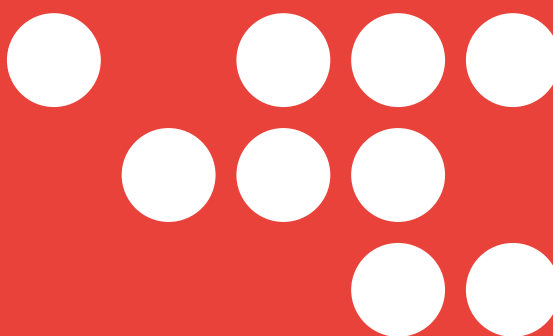


NORDIC DEMBRA

Strengthening work on democracy and prevention of group hostility, segregation and radicalization in Nordic schools

REPORT

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1. Foreword

How should schools address the various challenges facing democracy today? What competence do teachers need in order to help prevent and counteract antisemitism, islamophobia, racism and extremism?

These are central questions confronting many societies today. Indeed, they are part of the wider challenge of how to hold societies together. How can we live together despite our differences? How can we promote a sense of unity while also fostering diversity?

Nordic Dembra is a contribution to highlighting these questions. Teachers, school managers and experts in the field of education throughout the Nordic countries have met to learn, discuss and develop strategies relevant to the specific context of each participating school.

Schools in the Nordic countries have an important role in educating children and young people in democracy and human rights. And they do great work. This was apparent from the schools taking part in Nordic Dembra. Despite the individual accomplishments of these schools, however, the project revealed the benefit of exchanging experiences and increasing awareness of the mechanisms behind various phenomena, from prejudice to extreme hatred. The project's focus on experience exchange provides a foundation for each school to consider various methodologies and strengthen their work within their own specific contexts.

It has been a privilege for the Norwegian Center for Minority and Holocaust Studies (HL Center) to lead this project. The Nordic countries have much in common, such as their emphasis on democratic competence, teacher autonomy and education in

the humanist tradition of *Bildung* (liberal arts education). Despite our commonalities, we have also experienced variations in national and historical contexts. This underlines the need for national adaptations to and national ownership of development of competence-building programs.

The issues at stake, as well as the need for a sustainable preventative model, remain important, regardless of national context. An important role for the HL Center has been to share our practical experience and theoretical expertise. The HL Center has undertaken extensive research on various aspects of prejudice and extremism in both historical and contemporary contexts. Since 2012 we have also developed and led the national Dembra model in Norway, offering teacher training and follow-up guidance to schools, and developing web-based resources dealing with understanding, preventing and counteracting group hostility. This competence has been valuable for the schools and experts taking part in Nordic Dembra as input and background for the development of local strategies.

Altogether, we believe the Nordic Dembra project is an important contribution to schools in their efforts to strengthen democratic education and prevent group enmity. This also means that the project has value for the broader European context in countries facing similar challenges.

Guri Hjeltne
Director, HL Center

2. Executive summary

The project *Nordic Dembra: Strengthening work on democracy and prevention of group hostility, segregation and radicalization in Nordic schools* was implemented in the Nordic countries in 2019, led by the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (HL Center). Through the project, expert institutions and schools in Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland took part in a comprehensive cycle of competence building and school development related to the prevention of prejudice, exclusion and discrimination.

The Dembra concept is based on the research-based assumption that a democratic culture based on participation and critical thinking builds resilience against ideologies of inequality. Prevention of prejudice and discrimination is at the core of the school's democratic mandate in all the Nordic countries. Therefore, principles like inclusion and learner empowerment should form the core of preventive strategies in broader curricular activities as well as work on school culture and teacher ethos.¹

Dembra supports schools through teacher training and a process of school development. Guided by experts, schools engage in mapping, analyzing and responding to local challenges related to group hostility and undemocratic attitudes.

In the context of Nordic Dembra, partner institutions in the four Nordic countries each recruited two or three schools for the national piloting of Dembra in their respective countries. The partner institutions followed up the work of the schools, providing various training courses and guidance in

developing local plans of action for preventive activities in the schools.

The HL Center supervised the partner institutions and organized a capacity-building program for experts from partner institutions in each of the Nordic countries, as well as teachers and administrators from the participating schools. By means of literature, lectures and experience exchange, experts from the HL Center conveyed the conceptual basis of Dembra and facilitated adaptation of the Dembra model to the respective national and local contexts. Altogether, around 40 people participated in each of two workshops held in Oslo.

National and local implementation

The partner institution in Sweden, the Living History Forum (Forum för levande historia), has worked closely with the schools to motivate and involve all staff members to take part in systematic development activities. They see the Dembra process of implementation as the primary strength of the Dembra model. However, they point out certain challenges caused by the fact that competence building within the partner institutions took place at the same time as similar processes took place in the pilot schools. They found this limited their ability as a partner institution to always be "ahead of the curve" with regard to the schools receiving guidance. This points to the need for a longer time frame for such a rather complex project. The Living History Forum will follow the schools through the school year 2019–2020 to ensure implementation of the plan for preventive

¹ Claudia Lenz og Peder Nustad, "Dembra - theoretical and scientific framework," (2016), <https://dembra.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/The-theory-behind-Dembra-ENG.pdf>.

activities developed by the schools through the Nordic Dembra project.

The partner institution in Denmark, the Ministry of Children and Education (MCE), chose schools for the Nordic Dembra project that were already part of a socially financed guidance program aimed at preventing radicalization and social control. MCE thus states that further work on implementation of the Dembra plan and the Dembra principles of prevention will be ensured.

The partner institution in Finland, the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), has linked Nordic Dembra to its ongoing work with UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet). Dembra has been one of the activities for new trainers in the network, while other trainers have participated in teaching controversial issues training at Utøya organized by the European Wergeland Center and a similar Nordplus training program. Among other things, the schools have used Dembra as a framework to continue work on teaching controversial issues, which was started through the 2017 Nordic Council of Ministers' project on teaching controversial issues. This is in line with Dembra being a way to integrate various initiatives under common principles of prevention rather than being a separate measure.

In Iceland, three schools taking part in the project Democracy is the guiding light in social science (*Með lýðræðið að leiðarljósi í samfélagsfræði*) were chosen to take part in Nordic Dembra. This project seeks to incorporate the pillar of democracy and human rights into participating elementary schools. Participants pointed to the Dembra perspectives as eye opening, but the schools struggled to follow up the local work throughout the project period. The Directorate of Education sees a potential in Dembra due to its

similar focus on democratic education. The directorate also highlights the emphasis on local adaptation and flexibility in Dembra as an advantage for the model.

The Nordic Dembra project lasted through 2019, but the Danish project partner (MCE) plan to facilitate for the network of schools to continue throughout 2020, as part of its work as chair of the Nordic Council of Ministers' network for Democracy, Inclusion and Security.

General remarks

Judging by the evaluation surveys, the two workshops in Oslo on preparatory reading modules proved very successful. Bringing together 40 experts, teachers and school managers from Nordic countries created a great atmosphere, with interesting discussions and meaningful exchange. The feedback confirmed the relevance of Dembra in linking the theory of the challenges democracy faces to the everyday reality for teachers and school managers.

All partner institutions stressed the need for local and contextual adaptation when models like Dembra are implemented. At the same time, the experiences from the participating schools have proved that the strength of the Dembra approach lies in its conceptual clarity and adaptability in a broad variety of local contexts. Schools ranging in size from 34 to 1,800 students, different school types, and schools serving students with different socio-cultural backgrounds and contexts considered Dembra to be a valuable framework for the professional development of teachers. Dembra also appears to be a valuable resource for creating teaching activities and initiatives focusing on student participation and inclusion.

Considering the challenges of anti-democratic attitudes, group hostility and racism facing Nordic as well as other European societies today, whole-school approaches like Dembra that bring together

schools and external expertise are valuable contributions to strengthening democratic development activities in schools.

2.1. Recommendations

- Promote a whole-school approach of inclusion and democratic culture in schools as the *Nordic response* to challenges related to prejudice, group-focused enmity and anti-democratic ideologies, as this corresponds with the value base on which the educational systems in all the Nordic countries are founded;
- Organize initiatives supporting local school development cycles related to prevention of prejudice and group-focused enmity, lasting at least 1½ years and supported by external advisers;
- Organize a capacity building initiative for advisers supporting school development;
- Develop material on prevention of prejudice and group-focused enmity for use in teaching and school development, building on existing materials in related areas (Dembra) and involving national experts;
- Build a Nordic network of schools for experience exchange and capacity building related to prevention of prejudice and group-focused enmity in school;
- Link and align work on prevention of prejudice and group-focused enmity with the implementation of focus areas such as education for sustainable development (UN: SDG 4.7, UNESCO schools) and education for democratic citizenship (CoE: RFCDC, TCI).

3. Introduction and background

3.1. Introduction

Nordic societies face a number of challenges to democracy and cohesion: various forms of group hostility such as antisemitism, racism and Islamophobia, marginalization, polarization, hate speech, radicalization and violent extremism. Schools cannot solve these challenges but are still crucial arenas for developing the democratic competence and tolerance necessary for cohesion and for meeting the challenge of living together. Developing the competencies that students need in order to live life in a democratic society is at the core of the mandate of schools in all the Nordic countries. This gives schools a solid platform on which to counteract group hostilities. Integrating preventive activities with work on curricula, school culture and teacher ethos will result in a broader and more robust model of prevention than allocating only designated time slots in a busy school year. Measures against concrete challenges have an important place but must be set in the broader context of the school's work with learning about, through, and for democracy.

The project *Nordic Dembra: Strengthening work on democracy and prevention of group hostility, segregation and radicalization in Nordic schools* was developed to pilot a model for working with schools on how to manage the necessary competence building of teachers and school managements to succeed in this kind of integration. The project is based on Dembra, a Norwegian model for competence building in schools related to group enmity and undemocratic attitudes. Dembra is managed by the Norwegian

Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (HL Center).

Within the context of Nordic Dembra, the HL Center partnered with national institutions in Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Finland, with the aim of sharing perspectives on and building competence in counseling work aimed at assisting schools in their preventative work. The partner institutions in turn recruited two or three schools in their respective countries that wished to initiate development activities for preventing group hostility. Both experts and schools took part in two workshops organized by the HL Center. Together with preparatory modules, these workshops consisted of a four-module competence-building program for preventive activities in schools. The schools mapped the situation in their schools, chose a focus area, and developed a plan for activities to respond to local challenges (Dembra plan).

To support the schools in their activities, the dembra.no website was translated into the Nordic languages (see dembra.no/en). The site includes detailed suggestions for how to implement activities against group hostility, in addition to background material, tools and classroom exercises.

The Nordic Dembra has been financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers' program for Democracy, Inclusion and Security (DIS) throughout 2019. This report describes the project in detail and includes an analysis of outcomes and outlooks by the HL Center as project leader.

3.2. Background: Dembra in Norway

In Norway, Dembra was developed in 2012 by the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (HL Center), the European Wergeland Center (EWC) and the Institute for Teacher Education and School Research at the University of Oslo (ILS). In Norwegian, the title stands for “democratic preparedness against racism, antisemitism and undemocratic attitudes.” Dembra offers competence-building courses for teachers, school managers and other staff and is financed by the educational authorities in Norway. So far almost 80 schools have been partners in this project and around 2,500 teachers and school managers have taken part in the Dembra teacher training courses, of which 300 have participated in in-depth training and counseling in preventive activities in schools. Lower and upper secondary schools have been the focus of the project, but from 2020 Dembra will also be offered to primary schools.

Dembra in Norway is now being carried out by various centers for peace and human rights, of which there are seven in Norway. The Norwegian government allocates funding for these centers for the purpose of democratic education and prevention of group hostility. Five of the centers currently take part in Dembra: HL Center (project leader), the Falstad Centre, the Rafto Foundation, the Arkivet Peace and Human Rights Centre and the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue. One center has developed a special program for students visiting the site of the Utøya terror in 2011, and from 2021 the seventh center, the Narvik War and Peace Centre, will also take part in Dembra. All seven centers will by then be involved in activities directed towards democratic education and prevention of group hostility.

Norwegian Dembra for teacher education

Since 2017 the HL Center has also managed Dembra's teacher education activities. This project involves teacher education institutions in revising both curriculum and teaching, with the aim of strengthening the competence of teachers as well as contributing to the dembra.no website.

3.3. Project owner: DIS

The project has been funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers through the Democracy, Inclusion and Security (DIS) program. The DIS network consists of representatives from the Nordic ministries of education and their underlying directorates or agencies.

The mandate of the network states that the aim is: “to promote common Nordic values, strengthen the education sector's ability to meet societal challenges and conflicts with democratic means, prevent the development of violent extremism through concrete, school-focused efforts, and develop common learning resources.”

This aim is fulfilled through discussion, experience exchange and mutual competence-building in the Nordic countries. The development of learning resources based on research is another task of the network.

3.4. Relation to other initiatives

In 2017 the DIS network initiated the translation of the Council of Europe's material on teaching controversial issues (TCI) and managing controversy (MC) into the Nordic languages, followed by training of teachers. Nordic Dembra is a continuation of

this work, enabling schools to follow up work on controversial issues in a broader framework of preventing group hostility. See also the description of synergies between Dembra and the work of the Council of Europe related to Education for Democratic Citizenship in Chapter 6.6.

The project is also part of the Nordic follow-up of UN Sustainability Goal 4 on education, with particular emphasis on Target 4.7 (global citizenship education).

4. Overview of the Nordic Dembra project

The Nordic Dembra project description was developed by the HL Center in 2017 and revised in 2018 based on input from DIS.

4.1. The Dembra concept: prevention through democratic competence

Dembra builds on the realization that the role and strategies of schools in the broader societal task of enhancing cohesion and preventing group enmity should be grounded in pedagogy, the mandate of schools and the competence of teachers. While police and other actors in the security sector have skills and knowledge regarding the protection and security of society, schools and educators have the competence to develop preventive strategies for schools.

At the core of such a strategy is the mandate of the Nordic schools to develop democratic competence and empower students to play an active role in their own lives as well as to participate in society at large. Learning – the central focus of any school – should also be at the heart of work aimed at preventing group enmity. Although teachers and school managers need strategies to handle challenges like hate speech whenever they arise, the main focus from a learning perspective should be the long-term social and educational development of their students.

The Council of Europe's report *Students as suspects* points to two opposing expectations placed

on schools, resulting from the dominant security discourse: on the one hand, the idea that schools can help detect students who could be a security threat; on the other hand, an emphasis on creating an inclusive school culture and building trust with the students.² While the mandate given to the security sector warrants focus on the detection of potential security threats, the mandate given to schools requires that building inclusive schools, fostering trust, and caring for the students must be given priority.

Dembra's pedagogical model of prevention recognizes that a democratic culture, based on participation and critical thinking, offers the best means of preventing and counteracting attitudes that threaten democracy. This is based on insights from research on prejudice and group enmity. Prejudice and hatred towards a defined "other" provide us with a sense of identity and of belonging to a distinct "us".³ Prevention must therefore begin with opportunities for participation in inclusive communities that are not based on negative notions of "the other." Knowledge, critical thinking, and curiosity allow us to discover nuances that undermine stereotypes of "the other" and are therefore also key components of preventive efforts.

The subject of school and teacher development and how to best foster improvement is a broad

² Francesco Ragazzi, *Students as suspects. The challenges of counter-radicalisation policies in education in the Council of Europe member states* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2017).

³ John F. Dovidio, Peter Samuel Glick og Laurie A. Rudman, *On the nature of prejudice : fifty years after Allport* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005).

field of study. Research suggests that staff motivation and a sense of ownership are crucial.⁴ A whole-school approach⁵ emphasizes the importance of keeping sight of the various components which in sum make up a school: educational activities in the classroom, teacher competence, administration and school management, school culture, parents and guardians, and the local community. Based on the school's own experiences, Dembra contributes to strengthening comprehensive efforts against intolerance and group hostility.⁶

4.2. Principles, tools and process

In Dembra, the conceptual reflections are summed up in five key principles. These principles can guide teachers and school managements when working on different levels, from how to respond to situations in the classroom to working on long-term strategies for school culture.

The principles are:

1. Inclusion and participation
2. Knowledge and critical thinking
3. Intercultural competence
4. Ownership and long-term sustainability
5. Whole-school approach

The principles are key tools in the support Dembra provides to schools through teacher training and a process of school development. A project group is formed in each school consisting of teachers and school managers. The project group coordinates

the school in a process consisting of mapping, analyzing and responding to local challenges related to group hostility and undemocratic attitudes. Experts give guidance and teacher training to the schools, and leads joint workshops for project groups from several schools, with the benefit of experience exchange and discussion with colleagues. In Nordic Dembra this was provided through the two workshops organized by the HL Center. In addition, partner institutions held workshops for schools on a national level.

4.3. Implementation

The Nordic Dembra project consists of three parts:

1. Training and networking of advisors/supervisors from partner institutions

A program for competence building is set up for the training of supervisors from the partner institutions. The training model consists of two two-day sessions, scheduled meetings via Skype and guidance on the institution's cooperation with local schools; see detailed description below.

2. Implementation of Dembra in the Nordic countries

In parallel with the training, the partner institutions pilot Dembra in collaboration with two or three local schools.

In support of the implementation, the partner institutions will have a contact person / mentor from the project management / HL Center.

⁴ Michael Fullan, *Change theory. A force for school improvement*, Seminar Series Paper (Centre for Strategic Education, 2006).

⁵ Felisa Tibbitts, *The EDC/HRE whole school approach for the prevention of discrimination and violence in schools and communities* (The European Wergeland Centre, 2016).

⁶ Lenz og Nustad, "Dembra - theoretical and scientific framework".

3. Translation of dembra.no

Material on dembra.no is translated into the Nordic languages as well as into English, and made available to institutions and schools in the Nordic countries; see dembra.no.

The Dembra process

dembra

- **Mapping:** Survey, workshops for teachers and pupils
- **Analysis:** Choice of focus areas
- **Measures:** Develop a Dembra plan
- **Evaluation:** Dembra group and teachers evaluate and adjust



Figure 1: Overview of the Dembra process.

4.4. Partner institutions

The partner organizations in the Nordic countries were:

Sweden

Living History Forum

www.levandehistoria.se/

Contact: Meriam Chatty (Meriam.Chatty@levandehistoria.se)

Finland

Finnish National Agency for Education - EDUFI

www.oph.fi/en

Contact: Satu Honkala (satu.elo@oph.fi)

Denmark

Ministry of Children and Education, Agency for Education and Quality

www.stukuvvm.dk

Contact: Dorthe Anthony (dorthe.anthony@stukuvvm.dk)

Island

Directorate of Education

www.mms.is

Contact: Andri Már Sigurðsson (andri.mar.sigurdsson@mms.is)

Revision: broader school participationThe original project description reserved participation in the workshops for partner institutions. This was changed early in the project period, and representatives from the participating schools were also invited to both workshops. The partner institutions recruited two or three schools each, rather than one or two as specified in the project description. This resulted in more schools than what was

stated in the project description (one or two schools per country).

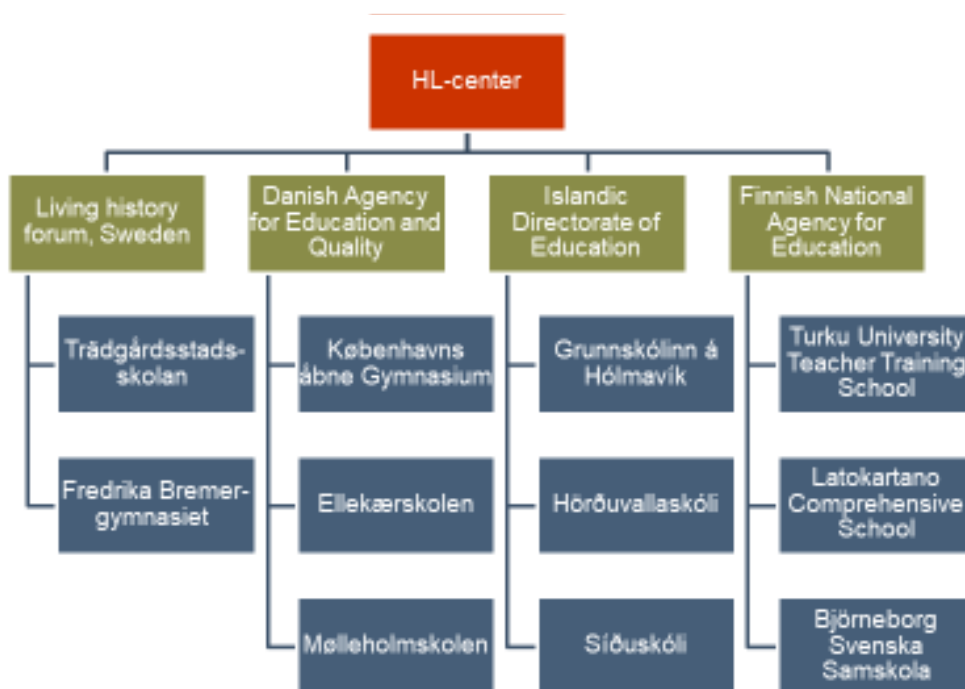


Figure 1: Organizational map of the project: schools (blue), partner institutions in each Nordic country (green) and project leader (red).

5. What has been done

5.1. The project plan/outline

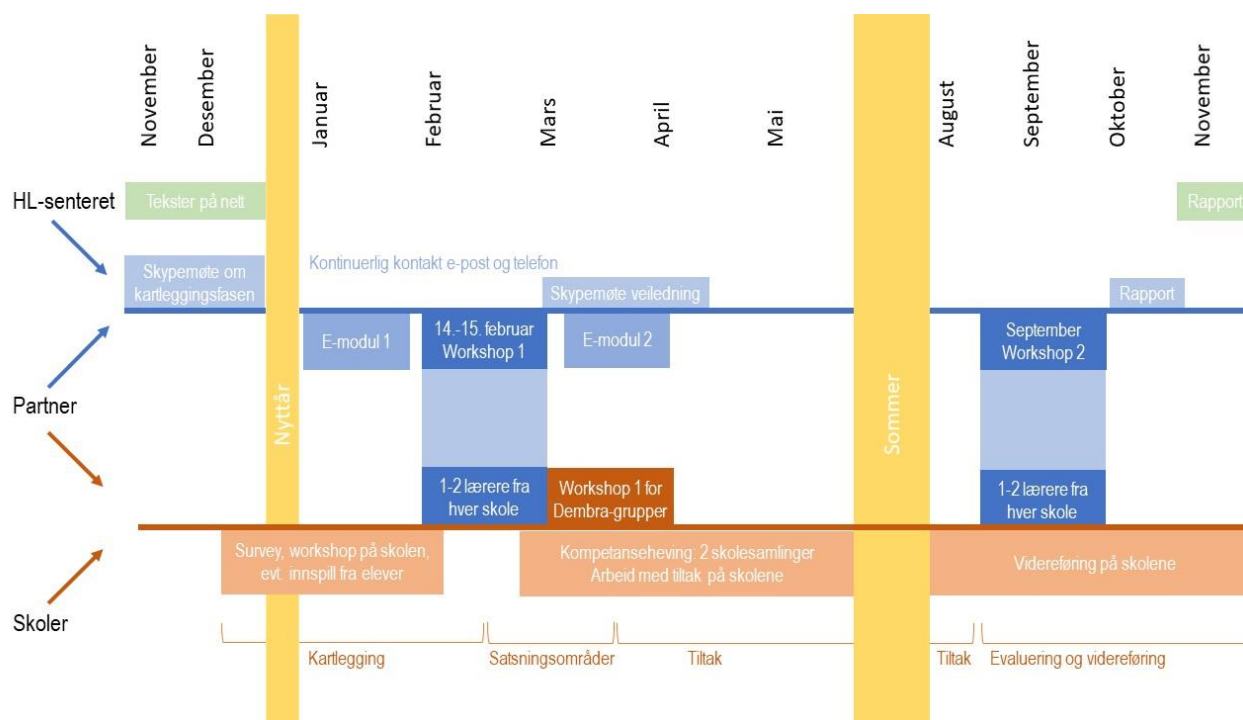


Figure 2: The timeline of the project.

Explanation (bottom up):

- The thin red lines at the bottom denote the time period for the phases in the Dembra work at each school: mapping, analysis and choice of focus area, activities and evaluation. The Dembra plan is the tool used to systematize activities, and most schools developed these plans ahead of Workshop II, in line with the criteria mentioned above.
- The red part of the outline denotes the process for the partner institution's work with the schools. Partner institutions have followed up schools differently, with some countries tuning this work with already existing programs.
- The blue part describes how the HL Center has followed up the partner institutions, through Skype meetings, e-mail correspondence and the two workshops with preparatory modules.
- The two green boxes denote translation of the websites (completed in January 2019) and the writing of this report.

5.2. Cooperation with partners

Contact with the partner institutions was established during the fall of 2019. The Living History Forum visited the HL Center on November 22, 2018 for a thorough introductory meeting. Skype meetings were held with the other partner institutions during November and December.

All partner institutions recruited participating schools ahead of the first workshop in February (see description of schools below). Throughout the project period, the HL Center held Skype meetings with the partner institutions and communicated by e-mail.

5.3. Capacity building of partners and schools

Due to the one-year time limit of the project, competence building of partner institutions was implemented in parallel with the work of the partner institutions with the schools. This also made it necessary to give an overview of all the fields of competence involved in Dembra from the start, rather than presenting one theme at a time.

Still, the main focus of the first part of the capacity building program was the phenomena and mechanisms involved in preventive activities: racism and radicalization, prejudice, group-focused enmity, and democratic competence. In the second part the main focus was development work in the schools.

Module 1: Introduction to the Dembra thematic fields

Preparatory work for Workshop 1

The module consisted of a reading list for all participants covering three themes:

- Group-focused enmity and prejudice
- Conceptual framework of Dembra
- Democratic education

Based on the importance of local context, partner institutions also prepared brief descriptions reflecting on the question: What is going on in your country that makes Dembra and work in schools against group hostility and anti-democratic attitudes relevant?

Module 2: Dembra, group-focused enmity and prevention activities in schools

Workshop

Program:

Day 1 – Thursday, February 14th, 2019

Session 1: Introduction, relevant issues and the Dembra approach to preventive activities in schools

Session 2: Split groups: Preventive work in practice

Dembra advisors/partnership institutions: How to guide Dembra schools in the process?

- Dembra.no and the process at each school
- The role as an advisor in light of the Dembra principles
- Challenges – role play (Forum theatre)

Teachers: Working on Dembra with a whole-school approach (group work)

- Input from Norwegian Dembra schools
- Challenges (exchange)
- Principles – dimensions – focus area / measures
- Dembra.no

Session 3: Q&A and summing up

Dinner at the HL Center

Day 2 – Friday, February 15th, 2019

Session 4: Democratic education, prevention, and the Dembra principles

Session 5: Group-focused enmity, racism and issues in society today.

- Alexa Døving: Conspiracy talk and racism

Session 6: Follow-up of countries and schools in the Dembra process

Module 3: Dembra plan, status and reading

Schools developed Dembra plans for their local activities. The plans help to systematize the work according to a whole-school approach. Schools are expected to run activities on all levels: teacher competence, classroom and teaching, school culture, governance, community and parents.

The module also consisted of a reading list covering the following themes:

- Levels of whole-school approach in Dembra
- Theory of development work in schools
- School culture in Nordic countries
- Pedagogical analysis of radicalization



Module 4: Dialog, moments of panic and future Dembra work

Workshop
Program

Day 1 – Wednesday, September 18th, 2019
Venue: HL Center

Session 1: Introduction and exchange on work and plans between the schools (“world café”)

Session 2: Tools for collaborative work and self-reflection

Session 3: “Moments of panic” in the classroom and principled ways to deal with them

Day 2 – Thursday, September 19th, 2019
Venue: Kuben Upper Secondary School

Kuben is one of the largest upper secondary schools in Norway, offering a wide range of courses. The school is a Norwegian Dembra school, and was awarded the Benjamin Prize for its systematic work against racism and discrimination.

Session 4: Antisemitism and islamophobia: Between the extreme and the normalized
Lecture and discussion. Joint program with Norwegian Dembra schools.

Session 5: How can we do better at preventing group hostility in our school? School development and the challenge of inclusion.

Session 6: Exchange with Norwegian Dembra schools on challenges to and small success stories on the work to prevent group hostility.

Session 7: Workshop with Norwegian Dembra schools and participants in the Nordic Council’s network on Democracy, Inclusion and Security (DIS network).

5.4. Feedback and survey results

Participants gave positive feedback on both the workshops and the preparatory modules. Bringing together 40 experts, teachers and school managers from Nordic countries created a good atmosphere, with interesting discussions and meaningful exchange. This impression is confirmed by the results from surveys conducted after the workshops. A large majority of the respondents

considered the workshops highly successful, a few considered them to be partly successful, and none chose the neutral or negative alternatives.

Already after the first workshop, half of the respondents felt fully or much better equipped to work on Dembra. After the second workshop, with its more practical focus, the percentage of respondents that felt much better equipped increased significantly.

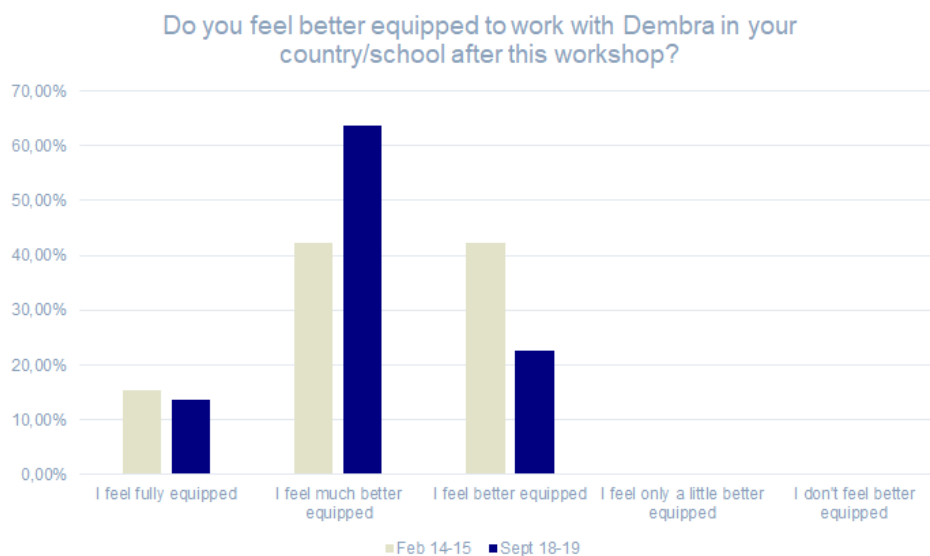


Figure 3: Comparison of participants responses after Workshop I in February and Workshop II in September shows more participants felt much better equipped after the second workshop.

The content of the two workshops differed, and in the survey, the respondents were asked whether

they had gained a better understanding of the specific themes of each workshop. The following two figures present the results:

Did the workshop help you gain a better understanding of:

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0

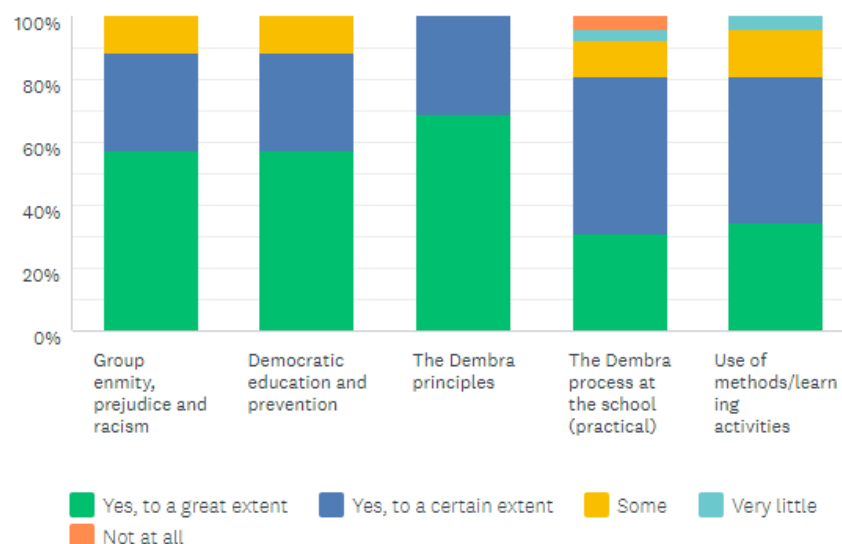


Figure 4: After Workshop I.

Did the workshop help you gain a better understanding of:

Answered: 22 Skipped: 0

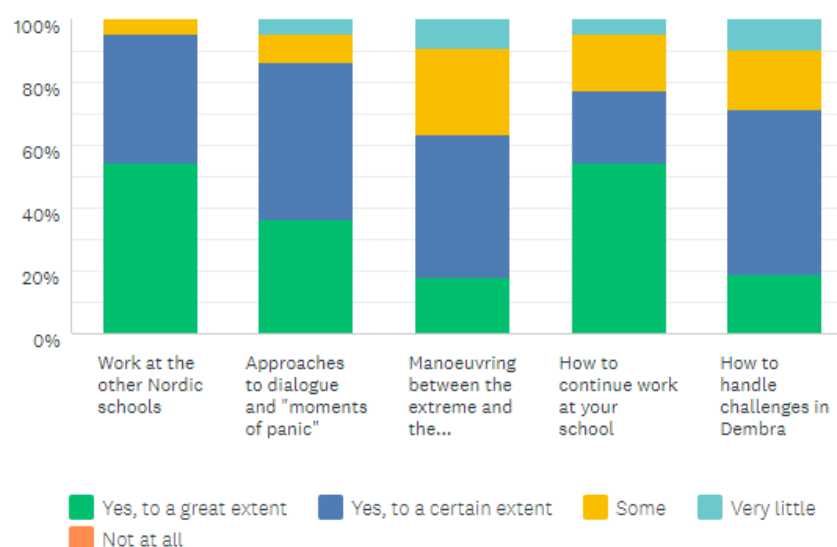


Figure 5: After Workshop II.

In the open comments, many of the participants commented on the sessions for experience exchange and how valuable it was to get a new perspective from another country. One of the participants wrote:

“I really liked the discussion and examples. I think the dialogical working method is the best.”

In response to the question “What did you find most beneficial from the workshop?”, one participant wrote:

“The session on ‘moments of panic’ and teachable moments was extremely inspiring. Furthermore, it’s always beneficial to share experiences (challenges and success stories) with other teachers from other countries.”

Another participant emphasized as beneficial *“the comparison between the participating countries, and their way to deal with Dembra.”*

5.5. Sweden

The Living History Forum started recruiting pilot schools in October 2018, and the two schools were chosen in December. The Forum held meetings with the school managements at both schools, and a declaration of intent was signed. Since both schools are quite complex organizations and would be expected to meet some challenges in working on Dembra using a whole-school approach, the Forum decided to invest considerable time and effort into institutionalizing both schools’ Dembra participation. To ensure that the work on Dembra could be as comprehensive as possible, it also decided to give priority to a thorough research and mapping stage at each school.

In December, the Living History Forum also had a meeting with the Ministry of Education and the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) to discuss the Swedish pilot. It was decided that the translation of the Dembra framework into Swedish needed to be revised in order to better

correspond with the Swedish context and curriculum. The Forum hired an external consultant, and the work was completed in February 2019.

Besides Skype meetings with the HL Center, the Living History Forum also invited a representative from the HL Center to visit and give a lecture to its staff on democratic education and prevention in April 2019. The visit also provided the opportunity for an in-depth discussion about local implementation and for a visit to one of the schools.

The Living History Forum guided the schools through the following process:

- Completion of a survey of 1,100 respondents, 1,000 of which were students.
- Meeting between the Living History Forum and the Dembra team.
- February: Nordic Dembra workshop in Oslo.
- Seminars with student representatives.

- Staff workshops, including a visit by the HL Center to the workshop held at Fredrika Bremergymnasiet.
- Meetings between a advisor from the Living History Forum and the Dembra team at the schools.
- August–September. Workshop with the Living History Forum and the Dembra teams from both pilot schools. The output of the workshop was a decision on focus areas for the school's Dembra plan.
- September: Nordic Dembra workshop in Oslo.
- Oct–Nov 2019. The Dembra plan was finalized and elements in the Dembra plan were discussed with the advisors.

The schools

Trädgårdsstadsskolan

Trädgårdsstadsskolan is a combined primary and secondary school in Botkyrka with 640 students. It cooperates with Stockholm University's teacher education department, and most of the school's educators are trained tutors for student teachers.

Botkyrka is a municipality in the Stockholm region with a high percentage of inhabitants with migrant background, and three parts of the municipality are classified as Sweden's "particularly vulnerable areas". However, Trädgårdsstadsskolan is situated in Tullinge, an area characterized by inhabitants with high socio-economic status and a high percentage of detached houses.

The Dembra process at Trädgårdsstadsskolan

One success factor for the Dembra work at Trädgårdsstadsskolan was that the school already had a well-functioning structure for school development issues. The Dembra team has been working hard to include and involve all the staff and to implement the Dembra principles through

continuous dialog among teachers and management.

In the beginning, the school had to work on how to involve both the primary and secondary school levels and all the students. Even if the Dembra principles can be applied on all levels, not all the Dembra material is adapted for use in primary schools, such as the survey. The school therefore had to find other ways to involve the primary level in the mapping phase.

Focus areas:

- To increase all the students' sense of security and inclusion in the school environment.
- To enhance the students' consciousness about language and how to be open towards people who think differently.
- To increase student participation and involvement.

Fredrika Bremergymnasiet

Fredrika Bremergymnasiet is an upper secondary school in Haninge with 2,000 students. Haninge is a municipality in the Stockholm region with a high percentage of inhabitants with migrant background.

Extensive changes have been carried out at the school over the past four years. Since 2016, the school has been a cohesive school unit with one principal for the entire school. The school currently offers 13 national programs, the Introductory Program, apprenticeships and a national sports education program (NIU).

The Dembra process at Fredrika Bremergymnasiet

Fredrika Bremergymnasiet faced some challenges when working on Dembra using a *whole-school approach*. As a very large upper secondary school

with several programs (13) and program directors, it has no school-wide common structure for school development issues. Thus, it took time and effort to be able to involve all the sections of the school and to make room for a common discussion on the school's challenges and needs and on what measures to take.

However, in cooperation with advisors from the Living History Forum, the school has made a great efforts to coordinate and involve all the staff,. This has been a fruitful process which has made them more aware of their common challenges and goals.

Focus area:

- To increase the understanding and acceptance of diversity.

Challenges and experiences in Sweden

- *Guidance:* In its report, the Living History Forum points out that it would have been preferable if its advisors had been given more guidance from the HL Center before starting the process in the pilot schools. Dembra, as a whole-school approach to prevention, involves many levels of work, and is a rather complicated process to grasp immediately. While the advisors from the Living History Forum have a lot of

experience working with the themes in Dembra, they needed support regarding the process of school development.

- *Survey:* Regarding the survey questions, the schools saw the need for some adaptations to the questions to fit their particular school system and local context. This points to the need for local adaptation and preparation in each country before starting the mapping phase
- *National laws and legal practice:* Under the Discrimination Act, all Swedish schools are required to take active measures to prevent discrimination and in other ways promote equal rights and opportunities. The Living History Forum notes that these legal aspects need to be taken into consideration when working on Dembra.
- *The Dembra approach to school development:* The advisors at the Living History Forum find that the implementation part of the Dembra process is the model's strength. The Forum therefore intends to continue using the model.

Classroom material: The Living History Forum and its advisors have a lot of experience developing and working with classroom material and exercises. The inclusion of material developed by the Forum would strengthen the work on Dembra.

5.6. Denmark

The schools chosen to pilot Dembra in Denmark are part of a socially financed guidance program to prevent radicalization and social control under the auspices of the Ministry of Children and Education. Dembra is thus being pilot tested as part of the

schools' current participation in an existing guidance program under the auspices of the Ministry of Children and Education.

Through the ministry's guidance program, the schools are offered practice-oriented guidance

based on the newest knowledge and methods concerning democracy and citizenship. Each school has formed a steering group comprising a leader and a number of employees who, together with the advisors from the Ministry, define local aims and implement initiatives based on the school's needs and challenges. The steering group is responsible for managing and ensuring progress in the initiatives.

The overall aim of the guidance program is for the institutions to test and develop existing and new methods and tools in order to anchor them within their own practice, as well as to share their learning outcomes and good experiences with institutions with similar needs and challenges.

To support the professionals in testing and spreading new methods and tools, the schools are offered different types of competence development by consultants from the ministry and an external partner.

The Ministry of Children and Education has established a website, www.duu.dk, with material and inspiration to continue with Dembra's principles. This site contains concrete material and activities to strengthen children and teenagers' citizenship, along with translations of the Council of Europe's material on teaching controversial issues (TCI), movies and podcasts, and a board game developed by the ministry.

The partner institution notes that integrating Dembra in an existing project will ensure continuity and long-term sustainability.

The schools

Københavns åbne Gymnasium

Københavns åbne Gymnasium is located in Valby, a suburb of Copenhagen, and offers both the upper secondary school leaving examination

(*studentereksamen* (STX) and the higher preparatory examination (*højere forberedelseseksamen* (HF))). The school has around 850 students and 12 classes.

The area in which the school is located is characterized by great diversity, with both social housing and residential neighborhoods adjacent to the high school. This diversity is also reflected in the student composition, which represents a broad group of students across resources, ethnicity, culture and religious beliefs. The school faces several challenges: low student engagement, segregation, and high dropout rates.

The Dembra process at Københavns åbne Gymnasium

The management, teachers and students work purposefully on the issues of democratic culture and community. The school slogan is: "YOU AND ME ARE WE", which underlines the importance of community, including the understanding of the role of the individual in the community. The school is characterized by having a very heterogeneous student group.

Focus area: Teaching controversial issues

In cooperation with an advisor from the Ministry, the steering group has held workshops about teaching controversial issues in which all the teachers who teach the HF students participated. The two courses were:

Course 1: Controversial issues: How do we agree to disagree?

Course 2: Citizenship didactics

Ellekærskolen

Ellekærskolen is a state school located in western Aarhus. Aarhus is the second-largest city in Denmark and is located in Jutland. The school has around 240 students from grades 0 to 9. It also

has special grades for children with special learning difficulties.

The area is a residential area localized on the border between the countryside and the city.

The average family income is lower than for the rest of the country, and parents have lower levels of education.

The school is facing severe economic difficulties and has been placed under supervision of the Ministry of Children and Education.

The Dembra process at Ellekærskolen

The Dembra project has three focus areas:

1. Negative social control
2. Teaching controversial issues
3. Parent cooperation

The teachers have been trained in democratic citizenship, a course that offers theoretical as well as practical perspectives and which adopts a norm-critical approach that creates an inclusive approach to discussing controversial topics, strengthens students' critical thinking and enables a democratic community of dissent. In this course, they worked on didactic organization and facilitation of democratic participation paths for all students.

Course 1: Change workshop

Course 2: Skills development around critical thinking

Course 3: Controversial Topics: How do we agree to disagree?

Course 4: Citizenship didactics

Course 5: Parent cooperation on democracy and citizenship

Course 6. What should we do in the work on social control?

Mølleholmskolen

Mølleholmskolen is a state school in Høje-Taastrup municipality in the capital region. The school has 160 employees and 850 students. The school was placed under supervision in 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, and has cooperated with the teaching consultants.

The school's student composition has changed dramatically in a short space of time, so that now more than half of the students at the school are bilingual. This has posed significant challenges for the school's teachers and management with regard to teaching practice, didactic approaches, and the framework for parental cooperation.

In the past year, Mølleholmskolen identified an increasing challenge with social control among the students, and in this regard the school searched for knowledge and tools to work on this issue.

The Dembra process at Mølleholmskolen

The vision of the school participating in Dembra is to strengthen citizenship by creating open dialog between students, parents and staff so that they can constructively engage in communities of disagreement.

Focus areas:

- Critical thinking
- Including teaching controversial issues
- Parent cooperation and social control

Challenges and experiences in Denmark

The challenge will be to anchor and implement the models and principles, because the schools are under pressure from several sides. Democracy and citizenship initiatives are squeezed between several other agendas. It is difficult for the schools to focus on their goals and get everyone to adopt a whole-school approach, but with support from the

Ministry of Children and Education, which sets the agenda, the chance of success will be greater.

The Ministry of Children and Education has established a website, www.duu.dk, providing material

and inspiration to continue working on the Dembra principles. The site contains concrete material and activities to strengthen children and teenagers' citizenship.

5.7. Iceland

In Iceland the educational company Trappa first served as a partner institution. Trappa also worked on a related project, *Með lýðræðið að leiðarljósi í samfélagsfræði* (Democracy is the guiding light in social science). The project was meant to create a plan to incorporate democracy and human rights, one of the six pillars of education, into the work of participating elementary schools.

Trappa recruited three schools for Nordic Dembra, with the intention of creating synergies between the two projects. All the schools participated in the first Nordic Dembra workshop, and the Dembra advisor from Trappa followed the schools throughout the spring of 2019.

The schools were given relatively wide scope in how they implemented Dembra, and the schools held information meetings for staff and arranged various activities with the students. The activities focused on encouraging democratic participation in the classroom and underlining cultural differences and similarities. All the schools completed the survey in May–April.

Unfortunately, Trappa's involvement in the project ended in the spring of 2019, which led to changes in the premises on which the schools originally accepted to participate. The schools have continued working democracy and the basic premise on which Dembra is based but they did not follow up work on the Dembra model.

After the summer, the Directorate of Education (*Menntamálastofnun*) took over the role of partner institution, at the request of the Ministry of Education. The Directorate notes that the main values in Dembra – critical thinking, democratic competence and inclusion – are directly related to some of the six fundamental pillars of education that are listed in the Icelandic national curriculum, namely democracy and human rights, equality and health and welfare.

The schools

Grunnskólinn á Hólmavík

This elementary school is situated in Hólmavík, a village of around 375 inhabitants in northwestern Iceland. The school itself has 41 students aged 6 to 16 years, and the students are taught in different age groups. A music school at the same location and an after-school program for children aged 6–10 years have a staff of 20.

A teacher participating in the second workshop reported that democratic issues are central to the school, and exemplified the reflection stimulated by Dembra with the establishment of gender-neutral toilets at the school.

Hörðuvallaskóli

Situated in Kópavogur, which is part of the capital region, this school has around 920 students aged 6–16 years and a staff of 157. Hörðuvallaskóli is one of the largest schools in Iceland. Around 4

percent of the school's students have a multicultural background.

The participants from Hörðuvallaskóli described the first workshop as an eye opener. The workshop inspired them to look at the broader context of issues in the school rather than at isolated incidents. Among other things, the school has worked to make students more aware of the words they use and of how words can hurt. The Dembra project also made the participants reflect on structural elements of racism in Icelandic society.

After the changes in the Icelandic partner institution, the school did not take part in the second workshop.

Síðuskóli

An elementary school located in the town of Akureyri in northeastern Iceland. Akureyri is the largest town outside the southwestern region of Iceland, with population of around 19,000. Like the other two schools, the students are aged between 6 and 16 years. The school has around 375 students and 77 staff.

After the changes in the Icelandic partner institution, the school did not take part in the second workshop.

Experiences

The Icelandic national curriculum defines six fundamental pillars of education: 1. literacy 2. Sustainability, 3. Democracy and human rights, 4. Equality, 5. Health and welfare, and 6. Creativity.

The benefit of Dembra is that it is at its core related to democracy, human rights and equality and can easily be related to the other pillars. This makes Dembra an interesting project to work on because it can connect different subjects and different aspects of student activities.

The Directorate of Education points to a strong emphasis on the individuality of schools in Iceland and on how each school has the right to decide its own focus points and agenda in school development. Therefore, it should prove easy for schools to implement Dembra should they choose to do.

Another strength of the model is its flexibility regarding level of involvement. The most effective method would be regular meetings for staff and students with active involvement from all participants, along with support for the staff through a learning community. Still, lesser degrees of involvement with the model are also possible, down to a few lessons from the website.

The Directorate of Education can inform schools about the Dembra material and the website and encourage them to participate in the project. But the emphasis on the individuality of each school means that not all the schools will follow the same framework.

It would be more difficult for schools to start following the program without a special or formal introduction and assistance. So a special advisor would be the most fruitful way to strengthen the groundwork of the Dembra program in Iceland. A special set of start-up seminars and follow-up programs would also be useful.

5.8. Finland

The pilot project in Finland has been organized by the Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI), because it is responsible for curriculum development and implementation support for curriculum. Democracy, inclusion and preventing violent extremism have also been promoted in the Agency's work through other projects. The Agency is forming a group of trainers from UNESCO ASPnet schools to promote activities related to PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism). Participating in DEMBRA has been one of the activities for new trainers. The other trainers have participated in a teaching controversial issues training course at Utøya and a similar Nordplus training course. The Agency has also provided training courses. UNESCO's ASPnet was selected because it is a school development network governed by EDUFI. The network is used to promote current curriculum issues. Satu Honkala and Maria Edel (until March 1, 2019) have been the advisors for the project, and it has been monitored by the Agency's PVE team.

During December 2018, UNESCO ASPnet schools were informed about the opportunity to join DEMBRA, and three schools with different profiles were selected. Björneborgs svenska samskola is a private Swedish-speaking located in a small town, Turku Teacher Training School is a multicultural university school, and Latokartano is an innovative and active school located in Helsinki.

As part of the introduction to Dembra, the schools attended the workshop in Oslo in February, where they started work on planning their schools' Dembra activities. The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) arranged a meeting with all the schools, including a video conference with the HL Center. Similar meetings were held in September and November, with participation from the whole

PVE team, ensuring progress and further development of Dembra in the Finnish schools.

The schools

Turku University Teacher Training School

Turku University Teacher Training School is located in multicultural Varissuo, which has an immigrant population of more than 40 percent. The school has about 1,100 students (aged 7–19) and 130 staff. The vast majority of the school's students in all grades (65 per cent in elementary education) speak Finnish as a second language. The school cooperates actively and continually with civil servants and organizations to maintain a peaceful and positively multicultural community. There are 50 different nationalities in the school and therefore also several large religious groups. The area has high rates of unemployment and poverty among both the immigrant population and native Finns, and controversial issues are likely to arise. Because of this, the school is actively seeking cooperation on means and methods of increasing participation and inclusion.

The Dembra process at Turku University Teacher Training School

During the school year the Dembra team at Turku has facilitated Dembra information and discussions during teachers' meetings relating to the topic of democratic education and prevention.

As part of the school's Dembra activities, a multi-disciplinary learning day dealing with controversial issues was arranged in April 2019. Dembra material was used for the event.

The school further reports that Dembra has been, and is, very useful. The school finds that the program can be used in single lessons for all grades (7–9) as well as a component in the broader PVE

program. Exercises from Dembra.no can also be used by student teachers to familiarize them with a multicultural school working culture. The school reports that it has found the five Dembra principles easy to understand and communicate to teachers and student teachers, first and foremost inclusion and participation, which they consider highly suitable for their ideology and working methods.

Latokartano Comprehensive School

Latokartano Comprehensive School for grades 1–9 is located in the northeastern part of Helsinki. It has about 850 students and 70 staff. The local community is socio-economically diverse. About 30 percent of the student body speak Finnish as a second language.

The Dembra process at Latokartano Comprehensive School

Latokartano Comprehensive School has successfully integrated its work on Dembra with its systematic efforts to create a calendar for the school's themes and activities throughout the school year. The calendar includes specific themes that will promote democratic competence, human rights, tolerance, acceptance, etc.

The school management has chosen language awareness as one of its strategic goals for the next three school years. This includes awareness of inclusive language among students and teachers alike.

The school has conducted afternoon training sessions for the entire staff – especially in how

teachers can enhance a safe space and the sense of being welcome at school as you are.

The school's cross-curricular module in the fall semester of 2019 is called "My hoodz", and aims to increase students' sense of belonging, reflection and responsibility for their environment. The whole school will be working on this project for five weeks.

Teachers are encouraged to promote ways in everyday class situations in which students can practice democracy, be active in planning their own learning and have their voices heard. Practical examples include weekly class meetings, a feedback box, questionnaires about sensitive issues or the mood in the classroom/school.

Björneborg svenska samskola

Björneborgs svenska samskola is a private Swedish-speaking school located in Pori, and covers early childhood education and primary and secondary education. The school has 224 students in grades 0–9 and 48 students in the senior/secondary level.

The Dembra process at Björneborg Svenska Samskola

The school has planned monthly Dembra themes for the school year 2019–2020, which are presented at the morning assemblies during each month. The school has developed a material bank for these activities, which also promote online resources such as dembra.no, levandehistoria.se, svenska.yle.fi/vetamix and lapsenoikeudet.fi.



Picture 1: The calendar developed by the Dembra team at Björneborg Svenska Samskola, plotting monthly Dembra themes for the school year 2019–2020.

Challenges and experiences in Finland

Integration of Dembra into other programs promoting democratic competencies: Finland has implemented the Dembra program by seeing it as an integrated part of the Finnish National Agency for Education's efforts to enhance democratic competence using a variety of approaches, such as the UNESCO ASPnet's teaching controversial issues, the REDI model, etc. Seeing these programs as complementary and as emphasizing slightly different but compatible aspects ensures a comprehensive, broad approach.

Challenges from having many programs/materials: However, the fact that democracy, inclusion and participation are deeply entrenched in the Finnish core curriculum, as well as the existence of many different programs with similar scope, also constitutes a challenge for introducing another program and material for preventive work. The Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) states that

the Dembra model and material might be very useful for schools, but there is a risk that Dembra can be seen as just one of many resources the schools can use in its work, and thus will not be taken full advantage of.

The weakness of applying Dembra in Finland, according to EDUFI, lies in the Finnish system. The schools are not very keen on using specific methods or programs. The teachers are highly trained, and they are expected to be able to adapt and develop their teaching according to group needs and current events rather than to follow a specific program.

Changing school practice takes time: The Finnish schools are highly aware that a real change in the way a school works on inclusion and prevention takes time. It is impossible to achieve significant results in just one year, but a process has been started and the schools have a plan for how to continue developing their Dembra plan. The

schools report that the difficult aspect of Dembra is having a genuinely whole-school approach, especially for a school with a large student body and staff. Activities are easy to implement, but having a long-term process, where everyone at school feels that democracy education and building democratic competence, is important.

Dissemination and continuation: The Finnish National Agency for Education reports that it will be

easy to continue promoting the Dembra material and encouraging more schools to adapt it to their local contexts. The themes of inclusion, democracy and preventing violent extremism will be included in the work of the UNESCO ASPnet schools. However, EDUFI sees a challenge in how it, as a national agency, can get all the schools to include the material and methods in their daily work. Dissemination of the material will be crucial.

6. Experiences and results

6.1. Enough time and good timing of partner competence building

As the Living History Forum has pointed out, the time frame for the Nordic Dembra was short, considering the complex nature of the project. More time in the initiation phase of the project would ensure greater ownership by the partner institutions and a better understanding of the Dembra process and what to communicate to the schools that were recruited. Sweden worked around the short time frame by taking initiatives such as travelling to Oslo to meet with the HL Center in November 2018. Partner institutions in Denmark and Finland were already competent in school development work, at the same time as they took the advantage of integrating Dembra into already existing projects. In Iceland the Nordic Dembra seemed to suffer the most from the short time frame for initiating and establishing contact with partner organizations because contact with Trappa was established late in the process.

In defense of the chosen model, it could be noted that there is a lot of learning potential in having to use newly adopted competence. This also offers the possibility to learn from own experiences and to adapt the transmitted knowledge to the actual, concrete reality of the schools one is guiding.

6.2. Having a structure for following up development work in schools

Finland, Denmark and Iceland all linked Nordic Dembra to other relevant projects in their respective countries. For Denmark and Finland this proved an advantage of the project. Both countries

also linked Nordic Dembra to the previously implemented project on teaching controversial issues. In this way, the schools see continuation in the work they are doing. This is also in accordance with the Dembra model. As a principle-based framework, Dembra can serve as a systematizing tool for various concrete activities.

Regarding Iceland, a change in partner institution seemed to halt the work on following up the schools, although both Trappa before the summer and the Directorate of Education after the summer gave positive feedback to the project. Having a stable institutional base for the Dembra project seems important for following the project up.

Apart from the Icelandic company Trappa, all of the partner institutions have been at central government level (with the nuance that the Danish agency is integrated into the ministry). In Finland and Denmark they have been directorates of education, with strong competence in process-oriented development work in schools. Sweden differs in that the Living History Forum is a special national agency which, according to the website, uses “the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity as a starting point, works with issues on tolerance, democracy and human rights.” The Forum has extensive competence and knowledge in teaching the Dembra related themes, but is seeking to strengthen its competence in school development work. The Nordic Dembra project has motivated it to continue this kind of work.

In Finland and Denmark, the implementing bodies were in a position to link Dembra to existing projects and related focus areas:

- Finland: Directorate with direct access to schools and high implementation experience from other focus areas
- Denmark: Ministry with direct access to schools and high experience with implementation of democratic school development

In Iceland and Sweden, the implementing bodies differed in how they felt prepared or suited for the task:

- Iceland: Ministry and directorate without direct implementation function and access to schools. Service provider with experience from citizenship education but with no experience in school development processes
- Sweden: Implementing institution with high expertise in Dembra-related topics, but little experience in school development

In conclusion, access to schools and experience in supporting school development processes seem to be the most important criteria for implementing the Dembra concept. Furthermore, the pilot has shown the need for capacity building in order to prepare implementing bodies for the task. A modularized capacity-building concept, as developed by Dembra, allows for tailor-made training for the personal assigned to guide schools in their development work.

6.3. National adaptations

National and local adaptations have been an important issue for all the participants in the project. Such adaptations are also at the core of the Dembra model, and in accordance with the Dembra principle number four: ownership and long-term sustainability. Local adaptation is necessary for ownership, which in turn is needed for long-term sustainability.

How such adaptations are to be made will vary. The partner institution in Denmark has quickly and confidently streamlined Dembra to its own project on democracy against extremism. In Finland, the schools were enthusiastic about Dembra, partly because they saw the possibility to adapt the model to their own reality. The Directorate, seeing the project more from a policy level, still sees the independence of the Finnish teachers as a challenge for a project like Dembra. Interestingly, this is the same element which the Icelandic partner believes could make Dembra relevant: that it caters to schools with quite different approaches to the issues at hand.

6.4. Differences between schools

The Nordic pilot has provided valuable experience regarding the implementation of Dembra in a wide variety of schools, regarding the particular needs for adaptation and added value:

- Primary schools, regular schools (1–10), higher secondary (with study specialization and vocational programs)
- School size from 34–1,800 students
- University colleges
- Socio-economic background of students
- Diversity in student groups

With its focus on awareness raising and professional development of teachers on the one hand and on school development on the other, Dembra addresses teachers and school managers at different kinds of schools.

6.5. The success of the program for competence building and networking

The workshops and the literature for competence building has been a great success, as showed

through the evaluation survey results above. Gathering teachers, experts and school managers from Nordic countries to discuss pressing issues for society, and exchange ideas, strategies and perspectives regarding work on these issues in schools has turned out to be very inspiring – for the experts, but not least for the teachers and school managers.

This also points to the value of the network component of the project. The workshops have served as an important hub in the network and school and experts. It would be an advantage if this network could be further supported in some way.

6.6. Fulfillment of project objectives and success criteria

In the following we list each objective and success criteria mentioned in the project description, followed by a brief description of their fulfillment.

Objectives

1. Build competence in partner institutions pertaining to guiding schools in their work on democracy and prevention of group hostility

All partner institutions were very satisfied with the workshops and the reading tasks in advance of the workshops. This success indicates an element of competence building. Whether this competence is grounded in the institution or not seems to vary considerably, as should be clear from the reflections above regarding differences in institutional support.

2. Connecting partner institutions in a network related to prevention of group hostility in schools

The network part of the project proved a great success, due mainly to well organized workshops. Also, bringing the schools into the network gave the project clear added value regarding network and community.

3. Strengthen participating schools' efforts for democracy and prevention of group hostility as integral elements of the schools' daily work

Although most participants in the competence building program seem to have strengthened their competence in Dembra-related issues, the results vary widely. Two schools did not attend the final workshop, and are unlikely to see Nordic Dembra to have strengthened the institutional level. On the other hand, some of the schools have maintained the Dembra project groups and continue development work, either inspired by or according to the Dembra model.

4. Introduce and further develop Dembra as a model for development work in schools in the Nordic countries

Nordic Dembra has succeeded in introducing Dembra as a model for work in Nordic schools, although to what extent the model will be continued is uncertain. Both the Dembra concept and the feedback from the project show the importance of further development to adapt Dembra to different local contexts. With more time in the initiation phase, further development could probably have been a more central element in the Nordic Dembra process itself. Nevertheless, all the countries have reworked elements of the project, from further work on website texts in Iceland to adapting the Dembra process in Sweden.

Success criteria

Collaborating institutions in the Nordic countries have exchanged experience and gained expertise in the implementation of Dembra, including guidance and courses for schools.

See objective 1 above.

The learning resources developed as part of dembra.no have been translated into the Nordic languages and used in schools' work on preventing group hostility

Texts at dembra.no were translated into Swedish, Icelandic, Danish, Finnish and English in 2018. The initial translations, performed by commercial translators, varied in quality. The translation process also demanded a lot of time and follow-up. Sweden and Iceland had experts revise some of the material to correspond to the national context. This seems to be a better way of ensuring the quality of the end product. The schools participating in Dembra used some of the exercises from dembra.no, but further use of the websites has been limited.

Selected schools in the Nordic countries have launched a sustainable effort to work on democracy and prevent group hostility.

This was clarified to mean the following:

- Create commitment to and ownership of work on democracy and the prevention of group hostility in the participating schools
- Provide schools with some tools and increased skills to continue their efforts beyond the project period
- That the schools have a well-planned plan (Dembra plan) for implementation during the school year 2019–2020

As already mentioned, the levels of commitment and ownership vary from school to school. Survey results shows that commitment after completing the competence building program was high. In the first workshop some participants called for more practical tools for working with the students, and the program for the second workshop was adapted to accommodate this. All the schools in Denmark, Sweden and Finland submitted their Dembra plans in advance of the second workshop, and the plans were discussed there.

6.7. Added value

The decision to include teachers and school managements from the participating schools in the competence-building program proved very successful. This resulted in discussions and exchanges at the workshops that were more beneficial and closer to the reality of the schools in the participating countries. School staff from the different countries found important similarities, but also differences in their respective approaches and national educational cultures.

Such networking between schools also creates the potential for new initiatives. One example of this from the Nordic Dembra is the decision by a Swedish and a Norwegian school to continue cooperating on an Erasmus project. The Norwegian school, Kuben Upper Secondary School, has called this project Dembra 2.0.

There has also been contact between the HL Center and the Swedish company Demokratibygget (demokratibygget.se). Among other things, Demokratibygget supports schools in implementing the Council of Europe's *Reference Framework of*

Competences for Democratic Culture.⁷ The conversation between Demokratibyggget and the HL Center has centered around the possibility of this framework serving as the basis for further work on Dembra in the participating schools.

Linking Dembra to other relevant initiatives is important for creating synergies and joining forces to deal with common challenges. In the introduction, we mentioned the close relationship between the Nordic Dembra and the work in Nordic schools on teaching and managing controversial issues. Connecting the two has been a central aim in Finland and Denmark.

As Dembra is based on a whole school approach to the development of on democracy and inclusion, there is a potential for significant synergies between Dembra and the work of the Council of Europe. Due to the broad conceptual overlap, Dembra can be linked to the local implementation of the Council of Europe's *Reference Framework for Competence in Democratic Culture (RFCDC)*.⁸ During the Nordic Dembra project the HL Center and the Swedish NGO Demokratibyggget⁹ discussed the potential integration of RFCDC into the

Dembra project cycle. As a result of this exchange possible links related to project planning and evaluation cycles have been identified.

Dembra also covers one of the six themes of the Council of Europe's project *Free to speak – safe to learn; Democratic schools for all*.¹⁰ Based on RFCDC, this project aims at highlighting the commitment to democratic values and principles in the life and culture of schools in Europe and to interconnect schools engaging in democratic school development. The *Free to speak – safe to learn* network of schools offers opportunities for Nordic Dembra schools to keep connected and to connect with schools from all over Europe.

There is also a potential in connecting Dembra to work on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, namely Target 4.7 on democratic education. This connection was made early by Iceland and could prove a good way to ensure long-term sustainability. As noted, the work in the Icelandic schools stopped due to institutional challenges.

⁷ Council of Europe, "Presentation of the project "Competences for Democratic Culture", "<https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/competences-for-democratic-culture>; *Competences for democratic culture. Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2016).

⁸ "Presentation of the project "Competences for Democratic Culture".

⁹ "Demokratibyggget," <https://demokratibyggget.se/>.

¹⁰ Council of Europe, "Free to speak - safe to learn," <https://www.coe.int/en/web/campaign-free-to-speak-safe-to-learn/home>.

7. Summary and outlook

One of the most important insights of the Nordic Dembra pilot is that the Dembra concept is consistent with the core mandate of education in the Nordic countries. The basic approach of “building for prevention” (*bygge for å forebygge*) lies at the heart of democratic educational traditions (*bildning, dannelse*) and culture in all the Nordic countries. The concept and the methods used in the project inspired the participating teachers and school managers, and thus, they seem to resonate with the Nordic teacher ethos. The project revealed the importance of adaptations to national and local contexts, which is also in accordance with the Dembra principle of ownership. Overall, participants found Dembra to be relevant in the respective national and institutional contexts.

The reports from the schools also show that the Dembra concept and principles are relevant for concrete activities in the classroom as well as for school development processes. Especially the initiation phase, including stocktaking of the challenges and resources at each school and the process to create a sense of ownership among the staff, seemed to be important for Dembra to be well received in the participating schools. The process-oriented character of Dembra and its focus on ownership and adaptation at the school level seem to be a precondition for its applicability outside the Norwegian context.

However, the pilot also showed that this transfer and adaptation process requires time and, in many cases, support by competent advisors. This results in two insights to be taken into consideration in future initiatives:

- a need for solid capacity building of guides (best: modulized training, accompanied by reading lists and online assignments).

- schools need at least 1½ years, starting with initialization in early spring, rolling out activities throughout the following school year, while integrating a Dembra focus in institutional practice at all levels.

In line with this, the Danish project partner plan to facilitate for the network of schools to continue throughout 2020, as part of its work as chair of the Nordic Council of Ministries’ network for Democracy, Inclusion and Security.

The role and expertise of the implementing bodies

The main challenge in implementing Dembra in different national contexts does not seem to lie in the applicability of the concept at *school level*, as local adaptation is one of the core features of the Dembra concept. Instead, experience gained from the Nordic pilot shows that there are some requirements an implementing body (the partner institutions) must meet:

- expertise in the content area (racism, group-focused enmity, anti-discrimination / anti-racist education)
- experience in school development
- access to schools

The translated material

The use of the translated Dembra website was of the more challenging elements of the Dembra pilot. Some of the national partners evaluated the material to be inadequately adapted to the specific national contexts, and had experts rewrite some of the material. Schools had used some of the exercises in the websites, but further use of the sites seems low.

Although the website was developed in and for the Norwegian context, it contains information about the challenges at hand and preventive strategies that are relevant both in a Nordic and in a broader European context. Similarly, the exercises can easily be used by teachers in other countries. Still, the website also contains material that is more specifically relevant to Norway, and the experiences from the other countries revealed the need to work with adaptation to the different contexts.

A lesson learned is the need for more thorough translations, preferably through cooperation between Dembra staff and local guides and experts, to develop tailor-made resources for the respective countries.

7.1. Beyond the Nordic Experience: relevance of the Dembra approach in the European context

Prejudice, xenophobia and radicalization leading to violent extremism represent threats against democracy in many European countries. The Dembra approach, based on the principle of strengthening democratic preparedness and resilience as the appropriate response to these threats, aligns with the Council of Europe action plan against radicalization and violent extremism from 2015.¹¹ In this action plan, the *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*

(RFCDC) is given a major role in creating democratic resilience and preventing radicalization and violent extremism.

The Nordic Dembra pilot has shown that Dembra can build on the democratic value base of the educational system and strengthen existing work related to democracy and human rights in schools in different national contexts. However, this democratic value base is under threat by aggressive nationalism and authoritarianism in many countries,

As shown in chapter 6.6 Dembra can become an integrated part of efforts to strengthen democracy in and through education, namely by creating links with the Council of Europe Reference Framework Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC). The framework is currently being implemented in a number of educational systems in Council of Europe member states. In such contexts, the Dembra concept seems to be an appropriate way of addressing prevention of prejudice, group-focused enmity and radicalization leading to violent extremism.

In sum, the Nordic Dembra pilot gives clear evidence of the benefits of further dissemination and implementation of the Dembra concept in a broader European context.

¹¹ "The fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism - Action Plan," Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe, https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c3576.

7.2. Recommendations

- Promote a whole-school approach of inclusion and democratic culture in schools as the *Nordic response* to challenges related to prejudice, group-focused enmity and anti-democratic ideologies, because this corresponds with the value base on which educational systems in all Nordic countries are founded;
- Organize initiatives supporting local school development cycles related to prevention of prejudice and group-focused enmity, lasting at least 1½ years and supported by external advisers;
- Organize a capacity-building initiative for advisers supporting school development;
- Develop material on prevention of prejudice and group-focused enmity for use in teaching and school development, building on existing materials in related areas (Dembra) and involving national experts;
- Build a Nordic network of schools for experience exchange and capacity building related to prevention of prejudice and group-focused enmity in school;
- Link and align work on prevention of prejudice and group-focused enmity to implementation of focus areas such as education for sustainable development (UN: SDG 4.7, UNESCO schools) and education for democratic citizenship (CoE: RFCDC, TCI)

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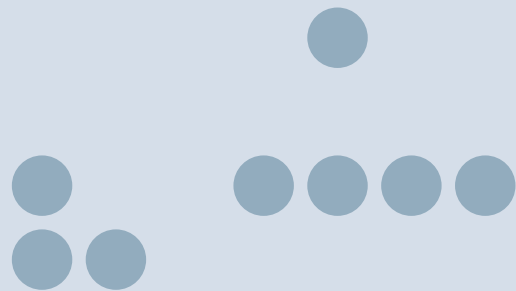
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NORDIC DEMBRA

Challenges of anti-democratic attitudes, group hostility, racism and radicalization face Nordic as well as other European societies today. This report describes a project implemented in schools in the Nordic countries aimed at strengthening the work of schools in responding to these challenges.

Teachers, school managers, and experts in the field of education from throughout the Nordic countries have met to learn, discuss and develop strategies relevant to the specific context of each participating school. The Dembra concept was developed in Norway on the assumption that a democratic culture based on participation and critical thinking builds resilience against ideologies of inequality.

Dembra supports schools through teacher training and a process of school development. Guided by experts, schools engage in mapping, analyzing and responding to local challenges related to group hostility and undemocratic attitudes. The ownership of teachers and school managers is central to the local development processes. This approach is relevant to the Nordic countries as well as other countries struggling with the challenges of anti-democratic attitudes.



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