

School PB

The project School PB innovates the known concept of municipal participatory budgeting by applying it to primary schools and by developing a user-friendly educational tool (web app) that guides teachers and pupils through the whole process of school PB.

Compared to a "real" PB at a city level, school PBs are neither very difficult nor time-consuming. The school sets aside a sum of money (between twenty-five and fifty thousand of CZK) to enable pupils to propose and by voting to decide on what the school will buy, fix or arrange with the sum. Children gain experience in practical democracy and develop a certain level of trust in general democratic processes as they see their activity preferences and opinions leading to concrete solutions and change.

Benefits of School PB

Participation brings about immediate and long-term benefits to all stakeholders (pupils, teachers, parents, school directors and provider—the municipality).

Pupils

PB helps pupils to understand democratic principles through hands-on experience in a decision-making process. Participation in a PB fosters pupils' creativity, civic skills, financial literacy, communication as well as presentation skills, and provides them with opportunities to think in a wider context.

Teachers

Faculty members will be able to engage pupils in productive activities, improve the atmosphere in their classrooms, enhance trust-based communication, and gain a new perspective on pupils' thinking processes, priorities, wishes, and needs.

School

The school gains a democratic atmosphere, increased transparency, strengthened confidence of pupils in school management, and detailed insight into the opinions and thoughts of pupils. Additionally, staff can use PB as a tool to open a dialogue with parents to better capture the needs of pupils and their communities.

Our objective

We aim at implementing school PBs into the majority of primary schools in the Czech Republic to achieve a society-wide impact. Our objective for this year is to double, from 37 to 80, the number of primary schools that are employing the school PB in the Czech Republic. We aim at establishing a relationship with the Ministry of Education Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic and relevant authorities about the possibilities of integrating school participatory budgeting into *Framework Educational Programme*, specifically into the subject: *Personal and Social Education*, the cross-section: *Education for Democratic Citizenship* in accordance with the *Long-term Policy Objectives of Education and Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic* and *Digital Education Strategy*.

The target group

This participatory budgeting project at primary-schools in the Czech Republic targets pupils from approx. Nine years of age (i.e. 4th grade of elementary school). This age limit was set up upon numerous consultations with teachers and child psychologists. Our practical experience has proven that children of this age already have all the necessary skills and abilities to take part in a PB program. These children are capable of clearly formulating opinions, performing required tasks, and cooperating with older schoolmates.

Funding pupils' projects

The maintenance of School PB platform is financed from sales of licences to primary schools.

There several ways of financing pupils' projects; we prefer the scenario in which the funds for pupils' projects and school PB licence is paid for by the primary-school providers. Another possibility is to gather funds for the PB from the primary school's budget, through CSR funding, and private donations.

School PB process

School PB process has seven stages and can be easily implemented within three weeks.

Stage 1 – Rules

This phase is under the control of the school management. During this stage, the administration sets up the total budget and any necessary financial restriction for individual projects. At this time, the scope of projects, participation criteria, timeline, and voting method are defined.

Stage 2 - Proposals

Proposals and deliberation are simple discussions among pupils, the goal of which is to propose, discuss, and co-construct PB projects. This process is managed by a moderator and attended by the proponents or pre-selected groups of pupils. At the end of this stage, moderators have a list of projects, which goes to the school management for further evaluation and approval.

Stage 3 - Evaluation

Upon the completion of the proposal stage, the school management evaluates the list of submitted projects to select the feasible projects, provide pupils with opportunities to amend their projects according to the established criteria, and exclude those projects which do not meet the criteria. Once the evaluation is complete, a final list of projects is presented before the entire school.

Stage 4 – Campaign

Once a proposal is approved, its proponents need to gain the support of schoolmates and parents. To do so, they can run a campaign. All forms of the campaign – conducted respectfully and non-offensively – are allowed, including posters, leaflets, YouTube videos, Facebook and other social media activities etc.

Stage 5 - Voting

At the end of the campaign stage, a list of all approved projects is entered into the school PB polling application. Then online polling takes place throughout one or more days. It is also possible to create a paper ballot polling system.

Stage 6 – Results

Results are available immediately at the end of online voting, while the processing of paper ballots can take a day or more. Once the results are available, school management organises an assembly for the entire school to present the winning projects.

Stage 7 - Implementation

The winning projects should be implemented promptly, following all the specific requirements and needs expressed during the PB process.

Key metrics

Quantitative

- Number of schools employing the school PB app (37 + 1 in India + 2 in Zambia)
- The number of voters (8988 + 453 + 4100)
- The number of proposed projects (260)
- The total sum spent on financing the realisation of pupils' projects (at least 1 million CZK)

Qualitative

- Evaluation of the classroom climate before and after the participatory budgeting exercise
- Participants' self-assessment (structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews)

Channels

- Traditional media (journals, newspapers, and newsletters on education for primary-school directors and providers)
- Internet and social media
- Conferences, roundtables, workshops, training
- Direct mailing of primary-school directors and providers

Our unique advantage

- Complete methodology of participatory budgeting at primary-schools in the Czech Republic
- User-friendly web app for the teachers of primary schools who are provided with a manual that guides them, step by step, through the whole process of PB
- Verifiable voting system
- Janeček polling method of multiple votes
- Czech and English version of the school PB app
- Printable supporting materials
- Since 2016 we have run school PB at thirty-seven primary schools in the Czech Republic.

Ideal scenario

When the whole process of participatory budgeting is repeated regularly each year, the habits which pupils adopt by participating at their schools are fostered by them so that children can carry the acquired practical know-how of participatory democracy with them into their adulthood.