



Input for the preparation of the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights pursuant to the Human Rights Council resolution 57/24

provided by **Gesicht Zeigen! Für ein weltoffenes Deutschland e.V.**

As a Civil society organisation with a record of 26 active years, and in reply to the call for inputs for the preparation of the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights pursuant to the Human Rights Council resolution 57/24, we would like to inform on a number of issues and developments in Germany and its capital Berlin.

Who we are

[Gesicht Zeigen! is a nationwide not-for-profit organization](#), founded in 2000 in Berlin. Our intention is to encourage people to work actively against xenophobia, racism, antisemitism and extreme right-wing violence. “**Gesicht Zeigen!**” literally means “Show your face”. Promoting open-mindedness, diversity and cultural awareness in Germany is not only our name, but the central call to action.

Our aim is to strengthen the commitment to social civility and to raise awareness of any kind of discrimination, including all forms of antisemitism, racism and anti-queer discrimination. At **Gesicht Zeigen!**, we initiate public campaigns in favour of civil courage, and we develop projects that promote tolerance and reduce prejudices. We develop educational materials suitable for the work with schoolchildren and have a learning centre where we are conducting workshops with young people every day.

Gesicht Zeigen! intervenes, participates in current political debates, and takes a stand on public issues. Moral responsibility in dealing with the memory of the Holocaust in the German society of today was one of the founding impulses for the organization.



Effective methods and projects – examples from our own experience

As an organization, we have over the years developed, tested and used quite a number of different methods, materials and projects, all of them with very positive feedback from users in quite different societal groups. In spite of many differences between these projects, they all address issues of discrimination, racism, antisemitism, xenophobia (and similar) with a democratic attitude, where experiences of the people taking part in an exercise are one important input to foster exchange and common learning – not neglecting the structural importance of the different positionings and experiences we all have in our society, but bringing these differences into a respectful and meaningful dialogue. Some examples:

- **Gesicht Zeigen!'s [serious games](#)** support personal and inter-personal processes of learning within a group setting, focusing on the realities, meanings and possible action that people can take in view of racism, xenophobia and similar phenomena. The materials do not focus on facts, but emphasize and foster social ways of learning within the group. The materials are printed on cardboard, are easy to use, follow simple principles and therefore are basically easy to adapt for different audiences, societies or countries.
- **Gesicht Zeigen!** has created a **unique learning center named 7x^{young} ([7x^{jung} – Der Lernort von Gesicht Zeigen!](#))** situated in Berlin. Our educational principles are built into the rooms as well as into the didactics being used in the 4-hour-workshops taking part every day. Therefore, the learning goals for the workshop are not fix and abstract but are highly dependent on the educational process itself. School classes come here for one school day to take part in a workshop, which is an important non-formal enrichment of the formal school context. School teachers are invited to be present, to themselves observe and learn about their learning group, and incorporate whatever they take from their observations into their ongoing educational process with the class.
- As an answer to questions from teachers, educators and headmasters of different schools, we have developed **[professional trainings for educators](#)** about our approach to interpersonal learning on the issues of racism, antisemitism and discrimination against any existent or imagined social group. The different materials mentioned above form an import base not only for these trainings as such, but they are also tools participants can use themselves in their oncoming lessons against discrimination etc. Therefore, the learning that takes place between adult participants who are education professionals, includes learning the methods they can apply themselves in the near future.

Combining Formal With Non-Formal Education

Education in Germany is organized on a federal basis, meaning that responsibility lies with the 16 federal states, and there are regional differences. When it comes to educational equity, Germany has been performing poorly in the PISA studies for many years, and despite all efforts the level of education a child will receive still is very much dependant on their household background.

Furthermore, a [recent representative study on schools in Berlin](#) shows that there is quite a high level of conflict and violence present, with elements of racism, antisemitism and anti-queer sentiments playing an important role.

Various measures have been taken to address issues such as exclusion, racism, and ableism. In the federal state of Berlin, the right to an education free from discrimination is [explicitly laid down in the school law](#). Gender and gender diversity have been incorporated into curricula (e.g. as part of the interdisciplinary competencies – see the Berlin/Brandenburg example [here](#) and [here](#)). In all federal states, the school system has been partially restructured through the establishment of inclusive classrooms.

But everywhere, schools are lacking resources and staff on these issues. Furthermore, schools (and formal education in general) are traditionally organized around subjects like mathematics, language, sports, etc. An ideal school will have trained teachers and experts for all these subjects. Nevertheless, teaching and reflecting with pupils on questions of racism and discrimination is not traditionally part of these subjects, and teachers in general have not received any training on these themes.

In Germany these issues have been primarily addressed and implemented by non-school actors and civil society organizations. Many civil society organizations do have a lot of expertise in the field and have been active with educational projects and programs for a long time. Education with young people and schoolchildren is a line of work where many civil society organizations have extensive experience and expertise.

Therefore, combining this expertise of civil society organizations providing tools of non-formal education and including the chance of more personal exchanges with the structural importance of schools and formal learning yields enormous benefits towards better and deeper learning about prejudices, discrimination, racism and the very important question for everyone: What can I contribute towards a positive change?

In our experience, this huge potential of a hand-in-hand between schools and out-of-school-learning experiences is at best only partly being acknowledged. For example, in the land of Berlin, the [school administration supports and headlines \("Projects to combat extremism and promote](#)

[democracy](#)”) some civil society organizations active in the field as partners for schools. In Germany on the average, though, according to an internal overview of the association for the education sector [Didacta Verband](#), the level of structural cooperation between non-formal “out-of-school” education and schools is rather low, depending mostly on the personal commitment of individuals (with few exceptions like e.g. “[Bildungspartner NRW](#)”, which do not focus on the themes of anti-discrimination though).

According to our direct experience – including experiences of many of our civil society partners –, in the field of preventing, addressing and combating discrimination and racism, **there lies a huge potential still to be developed in structural collaboration between civil society organizations including non-formal educational programs on the one side and schools as well as other institutions of formal education on the other.**

Civil Society Organizations as General Support for Schools

A sincere transformation of schools and other institutions of formal education into places that foster anti-racism, anti-discrimination and anti-antisemitism needs to address very different aspects. Besides the question discussed above of how to teach and to tackle these issues with pupils, further needs arise: What materials should be used (and not used) in education throughout the different subjects? How should people within the school treat each other in a respectful perspective that is critical of discrimination? How can the people working at school discern cases of discrimination, and how should they deal with them? What are adequate ways of professional training and personal development of leadership, teachers and all staff? Which needs of school development arise out of the aforementioned?

These questions mostly point to open gaps in school organization and administration. There are no mandatory training modules for teachers, no support centers in schools, and no clearly defined courses on these topics.

Many civil society initiatives have a lot of expertise in this wide array of themes and processes necessary as support for schools not only in teaching, but to develop schools as organizations towards a structural stand against discrimination and racism. Consequently, many of the gaps are filled mostly by civil society organizations – if they are filled at all.

That is why **Gesicht Zeigen!** has developed a wide range of training programs for teachers (see above) to teach human rights and to prevent and combat racism and discrimination, both in the classroom and in their interactions with students.



Funding

In order to give the necessary support to formal education, civil society initiatives need funding. As of now, there is a significant gap between what civil society organizations could do in this field and the available funding to realize this potential. Donations and philanthropy alone are by far not sufficient, all initiatives benefit from government funding – and yes, such funding does exist, on federal and state levels.

However, it is always temporary and depends on the political majorities in power at the time. Government grants usually have a formal limit of one calendar year, which structurally limits cooperation between civil society organizations (funded by the calendar year from January to December) and schools (functioning by academic years from August to July). More sustainable cooperations have to span longer periods of time – this is very hard if not impossible in the given funding situation.

On the national level, there is one funding program ([Demokratie leben!](#)) which has been instrumental in supporting civil society organizations in their activities against racism, antisemitism and any forms of discrimination since 2015. Among other key areas, this program has been funding model initiatives, the development of new forms of education and support for schools and early childhood education on the topics of discrimination and racism.

This program is right now being transformed by the federal government at very short notice, cutting two important funding lines that had been installed until end-2029 ("[Innovation Projects](#)") and end-2032 ("[Development of a Federal Infrastructure](#)") respectively, prematurely ending them with the end of 2026. Regardless of new funding lines [being prepared right now](#), the sudden change and the severe uncertainty contained therein nevertheless shake the very foundations of a lot of civil society organizations active in the field.

It would be very important and desirable to create reliable funding structures in this area to effectively combat racism and all forms of discrimination in a sustainable, long-term, and structural manner. Civil society organizations can contribute very much here, but they need a structural base to do so effectively which, as of now, does not exist.



Submitting organization:

Gesicht Zeigen! Für ein weltoffenes Deutschland e.V.

Franz-Mehring-Platz 1

10243 Berlin

Germany

www.gesichtzeigen.de

www.7xjung.de

Tel.: +49 30 3030808-0

Contact Person:

Jan Krebs, head of education

kontakt@gesichtzeigen.de