

IDEC 2005 Berlin  
Organizing Committee  
c/o Netzwerk SPIEL/KULTUR  
Dunckerstraße 11  
D-10437 Berlin

# IDEC 2005 BERLIN

Application

Sunday, May 23, 2004

## **International Democratic Education Conference — IDEC 2005 Berlin**

Dear friends and supporters of the IDEC,

We, representatives of the “Netzwerk Spiel/Kultur” and of the “Schule für Erwachsenenbildung”, both of Berlin, Germany, would like to host next year’s IDEC in our city in August 2005. In the following, we wish to outline our current ideas for the conference, for which we hope to receive your support and advice. We look forward to being able to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to the realization of this project and are confident that we can make it a success.

First, we would like to introduce ourselves briefly:

### **Netzwerk Spiel/Kultur and the KRÄTZÄ group**

The organization “Netzwerk Spiel/Kultur” was founded in the 1980s. Under the motto “the city as a play-scape”, it provides children and youth with numerous opportunities to play, engage in activities, and learn.

Since the early 1990s, the children’s rights group KRÄTZÄ has been part of our network. It fights for the goal of equal rights between children and adults, based on the conviction that everyone is entitled to the same human rights, regardless of age. Since its foundation, the KRÄTZÄ group has campaigned for changes in the German school system. Their critique of German schools has led many of its youthful members to seek out schools that could serve as models of reform, such as the SchülerInnenschule Wien in Vienna and the Hadera, Kanaaf and Keshet schools in Israel. In 2003, representatives of the group even visited the Sudbury Valley School while attending the IDEC 2003 in the U.S.A. Back in Germany, we reported on our respective impressions of this visit. Through texts by the Sudbury School (which were translated into German by our colleague Martin Wilke), we have long been familiar with schools of this type. Since 1990, our organization has encouraged the foundation of the first alternative school in the former East Berlin and is now supporting an effort to found a Sudbury School in our city. We have experience in both public relations and presswork, and are old hands at applying for and managing grants. In 1996 we organised a conference on the topic of “equality without age limits” with participants from Nicaragua and Honduras.

Since 1996 we have maintained a continually updated Internet website (<http://www.kraetzae.de>), on which texts in six languages are posted. The German webpage contains an extensive chronicle of our work.

## **The Schule für Erwachsenenbildung**

The Schule für Erwachsenenbildung (SfE) is an independent, non-hierarchical school of adult education that prepares its mature (18+) secondary-school pupils for the externally administered state Abitur (A-level) and Mittlere Reife (O-level) examinations. Founded in 1973 at the height of the so-called “autonomous student movement”, the SfE is today the only secondary school in Germany to be organized according to the principles of democratic self-government and self-determined learning.

The school is dedicated to the principles of equality and diversity, and many of its members engage themselves politically in the struggles against racism, sexism, antisemitism and homophobia. Financially, the SfE is entirely self-supporting, all of its running expenses (rent, salaries, etc.) being covered by the tuition fees paid by the students. However, in deference to the needs of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and in accordance with its status as a non-profit institution, these fees are kept as low as possible and, like all other matters of school policy, are set democratically by the collective of students, teachers and office staff. At present, the school has approximately 300 students (divided into 12 classes), 13 teachers and an administrative staff of four.

(<http://home.snafu.de/sfe>)

## **Goals**

At the Berlin IDEC we hope to achieve the following goals:

### “The IDEC family”

A gathering of democratic schools, at which experiences can be shared and contacts made

### The qualifications process

Talks by experts, discussions and workshops on democratic schools. What fundamental ideas, problems, arguments and solutions are out there? Critical voices are also welcome here.

[This is the most important point and demands more extensive consideration]

### Special themes

How do people learn—from a scientific perspective?

The consequences of the social contexts of East-West-South-North on democratic schools

[We would welcome suggestions here]

### Public relations work

We want to draw national and international attention to democratic schools. We are attempting to establish contact with influential politicians and journalists. Toward this end, we plan to draft press releases, invite politicians as guest speakers and perhaps pass a resolution among the participants.

[This last point might prove problematic in light of the debate over legitimation at the last IDEC in Albany, N.Y. Therefore we want to state at the outset that we regard it as important. Details can be worked out later.]

### Children's activities

The conference program should also provide for activities for young people, so that they, too, may participate in and enjoy the conference.

### Cultural Program

We are, of course, aware that many participants will want to take advantage of Berlin's many touristic attractions. We will make every effort to accommodate their needs.

## **Planning**

We hope to welcome between 300 to 400 participants. The accommodation facilities should be in close proximity to the conference venue. We have not yet chosen a concrete site but are certain to find an appropriate location in the Berlin area.

For one or two days, the IDEC will open its doors to a larger circle of visitors in order to offer "normal" teachers and students the opportunity to come into contact with democratic schools. To facilitate this process, we envision setting up a kind of informational market, at which the various democratic schools in attendance can present their work.

We hope that most of the participants will be relatively fluent in English. For certain events, however, we plan to provide interpreters.

In the conference program, a considerable amount of space should be left open for presentations by participants (along the lines of the "open schedule" system used at the Albany conference).

We cannot yet say what the obligatory attendance fee will be. We do, however, promise to plan as economically as possible. In addition, we hope to obtain both financial and logistical support from various organizations. Should we succeed in this, we would like to be able to assist low-income participants with price reductions and/or subsidies.

In the lead-up to the IDEC, a regularly updated Internet website will provide interested participants with current information on the state of our preparations.

The conference itself will be documented. For this purpose, we will use the appropriate media, such as brochures, the Internet and video cameras.

We hope to benefit from the advice and support of all those who have already had experience with organizing an IDEC. We sincerely request any tips, comments or assistance.

We envision holding the IDEC from July 30 to August 7, 2005.

We look forward to hearing your response.

Sincerely,

The Organizing Committee:

Mike Weimann, Ele Schwabe, Mense Bauer, Deborah Cohen, Christoph, Benjamin Bisewski, Sabine Steldinger, Daniel Schmidt, Paula Sell, Stefan ("Kalle") Karl