



Democracy Workshop

of the Austrian Parliament

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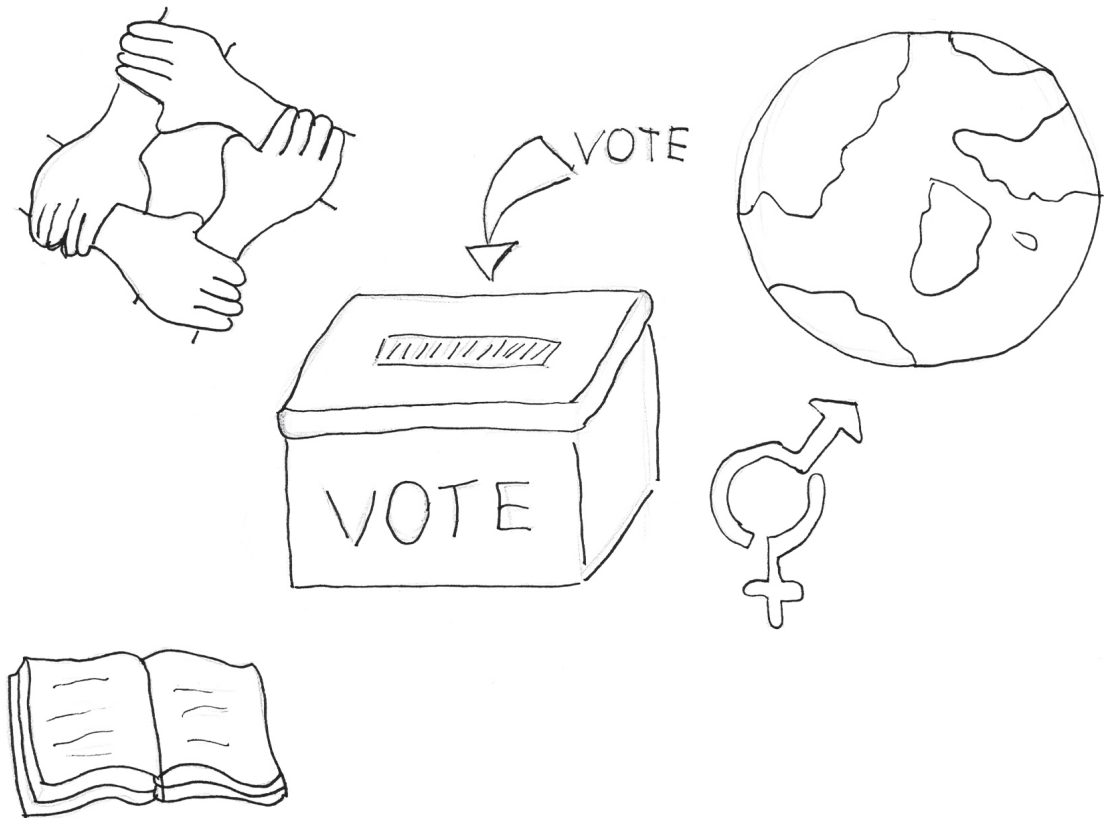


Politics - part of our lives!?

In exchange about different opinions and perspectives

Democracy

Ana (16), Consti (17), Diego (17), Fredrik (16), Joana (16), Letícia (17), Maria (16), Markus (17), Milos (16) and Paulo (17)



“What is democracy?”

The literal meaning of democracy is “ruled by the people“. It’s a form of government, where the people can have equal opportunities and the political control of their choices. In a democracy, citizens also have the freedom to express themselves publicly. Democracy is in our opinion quite a good system and we are very happy to live in one. But even so, it is not perfect. Every Democracy can get better because there are still many issues that should be discussed. Especially the communication between politicians and the people as well as

how social media affects opinions we see as a problem. There are many influences that affect the opinion of people, like the internet and social media. On the one hand, we can use the internet in our favor to gain knowledge. For that it is a very good thing. On the other hand, there are people that use this platform to spread misinformation, like fake news. And because many people believe the wrong information, it is a big problem for democracy. The biggest one in our opinion. So, there are always things to improve in a democracy.

Today, we had the chance to interview Members of Parliament, Ms Carina Reiter and Ms Stephanie Krisper on the topic of democracy, where we had the opportunity to listen to different opinions. Here is an excerpt from our interview: We asked them how they would define democracy. Ms Reiter thinks democracy needs participation, compromises about the way we live and how we find the best solutions. Ms Krisper believes that democracy is fragile, and that it needs to be maintained and appreciated. She believes in the so called “3 pillars of Democracy” which are: the government, the Parliament and the justice system. She also emphasized the importance of independent media and the adequate funding of it. Ms Krisper believes that the most important thing for an independent legal system is strong rule of law, but she also mentioned the lack of personnel and funding and used a quote from

the previous justice minister saying the system is “silently dying”.

When it comes to how being a politician affects your life, Ms Reiter said that it opens up opportunities and that it let’s her see different points of view. She also sees it as a life fulfilling job, but which is very time-consuming.

When it comes to independent media, Ms Krisper mentioned the recent media reform by the government, saying it is “terrible”, saying that the budget raise creates dependencies and that media affiliated with politics receive more money than independent ones. She highlighted the importance of media being more quality-conscious. The interview was very enjoyable. We believe that a discussion should always be possible, even if it ends in disagreement. Having a conversation is the most fundamental part of building and maintaining democracy.

Here are some words that are essential for a democracy in our opinion:

honest, respect, humble, education, union, independent legal system, trustworthy, equal rights, freedom of speech.



Parliament

Marek (16), Miina (16), Inês (15), Helena (16), Graça (16), Rita (18), Leonor (15), Guilherme (17), Maria Miguel (16), Lilly (16)

In this article, we explore and show the results of our research on how a Parliament functions, what it means for a democracy, its tasks and work procedures, and how representatives make the decisions for the people.

A Parliament is where elected politicians meet and debate bills. In a democracy, people can vote for e.g. members of their parliamentary councils, so they can represent the

opinions of the public and make

the decisions for them in a

parliament. However,

this varies from

country to country.

In Austria, there is

a bicameral system

(two chambers),

meaning that every

law has to pass

through both of them

(National and Federal

Council) to be approved.

The National Council has 183

members, which are elected by all

citizens who are able to vote. Everyone who

is at least 16 years old and has an Austrian

citizenship has the right to vote.

For a new law to be made, first the National

Council has to vote on a bill, and if the majority

votes for this bill, then the Federal Council

discusses and votes on it. This council though is not elected by popular vote but the members are delegated by their respective Provincial

Diets.

Interview with two Members of the Austrian National Council:

To this topic our

group interviewed

Ms Carina Reiter

and Ms Stephanie

Krisper, both

Members of the

National Council.

During this interview

we had the chance to

talk about different aspects

of the Austrian Parliament

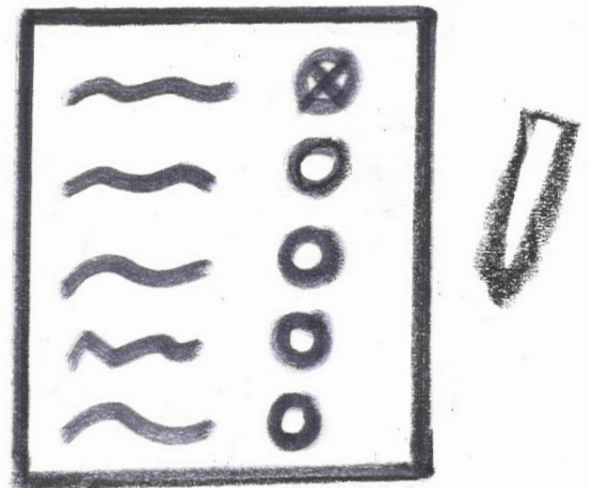


Interesting fact about the Parliament

The Austrian Parliament kind of looks like an ancient Greek temple. The architect of the Parliament, Theophil Hansen designed the Austrian Parliament to look like this, since the concept of democracy originated there.

and its importance for our society. They also talked to us about different perspectives. Our first question was: “Why is there a parliament?” The two women shared the same opinion, parliament is the heart of the democracy and the place where the laws are made. Then we asked “How can we be sure that the parliament is a sign of democracy?” They responded that the right to choose has a lot to do with parliament, since the citizens are the ones who make up a part of Parliament, the National Council, through voting. Because of this, parliament reflects the people’s voice. Of course sometimes decisions made by parliament can turn out to be wrong but the majority of times it tries to make decisions which can be accepted by the citizens. Later in the interview, we discussed the process of getting the Austrian citizenship, where the opinions were divided. Ms Reiter argued that the process was manageable if you seek to gain the Austrian citizenship e.g. tied to the average

salary. Ms Krisper had a very different opinion, she thought that it should be a lot easier and more accessible to everyone. The interview was interesting and very informative. For us it was something new to talk with two representatives of the Austrian Parliament. We were able to gain some new perspectives on how the Austrian Parliament works.



We decide through elections who represents us in parliament.



Discussions are very important and an essential part of our parliament.



Politics and young people

Andreas (17), Erikah (16), Justin (16), Lara (15), Leonor (16), Mafalda (16),
Melissa (17), Tobi (16) and Inés (15)



Two parliaments, two places for politics. The parliament on the right is the Portuguese Parliament, as some of us students come from Portugal. On left we have the Austrian Parliament.

Insights into a nation`s future: An exclusive interview with Members of the National Council of Austria.

Welcome to our exclusive newspaper coverage of a groundbreaking interview with two esteemed Members of the National Council. In this captivating exchange, we dove deep into the minds of these influential figures, gaining valuable insights into their vision of the nation`s future.

But before we dive into the interview, we want to discuss the topic of our article: politics! Before we knew the definition of politics, we asked each other what it meant to us. The answers we got were that politics was related to power (of the president, for example), to strong opinions and to what is fair. On the other hand, where there is power, there is possibility for corruption. Politics is a place full of fairness and

unfairness. News and media have a lot of power in politics, because they can influence people`s opinions and thus the political system.

We then learned that “politics is human action that aims to create binding regulation in communities“, according to the PolitikLexikon für junge Leute. We also discussed what politics means for us and tried to find areas of life that have nothing to do with it - we did not succeed. Politics is everywhere.

There are a lot of ways to be political. The most important things that we wish from our representatives are honesty, assertiveness, diversity for the representation of different realities. So how can you be political? There are a lot of different places where politics can

happen; on the streets, in parliaments, on social media, in big and small circles and interactions. Politics is necessary, so people can find peaceful ways to live together.

Some people are born with the desire to change the world. When we asked two Members of the National Council about their motivation to get into politics, we got an unexpected answer: Ms Krisper never thought that she was going to end up as a Member of Parliament but the need to change the world was stronger.

The environment that we live in is important. For this reason, we were curious as to how politics can make a country more welcome for the people who come from others cultures. Ms Reiter made the point that investments into exchanges and working visas would be beneficial. Ms Krisper raised the question “Why do they try to encourage people to visit if it is so difficult to live here?” She reiterated the point that laws provide the framework but the way we treat each other in a society also has a big impact.

We ended the interview by talking about the Austrian educational system. In our opinion, it is rather old fashioned and the two Members of



the National Council agreed with the students’ criticism since “the system changes very slowly and it’s very inflexible“ Ms Reiter affirmed. Ms Krisper added that the system developed slowly but that efforts are made to improve it with technology of nowadays and that change takes a long time. Ms Reiter thinks the school is the right place to learn about new technologies and politics. Ms Krisper said the school is a safe place to learn how to use new technologies. In the end, the two left some advice for the young voters: always inform yourself before voting, try to engage in politics and, especially, try to understand it.





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