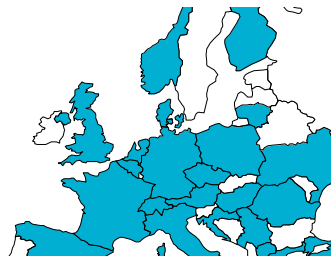


EUDEC Newsletter



EUDEC Approves New Logo



After a year of brainstorming, debating, voting and working intensely with a professional designer, EUDEC has approved a new logo. The aim of this process was to find a logo that is unique, functional and captures the dynamic and vibrant spirit of EUDEC.

Deciding on a logo democratically as a 200-member organisation was quite a learning experience for everyone involved. After two e-mail feedback rounds the new logo was put to online vote without the full name (EUDEC only). This version was rejected by a narrow margin. However, numerous members who had voted against it requested that the draft be adapted to include the full name. In response, Council proposed the adapted version at this summer's Annual General Assembly. The Assembly discussed the logo and decision-making progress in depth and voted to give Council authority to approve a final version, taking member feedback into account.

The name of the designer is Carlos Patiño, who is also a father at EUDEC member school Tximeleta, in Pamplona, Spain. He will also be designing a complete corporate identity for the organisation as well as new flyers and stationery.

If you have any feedback or questions [feel free to contact us](#).

In this Issue

News and Events

New logo approved!	1
Where is EUDEC?	2
Turning interest into action	2
Meet conference steering group	3

Regional News

German regional meeting	4
New Chapter in Hungary!	4
New institute in Germany	5
Two schools celebrate birthdays	6
New Italian network	6

Articles

Blog on Democratic Education	7
Spotlight on Schools: Sands, UK	
- A student's perspective	8
- A teacher's perspective	9
My Experience ... at Sands	10



Where is EUDEC Today?

EUDEC currently represents:

- 160+ individuals
- 25 schools
- 11 start-up groups
- 2 organisations

Countries with an established Chapter:
Germany
Switzerland

Countries with a Chapter group founded:
Hungary






Countries with a Chapter in planning:
Italy
Spain
UK
France
Scandinavia
BENELUX region

Turn Your Interest into Action!






Whether you're a student, parent, staff member, university professor or simply a fan of democratic education, you can help promote democratic education in Europe by [becoming a member of EUDEC!](#)

How is EUDEC making a difference?





We **help schools** connect, support one another and share ideas through

-  Annual meetings
-  Student/teacher exchange
-  School partnerships
-  E-mail discussion groups
-  Regional events

We promote **legal acceptance and public understanding** of democratic education through

-  Conferences
-  Newsletters
-  Online information/website
-  Seminars
-  Publications (in planning)

We actively **defend the rights** of democratic schools in Europe through

-  Official letters of support
-  Resolutions
-  Opinion papers
-  Co-operation with other organisations

How can you help? **By becoming a member!**

Right now, we speak out for democratic education in Europe with the voices of more than 200 members, including 25 schools representing a total of more than 1,600 students. We'd like to see these numbers grow into the thousands. Only then will democratic education be a **true political presence in the EU.**

Furthermore, as an independent non-profit organisation, we rely entirely on membership fees and donations for the **funding of our programmes.** Your membership makes all the difference!

Annual membership fees

- [Individuals](#): €36 (10€ for low-income countries)
- [Schools](#): €4 (€0.50) per student, max. €500 (€50)
- [Start-up groups](#): €25 (€10)
- [Organisations](#): sliding scale based on size



Meet the Conference Steering Group!

by Chloe Duff

The Steering Group is a group of students, teachers and ex-students from [Sands School](#) working with me to organise the IDEC@EUDEC Conference. The group was first formed in May 2009, when Sands School bid to host the next EUDEC Conference. Since then we have been working closely together on the project as it has evolved into [IDEC@EUDEC 2011](#).

At present the group has twelve members. We meet every two weeks to discuss new proposals, make decisions about the direction the conference is taking, identify jobs that need to be done and share out the workload. The rest of the time we are in contact via e-mail or in smaller group meetings.

Now that the conference is only months away, we are really focusing on getting things moving. The members of the group who still work and study at Sands are also meeting every Friday afternoon to do all those small, seemingly unimportant jobs

that will mount up over the months to make the conference a success.

It is a very busy time for us at the moment as we are about to launch the conference website and start registration, so all the final jobs to get that started are underway.

Here are some comments from some of the members of our team:

"It's fantastically complicated, but it really gets you thinking. I'm really enjoying it." (Jocelyn, former Sands student and learning assistant at Sands)

"It's really interesting meeting people from other schools and learning about EUDEC" (Maya, Sands student)

"The conference is now starting to feel really real. It's a little bit frightening, but very exciting." (Martin, Sands teacher)

Keep a look out for the start of registration as there will be big reductions for people booking early.



Some members of the IDEC@EUDEC 2011 Steering Group: Back row from left to right: Jen Atkinson, Jocelyn Farr, Martin Roberts, Chloe Duff and Tria Burton; front row from left to right: Holly Allen, Esme Shea and Maya Bodiley

Germany: Regional Meeting Report

By Jochen Benz

10-12 September 2010
[Grundschule Harmonie](#) in Eitorf

The [German Chapter of EUDEC](#), EUDEC Deutschland, organised another interesting regional meeting, this time at the Grundschule Harmonie in Eitorf. Several participants took advantage of the opportunity to visit the school on Friday.

The meeting itself began on Saturday with an "open schedule". Subjects included the democratisation of state schools (which participatory structures would be possible in today's public school system and how democracy can be practiced realistically in a large school with around 1000 students), "what is EUDEC" (for newcomers), teaching maths and "creative interventions and children's psychodrama". Another workgroup focused on the subject of how democratic a school has to be in order to be considered a "demo-

cratic school". This group made plans for pursuing this subject further in preparation for proposal to be made on this issue at the [next AGM in July 2011](#) and involving students in the decision-making.

On Sunday morning, the concept of *Liquid-Democracy* was presented and discussed. The Assembly at this summer's AGM voted to try out this system of decision-making.

A total of 25 people took part in the meeting. Participants identified several subjects worth pursuing in future meetings.

For more information, contact [Jochen Benz](#).



Hungary: New Chapter Founded!



By Peter Foti

On 3 September seventeen people from the Hungarian democratic-education [e-mail discussion group](#) met in Budapest to found the Association for Democratic Education and Learning. The name was decided upon through a democratic process. This was not easy because it is difficult to find the right Hungarian word for "education", and we wanted the name to be clear.



The 17 association members agreed on the association aims, which we will soon be translating into English. We believe that these aims are in line with the aims of EUDEC, and we would like to be the Hungarian Chapter of EUDEC and work in cooperation. In Hungary there is currently no truly democratic school, and the current right-leaning government would like to put more authoritarianism back into the school system. Although they are talking about democracy in schools, they feel that this democracy only applies to teachers, and that students should simply be following their teachers' orders.

The 17 of us have a different vision for democratic education. We want to spread the ideas of [A.S. Neill](#), [John Holt](#) and [Daniel Greenberg](#) and support all schools and homeschoolers who strive to include all members of the learning community in the democratic process.



[Peter Foti](#), Chair of the Association for Democratic Education and Learning, Hungary



New Institute for Self-determined Education

By Maya Dolderer



Since the first EUDEC conference, EUDEC 2008, many efforts have been made toward founding an institute that would both conduct research on democratic education and offer a place of learning and networking for people interested in dealing (in depth) with the topic of democratic education and democratic schools. As a research facility, the Institute shall focus, for example, on issues of equality between adults and children as well as associated social inequalities. As a place of learning, the Institute shall offer (future) staff members of democratic schools a place in which they can critically examine their daily work and a place in which they can become conscious of their motives and reflect upon their unconscious behaviours, in a group of people who share a common belief in the basic equality of adults and children.

A group has been meeting since the beginning of the year under the name InSeL, "Insel für selbstbestimmtes Lernen" (Island for Self-directed Learning) in order to plan the creation of this institute. Learning at the InSeL, like at traditional universities, shall be connected with socially relevant research. However, unlike these institutions, all participants shall have the freedom to plan their individual learning paths

and have an equal voice in all matters concerning the entire group. The goal is to achieve a learning and research community based on equality. This equality requires members to be able to reflect upon various positions and types of dominance and be willing to listen to and accept the opinions of all the parties involved, even differing points of view.

With this sensitivity for various positions another form of learning and another kind of science shall be created: a form of learning that reflects



its conditions, questions why certain topics are interesting at certain points in time, what preceded them and what various approaches there are for these subject areas. And a science that is conscious of its social position and does not pretend to be objective, but admits its commitment to a political project that includes solidarity with the weak in society.

A direct-democratic learning environment shall be created that carries forward the philosophy of democratic schools in a meaningful way. Therefore, especially at this early stage of its development, the InSeL is directed at people who are interested in educational work - for example with (democratic) schools or political education - while

remaining open to other interested individuals. In the fall, two study programmes will commence: In the programme "Democratic Education", students will reflect on their learning in a fixed programme-year group (as opposed to thematic groups). The goal is to support one another in finding individual paths of learning and in developing and pursuing individual questions for inquiry. The programme will take place two days a week in Leipzig.

In the second study programme with the working title "Teaching at state schools/traineeship", students who have completed their "first state examination" (for becoming a teacher in Germany) will take a critical look at the mainstream school system and meet regularly while completing their traineeships. This study programme is organised as a peer group in which group members can exchange experiences, share impressions and articulate concerns or difficulties. Because the participants will be living in different cities most meetings will take place on weekends.

Both study programmes are still accepting applications! For more information visit www.onlineinsel.org (at the moment, only in German, but soon to be translated into English).



Maya Dolderer,
INSEL co-founder



www.eudec.org

EUDEC Schools Celebrate Birthdays!



September 2010 was an important month for two EUDEC member schools, [Det frie Gymnasium](#) in Copenhagen and the [Freie Schule Leipzig](#) in Germany.

Founded in 1970, Det frie Gymnasium celebrated the 40th anniversary of its high school and 25th anniversary of its secondary school with a huge party and reception. The school now has more than 600 students, ages 14 and up, and many fans around world.



The Freie Schule Leipzig reached the end of its teenagehood this year, organising an all-day celebration for its 20th anniversary. The festivities were attended by many alumni, local politicians and EUDEC members and included an exciting "open stage" programme, put on by the students. The Freie Schule Leipzig was founded in 1990 during German reunification as the first free alternative school in the former East Germany. There are now 130 students between the ages of 6 and 17.

[Summerhill](#), the oldest democratic school in the world, will be celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2011!

[Visit our website for a list of all EUDEC member schools.](#)

Italy: New Network Founded!



First official meeting of "Libertarian Education Network"

By Irene Stella

On a wet September weekend the first official meeting of the Italian network on "libertarian education" took place near Bologna, Italy.

We were 16 people from 6 of the 21 Italian regions, with different backgrounds and different attitudes.

Some of us were teachers searching for a different way of doing schools, others were parents that want to open a democratic school.

We decided at first to compare our personal ideas of democratic education to find a common platform to start. Even though this process took up a lot of time, it was useful to build a first feeling of being

a group. A moderator led the meeting, and decisions were made one-person-one-vote. At the beginning not everyone was comfortable with this kind of process; in particular it seemed difficult for many to accept when their own proposals were voted down by the assembly. But within the assembly we were able to share our ideas and thoughts in a very constructive way, so that we are now able to produce a manifesto where we can clearly explain what our aims as a network are.

We are still deciding whether we need to become an association, and if so whether to be a EUDEC Chapter.

Our very next steps are to renovate the website, to meet 4 times a year as a "council", to organize the next national meeting in spring and to con-

tact newspapers and magazines to let people know that we are an active network.

Italian media is now showing a huge interest in this topic.

During the last two weeks four articles have appeared in different newspapers and magazines, even in one of the most important Italian newspapers.

This means that slowly the idea of democratic education is becoming known and that we, as a network, are receiving more and more e-mails with questions, suggestions and ideas.



Irene Stella, founder of [MUKTI](#), a democratic school founding group in Italy

Some Thoughts on Democratic Education

By Michael Sappir

Originally posted on [Michael's Blog \(German translation available\)](#)

I

The term "democratic school" has always seemed problematic to me. It's problematic because democracy isn't really the point. Democracy is a tool for creating something else: a community where free learning is possible, as much as such a community is possible. All democratic schools should be run by a democracy, but not every school that is run democratically is automatically a democratic school.

A democratic school is a place where students are responsible for how they use their own time. It is a school which does not try to encourage students, explicitly or implicitly, to take classes and tests. It is a place where people are treated with respect, and know they can expect justice to be served when someone disrespects the community or an individual.

II

It just so happens that certain styles of democracy serve as excellent tools for upholding freedom and respect. However, it's very easy to get it wrong, which is why [Sudbury schools](#) are very insistent on getting it right. These schools set up very well-defined democracies, because democracy is only good so long as it does not overreach — it has to be there to protect students' freedom in the present, without presuming to know what choices are better for their future, or in-

fringing on the privacy of their feelings.

III

Incidentally, the word "republic" comes from the Latin *res publica*, meaning "public matter". This hints at a very important idea: the polity (the state, the city, the school) is a public institution, and is something you keep separate from private things.

Sudbury schools use a Judicial Committee which focusses on whether school laws were broken (not on why, or what the individual is going through personally). Some in the free school movement express uneasiness about this seemingly severe approach to justice. However, anyone who has spent some time in such a school knows it is a good thing. Judicial Committee deals with the public aspect of disputes — disrespect of community decisions in such a way that bothered someone enough that they fill out a complaint. This process ignores the personal aspects completely and intentionally.

However, it leaves plenty of room for individuals to address these aspects on a truly personal level. And these are things that come across better when they're truly and sincerely personal (like talking about problems at home, or about issues one is having with the school or with people there). The judicial process may not directly address the problems that lead people to break community decisions, but it does help others see the problem, which allows them to deal with it. And on the upside, it respects peo-

ple's privacy — sometimes you don't feel like telling just anyone about how you feel.

IV

There are other benefits to separation of the public and the personal. When the community has accustomed itself to this habit, democratic meetings work better — being warned by the Chair is a technical issue, not a personal thing you have to get annoyed about; you can argue strongly against a friend's motion without them taking it as an insult; every member of the community can apply their thinking to the process as much as they'd like without constantly worrying about the conclusions being taken the wrong way.

V

When a democracy protects the community's interests and the individuals' interests while keeping them separate, that democracy can create a democratic school. It can create a place where students develop freely and learn to direct their own learning and gauge their own success. It empowers students to determine their own direction and participate vigorously in community life.

None of these things are automatic, and protecting them is half the secret of success for those democratic schools that have succeeded....



Michael Sappir, linguistics undergrad at the University of Leipzig, a graduate and proponent of Sudbury schools and Council Chairman of EUDEC.

Spotlight on Schools



Sands: A student's perspective

By Tria Burton

As a year eleven student I have been through almost all of mainstream education from pre-school to primary school and lastly secondary school, however in September I enrolled into the democratic school SANDS. The differences are astounding. The relationship between teacher and student is completely equal, and the power of students is real and respected. The school meetings that are held every week allow pupils to voice issues they have encountered or suggestions to improve the school and then vote on anything that needs to be decided upon, and even though all other times there is a lot of screaming and laughing and generally acting like teenagers, in the discussion meeting the atmosphere is calm and everybody listens.

The thing I enjoy most is the lack of the "health and safety mentality" which has dogged my school life for so long; the school

as a whole trusts in the student's intelligence and ability to look after themselves. The entire ethos of the school allows pupils to develop their own feeling of self and their opinions; this is the best part of the school and the largest difference with mainstream education.

I have always hated being patronised ever since I was very small, and the bane of my life has been the stereotypical "they're just children, they don't understand" and other such distorted perceptions. I have always known that I was being patronised and that my opinions weren't considered valid, however I have only just recently learned such big grown-up words. In SANDS you are listened to and the benefits of that, I have always felt, are vastly underestimated.



Tria Burton, student at Sands School, England.

[>>more schools](#)



Spotlight on Schools

Sands: A teacher's perspective

By Martin Roberts

Well, September brings a new year. We start with 68 students; a record, I think! This is amazing news, particularly in a time of economic depression.

It's funny going back to school - I'd had eight weeks off for the summer break, and I don't know what I did with all my time. Now I've been back two weeks, and I can hardly remember what a holiday feels like!

What an amazing place to work, though; what a wonderful, interesting, crazy bunch of people - both staff and students. I'm always telling people that I love my job, but after two months away, I'd actually forgotten quite how much.

We've got a couple of new ideas that we're trying out this year, too, and I thought this a pretty good opportunity to share them with the EUDEC community. I'd love to hear members' thoughts and opinions. Nothing too radical, but I think they're both good ways of getting students to participate more actively in their education, and to break down the barriers between adults and students, as well as challenging our unquestioning acceptance of traditional educational roles.

Firstly, we decided to carry out our academic tutorial sessions on a dedicated day.

These sessions are where students meet their academic tutors to discuss their learning over the last year, and to plan how they would like their coming year to progress. In the past we have always fit these sessions in around our normal timetable, but we decided that we wanted to try and give them a higher status, in the hope that it would encourage students to participate more actively in their learning. Despite some resistance from a small minority, the School Meeting agreed that it was worth giving it a try, and I have to say, that from my point of view, the day was a great success.

The second initiative is an extension of an idea I have been trying out for the last two years, where I have been encouraging students to work on projects of their choice, rather than coming to class each week and being told what activities they should be working on. This is an idea I got from a talk about the Freinet learning methodology that I attended at the first ever EUDEC conference in Leipzig, 2008, combined with conversations I have had with Leonard Turton of Summerhill School about the way he runs his year group class base. The greatest challenge in this way of learning for my students, I found, was that many of them did not have very much experience of making decisions for them-

selves. The greatest challenge for me was in refusing to teach! I would not tell students what to do - all I would do, for those who were really struggling and becoming anxious, was give them a very broad list of options, but still force them to make a choice.

Anyway, the extension of this, that we are trying out for the first time this year, is that we are now doing it in a much larger group. We have timetabled three year groups, and four different teachers together. The idea behind this is that we encourage students to work across their usual age boundaries (thus broadening the range of experience they have to draw from), and that it should discourage the idea of a teacher's "ownership" of a specific area of curriculum.

It's early days yet, but initial signs seem encouraging to me. Both of these approaches have really reinforced my belief that schools have been far too preoccupied with the notion of *teaching* for far too long!

Vive la Revolution!



Martin Roberts, teacher at Sands School, England.

[>>more schools](#)



My Experience ...

... at Sands and beyond

by Rachel Roberts



When I was 12 years old I was a student at the state comprehensive school in our town. I had always been a bright student; intelligent, interested, motivated. But now I was struggling. Struggling with the system; authority, staying in the top sets, exam pressures, social pressures and rules from above which made no sense to me. I became depressed and ill. I stopped attending school, I more or less stopped speaking, I pretty much stopped being recognisable as me. My parents were worried and desperate, what could be a solution? What could bring their daughter back?

We were lucky enough to live in beautiful south Devon near the democratic school SANDS. A family friend knew of the school and through fortunate circumstances offered to assist in paying the school fees. I had heard of this school, and I was wary: Wasn't this a school for special kids, problem kids? I decided to give it a try nonetheless.

On my first trial day I sat down with a teacher, and he said, "How about I tell you, you don't have to sit any ex-

ams, in fact you don't have to do anything you don't want to." This was perfect. Within my trial week I already began the slow process of coming back to myself. Without the pressure from others I only had myself and my expectations to live up to, and my self-expectations were high enough. I had always loved the structure of rules but never understood all the pointless rules in life, here I could be a part of making up the rules ensuring that only rules which made sense existed. The school fitted like a glove.

I did many things in my 3 years at SANDS. I wrote poetry, made crazy sculptures, climbed, made a million pom poms, performed in plays, drank never ending pots of tea, jumped in the river, talked about everything from geese to feminism, chaired school meetings, campaigned, communicated with people of all ages, listened and - somewhere within it all - completed 8 GCSE's grades A-C.

I left SANDS feeling indestructible. I was confident, maybe a little arrogant. I had learnt a way of functioning in this world that was respectful and made sense. I knew I could reason my way in and out of anything. I felt I was far better prepared for the big wide world than my contemporaries. I knew what I wanted and I knew how to be motivated to achieve things on my own.

This was initially mistaken as "bad attitude" by my tutors at college. They knew I had come from SANDS and expected me to be a 'problem student' from the beginning. To begin with, being back in the authority structures of the system was a real struggle. But after a few months I learnt where the boundaries were and how I could push them within reason, and my tutors learnt to appreciate my direct manner.

I went on to study Sociology at the University of York. At the beginning of university I still felt I was better prepared than my peers. I already knew about independent learning, and isn't that what university is about after all? I suffered a bit of a shock: It was that classic little fish from small pond into big ocean phenomenon. No one knew me, I had no personal relationships with my tutors, and it finally dawned on me that although I had been directing my own learning it had always been within a small supportive environment with lots of one-to-one interaction. Once again it was a struggle. I had to actually learn how self-governed learning really works, but I got there in the end.

My interest in democratic education never left me. I took elective modules in "Education towards a better world" and "Philosophy of Education". I wrote my dissertation on "Idealism meets Reality", discussing what



kinds of people may be products of democratic education and to what extent they are or aren't prepared for integration into this society.

After university I worked for 6 months in a children's care home. This was challenging and a big learning curve for me. The children and I came from different worlds. They quite literally couldn't comprehend being treated or listened to with the kind of respect which I had come to learn everyone deserves.

Upon leaving this job I had remembered why I believed in the importance of democratic education and was determined to do something more actively involved. One day I idealistically typed 'Democratic Education Jobs' into Google. And unbelievably an internship with the Phoenix Education Trust appeared. I had missed the application deadline, but I called up anyway: This was

exactly what I wanted to be doing. I worked with Phoenix for just over a year, initially as an intern and then as an employee. Through this I worked with the English Secondary Students Association (ESSA) coordinating their annual Student Voice conference and delivering workshops in a range of schools. We offered the schools assistance in developing their student voice programs, helping students' voices actually be heard and student councils to function actually democratically.

After a year of doing this I was wanting to take a step further in the radical direction and gain some experience working with younger children. I spoke with Anna from Phoenix about this, and she suggested I contact the Free School in Leipzig, people whom she and I had gotten to know through EUDEC. I wrote an e-mail application and secured an internship as


an English mother tongue worker in the school.

I came to Leipzig for a 6 month placement without knowing a word of German. (I'd never chosen to learn a language. I just didn't want to so I didn't ... I was a student at a democratic school you know.) Now a year and a half later I have a full-time teaching post at the school, and I can almost fluently speak German.

Without democratic education I don't know what would have become of me. But I definitely wouldn't be here doing this as I am now. It has shaped everything in my life so far and will continue to shape my future.



Rachel Roberts, graduate of [Sands School](#), UK, and teacher at [Freie Schule Leipzig](#), Germany.



eudec european democratic education community

EUDEC is a non-profit organisation that promotes democratic education in Europe.

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