



Democracy Workshop

of the Austrian Parliament

No. 1952

Tuesday, 7 March 2023

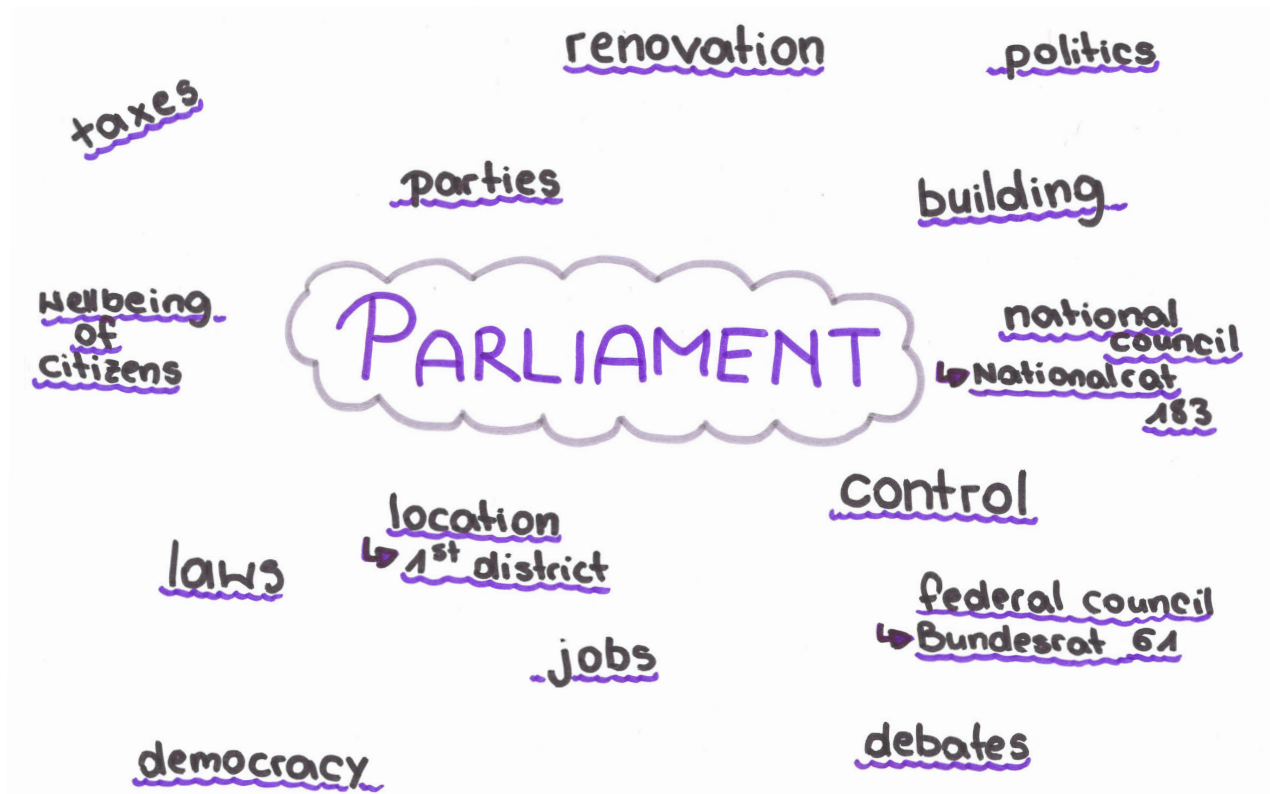


Let`s get political

Democracy depends on us all!

The representatives of the people

Caroline (19), Massimo (17), Emelie (19), Anna (17), Azel (17), Zoe (17),
Kate-Arienne (17) and Alexandra (17)



We think of the following words when thinking of the parliament

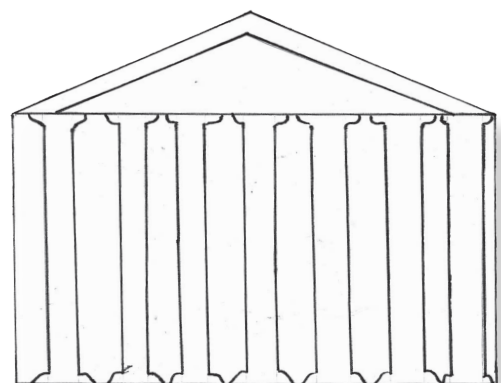
Politics is a big part of our lives. It is essential in our society in order to have a structure. In Austria, the parliament is the place where aspects of our lives are being talked about and where the rules are made.

How the parliament is build in Austria?

The parliament building is located on the Ringstrasse, one of the oldest streets in Vienna, which circles the first district.

Parliament debates on different important topics and has the task to make national laws which not only citizens but also everyone within the Austrian state border has to follow.

The Austrian Parliament consists of two



The parliament building in Austria resembles an antique Greek temple.

chambers (so-called “bicameral system”), which are called:

- the National Council
- the Federal Council.

The National Council and the Federal Council form the Austrian Parliament. The seat of the National and Federal Council is in Vienna.

Together these two make the Austrian federal laws. Deliberating and deciding democratically and transparently on laws is one of the most important tasks of the parliament.

The second important task of the parliament is to control the work of the federal government and the administration. The government e.g. has to regularly report to the parliament. Control of the government is part of the separation of powers in Austria. Separation of powers is important so that work is equally shared and that one entity can't gain too much power.

National Council

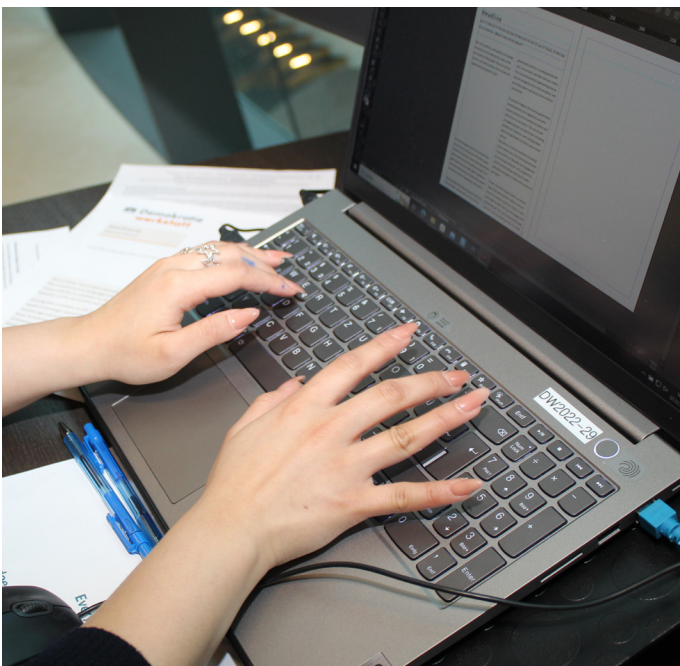
The National Council consists of 183 elected representatives who have the task to represent the ideas and opinions of the population. They are elected in national elections every 5 years.

Federal Council

The National Council consists of 61 representatives who have the task to represent their federal states. They are delegated by the federal provinces.

Separation of Powers

Separation of powers means splitting overall authority between parliament (federal law making), federal government (enforcing laws) and courts. So multiple people decide together and not a single person dictates the activities of an institution.



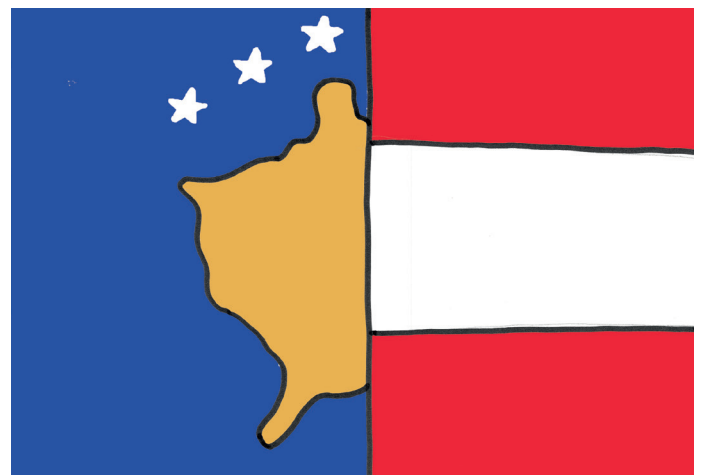
Insights into our interview with Mr. Ismet Krasniqi, Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo



We had the chance to have an interview with Mr. Ismet Krasniqi, Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, and got some great insights into the work of the parliament in Kosovo.

Our first question was if the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo is working together with the parliament of Austria. Mr. Ismet Krasniqi told us that they are working together and have a good relationship. There is a high level of cooperation and communication between the two parliaments. He said that it can be compared with a friendship group. The answer to our second question, what the role of a secretary general is, really impressed us. The Secretary General told us that a secretary general is a connector between the administration and

political topics. He is responsible for the staff members. Being a secretary general makes him responsible for everything that enables the administration and that everything works as it should. It is important that all necessary tools are available to reduce failure or complications



The Kosovar and the Austrian Parliament are working together on different topics.

during the process. We were wondering why the parliament in Kosovo is so important for the country and we got a great answer to our question. The parliament of Kosovo is important to regulate laws. Also to analyze if laws are working the way they should be or if they should be enhanced. Moreover, the main function of the parliament is to agree on decisions and, in the case of Kosovo, to select a president in a democratic way. Our last question focused on the characteristics a secretary general needs to have to become one. We received great answers such as that it is important to be sensible and flexible as well as having experiences as a manager. To treat every person equally and respectfully, in other words treating others in an ethical way, is very important as a secretary general. We gained

a lot of new insightful information about his position and the parliament in general and are really grateful for having the chance to have an interview with Mr. Ismet Krasniqi.



Building democracy

Beyzanur (16), Gabriela (17), Julia (16), Sophia (16), Ana Maria (16), Suzana (16), Marija (17) and Luca (16)

Students of the ibc-Hetzendorf interviewed the Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo and discussed a functioning democracy.

Today, we had the chance to talk to the Secretary General of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, Mr. Ismet Krasniqi.

Before that, in the beginning of the workshop, we all discussed the topic “democracy”.

Then we brainstormed what questions could be important and interesting and prepared for the interview. We came up with a few questions which seemed very engaging, which we wanted to discuss.

We started with the question: “What was the biggest challenge in your career?”. The Secretary General answered that it was hard to start from 0 and turning Kosovo into an independent country. It was also difficult for Kosovo to turn into a democracy, which

means they had to focus on all the criteria of a democracy and to fulfil these and also to harmonize with all human rights a democracy needs. An inspiring answer was also when Mr. Krasniqi said that democracy and human rights are not completed. They need a lot of work and won't last if the society and the politics are quiet. Mr. Krasniqi also mentioned that Austria is a good example of a working democracy and especially for its diversity. He liked that Austria puts a lot of effort into the Western Balkan countries becoming a part of the EU. We really enjoyed the interview and gained a new experience. Thanks!



Democracy - The People Rule

As we all know democracy is a very important part of our daily lives. The simplest term, in our opinion, that defines democracy is “equality for all”. The word democracy originates from the greek words “demo”, which means “the people”, and “kratein”, which stands for “ruling”. Important factors that make up democracy are diversity, voting rights for all genders and freedom of speech. You can't call it a democracy if those factors aren't included.

Now we want to talk about why democracy is important for us. It especially affects our education and our leisure time because other systems may not allow education at all or not the one you wish for. In conclusion, we are all very satisfied with our democratic system as well as the fact that we have an influence on our society and the political system we live in.

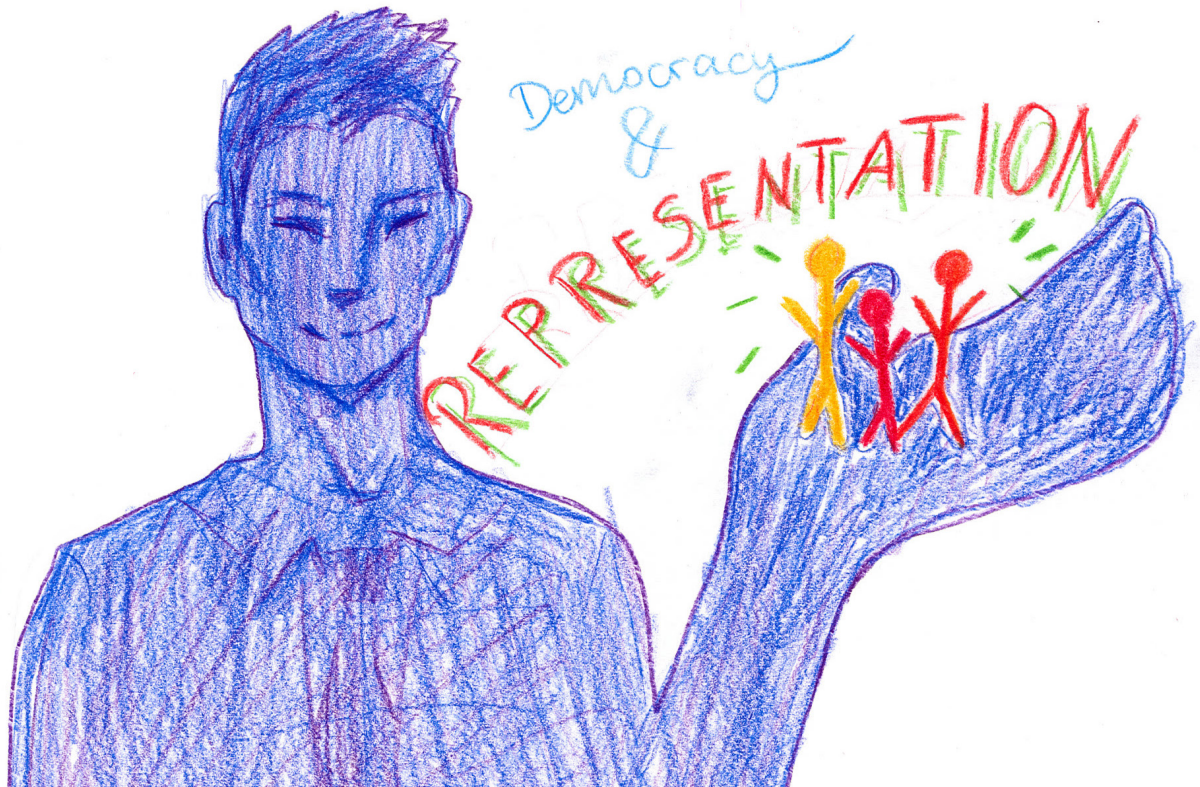


Freedom and equality are very important in a democracy.



What does politics mean to us?

Sara (17), Marvin (17), Nicola (16), Faye (19), Marcell (16), Jan (17), Lea (17), Anais (17) and Miriam (16)



This article talks about different points of view in politics as well as how they shape our society.

The first words that usually come to one's mind when talking about politics are "parties" and "laws" but in reality it's much more than that.

There are many ways to define politics, however, the most impactful factors are "systems" and "society".

Politics shapes the society in many ways which may vary from region to region, be it a democracy or dictatorial regime.

It's important to mention that when people get a hold of too much power they might misuse it

by allowing corruption to happen. This could lead to citizens being frustrated and attempting to overthrow the government.

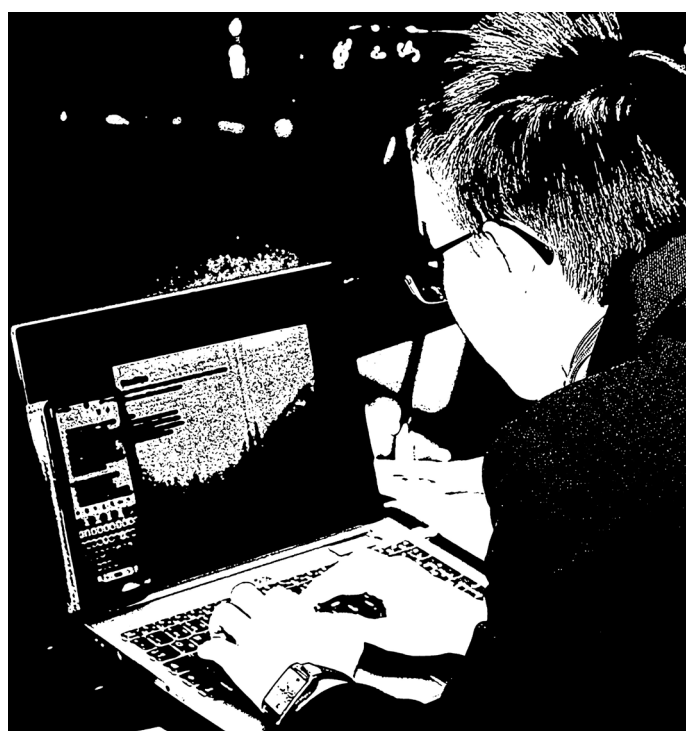
For these reasons, it is crucial to hold discussions regularly so that the people have a chance to feel represented.

In our discussion, we realized almost everything is political and every part of life is touched by politics. That also counts for private relationships. We think private relationships can be political. For example in some countries

it's forbidden for persons of the same sex to be together because of the laws that are in place. This can cause issues between the government and the public. Another example could be the relationship between a child and their parents/family. If the parents get divorced they possibly have to split custody of the child which could also cause issues.

Even when it comes to laws of physics or science, politics is involved. While the laws of physics are not defined by politics, what we do with them and how we interpret them can be political.

In order to come to an agreement with the population, it's important to listen to suggestions and requirements of said population. The government can only change laws to a certain extent.



Working together is a crucial part in politics

Barriers to political participation are a danger to democracy, since democracy relies on the participation of the people. There are various reasons as to why members of our society disregard and lose interest in daily politics.

Here are some examples:

Education: Without information or a certain amount of knowledge of different topics, a meaningful and reasonable participation can be difficult. That is why many would rather not be part of politics.

Poverty: People suffering from poverty are primarily focused on surviving, their basic needs need to be met before they can participate.

Lack of representation: This can be based on any factor like gender, age, ethnicity, etc.. If there is not enough representation and there are no relatable people as representatives, fewer people will be willing to participate since they don't have a personal connection to these people.

As you can see, there are many factors that can influence the willingness of people to participate in modern day politics.

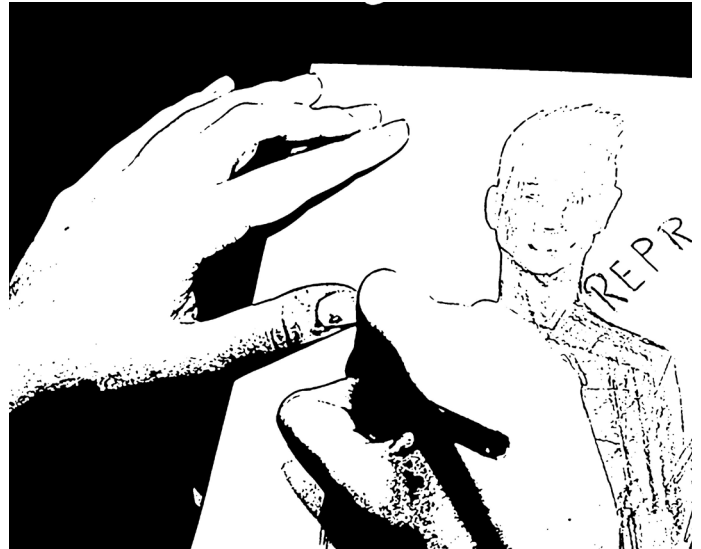
What can we do to promote trust and interest in politics?

The Austrian government can increase transparency by providing more information about its decision-making processes and by making more

government documents publicly available. The government can also release regular updates on its actions and decisions to ensure that citizens are aware of what is happening in the country.

Austria can promote diversity and inclusivity by increasing the representation of minorities in government positions, including elected officials, civil servants, and other decision-makers. This can be achieved by implementing policies that encourage diversity in the workplace and by providing support and resources to minority communities.

To promote integrity, the Austrian government should establish strict regulations and enforcement mechanisms to prevent corruption and other forms of misconduct. This can



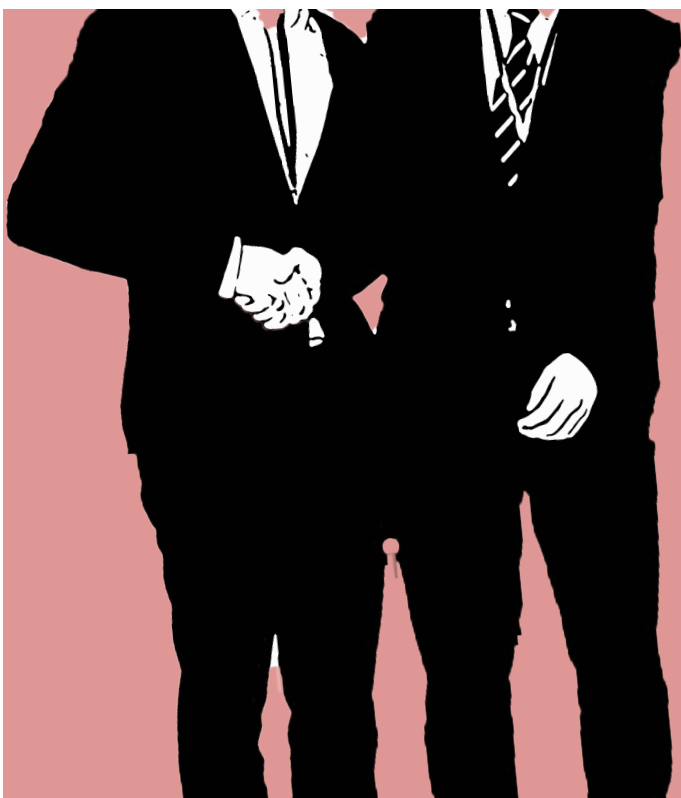
We create politics together!

include strengthening anti-corruption laws, increasing penalties for violations, and creating independent oversight bodies to monitor government actions.

Education is a critical component of building trust in democracy. The Austrian government can promote civic education and engagement by increasing funding for such programs in schools and providing resources for public education campaigns on democratic values and principles.

Finally, the Austrian government and parliament can encourage citizen participation in democratic processes by making it easier for citizens to vote, to participate in public hearings, and to engage with elected officials. This can be achieved through measures such as expanding access to voting, implementing online public consultation tools, and creating more opportunities for public engagement.

We interviewed Mr. Ismet Krasniqi, Secretary



Integrity and transparency are keys to good politics.

General of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. One of our questions was, what role minorities play in the Kosovar Parliament. They have quite a central role when it comes to decision-making, as e.g. at least one of the minorities has to be in favor. Furthermore, when you want to change a constitutional law, 2/3 of the representatives of minorities have to agree. We think this is an interesting approach, as you can ensure this way that the government is forced to listen and take the minorities' opinions into account.





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