THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE GOING TO A DEMONSTRATION

You have the right to express your opinion at a demonstration, but to prevent your rights from violation and protect you from any harm or negative consequences, it's important to keep a few things in mind. We've collected 15 things you should know about demonstrations as a student.

I. WHAT SHOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT DEMONSTRATIONS?

1. You have the right to go to a demonstration even under the age of 18!

If you are under 18, you are considered to be a child, so you have special rights. Demonstration is a form of expressing your opinion and you definitely have the right to participate. Even if you are a primary or secondary school student, you have the right to go to a demonstration that is not only for students, however, it is important to know that you are more vulnerable, therefore, it is especially important to be informed.

2. No one can oblige you to take part in a demonstration!

- Your participation is voluntary, so no one can oblige you to demonstrate or prevent you from going to a demonstration and you do not need a written permission from your parents.
- There may be resistance in your school or family, but it's important to know that you are free to decide whether you want to express your views in public.
- However, you should also respect if others have a different opinion on the subject, so be careful not to force anyone to show up with you at a demonstration.

3. No one can harm you for participating to a demonstration!

- Unless you do something unlawful, participating to a demonstration may not have any negative consequences. No one can hurt, mock or prosecute you simply for expressing your opinion.
- If you feel that your school performance is being unduly influenced by attending a demonstration, you can initiate proceedings at your school with the students council, at the Institution Maintenance Centre or the Office of the Commissioner for Education Rights.

4. Demonstration in itself is not politics!

- If you stand up for your opinion or an issue that is important for you at a demonstration, it does not mean in itself that you get involved in politics, even if demonstrations often have a political undertone.
- You must be aware that **children cannot be used for political purposes.** You cannot be the subject of a political campaign, neither your photo, nor any of your statements or opinion can be used for campaign purposes.



II. HOW SHOULD YOU PREPARE?

5. Make a conscious decision about your participation!

Demonstrations often seem to be good fun, however, before you make a decision to take part, think about the reason for your participation:

- **Do you consider the matter important** or do you want to achieve something with it? Maybe you are going simply because your friends are going too?
- Before the demonstration, it is worth knowing the details of the event. Who are the organisers and what is their case? What is their main message, do they have any claims, or are they related to any political movements? Consider what you are personally interested in of all the above mentioned, why do you consider it important to be there. Be prepared and be aware what you support and what your personal goals are related to the specific case.

6. Think about what a demonstration is like and consider the consequences it might bring!

In order to make an informed decision whether you really want to attend a demonstration, it is important that you think through and understand the consequences of such an event.

• A demonstration is a public appearance, therefore, you cannot keep it in secret that you've been there, so you should only attend if the matter is really important to you and you're happy to represent it. Ensure you are OK to admit later that you've been there.

- Make sure you have a parental consent statement in case you want to speak to a journalist. See item 13.
- Understand **the legal consequences** of attending a demonstration. Learn more *here*.

7. If you attend a demonstration during school hours, you will have to prove your absence from school!

- If you miss school classes due to attending demonstrations, the classes missed might be registered as unjustified absence. According to the house rules of the school, a certain number of classes can be justified by your parents or your teacher might justify certain missed classes. If your school breaks up due to the demonstration, you do not have to justify your absence.
- If you miss a class, **make sure you catch up with the tasks**, but it is important that you are aware that all students should be given enough time to prepare for the tests after their absence, and **you cannot get bad grades just because you attended a demonstration.**

8. If you have decided to go to a demonstration, organise the details!

- You are **recommended to attend demonstrations together in a group** so that you can look after each other.
- A large crowd may develop in a demonstration where they may be no signal for your phone to operate. Try to stay together but discuss a meeting point in case you are swept away by the crowd.
- Inform your parents or some other adults about going to a demonstration, so that they know where you are if necessary.



9. Are you free to speak at a demonstration?

- Anyone, whether a child or an adult, is free to speak at a demonstration. However, by giving a speech, you commit to appealing in public so the press can broadcast materials about you.
- **Parental consent is required** for public appearances, so you must have your parents' or guardians' written permission when you speak.
- In all public appearances, it is important to be prepared so that you avoid being harmed in any way. In order to be safe without compromising your rights, you may want to read what you need to be aware of when working with adults (in this case, demonstration organisers) and how to prepare for a public appearance.

III. THINGS TO PAY ATTENTION TO AT A DEMONSTRATION

10. Demonstration is a peaceful, common form of expressing opinion:

- Take care of yourself and your companions and follow the social rules for peaceful behaviour.
- A demonstration does not entitle anyone to violence!

• You can express your opinion, but **make sure you do not hurt others.** Do not judge or bully others because they have different opinions. You will not gain any advantage for your case if you do so.

11. Can the police check you because you attend a demonstration?

- Anyone can be checked by the police at public places if they have a compelling reason for it. The justification may be keeping public order and security, crime prevention or law enforcement. The fact that you are demonstrating in itself does not justify being checked.
- You are not automatically informed about the reason for a police check, but the reason must be told upon request. If the police refuse to do so beforehand on the grounds that it would jeopardise the effectiveness of the measure, you must still be informed about the purpose, right after the police check at the leatest.
- If you have your **ID card** (or a driving license) and your **address card**, **take both with you**, because if you are checked by the police you may need them.



12.Can recordings be made of you at a demonstration?

- If video and audio recordings are announced when the event is organised, then by attending these events, you accept the terms and conditions. This means that public recordings can be made of you and they can be published.
- However, no pictures where you can be clearly recognised can be taken of you and made public on the net without your and your parents' consent. If you come across a photo or video of yourself, you can request with the help of your parents to have the content deleted.
- As already mentioned above, politicians are not allowed to use the picture of you for campaigning purposes.

13. You do not have to speak if you are asked for an ijnterview!

- Just like in the case of photos of you, which is only possible with your and your parents' consent, no one can oblige you to give an interview. You should never feel embarrassed about saying no, feel free to say no at any time you do not want to be recorded.
- If you still decided to give an interview, make sure you have a printed copy of your **parents'** written consent with you.
- When you give an interview, you can also decide whether you want to face to be visible and how much you wish to be recognizable.

- Even if you agreed to give an interview, you cannot be forced to answer any questions you would not like to.
 There is no information you are obliged to share in such cases!
- Your opinion cannot be distorted to party political aspects!

14. If you decide to give an interview, you should think about:

- what you would like to say and what you aim to achieve by saying it,
- what you would not like to say, what kind of questions you would not answer
- what are the possible consequences of a public appearance (e.g. it will remain available on the internet, you will never be able to revoke what you have said).
- Before agreeing to an interview, you should take time to prepare. Our *material* on public appearances might be of use.

15. You should know that you are free to quit or go home whenever you want to!

- If you are tired or feel uncomfortable in the crowd, feel free to stand aside or even go home.
- The organisers always indicate the beginning and the end time of the event, nonetheless, the crowd may decide to stay longer. Be aware, that in this case the event will no longer be organised, so it is against the law if you are, for example, blocking traffic.





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