



Democracy Workshop

of the Austrian Parliament

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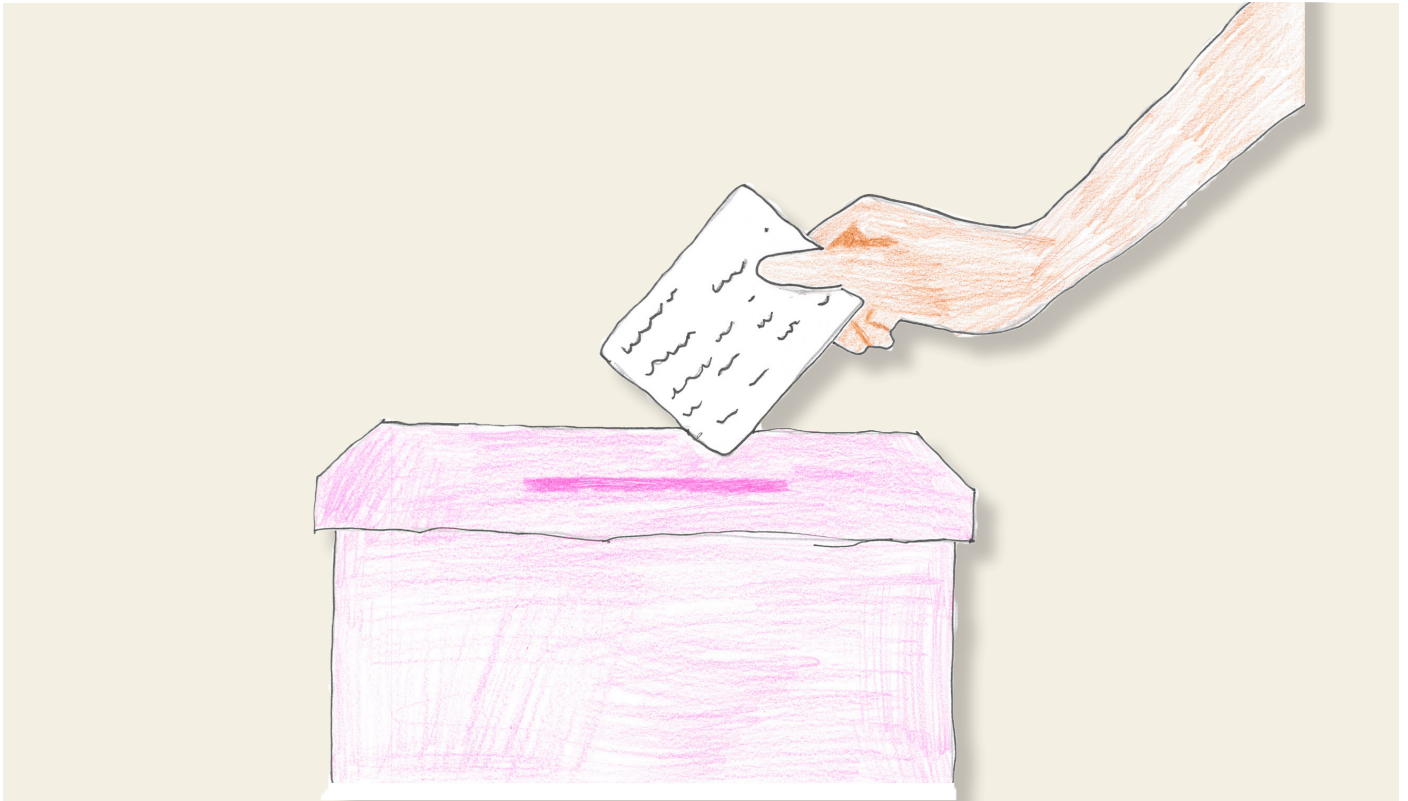


Talking about politics

Democracy needs us!

The people's opinion on democracy

Isra (15), Hugo (15), Britta (15), Ilina (14), Miri (15) and Hanna (14)



Our thoughts on why it is important to live in a democracy.

Democracy is a system built on fundamental human rights, including the right to life, freedom of choice, and the right to go to school and receive education. Democracy relies on freedom of speech and on open, free media to ensure that different opinions are heard and certain rights are protected and provided for everyone. Ultimately, the stability of this entire structure depends on the power of the people to participate through their votes. This last thought - the right to vote - was also one of our main topics within our interview with two politicians: Harald Schuh, who is a member



Everyone should live in peace and in democracies.

of the National Council, and Simone Jagl, who is a member of the Federal Council. Among other things, we asked them why Austrians are allowed to vote specifically from the age of 16 and not any other age and if they would change it if they could. Harald Schuh answered that everyone should feel included, and there is no certain „right“ age; it depends on the maturity of every individual. He wouldn't change it. Simone Jagl reminded us that the voting age used to be 18, and it has only been changed recently. She thinks 16 is an appropriate age, because she saw and felt with her five children that they will only get involved whenever they feel like it.

We also asked them if they think there should be a maximum age for the right to vote, like there is a minimum? Both answered no, definitely not. Harald Schuh referred to the demographic change in Austria. The elder population contributes just as well, therefore they should not have that right taken away. Simone Jagl also made clear that everyone should have the right to their own opinions, and

anyway, as soon as they are physically incapable of voting, they won't. Another question concerning the Austrian citizenship as a condition to vote was important to us. We asked them if they think people who have been active members of the Austrian society but don't yet have citizenship, should be allowed to vote. Harald Schuh said that the right to vote is the core right of citizenship and should not be given away too easily. Simone Jagl also denied, but made clear, that it definitely should be easier to get the citizenship, and if possible, at lower costs.

We think it is important that we live in a democracy because it gives us the freedom to decide what we want to become and what we want to do with our lives. It is also important that we get the freedom to express our own opinions, which builds character, critical thinking and helps with the transition into adult life. Another good thing is that we are allowed to vote at a young age, and the people who don't feel mature enough or ready to vote aren't forced to do so.

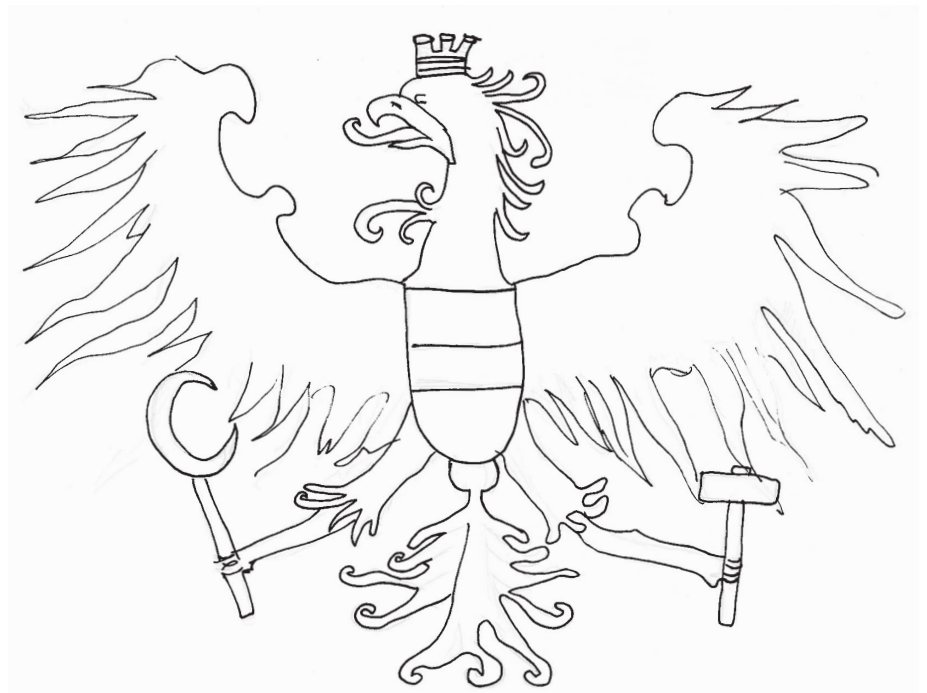


Politicians in Parliament

Ayham (15), Devran (15), Izabell (15), Heda (14), Johanna (15), Jasper (15) and Markus (14)

During our visit to the Austrian Parliament we explored what it is like to be a politician and how democracy works in practice. We also had two Members of Parliament present, and we asked them some questions.

Parliament is a place where people can discuss politics and make political decisions. Every citizen should have the right to express their opinion, and Parliament embodies that idea of democracy. We looked at several different parliaments all over the world, and we realized some things: they are all related to their country's architecture and culture. Sometimes the parliament buildings look like ancient Greek buildings because democracy was founded in ancient Greece. Parliament buildings differ because of the specific culture, values, and power. Parliament has a lot to do with power. In our opinion, how the parliament building looks like is already a sign of possible power: how much money was spent on building this? Parliament is often a symbolic place for the community or the people in the country.



The eagle is the emblem of Austria.

Parliament is part of the voice of the people: through votes, we choose representatives that make decisions for us. In a democracy, the power is separated, and Parliament is a part of it. Power should be separated because different opinions, different parties, and different ideas are very important; we need things to relate to. On the next page, you can read about our interview!

Interview with Members of Parliament

First we asked our two guests why they wanted to become politicians. They both shared their personal stories of their careers. Mrs. Jagl started in politics because of climate change, and Mr. Schuh said that he hadn't aimed to become a politician initially. Next we asked what the best and worst parts of the job are.



Mr. Schuh answered that the best part is that you have the chance to change something. Mrs. Jagl likes best that every day is different. For both, the worst part is that sometimes not everybody listens to you. Both are also kind of nervous before speeches. Mr. Schuh said that he is still nervous sometimes because he is a rather new member of Parliament and has not had that many speeches. Overall it was a very nice interview, and we got the chance to learn many new things from Mrs. Jagl and Mr. Schuh.



Politics in our lives

Livia (14), Maria (15), Sara (15), Rayhan (15), Elisabeth (15) and Elliot (15)



In this article, you can read about politics and what it means to us

Politics is a big part of our lives. Today we're going to talk about how it affects our daily routines. „Politics is human action that aims to create binding regulations in communities“, this is a definition in the book „Politik-Lexikon für junge Leute“.

How does it actually affect our lives? First, we have to follow laws and rules, for example, in school. In Austria, we need to attend school for at least nine years. Another example is road safety. We need to stop at red traffic lights, and cars have to stop too.

It also affects us in money and jobs: there are rules for the payment of employees.

Our last example is addressing rights and freedom: you can express yourself and your opinions online and in public. Of course, there are many more laws and rules, but these are some of the most basic and important ones to us. Acting politically has become a natural instinct at this point. We don't even notice doing something important. This is important to know because your actions have an impact on yourself and other people. That's why you should always

be aware of your decisions.

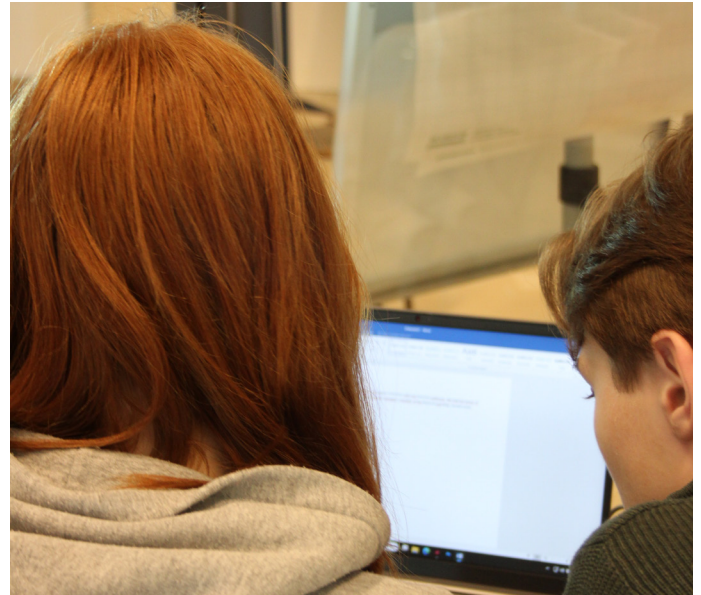
To get more information, we had an interview with two Austrian politicians. We had the honor of meeting Simone Jagl, an early childhood educator and a member of the Federal Council and Mag. Harald Schuh, an account manager and a member of the National Council.

Harald Schuh told us he got into politics because an old friend asked him if he wanted to contribute. After doing a very good job, he continued it. Simone Jagl doesn't come from a political family, so only when she went to school

she did realize that she actually had an interest in politics.

Both said education, for instance the school system, and the environment are the most important topics for young people because they are most affected by them.

The most unexpected thing Schuh experienced was that even in his time off work, his ideas were taken for ideas of his party. Jagl said, she expected to be nervous giving her first speech, but surprisingly she wasn't at all.





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