

DEMOCRACY WORKSHOP

OF THE AUSTRIAN PARLIAMENT

Tuesday, 7 September 2021



**DEMOCRACY =
YOUTH
EMPOWERMENT**



Virtual 2020 **Vienna 2021**

**World Conference of
Speakers of Parliament**

Parliaments for peace, people and planet #5WCSP



REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
Parliament



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy for everyone



Dear students,
Honourable Speakers of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Welcome to the Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union!

On behalf of the Democracy Workshop, a programme of the Austrian Parliament's Democracy Education department, we would like to welcome you to this workshop within the framework of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament.

The conference, which takes place in Vienna from 6 to 8 September 2021 at the invitation of the Austrian Parliament, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations (UN), brings together Speakers of Parliament from all over the world for a face-to-face meeting.

We invite you to take a look at this newspaper created during the workshop by the students themselves and see first-hand how our Democracy Workshop supports young people on their way to political empowerment. The

Democracy Workshop focuses on topics such as participation, diversity, the moral courage to stand up for one's beliefs, the media and the history of democracy and parliamentarianism.

The President of the National Council, Wolfgang Sobotka, has given the Democracy Workshop the power to promote awareness of democratic processes and participation among young people in Austria and beyond, including in our partner countries.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to you, our guests, for joining us and participating in the Democracy Workshop with your questions, experience and advice. In doing so, you have set a clear example for young people of what it means to act responsibly in a democracy.

Leopold Lugmayr

**Head of the Democracy Education
Department of the Austrian
Parliamentary Administration**

THE CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

Matthäus (13), Ernesto (13), Mia (13), Lukas (13) and Pranav (13)

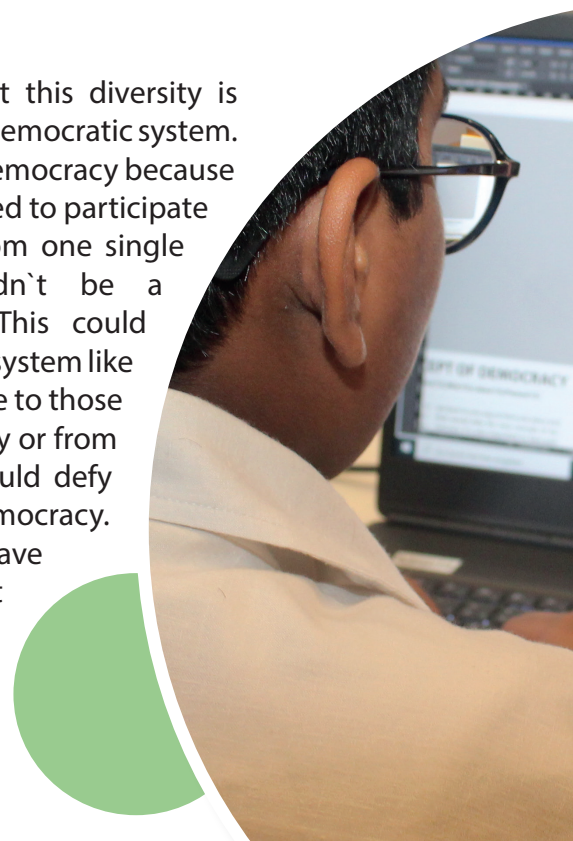
To us, democracy means that everyone is treated equally and fairly and that everyone has the right to vote for whomever they want to.

In a democracy, it is important that there is room for all cultures and people, and that it's diverse. Because of this, many people have different opinions and goals in life. Different opinions can lead to arguments and discussions. In a

democracy, however, every opinion should matter and be heard. Because with new opinions come new ideas and

solutions.

It's also important, that this diversity is represented within the democratic system. This is important for a democracy because if the only people allowed to participate in democracy come from one single background it wouldn't be a democracy anymore. This could lead e.g. to apartheid. A system like that would give privilege to those who are born in one way or from one place and that would defy the very concept of democracy. It is also important to have politicians with different views and experiences. It's important that they then share these



with the citizens. In this way, the different views and experiences of the citizens are represented.

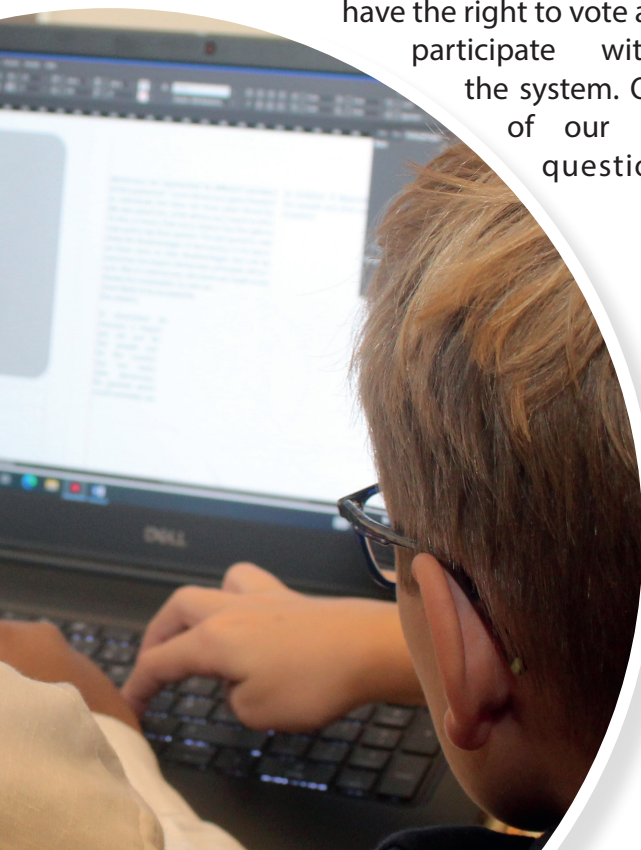
Citizens of a democracy have basic rights. For example, one important right is that everyone is allowed to vote. If we can't vote, we can't participate. Another important right is the right to express one's opinion. If you're not allowed to say what you think, you are also not able to participate.

We also talked about this topic with **Mr. Talat Xhaferi, the President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia**. We asked him different questions about democracy, such as what democracy means for him. To him, it means, that every citizen has the right to vote and to say his or her opinion. We also discussed with him why democracy doesn't mean unlimited freedom although it isn't dictatorship. Mr. Xhaferi told us, that unlike dictatorship, democracy is rule by the citizens. The citizens in a democracy are represented by different members of parliament. Democracy grants its citizens a lot of freedom, but this freedom isn't unlimited. All citizens have to follow the rule of law. We also asked him, what democracy means to him. Here he told us, that democracy means to him, that the people have the right to vote and participate within the system. One of our last questions

tackled the question if democracy has disadvantages. In his opinion, there are no clear disadvantages, but but in every democracy democratic principles have to be respected. Also in a democracy, decisions are made more slowly, but are more sustainable, so rules are more likely to be accepted by the citizens.

In conclusion, democracy is important not just for the country but for the people too. Too many take democracy for granted which could someday cause problems.

It depends on the people and their participation. Democracy can only endure if the citizens take part.



POLITICS

Kevin (13), Liam (14), Luke (13), Emilia (13), Melissa (12), Youssef (12) and Leonardo (14)

Many people have heard the word politics, but do they actually know what it means? Politics is a way to organise society. Every country in the world uses a way of politics. Politicians, government officials and the citizens of a country are the ones who do politics.

Technically, in a democracy everyone can be political because everyone has a right to participate! There are different ways to be political and it can be as simple as having a family conversation and sharing your opinion. You can also go further and become a politician yourself. But there are a million other ways to participate in politics such as voting for who you agree with, staying informed through media, etc. Even hobbies or consumers choices can be political.

Let's ask a politician ...

We interviewed **Ms. Tone Wilhelmsen Trøen, President of the Storting, the Parliament of Norway**. She told us that the whole reason why she became active in politics was because there were too few opportunities to be athletic in her hometown and she wanted to change something about that!

So if one wants change to happen, one should participate in politics! Sharing your opinion, having a voice and using it will change other people's views and maybe change your country for the better!

Some people shy away from politics, because there can be disagreement and controversy. Politicians also often have to face hate speech.

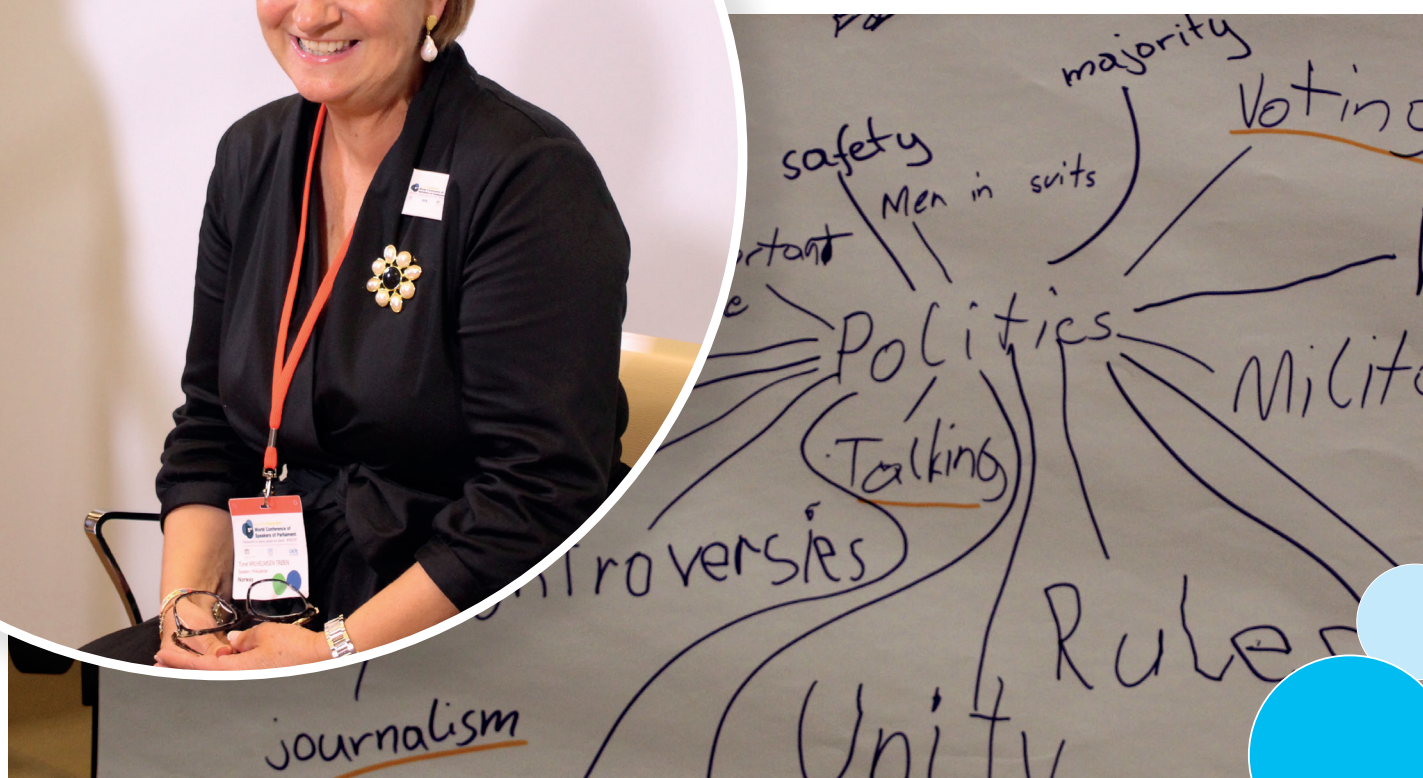
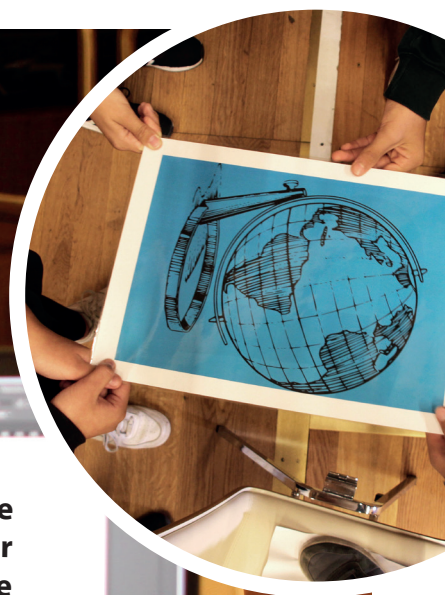
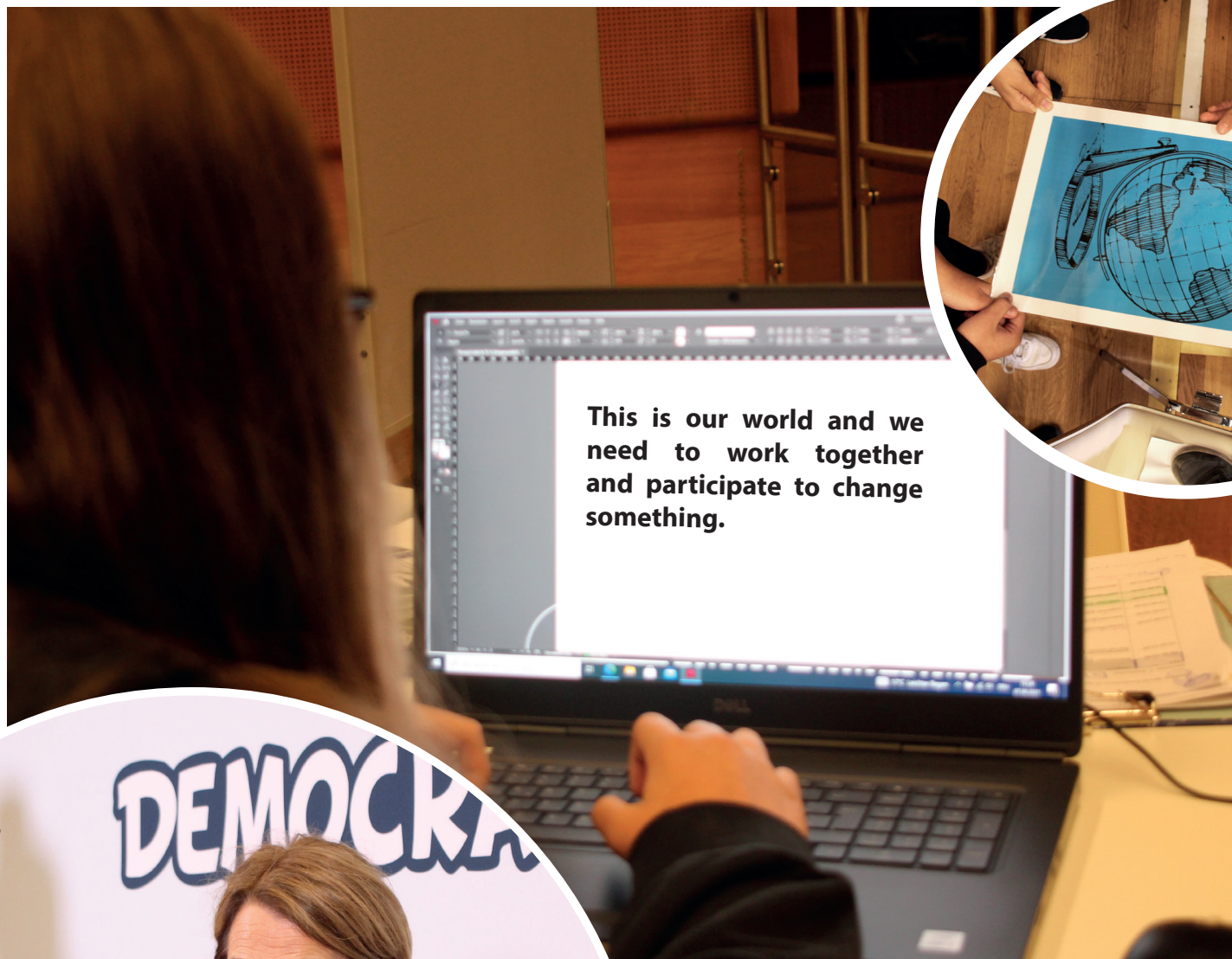
Especially women and young people, according to Ms Trøen.

What stood out to us the most during the interview was Ms. Trøen saying her goal is to create more equality worldwide.

... what about us?

We also think it is very important to be political. If we had the power, some of us would want to create more gender equality. We would change education and focus on socially controversial topics. Some of us would try and create fewer borders. Some of us would also reinvent the financial and wage system. We would work towards normalising things in this society and we would work towards more moral support within society.





PEOPLE AND PARLIAMENT

Frederik (14), Emanuel (13), Enya (13), Antonia (13), Charlotte (13) and Mimi (13)

You have never heard about parliament? Let us tell you about it!

A parliament is a place where politicians come together and discuss important decisions for the country. Without this professional place to discuss the problems and possible solutions, there wouldn't be a democracy as we know it today.

A democracy needs the possibility for different opinions. A good democratic parliament also needs several parties with different visions. So the people have a wide variety of parties and ideas to vote for.

We interviewed **Mr. Andreas Aebi, President of the National Council of Switzerland** on this topic. He told us that a parliament reflects the opinions of the society. Therefore, there are different opinions in the parliament and this is important to step forward. The parliament is as diverse as the population of the country. Mr. Aebi is the President of the National Council of Switzerland's bicameral parliament for one year. He has been voted into this position by the members of parliament. He is responsible for representing his parliament in the world e.g. here at this conference, so he has to travel a lot.



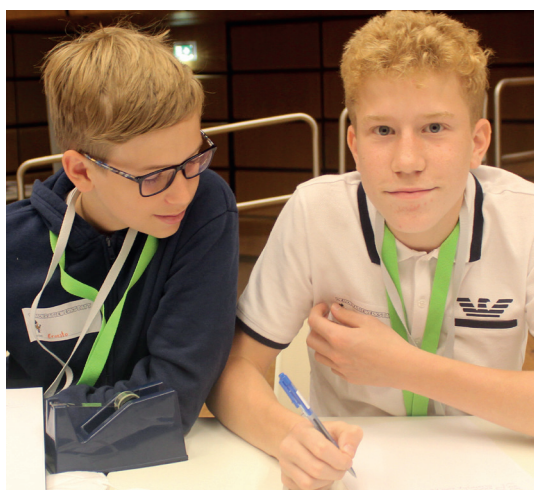
In his opinion, a speaker of parliament should have the ability to love all people and remember them. He said that it is a good feeling to be in this position. The work of the parliament affects our lives even if we are too young to vote in many ways because of the laws that tell us what we are allowed to do. For example, it is mandatory for us to go to school up to a certain age. Even being so young we can participate in demonstrations to strengthen our opinion and to influence others.



Bicameral parliament

Means that a parliament has two chambers – e.g. a National Council with elected MPs representing the citizens and a Federal Council representing Federal Provinces. This is the case e.g. in Austria and Switzerland. Many countries are unicameral with only one chamber.





IMPRINT

Publisher, media owner, producer: Parliamentary Administration

Basic direction: Raising awareness about democracy.

Workshop Politicians

The opinions expressed in this newspaper are the personal opinions of the participants of the workshops.

Copyright: © Parliamentary Administration, unless otherwise indicated

www.demokratiewebstatt.at

4A, Bundesrealgymnasium Linzerstraße 146, 1140 Wien



REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
Parliament