



The www.demokratiewebstatt.at designed specifically for children and young people aged 8 to 14



GOAL OF THE DEMOCRACY WEBSHOP www.demokratiewebstatt.at

The www.demokratiewebstatt.at is an Internet site set up by the Austrian parliament for the benefit of children and young people aged 8 to 14. One of the goals of this workshop is to acquaint children and young people with the principles of democracy and parliamentary processes. This means explaining and describing political processes in age-appropriate language. Another goal of the Internet site is to create ways for the target group to become actively involved. This helps children and young people realize that their opinions and ideas matter and will be taken seriously.

The www.demokratiewebstatt.at has been growing steadily since 25 October 2007, both in terms of the information offered and of the available interactive options that are both fun and creative. The product is a platform for children and young people that presents information and also offers, promotes and supports communication, action and interaction in the political arena.

The site also includes all the current dates of the democracy workshops at Palais Epstein and publishes the newspapers, films, audio recordings and photos compiled at the workshops.

In addition to the educational goal of developing a basic understanding of democracy, the www.demokratiewebstatt.at sets out to engender a positive attitude towards politics and parliament in the specified age group, to present their opinions and interests, and above all to stimulate excitement about having a say and being involved.

STRUCTURE OF THE DEMOCRACY WEBSHOP

When you go to the www.demokratiewebstatt.at, you will see from the categories in the left column that the site is divided into different areas: **visiting and discovering** contains information on the democracy workshop and guided tours of parliament. It also offers a virtual tour of parliament and information on the individual delegates. In addition, the staff in the parliament building who normally work behind the scenes describe their jobs. **Knowing and asking** offers information about democratic and parliamentary procedures in age-appropriate language and using concepts that children can understand. At **Doing and exploring** the focus is on having fun while learning and doing things yourself. **Playing a part and contributing** is the area promoting participation and interaction. The news presents current topics relevant to democracy.

In all the above areas of the www.demokratiewebstatt.at, children and young people's questions, requests and ideas are welcome at all times.





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CONCRETE SUGGESTIONS FOR INCORPORATING THE DEMOCRACY WEBSHOP IN LESSONS

One of the goals of the developers of the www.demokratiewebstatt.at was to make the site as flexible and compatible with as many uses as possible.

In the classroom, the site is specifically relevant for the subject areas of German, history and political education, geography, and art. The www.demokratiewebstatt.at can be integrated to especially good effect in multidisciplinary project days or weeks during which students study the political system in Austria, democratic processes in general and the ways they can get involved.

Visiting and discovering:

If you plan to visit the parliament building with your class, you will find information here on the **democracy workshop** held at Palais Epstein, on **guided tours** and special offers.

The **virtual tour** is an excellent and exciting way for students to learn about the parliament building, its uses and its history. With the possibility of either going room to room or looking at individual rooms from the illustrated map, the interactive tour arouses students' curiosity and has proved to be a stimulating learning experience. Each of the rooms is described in detail in age-appropriate language. The tour incorporates information from many areas: the architecture of the building and its philosophical and art history background, historical events and developments, and the current use of the rooms, as well as descriptions of the processes that take place in them.

Who's who in parliament gives students the chance of getting to know the delegates in the National Assembly and the Federal Council better, as "people just like you and me". This helps break down barriers and lessen general fears about the subject. It also becomes apparent that individual political careers take very different paths and do not depend on the candidate having a degree or even having completed as much training as possible. The seating order on the maps corresponds to that in the National Assembly and Federal Council chambers.

Who works where again demonstrates the complexity of parliamentary procedures and how many strings must be pulled in the background in order for parliamentarianism to function in Austria. Children and young people see that it is not just politicians that work in parliament, but that a wide variety of different professions are needed.





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Knowing and asking:

The extremely extensive information component of the www.demokratiewebstatt.at teaches students complex basic information about **democracy**, **elections** and **laws** but in a simple and lucid way. Here students will find answers to questions such as “What actually is a minister?”, “Who can vote?” and “How are laws made in Austria?” More than fifty politically relevant terms are explained in age-appropriate language in the **democracy lexicon**. With the help of thematically sorted **link tips**, students can find further information based on their interests or current project.

Doing and exploring:

The **law generator** is the ideal tool to illustrate and teach the complex process of legislation. It explains step by step all the things that must be laid down in a law, naturally in simplified terms, and what must be considered in a draft bill. By crafting and designing their own law, students consolidate their understanding of the individual steps, which makes the process more logical and comprehensible to children and young people. (The knowing and asking component entitled “Everything about laws” complements this section well.)

The **games** make a good closing activity for a lesson, and the memory game leaves a good impression of the parliamentary building through the selection of images. The **colouring pictures** can be printed out and painted. They were created specifically for younger visitors to the www.demokratiewebstatt.at.

Playing a part and contributing:

The interactive components of the website are to be found in this section. Here, information and the status of past, present and upcoming **contests** and ballots are published.

Students also have the opportunity of playing an active role in the development of the www.demokratiewebstatt.at. Their input, entered in a **form**, goes directly to the editorial department, which then includes their ideas as well as possible.

Key issues and key issue archive:

The key issue of the www.demokratiewebstatt.at is always a thought-provoking issue related to democracy. The entire WebShop has been expanded through the key issue of language: all the main texts of the www.demokratiewebstatt.at and the language key





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issue itself can be read and heard in the three official languages of Burgenland Croatian, Slovenian and Hungarian.

Sign up for the www.demokratiewebstatt.at newsletter* and you will always receive the latest information about the Austrian parliament's interactive democracy platform for children and young people.

*to the side in the small menu at the bottom right

Lesson ideas:

German: give your class the project of

- writing a report on "An exciting day in parliament" or "The way through parliament" (virtual tour)
- writing a description of a room (virtual tour)
- writing a summary of the tour through parliament (virtual tour)
- explaining the happenings in the rooms in the parliament building (virtual tour)
- terminology quiz: let students find out for themselves
- role playing: the making of a law (all about laws)

Art:

- Ideas: "let's decorate parliament" (virtual tour)
- With your class, explore the art history of the parliament building (virtual tour)

History and politics:

- Give your class the assignment of exploring political processes in the different rooms of parliament and find the connection to their own lives (virtual tour)
- With your class, discuss the work of parliament as compared to the ministries (knowing and asking)
- Show the class the path legislation takes through parliament
- (law generator, knowing and asking)
- Have them research: what are official languages in Austria?

Non-subject specific / multidisciplinary:

- Have the students work in small groups to draft a law and then present it (law generator; knowing and asking)





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- Together with your students, write down your class rules in the form of laws (law generator)

