



HANDBOOK
FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PUPILS

Politics

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Project Summary

Citizen's competence is of crucial importance for active political participation, which is one of the main components of good governance and sustainable democracy. Especially in the Eastern part of the Danube region, political participation is stagnating. Particularly worrisome are the apathy and lack of political interest on the side of younger population. Furthermore, in the last years, we witness political developments that result in deterioration of democratic standards in many parts of the region. The core element of the citizen's competence is high level of media literacy. It is necessary for citizens' reflection of social reality and their resilience to negative media phenomena, like hate speech and fake news.

The main objective of the project is to improve democratic transnational governance by developing a transnational media literacy observatory, based on cooperation between different relevant stakeholders. In many countries of the Danube region the development of competences of media literacy and active citizenship are far behind more developed parts of Europe. This observatory will serve as a mechanism for increasing media literacy and thus strengthening citizens' competences what will contribute to development of sustainable democracy. The main target groups are the youth and the people who work with them. For the purpose of strengthening it, the observatory will provide tools, available for both young people as well as their educators.

The project will establish an observatory for media literacy that will provide instruments for scrutinising media contents, training tools and policy recommendations for upgrading media literacy in relation with other civic skills. Outputs include: capacity building and training tools, web-based interface and policy recommendations. The core activities of the project are: mapping of practices and dissemination of information, developing learning system, designing web training platforms, and pilot testing.

How to work with this Handbook and interactive presentation

Dear pupils,

you have just received a handbook that is designed for you and for your work with the presentation in the class. You will find information on how to work with individual slides, what is their main goal and you will find some tips for a better understanding of the topic.

The handbook also includes a list of literature, thanks to which you can acquire or expand knowledge that relates mainly to a specific topic of the presentation.

If you see an “i” icon on the slide in the lower left corner, click on it. Under it, there is additional information or examples that will help you better understand the issue.

Some slides have interactive elements in addition to the „i“ button. These elements are highlighted. When you click on them, you will learn more information (there can for example an audio sample, video or additional information). You will also find an audio icon in the presentation. Some slides contain sound. If necessary, you can click on the sound icon to mute or reactivate the sound in the presentation.

Click on the right arrow for the next slide. If you want to go back in the presentation, click on the left arrow. To go back to the very beginning of the presentation, click on the house icon.

For better orientation in the text, individual slides are gradually displayed with additional educational material and further expansion of teaching. The text is interspersed with **Definitions**, because you come across some terms for the first time and it is advisable to remember them. Also pay attention to the **Interesting Facts**.

Caption to the texts in the handbook:



INTERESTING FACT



DEFINITIONS

Introduction to the lesson

The world has largely moved to an online environment where hate speech and fake news, which negatively affect the democratic environment in the EU, are easily disseminated. An integral part of active citizenship is participation in the political environment. Political parties and organizations also operate in the online environment.

Online platforms allow all users to create a public profile and use it to communicate with other users, spread ideas and express their opinions. In this lesson, we will explain the role of politicians in everyday life and aim, within sustainable democracy, to show, through practical examples, the reasons why it is important to take an active interest in politics and in what way.

Political power

In this lesson, we will deal with **political issues**. Among other things, we will be interested in how politicians present themselves and how they are presented to the media, what we expect from them and why they are important.

It is sure you've encountered the concept of **power**. Read the slide to find out. The concept of power is related to politics and political influence.

What do you think power is? What does it mean when someone has power?



Who should have the power? Who should be entrusted with it? Is it good if only one person makes the decisions, or should more people be involved in the government of the people? On what basis should these people be chosen?

What is the difference between a totalitarian and a democratic state in terms of power?



In every state, there are people or institutions that have power.

In **totalitarian states, a small group of individuals** has power or the power is concentrated in the hands of only **one person**.

In **democratic states, the citizens** have either the authority to **choose their governing legislators** or the authority to decide on legislation.



Think about the advantages and disadvantages of each type of state. Write down everything you can imagine and discuss it with your classmates.

Do you have experience with misrepresentation? Has anything like this ever happened to you?

If we do not have verified information directly from a reliable source, we can be almost sure that it has already reached us **distorted** in some way. We do not know if and what part is true, or if it consists only of assumptions and fabrications. This creates space for so-called gossip (unconfirmed and distorted information, for which it is difficult to find the way of distortion and therefore the culprit of the consequences).



Interpretation = explanation, explication, presentation (of thoughts, text, situation...).



Misinterpretation = information distortion, taking sentences out of context.

Politicians

Every citizen (whether a doctor, worker, manager or carpenter) has the right to participate in political life. People have different needs and interests. That is why they elect their representatives.

Home icon

The role of politicians in everyday life

Left arrow icon



Right arrow icon

Information icon

Politics influences everything that happens in the country, we elect politicians who hold different views ...

No human in the world can please everyone.

Being a good politician for everyone is impossible. Every citizen has different criteria and demands that a politician should meet.

How do you think the ideal politician should behave?

(We do not address visual characteristics, but moral properties - attitudes, behaviour, etc.)



Society is made up of different **groups of people** who have different needs and opinions. *For example, pensioners want higher state pensions, workers lower taxes.*

These groups are generally represented by **political parties**. Each political party mediates the interests of social groups through elected representatives.



Political parties perform political functions through which a particular social group gains a **share of power**.

Politicians are the representatives of political groups in these institutions.

Examples of frequent campaign promises:

“We will end corruption and state budget spending“

“Free public transport for all!“

“Free flats for everyone“



.. but could they be really achieved?

Try looking up campaign promises from the last state or local election.

Can you find any that you think are undeliverable?

Think about it.

Why do politicians include them in their campaigns?

Different perceptions of reality

Task + discussion:

How do you think the ideal politician should behave?

Write down 10 qualities that your ideal politician should have.

(Remember, we do not address visual characteristics, but moral properties

- attitudes, behaviour, etc.)

Now play the videos and then answer the questions below the slide

(record your answers on paper and discuss in class).



Donald Trump

What did we learn from the video? What happened?

Barack Obama

What did we learn from the video?

How is it different from Donald Trump's version? Why?

What percentage of Donald Trump meeting participants will learn the same as us in the second video?

And how many of them will believe it?

Who were the speeches for? Who are the listeners of the speeches?

In this case, the listeners are mostly supporters of the same opinion as the speaker.

Find out more about the speakers in the info button.



The speakers of the videos are former U.S. presidents speaking to voters at a pre-election meeting.

Donald Trump was the presidential candidate, Barack Obama spoke in support of his party colleague Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election.

1. Donald Trump

In his speech he twisted reality to manipulate the public and the media. He is a source of information and he works with emotions. (the so-called politics of emotion).

2. Barack Obama

His speech is more humble without trying to ridicule his political opponent. It shows that it is important to respect a person, even if they have a different opinion. His speech does not manipulate the emotions of the voters. If does, it is in a positive sense, where he presents himself as a positive person.

**It is easier to instill a sense of fear or hate in the people's minds.
It is much harder to appeal to intellect.**



At the beginning of the lesson, you tried for yourself how misleading information is created. Now you have the opportunity to see that similar situations can happen in virtually any environment.

What does “Social bubble” mean?



Social bubble = a group of people who have a similar opinion on a certain topic, interests, world view. Like-minded people communicate with each other, but they are not in contact with people who share the opposite view. They are thus established in the idea that their view is the right one, they perceive other opinions as bad, inappropriate.

Think about it and search online:

What are the positives and negatives of social bubbles?

Credibility

The important thing we want politicians to do is tell the truth and be clear and legible to their citizens. In short, to be trustworthy.

In your country, which politician would you trust the most and why?

In order for a politician to be credible, it is important to check whether the politician is telling the truth.



Fact-checking = verification of a statement that aims to determine its veracity or untruth. Every internet user has the opportunity to do so-called user fact-checking, where he searches for and verifies the information he has encountered. But it is very time and resource consuming.

But we are also interested in how the politician behaves in public and how he expresses his views. Take a look at this slide and an example from the Czech Republic in 2021. The president of the republic made inappropriate comments about gender identity. What do you think of his statement?

In late June 2021, the Hungarian Parliament passed a controversial law banning the distribution of content showing homosexuality among children. Many European countries have condemned it, but not the Czech President Miloš Zeman.

I can understand homosexuals, lesbians. But who I don't understand at all are transgender people. If you get a sex change, you commit the crime of self-harm. These people are really disgusting to me.

Have you ever heard the term Hate speech? Check out the info button.



In late June 2021, the Hungarian Parliament passed a controversial law banning the distribution of content showing homosexuality among children. Many European countries have condemned it, but not Czech President Miloš Zeman.

Hate speech:

Hate speech is a menace to democratic values, social stability and peace.

Addressing hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech. It means keeping hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, which is prohibited under international law.

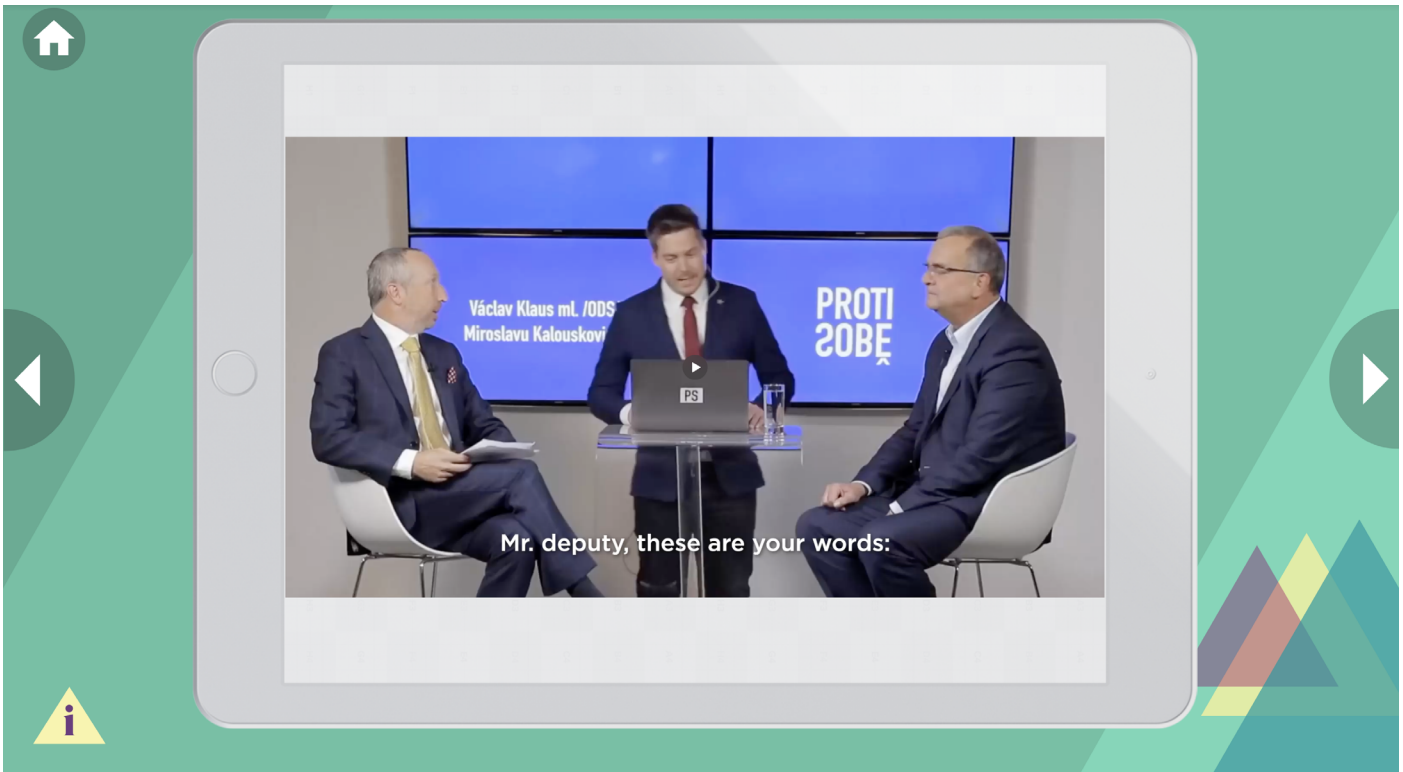


Internet / reality

**Have you ever written something on the internet that you later regretted?
What was it?**


The video is a confrontation of a Facebook message by czech politician Václav Klaus Jr., who wrote that his political opponent Miroslav Kalousek is drunk in the Chamber of Deputies. It's easy to see in the video that writing something on social networks is easy, but telling it to someone's eyes is much harder.

While watching the video, focus on the role of all 3 people, evaluate their feelings and professionalism.




People often feel very powerful on social networks and they **can write things that they would not be able to tell or do to anyone in the real world.** Yet even here, in the virtual world, such behaviour is punishable. We are also criminally liable on social networks. It is up to each individual whether to insult someone, deliberately lie, spread disinformation, etc.

What kind of political TV shows and discussions do you know and what channels do they air on?


 Politicians should be moral examples of society and maintain its ideals.

Unfortunately, this idea is sadly outdated. They should be moral examples, but they are not.

Different social groups have different expectations of their representatives.

 In the video you learned that this politician (Mr. Klaus) is lying, he is unconstructive and he is making a fool of himself. What do you think of a politician who so boldly slanders on social media, but at the same time is unable to confront his opponent in real life?

At the same time, politicians are also the image of the society they represent. This party had a predominantly radical electorate. (the politics of emotion is evident here).



For example, politicians may have parliamentary immunity, which makes their possible prosecution more difficult.



Immunity of legislators = rules under which it is not/possible to prosecute a member of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. Immunity is often used for the freedom of speech of legislators.

Behavior in public spaces

In order for political parties to be successful, they need a so-called **election program**.

They say: don't set small goals. But is it always true?

What is an election program?

Political parties or individuals want to attract people with the election program thus securing their election. The election program is there for a **set of promises**, which should be fulfilled after the election.

Behavior in public spaces

At a time when he was seeking the sympathy of the voters.

After his election, the President of the Czech Republic was not afraid to threaten the Prime Minister with a wooden stick.

Note: The infographic includes a home icon, navigation arrows, and an information icon.

Devising an election program is one thing, fulfilling those promises is another.



At the moment when politicians are competing for the favour of the electorate, different self-representations are evident.

◀ For example, before the presidential election, president Zeman promised to bring the people together. But at other times, he did not hesitate calling journalists hyenas. ▶

At a time when he was seeking the sympathy of the voters.

After his election, the President of the Czech Republic was not afraid to threaten the Prime Minister with a wooden stick.



Abuse of power

Resisting the pressures of the environment can be challenging for any of us. We usually do not find problems of an ordinary citizen in the media. However, there are people who are very interesting to the public.

On the slide you see an article from a Czech online daily. It is about a prominent politician who abused his power and was caught in action.



iDNES.cz | NEWS SERVICE

Police arrested governor Rath due to EU subsidies

15. May 2012

On Monday evening, the police arrested the Central Bohemian Regional Governor and Czech Social Democratic Party (ČSSD) Member of Parliament David Rath. Together with him, they arrested four other men and three women. Police officers also investigated Rath's office and his hospital's office in Kladno. According to iDNES.cz, the arrests are related to the investigation of the manipulation of EU subsidies in this hospital.



The info button explains who the politician in question is and what he was punished for.



David Rath has served as a regional governor and as a Member of the Parliament (he has served in local and central politics at the same time, which is possible in the Czech Republic). He was also Minister of Health in the past. He is a well-known public figure in the Czech republic.

Unfortunately, he abused his power. He accepted a bribe in the matter of a public contract for the construction of a hospital. He was arrested with a bribe of CZK 7 million, which he was carrying in a wine box.

Since May 2012, he has been the main figure in a corruption scandal for which he has been in detention for a year and a half. The court sentenced Rath to 8.5 years imprisonment and a supervised prison term for the crime of accepting bribes in five cases of corruption and manipulation of public contracts. In addition, the state was to receive almost CZK 22 million from the assets acquired by Rath through criminal activity.



INTERESTING FACT

Discussion topic

In 2020 there was a presidential election in USA. The two main candidates were Joe Biden and Donald Trump. When election results were in, and Joe Biden was pronounced the winner of the election, Donald Trump refused to concede the election.

Donald's post-election speech was interrupted on many television stations. A frequent explanation from television stations was that Trump was telling false information.

In such a case, do you think the media should be able to interrupt the transmission, put it in perspective and point out possible irregularities, or should they not interfere in the speeches at all?



Active citizenship

Even though our social life is moving at a rapid pace from physical to digital, that does not mean we should not look at what's going on in real life.



Who all can influence how I/we will live? How to protect the village/city/state from the unwanted influences of politics?

- record your answers on paper, discuss with your classmates and try to find different ways together.

Instead of taking an interest in their city and municipal politics, they spend their time in a virtual environment.

Remember, if we have poor quality political representatives at the local or national level, it is our fault because we elected them. The people have the government they deserve. If you go to vote, you can help decide whether you live in a beautiful or an ugly city. You can participate in political decisions just by participating in a democratic society.

The worst thing you can do is not vote and not care about what is happening around you.

Politics is implemented at different levels (= multi-level governance).

Each issue is dealt with at a different level, depending on the competences of the institution.

For example: a small municipality decides to build a road in its municipality, not the EU institutions, which decide about international laws, policies or development.



What happens if you do not care about politics?

The city you live in will not be renovated and the quality will decline.

Do you think it's just the mayor's fault?

It's not just the politician's responsibility, it's also yours. Because people elect their representatives.

You are responsible for how your city looks like and who runs it for you.

If the public space is not cultivated, it's privatized.



Political participation




IT IS YOUR FUTURE



On the slide you can see how easily things can be changed. If you go to the polls, you can help decide whether you live in a beautiful city or an ugly city. You can participate in political decisions just by participating in a democratic society.

The worst thing you can do is not to vote and not to care about what is happening around you.




IT IS YOUR FUTURE

Be part of maintaining democratic values, because your future depends on it.

Politics affects us all. Each of us is able to influence the environment and culture in which we live. The political climate directly affects the prosperity of you, your family, your city and your country. Knowing we are able to make a real difference gives credibility to politics.

Believing that you can make a difference with your voice leads to big changes. No one else can solve your future for you.



**Is it worth being politically active at a time when I am not yet eligible to vote?
How to be active in this area?**

What can you do?

It is difficult for an individual to achieve big changes, but he or she can actively participate as an important part of the group.



What can you do?

- Participate in public election briefings in your city with your politicians.
- Read the official board in your city and don't be afraid to make factual arguments.
- Remember, it's not embarrassing to talk about politics with your friends.
- If you don't understand something, ask your parents, teachers or friends.
- Politics is not just for the elite but for everyone.

Get involved in local politics and go vote!

The End

Conclusion

In this lesson, you learned about politics and especially about politicians. You have written down for yourself personality traits of an ideal politician (what they should/should not be).

**Did any samples in the presentation confirm what you wrote?
Would you change your list now? What is missing and what abides on your list?
Why?**

You have seen in specific examples that this topic and profession is not easy at all, and that personality traits are no less important than work commitment or a general overview.

What else did you learn? That you have to take an interest in politics, not be ashamed to talk about it with your parents or your classmates. It doesn't matter if you have different opinions, after all, you already know that people have different needs and therefore vote for different political representatives.

And since you have needs too, politics also concerns you right now and especially in your future. But you are already influencing it today.



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