Evaluation Network of the Federal Programme „Live Democracy!" in the Funding Period 2020–2024

Summary of the Final Report on the Federal Programme „Live Democracy!"

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1   Introduction

The federal programme „Live Democracy!" („Demokratie leben!") of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) is Germany's most important funding programme for promoting democracy, shaping diversity and preventing extremism. „Live Democracy!" makes a significant contribution to society's resilience against anti-democratic tendencies and promotes active participation in democratic processes.

In its second funding period (2020–2024), the programme comprises two pillars: „sustainable structures" („nachhaltige Strukturen") and „Model Projects" („Modellprojekte"). The sustainable structures strengthen the nationwide promotion of democracy through Competence Networks and Centers, State Democracy Centers as well as municipal Partnerships for Democracy to support local projects. Model Projects promote innovative approaches in the fields of promoting democracy, shaping diversity and preventing extremism.

„Live Democracy!" connects actors from civil society and regular institutions such as child and youth welfare services in order to create synergies and establish democratic values in the long term. The programme's most important target groups are children, adolescents and young adults as well as multipliers who work with them or have an influence on them. The scientific monitoring and overall evaluation, which is divided between four institutes[1], evaluate the programme, analyze its achievement of set goals and its impact as well as identify potential for improvement. The results are incorporated into the further development of the measures.

This paper summarizes the key findings of the evaluation network and provides an overview of the contents of the final report, which is expected to be published by Beltz Juventa in spring 2025.[2]

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1   Camino – Werkstatt für Fortbildung, Praxisbegleitung und Forschung im sozialen Bereich gGmbH, Deutsches Jugendinstitut e.V., Deutsches Zentrum für Integrations- und Migrationsforschung e.V., Institut für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik e.V.
2   Bibliographic information on the publication: Greuel et al. i.E.

2 Overview of the final report

The first part of the joint final report by the institutes in the evaluation network presents the impacts achieved and objectives attained in the second funding period of the federal programme. In five chapters, the authors summarize key findings across all areas and fields of action of the federal programme on the following topics:

1. Target groups and how to reach them,
2. Networking of civil society structures,
3. Innovations and innovation potential in the federal programme,
4. Sustainability and transfer,
5. Effects on addressees of individual measures.

The implementation of the second funding period of „Live Democracy!" took place under difficult circumstances such as the COVID-19-pandemic and its catalyzing effect on developments that threaten democracy, such as increased conspiracy myths. In addition, there was the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the arrival of refugees, as well as armed conflicts in the Middle East and increasing articulations of anti-Muslim racism and anti-Semitism. Across the board, there has been an increase in attitudes that are skeptical or even hostile to democracy and group-focused misanthropy in recent years - and not just in Germany. These challenges have necessitated flexible adjustments and innovative approaches in the federal programme, as „Live Democracy!" is designed as a learning programme that continuously reacts to social changes. In addition to the impacts and achievements attained through the promotion of sustainable structures and Model Projects, the thematic and methodological developments in the programme are therefore also of decisive importance for the evaluation of the federal programme. These are presented in the second part of the report, where the authors focus on the following aspects:

1. Development of terms and concepts,
2. Digitization
3. Participation and involvement,
4. Topics with increasing relevance,
5. Gender mainstreaming, diversity mainstreaming and inclusion.

The report concludes with a summary of the key findings and suggestions for the further development of the federal „Live Democracy!" programme.

3 Insights and findings

3.1 Part I: Impact and target achievement

3.1.1 Target groups and how to reach them

„Live Democracy!" addresses a wide variety of target groups. It is primarily aimed at children and young people, but also at educational professionals, multipliers and civil society. A balance is struck between a broad approach on the one hand and a focus on different specific target groups depending on the programme area on the other.

The results of the evaluation show that „Live Democracy!" reaches main target groups such as children, young people, young adults, educational professionals and multipliers with different focuses across all areas and fields of action. At the same time, more specific target groups are also successfully addressed in the various areas and fields of action of the programme. These include, for example, people or groups who have experienced threats or have already been victims of racist, anti-Semitic or other group-focused violence, or people or groups who have little or no participation in social or political processes. The target groups were reached via a wide variety of access routes. Specialists and multipliers often played a central mediating role here. In addition, digital formats gained in importance due to the COVID-19 pandemic and enabled new access, but at the same time presented hurdles for target groups without digital access. Other options that have proven successful in reaching specific target groups include cooperation with other organizations or institutions, as well as the early involvement of the target group in the project concept. The results also show the challenge that although offered services in the areas and fields of action were generally used, they were used to varying degrees by specific target groups, to a lesser extent or not at all. This is a general challenge that is known and widespread in social work as a whole. The reasons for non-use of services are primarily situational. In addition to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, socio-structural reasons for the non-utilization of services were identified, as specific services depend on local conditions and are difficult to access in rural areas, for example, due to a lack of connections.

During programme implementation, projects were able to gain valuable experience with hard-to-reach target groups and improve accessibility for certain target groups. Networking and targeted public relations proved to be key factors in addressing and working with previously unreached target groups. Resources must be planned accordingly for increased work with previously unreached target groups. In order to take the diversity of the target groups into account even better, flexible approaches are also recommended that allow the interests and needs of the target groups to be acknowledged and enable them to participate in shaping the programme.

3.1.2 Networking of civil society structures

The aim of networking civil society structures within „Live Democracy!" was to create synergies through cooperation and to increase the effectiveness of democracy promotion, diversity management and extremism prevention. The funded structures – such as *State Democracy Centers*, *Competence Networks and Centers* and *Partnerships for Democracy* - contribute to the networking of actors and long-term cooperation. Cooperation within the framework of the federal programme is correspondingly widespread. This strengthens professional civil society as a whole.

The evaluation shows that the existing networks have a variety of functions:

- Networking to build networks (within the circle of programme stakeholders and beyond),
- Networking for professional exchange between professional actors,
- Networking in order to gain, develop and pass on specialist expertise,
- Networking to create exchange spaces for committed civil society and local political actors,
- Networking to reach target groups,
- Networking for the dissemination of project results,
- Networking to discuss cases and problems,
- Networking to develop strategies and coordinate action.

This variety of functions shows how important networking can be in order to achieve project and programme goals.

Conditions conducive to networking are cooperative relationships across all programme areas that are based on mutual recognition and trust. The basis for this is personal contacts and positive experiences in cooperation. In addition, a dialog at eye level and reflection on different perspectives and logics of action are particularly important for cooperation in networks. In general, networking is time-consuming and ties up resources. It is therefore important to ensure that the costs of networking do not exceed its benefits. In addition, existing local structures should be built upon instead of designing new top-down networking structures that do not meet the needs of the stakeholders. Networking is not an end in itself but must pursue clear goals and bring benefits for the actors involved.

3.1.3 Innovations and innovation potential

The aim of the „Live Democracy!" is to respond to social challenges by supporting the development, testing and transfer of innovative concepts in the areas of promoting democracy, preventing extremism and shaping diversity. Innovations can include the processing of new content or the addressing of new target groups, the (further) development of methods or the creation and further development of structures. Accordingly, a distinction can be made between content-related, methodological and structural innovation.

As a result of the scientific evaluations, it can be stated that the federal programme developed innovation potential particularly in the areas of Pilot Projects and the

innovation fund, while the generation of new ideas in the structure-related fields of action is more in the background.

The Pilot Projects and the innovation fund primarily implemented innovations in terms of content and methodology.

Content innovations in the federal programme „Live Democracy!" relate to new topics and perspectives that are being addressed in the various fields of action, as well as to target groups that were previously given little consideration but are now being addressed. One example of this are the Pilot Projects in the field of preventing extremism: here, almost a quarter of the Pilot Projects focus on new areas of work (e.g. nature conservation). Furthermore, new approaches for dealing with discrimination and promoting inclusion are being developed that explicitly take into account the perspective of those affected, by developing concepts for the inclusion of people with disabilities and discrimination-sensitive concepts for after-school care in the field of democracy promotion. In other fields of the programme, such the Innovation Fund, people with disabilities are addressed as a direct target group. In the diversity design field of action, the consideration of the perspective of those affected plays a prominent role in relation to the development of content innovations. Here, the perspectives of different groups are taken into account, e.g. in the setting of topics and needs-oriented educational work. With the involvement of communities (e.g. Asian Germans, Black Germans, people with refugee experience, young Sinti:zze and Rom:nja), content such as participation formats, forms of dealing with discrimination and ways of identifying the needs of specific communities are developed.

New methods are often needed to implement innovations in content, so that innovations in content and methods usually complement each other. Methodological innovations include the development of working approaches and strategies that make it possible to reach target groups that were previously difficult to access or those that take into account the challenges arising from spatial characteristics, such as reaching young people in structurally disadvanted areas. For example, „key persons, multipliers, bridge builders and gatekeepers" are used in several fields of action to get into contact with target groups in rural areas.

Structural innovations were implemented in various areas of the „Live Democracy!" programme. Of great importance here is the (further) development of a nationwide infrastructure in the thematic areas of the federal programme, which, through the establishment of thematically experienced Competence Centers and Networks, follows on from the „structural development to become a nationwide central provider" of the 2015-2019 funding period. The Competence Centers and Networks, but also the Pilot Projects in the programme's various fields of action, contribute to the establishment of networks. These have the potential to transform civil society involvement into institutionalized forms of cooperation and the pooling of expertise. This is innovative when it concerns subject areas that were not or hardly considered previously in the programme and in which there are no established network structures.

A prerequisite for the development and testing of innovative concepts is the freedom to allow failure in order to learn and further develop project measures as well as the material and knowledge-based resources provided by the federal programme. In addition, cooperation and networking as well as collaboration with regular structures, with the latter being supported specifically by the federal programme, are important. These enable feedback on concepts and implementation strategies, as well as the transfer of findings from project practice to other actors and the adoption of the developed concepts into practice.

3.1.4   Sustainability and transfer

The evaluation of sustainable effects requires a review of the impacts and results achieved by the programme. Since such a review is not possible due to the timeframe of the scientific monitoring parallel to the funding period, the scientific monitoring focused on identifying sustainability potential. A model based on a process-oriented understanding of sustainability was used to evaluate the sustainability of the projects in the federal programme. Accordingly, sustainability results from a participatory and context-sensitive process that continues on an ongoing basis so that structures and results are adapted to varying challenges. The following sustainability dimensions were examined:

- · structural sustainability,
- · action-oriented learning,
- · maintaining relevance
- · benefit-oriented sustainability.

The study shows that the federal programme „Live Democracy!" has developed sustainability potential in all four dimensions.

Structural sustainability refers to the continued existence of (working) structures and results, among other things, from the further development of structures and the professionalization of the providers. The scientific monitoring shows that (networking) structures have been established in all fields of action of the Pilot Projects, which on the one hand involve programme actors and stimulate networking between specialist actors outside the programme. However, structural sustainability also arises when projects support institutions in the regular structures in setting up or restructuring institutions.

Action-effective learning means an increase in competence and knowledge that is reflected in the concrete actions of the actors and thus becomes sustainable. Actionable learning can be identified not only at the level of individual target groups, but also in organizations. In organizations, effective learning processes initiated by the federal programme are particularly visible through the further development of the organization's content: For all areas of action, it can be determined that knowledge and skills acquired during the funding process are transferred to other areas of work of the funded organizations. The adoption of participation concepts by schools or youth facilities also took place and can be described as effective learning.

In the context of the federal programme „Live Democracy!" *maintaining relevance* is created as a further sustainability strategy through the continuity of goals, topics and structures of the federal programme, which are further developed on the basis of programme concepts/funding strategies (across programme-phases).

The dimension of *benefit-oriented sustainability* includes, in particular, the materials and media that have been created in the context of the federal programme. These include handouts and method kits as well as podcasts and video clips. The materials produced are often the basis for successes in other sustainability categories: For example, they can contribute to knowledge transfer and thus to learning processes that are effective in terms of action.

In order to support benefit-oriented sustainability, the federal programme „Live Democracy!" operates a systematic knowledge management system, for example through the Diversity Media Library, by publishing materials on the programme homepage or through the creation of practical handouts by the scientific advisors.

An important strategy for achieving sustainability is the transfer of results, findings and concepts both to other programme areas and beyond the programme to regular structures and civil society areas. Both the Pilot Projects and the projects of the Innovation Fund as well as the structure-building areas of action are accordingly involved in preparing and passing on knowledge, expertise and innovative approaches. The results are transferred to child and youth welfare institutions (e.g. educational support, open child and youth work, daycare centers), schools and vocational schools, cultural or political education providers (e.g. adult education centers, memorials, libraries, art schools), professional or group-related working/interest groups or alliances, (technical) colleges, universities and public administration (e.g. youth welfare offices), including security authorities.

Central factors for successful transfer are the existence of a transfer concept, a needs and addressee orientation, the involvement of relevant actors from the outset, access to the transfer target systems and the structural anchoring of the transfer content in the transferring organization, as well as support from the programme designers in the dissemination of knowledge, experience and concepts.

3.1.5 Effects on addressees of individual measures

Effects on the recipients of the measures in the federal programme can be observed in a variety of ways.

In the field of extremism prevention, for example, it has been shown that people who have undergone radicalization processes have opened up to alternative world views and reflected on their own thoughts and actions. In the field of democracy promotion, the development of resilience against positions that threaten democracy and inhumanity and an increased willingness and ability to engage in civil society for democracy and diversity and to participate in political decisions are important changes that the projects in the programme have initiated. In the field of action of shaping diversity, empowerment and increased participation of marginalized people as well as regaining the ability to cope with everyday life after assaults are important

effects that have been achieved. The projects were also able to reduce racist prejudices among the target groups, make them more sensitive to discrimination and increase their overall appreciation of diversity. Educational professionals and administrative staff in particular were able to further professionalize their work.

The (local) social climate and the recognition of the phenomena addressed as social problems proved to be important contextual factors for success. The establishment of sustainable working relationships and the reflection of power constellations in the educational work, the active participation of the addressees according to their wishes and needs in the preparation and implementation of measures proved also to be conducive to the intended effects in the project work. Long-standing, established cooperation was a particularly beneficial factor to bring about effects among addressees from local government and politics.

3.2 Part II: Processes and project implementation

3.2.1 Development of terms and concepts

„Promoting democracy" („Demokratieförderung"), „shaping diversity" („Vielfaltgestaltung") and „preventing extremism" (Extremismusprävention") are the key terms and concepts of the programme. These shaped the external impact and structured the work of the projects. They can be seen both as results and as arenas for social discourse and negotiation. For example, different concepts and terms have shaped the federal programmes since 1992, addressing violence and right-wing extremism and promoting diversity and tolerance.

The term „democracy promotion" („Demokratieförderung") was introduced in the first funding period of „Live Democracy!" and as part of the programme expansion in 2017 in individual areas of action, primarily in the Pilot Projects and in the federal government area of action. In the second funding period examined here, it is on the one hand an umbrella term for the federal programme, while at the same time distinguishing itself from approaches to shaping diversity and (extremism) prevention approaches. In the professional public debate, it was sometimes viewed critically, especially as its relationship to related approaches such as „political education" („politische Bildung"), „democracy education" („Demokratiebildung") and „democracy pedagogy" („Demokratiepädagogik") remains unclear. Ultimately, the projects were aimed at strengthening young people's social and political participation, awakening their interest in social, democratic and political issues and motivating them to become (democratically) involved. In addition, the aim was to raise awareness of anti-democratic phenomena and threats in order to build resilience against them.

In order to achieve this, projects in the „democracy promotion" field of action support democratic socialization processes of young people, the development and expansion of local participation structures and the strengthening of local political culture. Democracy promotion therefore takes place on three levels (see Fig. 2): It includes (a) the promotion of individual democratic skills and attitudes of (young)

people and all actors involved in their democratic and political socialization, (b) the strengthening of democratic processes and a democratic culture through the experience and active collective shaping of democratic processes and (c) the development, expansion and safeguarding of democratic participation structures.

Fig. 1:   Conceptual levels of democracy promotion

Democracy promotion

| Individual competence/ attitude development | Structural security and development | Process development |

for the production/stabilisation of a democratic political culture

Source: Model of scientific monitoring of Pilot Projects in the field of democracy promotion, see Walter/Ehnert 2022, p. 8

There was hardly any socio-political discussion about the term „shaping diversity" („Vielfaltgestaltung"), as this was a new term for a field of action constructed by the federal programme „Live Democracy!". It appeared for the first time in this funding period. With a total of 77 Pilot Projects and seven Competence Centers and Networks, it is the largest field of action. It was divided into six subject areas: „anti-Semitism", „antiziganism", „hostility towards Islam and Muslims", „racism", „homophobia and trans*hostility" and „challenges and opportunities of the immigration society". This was based on principles that were already guiding principles in the previous funding period: a) the empowerment of individuals, groups and communities that have experienced discrimination; b) raising awareness of prejudice and discrimination as well as diversity. The underlying concept of group-focused enmity was supplemented in the educational work of the Pilot Projects by approaches such as criticism of racism and anti-Semitism as well as intersectionality in order to also address the structural level of discrimination. Projects also conducted a critical examination of the federal programme's thematic field designations, some of which were taken up and changed by the learning programme itself during or in the subsequent funding period.

„Preventing extremism" („Extremismusprävention") has been used in practice, academia and by federal programmes since the 1990s, but not exclusively and not without critical debate. The terms „extremism" („Extremismus") and „prevention" („Prävention") have often been criticized because they seem to equate extremely different phenomena normatively or stand for social control rather than socio-educational values. Some projects report negative effects on cooperation and networking due to these associations. Model Projects position themselves in relation to the terms either (1) affirmatively irritating, (2) pragmatically explaining or – most frequently – (3) dismissively concretizing. For example, the corresponding Competence Center/Network uses the term „left-wing militancy" („Linke Militanz") from the previous funding period to distinguish it from the term „left-wing extremism" („Linker Extremismus"). Model Projects in the field of prevention and deradicalization in prisons and probation services sometimes avoided terms such as prevention, extremism or deradicalization for reasons of stigmatization and accessibility. Some projects established various conceptual alternatives to those of the federal

programme in order to do justice to the field and practical conditions and needs. Ultimately, very divergent goals and strategies emerged under the umbrella of preventing extremism, meaning that the federal programme also needed a flexible approach to the corresponding terms.

Overall, it can be stated that political, social and professional debates have been incorporated into the federal programmes, which can be seen in the programme architecture and the content of the funded measures. The federal programme also proved to be learning and dynamic in terms of terminology and concepts. New subject areas were added, new projects were funded and Competence Centers and Networks were expanded.

3.2.2   Digitization in the federal programme

Digitalization significantly shaped the framework conditions of the second funding period of the federal programme „Live Democracy!", especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The proportion of funded projects for which digital offerings were an essential part of their work rose from 9.5% at the beginning of the funding period to 44% at the end of 2023. They not only responded to the social digitalization push but also released a high potential for innovation in all project areas.

Topics and phenomena of the digital space were increasingly addressed. At the end of the funding period, the corresponding Competence Center of a coordinating supporting organization became a Competence Network in which five relevant organizations worked together nationwide on the challenges of the digital space. In terms of content, projects – depending on the field of action – were dedicated to phenomena that endanger democracy, potentials that strengthen democracy and digital living environments, extreme right-wing, anti-democratic and anti-human actors on the internet and, increasingly, conspiracy myths. To this end, offers were developed to strengthen critical digital and media skills and the participatory potential of digital spaces. Topics such as children's rights on the internet, digital inequality and identity formation processes were also addressed, e.g. with reference to online gaming or digital youth cultures.

Over half (57.7%, n=350) of the projects tested and adapted new pedagogical approaches, methods and tools in digital spaces. What for some was a temporary „emergency solution" in dealing with the pandemic state of emergency due to their target groups or social spaces, was an opportunity for others to implement digital trial experiences permanently in their work. This included reaching target groups digitally, which was helpful for three quarters of the projects. Digital offerings proved to be useful for reaching a broad public, for working with professionals and multipliers as well as for open discussions. The possibility of anonymous participation lowered access barriers and increased the attractiveness of participation, including for parts of vulnerable or marginalized groups. This made it possible to tap into new target groups. At the same time, participation in digital offerings depended on access to technical equipment and digital infrastructure, spatial conditions, levels of knowledge and routines in the use of digital tools as well as regional and institutional framework conditions. Target groups were addressed particularly well when they

were supported in a needs-oriented manner, for example through peer-to-peer support, low-threshold offers or the provision of infrastructure.

Digital formats were characterized by condensed work with a focus on technical content. The central challenges of (educational) work in the digital space were building emotional closeness and trust as well as establishing an interpersonal bond. In digital project measures, the creation of communicative spaces in between, which only served the purpose of networking and building trust, proved successful. Networking - including supra-regional networking - was therefore successful when initial contact was made via an analog kick-off event held in person.

Challenges in building digital relationships were also a factor in that educational formats in the federal programme were sometimes difficult to transfer to the digital space. This applies to formats that required the establishment of emotional closeness and trust, such as empowerment, awareness-raising, exit projects, conflict and violence prevention or long-term victim counseling as well as experiential education approaches, location and space-based projects and exercise programmes. The combination of analog and digital services (hybrid or multimedia) has proven to be an effective strategy to combine the advantages of analog commitment and resilient relationships of trust with the flexibility and anonymity of digital services.

Digitalization offered the projects an efficient way of doing their work, provided it was used in a targeted manner, but required continuous skills development among employees. This also included taking into account institutional and legal restrictions (e.g. data protection).

Overall, projects have adapted their offerings to the digital space, increasingly addressed threats and challenges there and developed and tested new innovative methods and formats. The federal programme has provided the necessary framework and funding conditions to react flexibly to the advancing digitalization and to help shape it.

3.2.3   Participation and involvement

Democracy thrives on the active participation of all groups in society. The promotion of participation („Partizipation") and involvement („Teilhabe") is therefore the self-image, working method and goal of the federal programme. Accordingly, it is relevant in all fields of action of the federal programme. It plays a prominent role in the Competence Centers and Networks, in the Partnerships for Democracy and in the Pilot Projects in the area of democracy promotion.

The scientific monitoring of the federal programme shows that participation and involvement is made possible both within projects and - supported by the projects – outside of the federal programme. The respective target groups were motivated to become active and were provided with knowledge relevant to engagement, for example on the self-organization of social groups. They were involved in the project implementation by being involved in the concept development or taking on the

implementation of individual project modules themselves. The projects were successful if they were characterized by low-threshold offers, cultural sensitivity and long-term cooperation.

By involving different groups, the projects were able to identify and take into account target group-specific needs and essential topics.

At the same time, it became clear that the project measures must be designed in such a way that they meet the mostly very heterogeneous needs of the target groups so that participation and inclusion can succeed.

For the further development of the federal programme, it is important to develop and test innovative participation formats both in project work and at a structural level.

3.2.4 Topics with increasing relevance

During the funding period, a number of social challenges became significantly more relevant to the implementation of the projects, both in terms of content and as contextual factors. On the one hand, a growing awareness in specialist practice and science resulted in an increased importance of certain topics. These included the increasing prevalence of cross-phenomenal approaches that address forms of discrimination in all their complexity and the involvement of self-organizations. In this way, intersectional and multiple discrimination could be better taken into account and participation opportunities for marginalized groups could be strengthened.

On the other hand, issues became increasingly important due to their virulence as a threat to democracy. As a result, there was a need for increased engagement with populist and conspiracy ideology actors, bridging ideologies such as anti-feminism and anti-Semitism, as well as hostility from pro-democracy activists.

Fig. 2:   Hostility and assaults on different groups of people (2024)
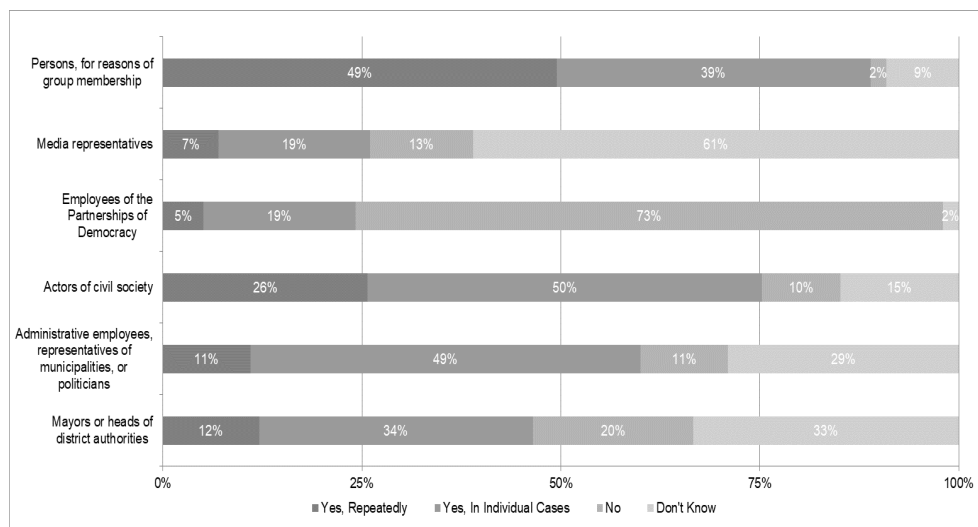
Source: Data from the scientific monitoring of the local authority action area, information from the coordination and specialist agencies 2024 (N=357); Saßmannshausen et al.

In the second funding period of the federal programme, raising awareness of the many ways in which manifestations of anti-democracy and group-related enmity are intertwined has triggered a series of changes in terms of content, methodology and structure. For example, organizations applying for funding were explicitly made aware of the eligibility of security concepts for funding and the accompanying project „Strengthening and protecting civil society", which focuses on confidence-building formats between politics, administration, politics and civil society, was implemented at municipal level.

In view of the aforementioned developments, the updating and adaptation of consistent and long-term effective counter-strategies is of central relevance for the federal programme. In the next funding period, it will remain a task for projects to develop appropriate ways of dealing with new issues that arise from their own work and from social developments. It would be beneficial to further expand the flexibility of the project objectives in order to better address current issues and thus, strengthen the dynamic and adaptive character of the federal programme.

3.2.5 Gender mainstreaming, diversity mainstreaming and inclusion

In the second funding period of the federal programme, gender and diversity mainstreaming and inclusion (GDI) are cross-cutting themes and key objectives in the federal programme. Many projects have successfully integrated gender- and diversity-sensitive approaches into their work. The distinction between GDI in the internal supporting structures and its external project-related implementation is an important clarification in order to sensitize both the actors of „Live Democracy!" and the scientific support for the comprehensive areas of action in which GDI measures are necessary. The findings have made it clear that internal and external measures are closely interlinked and that consistent action at all levels is necessary for the comprehensive consideration of SDI. In line with the top-down approach, the use of targeted RDI strategies requires systematic concepts and guiding principles, which must be demanded or offered by the federal programme and implemented in supporting organizations.

The use of GDI varied from project to project. In view of the diversity and frequent generality of the interpretations of GDI used, it would be helpful to clarify the diverse gender positioning and the concept of inclusion in order to align the work more precisely. More specific recommendations on the implementation of GDI, e.g. in the teams of project staff, would also be advisable.

It is recommended that the federal programme standardize and systematize objectives and definitions of gender, diversity and inclusion more strongly in the future and operationalize empirically verifiable GDI objectives. These could, for example, call for preference to be given to hiring women, people with a migration background and people with disabilities in teams with equal qualifications and for this to be explicitly taken into account in job advertisements. These definitions and criteria should be made accessible and binding on websites. Optional further training for

projects could also be helpful in order to integrate GDI more systematically into project work.

3.3 Conclusion and recommendations

An overall view of the funded projects in the second funding period shows following positive effects of the programme: strengthening democratic structures, increasing resilience against extremist tendencies, shaping diversity and promoting innovation.

The learning nature of the programmes implementation should be emphasized, which has resulted in a wide range of further developments in specialist practice. Adjustments were made to respond to social changes and crises – such as the COVID-19-pandemic. „Live Democracy!" facilitated a cycle of learning and action in which innovations generated in the programme met new social challenges that enabled the continuous adaptation of action concepts and methods.

The programme was also successful in terms of its impact and the achievement of key objectives of the federal programme in its second funding period. Across the breadth of the programme areas and fields of action, far-reaching changes in the target groups addressed are evident at an individual, collective and institutional level. Here, the combination of clearly formulated goals for the respective topics and challenges with openness to innovative approaches proved to be particularly beneficial. The networking and strengthening of structures as well as the transfer to regular structures also make the effects sustainable beyond the funding period.

The findings of the scientific monitoring and the overall evaluation resulted in the following recommendations for the programme:

- · Maintain openness and strengthen the trial character of projects and measures,
- · Support communication about the success of innovative approaches,
- · Anchoring self-evaluations in the projects and thus enabling systematic reflection on practice,
- · Promote the development of specific transfer concepts,
- · Introduce a transfer phase in which projects can prioritize the communication of their findings,
- · Continue to support the networking of actors in the federal programme.

Overall, the federal programme „Live Democracy!" is on the right track and has the necessary prerequisites to continue to develop even in challenging times, thereby contributing to the promotion of democracy, the shaping of diversity and the prevention of extremism.

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5 List of illustrations