

EUDEC

ZsaZsa Shea

EUDEC (the European Democratic Education Community) is a newly founded organization run for and by a growing network of schools, organizations and individuals dedicated to Democratic Education. These are its objectives:

- To support all forms of democratic education throughout Europe
- To promote democratic education as a sensible educational model for all democratic states
- To establish, in legislation, the right to found and attend democratic schools and to provide aid and support to democratic schools and start-up groups
- To facilitate exchange of information between democratic schools in Europe and create connections between schools for cooperation and mutual learning
- To provide information and outreach programs for colleges and training institutes to give future teachers a practical understanding of the basics of democratic education and what it can mean for teachers, pupils, educational environments, and democratic states

EUDEC is unique in its set up. The organisation is run entirely by the members, with meetings of the community taking place annually. This allows us to really focus and find out what we want; this comes in handy considering democratic education holds a broad spectrum of forms and opportunity. EUDEC aims not only to connect the existing democratic schools but also to support and promote them and to help to establish new schools that incorporate democratic principles.

Last year EUDEC held its first conference in Leipzig, Germany. It was a great success with around 400 participants from 25 different countries. The 10-day conference included a public session with panel discussions, guest speakers and workshops, the annual general meeting and an open schedule. The conference gave people the enthusiasm and focus EUDEC needed to start the work of fulfilling its aims and objectives.

We are already planning a conference for 2010 to be held in Devon, which we hope will be equally successful and engaging.

But what is Democratic Education?

In democratic education young people have the right

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- to decide how, what, when, where and with whom they learn, taking into account the limitations of what the school is actually able to offer, and
- to have an equal say in decision-making concerning how their schools are run, and what rules and sanctions, if any, are necessary.

Democratic education is not a new concept and there is an ever-growing number of democratic schools across the world. A.S Neill's Summerhill was founded in 1921 and is still attended today. It's not just independent democratic schools that are on the increase, there are also new programs and schemes starting to incorporate democratic principles into state-run education. All schools can incorporate some democratic principles.

I've been attending Sands School, a democratic school in Devon, for almost five years and the first thing I would say to anyone is that I've really learnt what an experience it is to want to learn; to be interested and impassioned by my everyday school life. I now trust myself to make the necessary decisions needed to move on into the world.

Democratic education is neither new nor radical. It enables students to take control of not only their own education but also of their futures and talents. If you'd like to get involved or simply know more about Democratic Education, feel free to contact me at: zzshea@EUDEC.org or visit www.EUDEC.org