the political sphere and how they can change their living environment individually or collectively through political action.

In order to provide the best possible support for this important task, IKAB-Bildungswerk offers training and advisory services. The content is based in particular on current practical research projects in which IKAB-Bildungswerk has been involved. The offers are aimed at strengthening professionals in their practical work and supporting them in reflecting on their own professional actions with regard to strengthening young people's political agency.

Ever since our foundation, we have regarded the systematic combination of theory and practice as a key quality feature of political education work and are committed to promoting well-founded debate in the field of youth work at local, national, and European level. IKAB-Bildungswerk publishes its own publications and participates in

practice-led research projects on non-formal political education and European youth work. On the one hand, these activities enable us to reflect on our own practice and gain profound insights. On the other hand, they enable us to share our experience and findings in specialist debates, thus enriching scientific discourses with practical perspectives.

## **5. Community of Practice**

Our work relies on partnership-based cooperation with other organizations which is based on trust, shared values and co-construction.

We attach great importance to embedding our short-term educational programs in long-term pedagogical processes. With this goal in mind, we cooperate with partner organizations from the formal and non-formal education sector who allow impulses from our measures to inspire their long-term educational projects.

As part of the community of practice, we work together with other educational stakeholders to create the best possible framework conditions for non-formal political education and European youth work. To this end, we are involved in existing structures and committees at local, regional, national and European level, and we initiate and shape our own networks.

We advise political decision-makers and funding institutions on the design of guidelines and programs. A key objective is to acknowledge young people as active players of societal change.

## **6. Quality**

The basic principles described above characterize the quality of IKAB-Bildungswerk's non-formal learning processes.

Through the regular evaluation together with participants and partner organizations as well as through our own quality management processes, we ensure that our work is based on uniform quality standards from the planning and implementation to the follow-up of educational measures.

Transparency, teamwork and empowerment are key principles for Bildungswerk, both with partners and internally.

IKAB-Bildungswerk considers itself a learning organization and systematically reviews its own concepts and standards in order to continuously improve both the educational offer and the organization.

In order to meet our own quality standards, we regularly check whether the key messages in the mission statement accurately express what unites us as members, employees and partner organizations and what we see as our socio-political contribution.

In the event of particular social developments, we examine whether the formulated mission statement and the tasks derived from it can meet the specific challenges. In doing so, we primarily consider whether the mission statement and services actually address those whom Bildungswerk is trying to reach: partner organizations that work with young people and, above all, the young people themselves.