**Research to Enhance Democracy through Aesthetic and Embodied Learning – the Faculty for Techer Education University of Zagreb partner in EUR 2.7 million project**

**Faculty for Techer Education University of Zagreb is a partner in a project coordinated by the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Lapland and five other universities, which has been awarded 2.1 million euros of EU Horizon funding and 630 000 euros of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) funding. The purpose of the international AECED project is to enhance awareness, appreciation and understanding of democracy as lived and embodied experience, and to develop pedagogies to support this.**

Democracy is an integral part of European civilization and free societies. However, recent years have seen increasing challenges to democracy, including leaders who question democracy and the values of the constitutional state and greater polarisations and aggressive language in social debates, as well as populist political forces that have a negative attitude towards education and culture. The project emphasizes that if democracy is to be protected and maintained and to grow in strength, it is important to enhance awareness and understanding of social diversity and the importance of dialogue across differences and of shared decision-making. This can be supported and promoted in education for democracy in multiple ways.

The project aims to increase understanding of the practical ways that democracy can be enhanced through aesthetic and embodied learning at different levels of education. Growth in mutual understanding concerning differences and commonalities amongst people can be helped through recognising the variety of ways in which others and oneself see and experience democracy and engaging in collaborative reflections and activities with others. The aim is to design a pedagogical framework and innovative guides to teaching that facilitate educators’ and learners’ creativity and help to nurture feelings, awareness, sensibilities and energies of momentum vital to living democracies.

**AECED:** **Transforming Education for Democracy through Aesthetic and Embodied Learning, Responsive Pedagogies and Democracy-as-becoming, 2023–2026**

The three-year project will develop an evidence-based, innovative aesthetic and embodied pedagogical framework and teaching toolkits and guides through ground-breaking, transdisciplinary participatory research on various educational levels. There is a total of 19 case studies in six countries. The emphases of aesthetic and embodied methods vary across cases, from visual and narrative approaches to methods based on movement and senses.

The consortium consists of six partners: In addition to the University of Lapland (Finland) who coordinates the project, there are the University of Hertfordshire (UK), Riga Technical University (Latvia), University of Zagreb (Croatia), Phillips-Universität Marburg (Germany), and Universidade Alberta (Portugal).

The total funding of the project is EUR 2.7 million, of which EUR 2.1 million is funding from the Horizon Europe 2022 Reshaping Democracies programme and EUR 630 000 funding from the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). The project will start on April 1, 2023.

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*Democratic agency is always embodied.* Picture: *Kaisa Sirén*