



# Democracy Workshop



of the Austrian Parliament

April and May 2026



## Democracy across borders

Shared values and empowered voices

## Cross Country Online Democracy Workshop Series

The Democracy Workshop programme promotes an understanding of democracy and an interest in politics. It is designed as a place for exploring political topics hands-on. The programme, created by the Austrian Parliament, is also being successfully implemented by the Parliaments of Albania, Montenegro and Kosovo. Following intensive exchange and close collaboration, the Parliaments of Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Slovakia and Ukraine, together with the Austrian Parliament, initiated a Cross-Country Online Democracy Workshop Series.

The programme offers students aged 12 to 15 the chance to learn about democracy, participation, the European Union and its values. In total, three hybrid workshops took place between April and May 2026.

In each workshop, students from two of the aforementioned countries had the opportunity to work together and explore different topics. Additionally, they had the opportunity to meet Members of Parliament from different countries. In interviews conducted by the students, the Members of Parliament offered valuable insights. The students' work culminated in the creation of this newspaper.





# Diversity in the eyes of teens

Kristian (13), Aidon (13) Mishel (13), Kenza (13), Noela (12) and Era (12)  
from Albania

Diversity and respect go hand in hand. Even if we are different, we have to respect and include each other.



Diversity, to us, means having different mentalities, opinions and looks. We need to respect diversity because it helps us to get new ideas and opinions. Despite the importance of diversity, different opinions might clash and people can disagree very easily.

But how can we combine ideas into one big idea? Sharing diverse opinions and cultures is important because we get to understand different opinions and personalities. We think

you can learn a lot from others. For example, one country can have great food, but it wouldn't be diverse if all the people always just ate the same food. So we combine foods from different countries into one big "restaurant". Diversity is essential for democracy and we need to respect everybody, however different they are from us. This is also the Motto of the European Union: United in Diversity.

Today we interviewed two Members of



Parliament, Ms Jorida Hasan Tabaku from Albania and Mr Ralph Schallmeiner from Austria, and here we give you a glimpse into our questions and their answers.

Q1 : Is it hard to tend to everyone’s needs?

Ms Tabaku: It is very hard because people are different. Sometimes you need to prioritize.

Mr Schallmeiner: You can’t please everyone, but that is not the job of a politician. This is why different parties exist.

Q2 : How does diversity affect democracy?

Ms Tabaku: Democracy thrives with diversity.

Mr Schallmeiner: Without diversity, democracy can’t live!

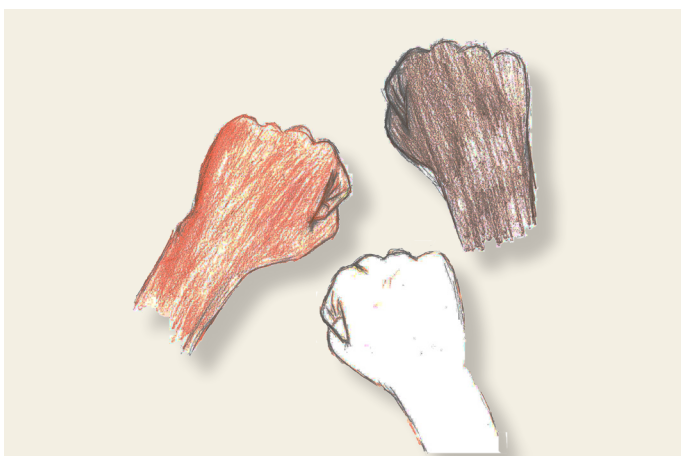
Q3: Is it hard to work with people that have other opinions?

Ms Tabaku: It is very hard to work with people that have different opinions because they make you feel like your opinion is wrong, even though they are not trying to. This is something we need to embrace. It is important to work and collaborate with your opponents. You can maintain your principles while allowing other opinions.

Mr Schallmeiner: Compromise and coming together to form a solution are important, though it can be hard to have different opinions. We learned that politicians can be emotional and can be very stressed, even if it doesn’t seem so sometimes. Emotions are an important part of politics because they make us human. Respect is the main ingredient for democracy.



## I feel respected ...



# Different aspects of Justice and Law

Patrik (14), Alex (13), Dorota (14), Žofia (14), Dominika (14) and Amália (14)  
from Slovakia

## Our opinions on certain topics

Respect for other opinions is important.

Justice shouldn't be used as a weapon, it should be used as a tool!

Our everyday rights: free speech of my opinion and being educated.

Everyone is different. It's important too!

Laws are the same for everyone.

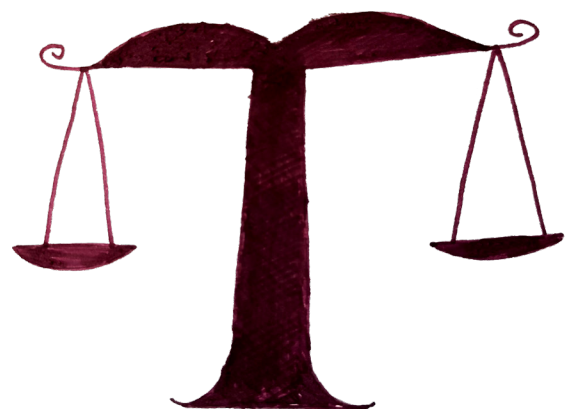
I don't want to eat what other people make; I want to be the cook!

Fight for justice!

The most important rights for daily life are, in our opinion: Definitely the most important law or right, in our opinion, is the right to express your opinion and your perspective on numerous situations on a daily basis in all kinds of situations, e.g. at school, on certain topics, and others. Another important law is the right to demonstrate and to agree, or disagree, with the government. We have the power to have an impact on the country through demonstrations, et cetera.

Democracy only works when people take part in it. It is certainly true that it only works when

people work together to build an environment where everyone can live peacefully.



Everyone's opinion has the same value.

## Interview with MP Jorida Hasan Tabaku & MP Ralph Schallmeiner

Q: Why did the MPs choose their job?

A: One of the MPs said, "The job chose me". Both MPs had certain visions and interests that developed in the early stages of their lives, and they had a deep passion for politics and big motives for changing the laws of their countries. The disadvantages of being an MP are, for example, limited time with their family, because the job of an MP is not very flexible in terms of time.

Follow-up Q: Were the MPs' families supportive towards their career path?

A: The support of their families is very important; both of the MPs we interviewed

*Equality & Balance*

Justice shouldn't be used as a weapon. It should be used as a tool.



Even if we have some differences, we can still find a compromise.



talked of pretty supportive families most of the time even though they had some disagreements and/or different opinions. They followed their dreams.

Q: What's the MPs definition of justice?

Everyone has the same rights and can contribute despite everyone being different.

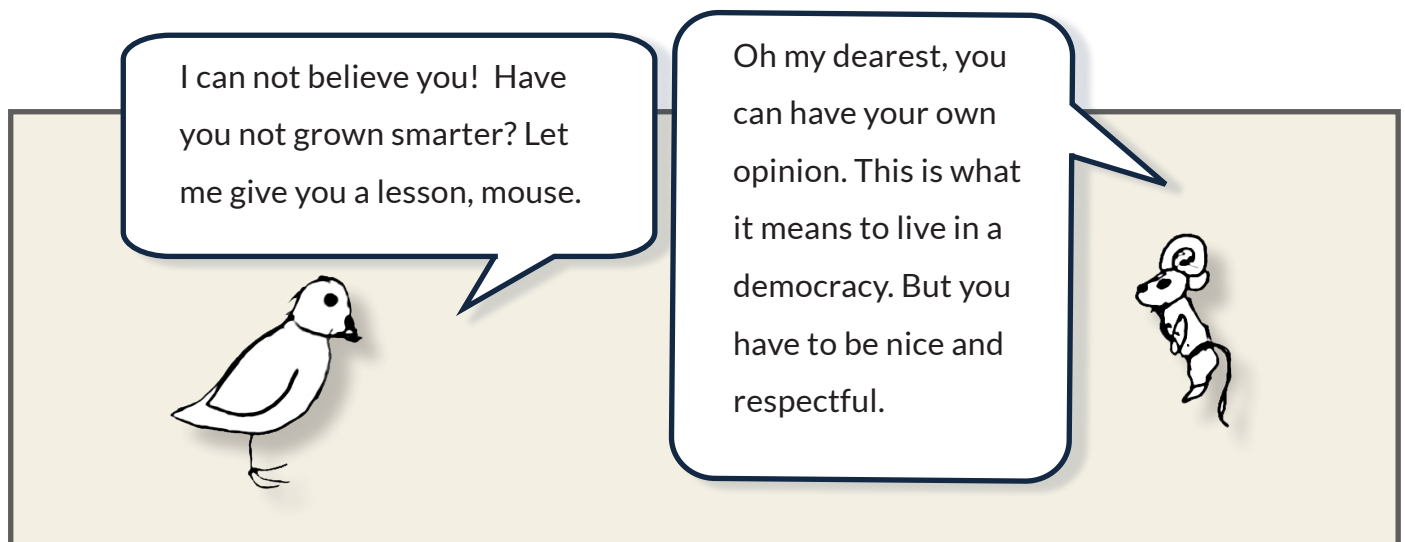
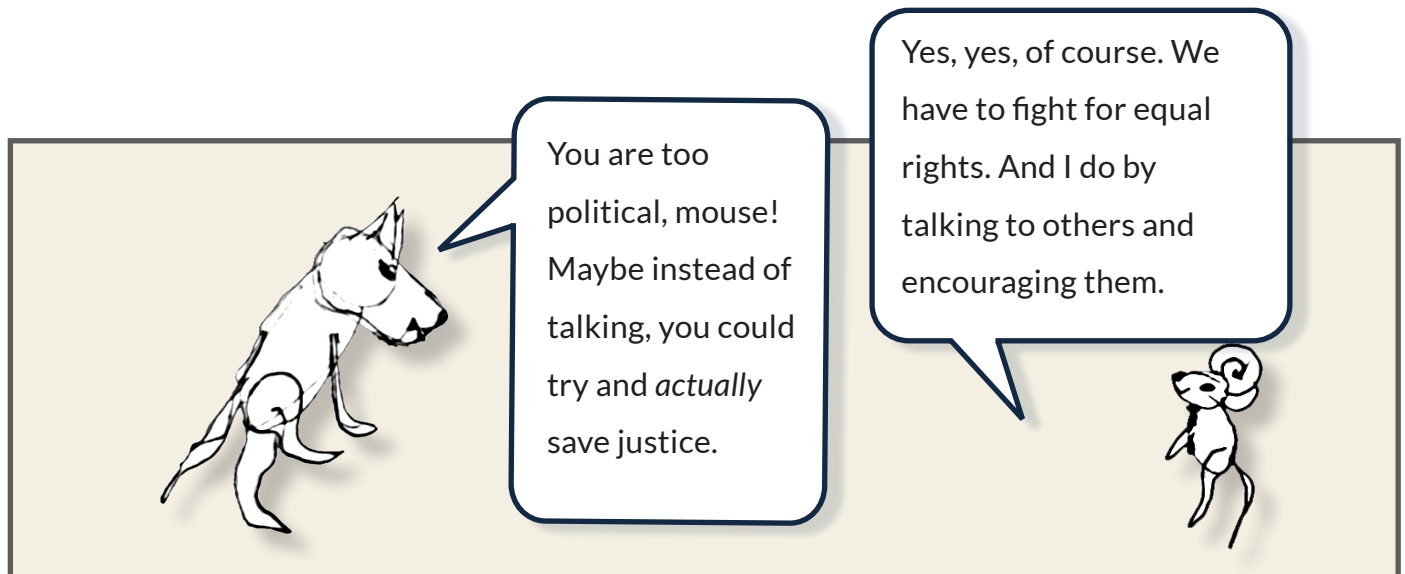
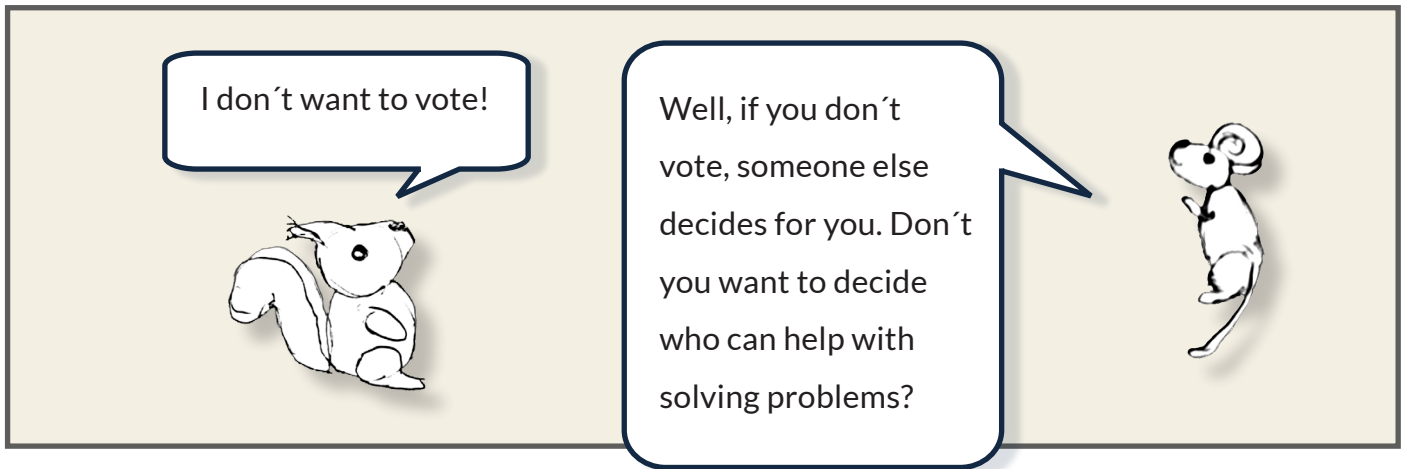
### Our opinion:

#### What does justice mean to us?

It isn't only restricted to politics. It means that everyone is equal in every situation imaginable. It means that it doesn't matter who we are, what our ethnicity is or who we are attracted to. You have the same rights as everyone else.

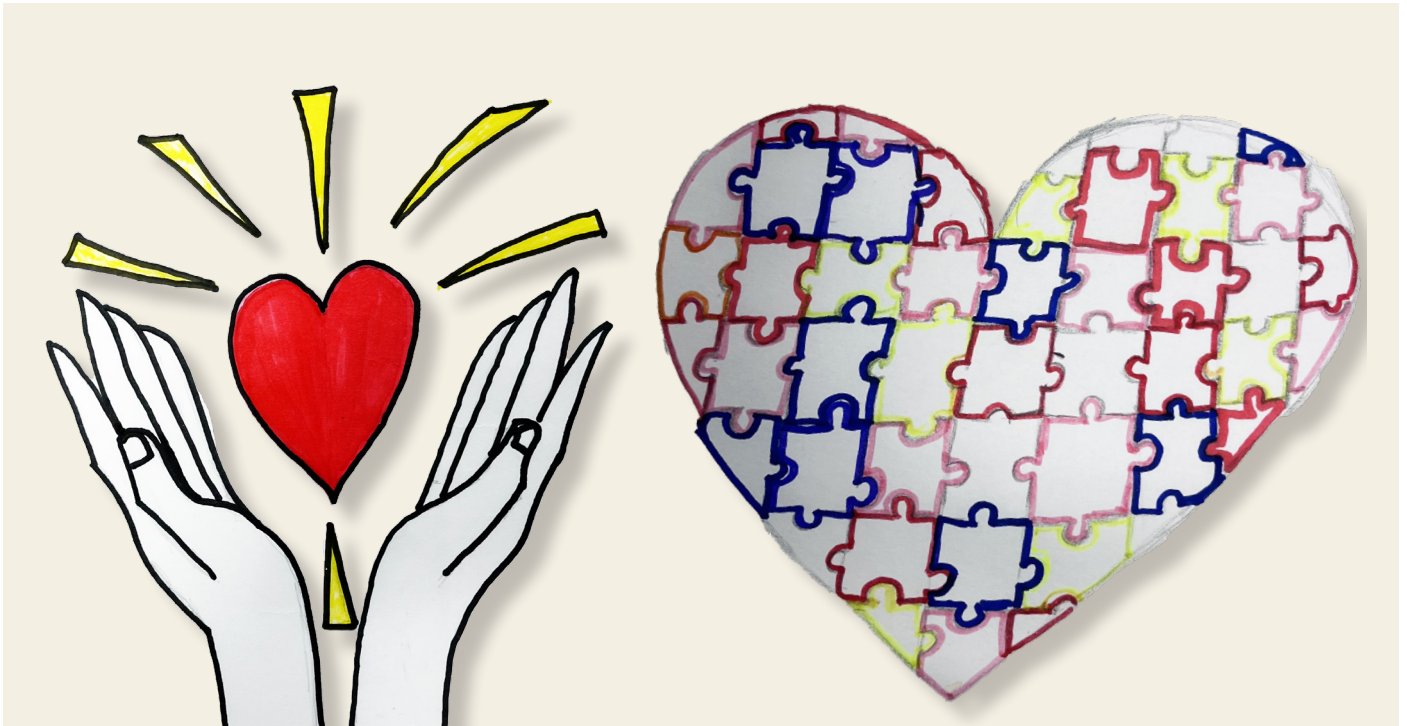


## Comic: The Mouse & Democracy



# Solidarity and Understanding

Jana (13), Kalina (15), Kalina (14), Matej (14), Klara (14) and Tamara (13) from North Macedonia



**Hello! Today we are going to talk about our experience at Parliament. We are a group of six students who worked on this project together and we would like to share our opinions and thoughts on solidarity and understanding.**

Solidarity, to us, means being able to voice our opinions and being taken seriously, to be there for each other, being able to help and being supportive when we can. We live in a community, where we can lean on each other, share our opinions, be open, have support. For example, in our school, we have done several acts of solidarity: we have raised money for kids from socially vulnerable families, for

single mothers and we have donated food to kids in Ukraine. Not too long ago, in the city Kočani there was a fire with a big impact on the community and we raised money with donations and also had a tournament to raise money..

In a good community everyone can improve and develop. In a community we can always learn from one another.



Today we had the opportunity to talk about solidarity and civil rights with a Member of Parliament (MP) from Austria, Mr Paul Stich, and from Kosovo, Ms Arbëreshë Kryeziu-Hyseni. We asked them a few questions about our interests about the given topic: Why is it important for them to face many different opinions? We learned that we should always be open-minded and always respect and accept each other's thoughts. "An injury to one is an injury to all!"- What does this mean? This was a challenging question, but we got the answer that the community suffers the same as one singular person does.

How can we include people who are different? There are a lot of things referred to as different, but we should put our differences aside

and respect one another. One question was specifically addressed to Ms Kryeziu-Hyseni: What is your experience with solidarity as a woman in Parliament? "I have been a Member of Parliament since 2019. It is never easy to keep walking in politics when you're a woman. But in Kosovo the situation has changed drastically. This is my fourth term and I have always been elected as a Member of Parliament without relying on a women's quota. This is because the citizens started to believe in women more and they started to believe that we represent them better and that's why they started to support women more. Still there are challenges, but I am glad that we overcame many of them and are working on overcome those that are still present."



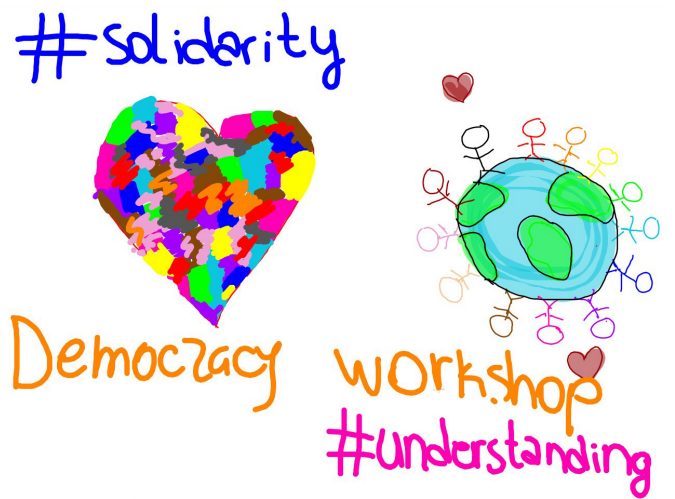
Here is a poem we wrote about solidarity and understanding:

Different voices, one shared space  
Every child has equal place  
We listen, learn and show respect  
That's how our community connects.

At Blaže Koneski, hand in hand,  
We share solidarity across the land  
We give, we share, we always care  
And lift each other everywhere.

Together we lead, together we stand  
Building a fair and caring land  
With every voice heard loud and clear  
We choose respect, we choose to care.





What helps a community to grow strong in our opinion?



# Freedom: The Foundation of Democracy

Ledri (15), Bleta (15), Yll (14), Orlik (14), Bora SH. (15) and Bora XH. (15) from Kosovo

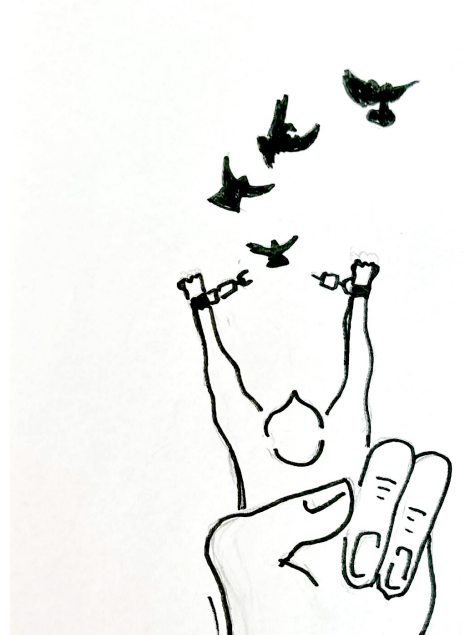
A lot of people think that freedom means doing what you want, but this is a threat to freedom. There has to be a balance between doing what you want, and following the rules. Everyone has freedom of speech, but you have to use it wisely. We need the balance and the limit to freedom, so that there is no chaos. If what you do and say stops someone else from being free, it is a problem. This is often mistaken. Freedom, for us, means being allowed to do anything without causing harm to other people.

**We need to stand up and speak up about decisions.**

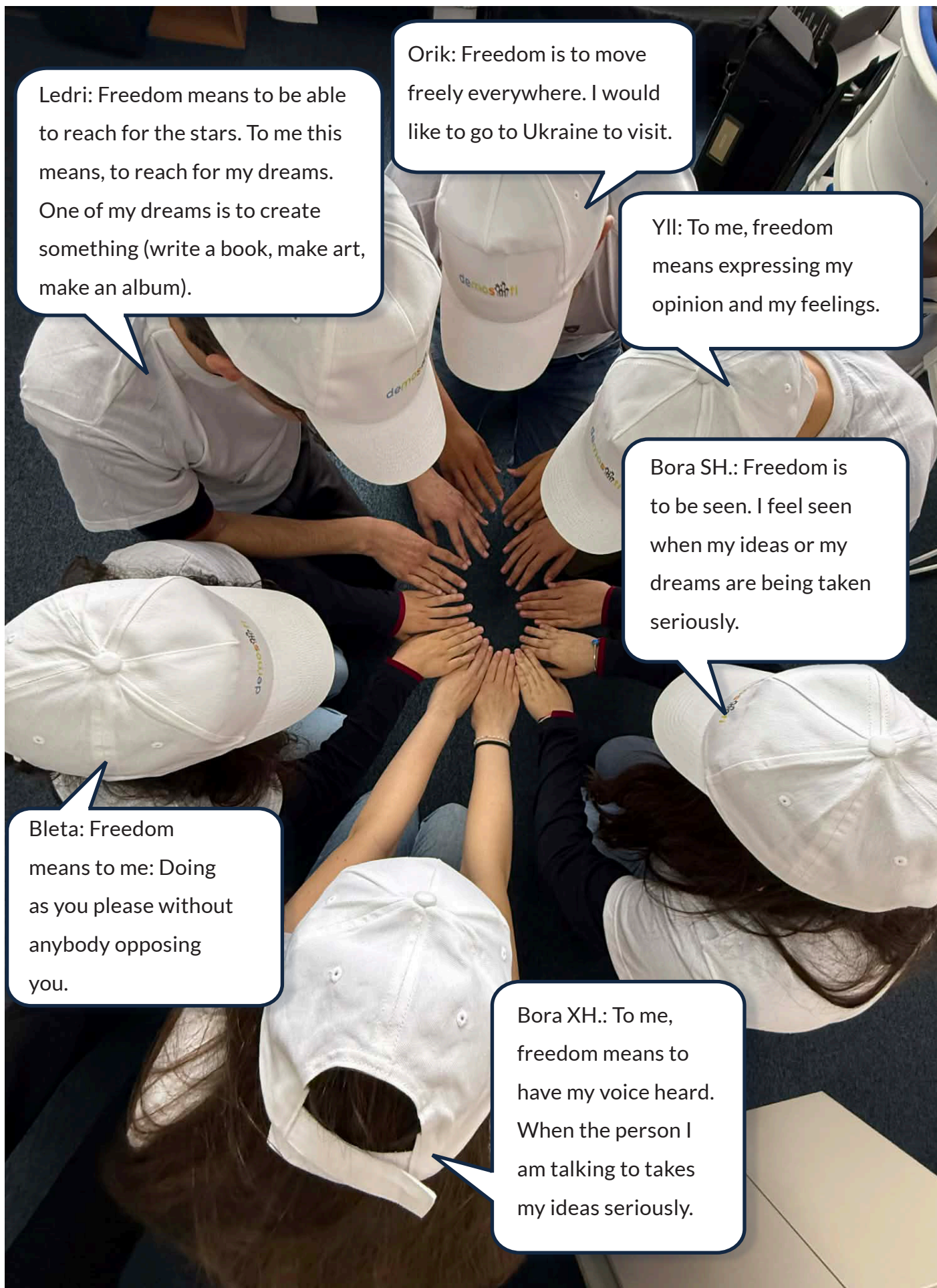
**Our Interview with two Members of Parliament (MPs) from Kosovo and Austria, Ms Arbëresha Kryeziu-Hyseni and Mr Paul Stich.**

The topic we discussed today was freedom and responsibility. We were able to get answers from MPs and we compared two perspectives from the Austrian Parliament and Kosovar Parliament. It was very eye-opening, and we discussed some of the most current topics in democracy today to define freedom and responsibility. This experience was very important to strengthen the connection between youth and politics. During our

FREEDOM



interview we managed to get answers to most of our questions. For example: We asked how important the cooperation of countries like Austria and Kosovo is for the future of democracy in Europe. Mr Stich answered that it's very important because in Austria there are a lot of immigrants and he wants to work on the issues that citizens from other countries might face. We asked if the government should have limits on how it monitors citizens? Ms Kryeziu-Hyseni answered that citizens control the MPs and hold them responsible for everything they do. MPs have to prioritize helping the citizens and attending to their needs, before thinking of themselves.



Ledri: Freedom means to be able to reach for the stars. To me this means, to reach for my dreams. One of my dreams is to create something (write a book, make art, make an album).

Orik: Freedom is to move freely everywhere. I would like to go to Ukraine to visit.

Yll: To me, freedom means expressing my opinion and my feelings.

Bora SH.: Freedom is to be seen. I feel seen when my ideas or my dreams are being taken seriously.

Bleta: Freedom means to me: Doing as you please without anybody opposing you.

Bora XH.: To me, freedom means to have my voice heard. When the person I am talking to takes my ideas seriously.

Democracy is not built only in parliaments or through laws, but also our voices, choices and actions build democracy. Freedom gives us the right to speak, dream and express our ideas without fear. It is our responsibility to remember that our actions affect others and build the society we live in. As young people, we are not only the future of democracy but we are part of its present. When we participate and when we talk to each other with respect, we can create communities where different opinions are valued and every individual has the opportunity to be heard. True democracy exists when freedom and responsibility walk together.



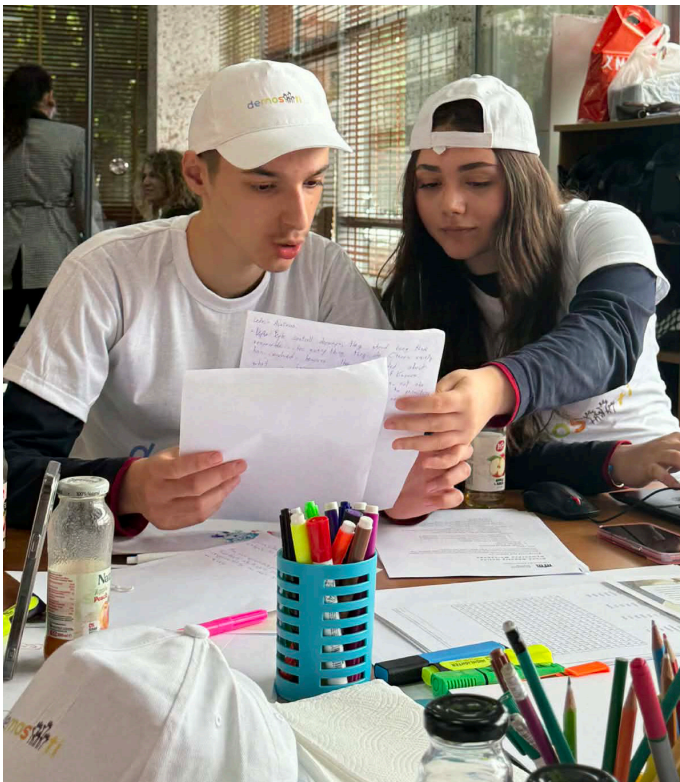
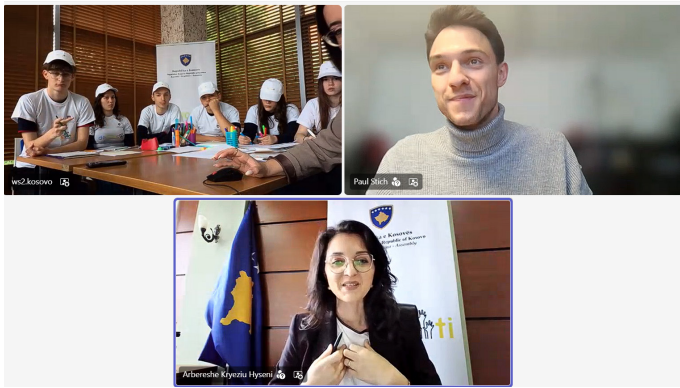
### “We bleed for Democracy”

Around the world, people have risked everything for the right to vote, speak, and live freely, sometimes through blood, sweat and tears.



**FROM THE PEOPLE,**









# What do solidarity and civic courage mean to young people?

Vuk (14), Bodgan (14), Sanja (14), Katalea (13), Vojislav (13) and Bojana (13)  
from Montenegro



In this article, we talk about civic courage and solidarity. Have fun reading!

For us, living in a good community means respecting others, helping and understanding each other. It also means showing kindness. Not trusting each other, not accepting differences, being impatient, being mean, bullying and ignoring each other is bad for a community. Sometimes it needs people who show civic courage. It means standing up for yourself and others in hard or unfair situations. How

can we show civic courage? We can show it by showing kindness because the kindness we show the world will return to us. Understanding others, listening when others speak without interrupting, standing up for people who cannot do so themselves, showing emotional support, noticing and reacting to a situation are ways to show civic courage.

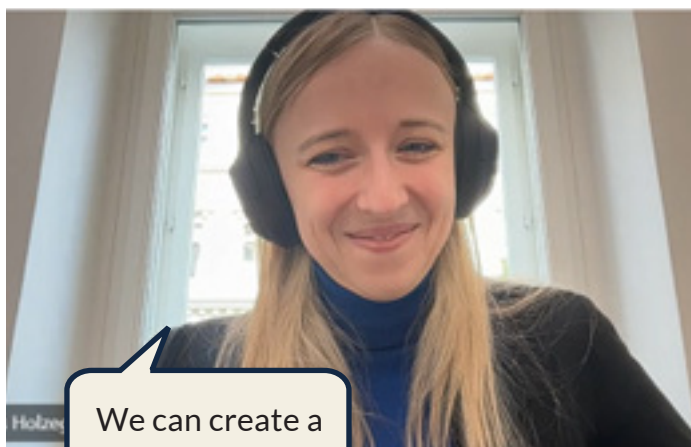
Why is it so important to show solidarity?

We can solve problems together and help people. Solidarity also promotes our freedom and our opinions, and the fight against injustice is something we need to do as a group. Being tolerant and respecting rights is a great way to do that. During today's workshop we had

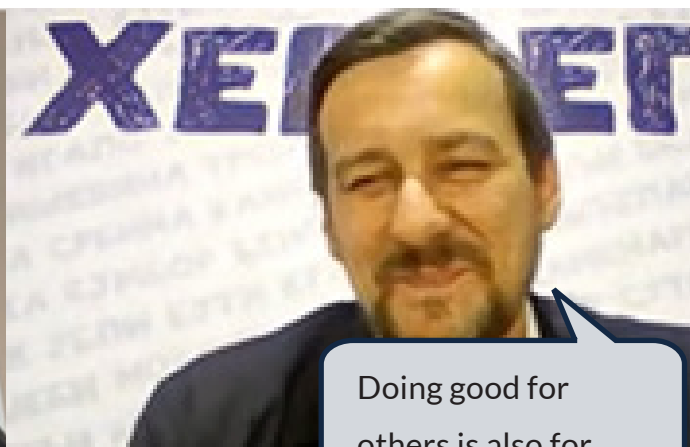


the opportunity to have an interview with a Member of the Parliament of Austria, Ms Ines Holzegger, and Mr Jovan Subotić, a member of the Parliament of Montenegro. We talked about solidarity and civic courage. Ms Holzegger told us that we need a strong civic society to have a strong democracy, which is the best form of government. It is important

for people to live life the way they like, and the duty of a politician is to listen to people, even if they sometimes don't agree with that opinion. Our question to Mr Subotić was about challenges that he had while showing solidarity or civic courage. Mr Subotić explained that there are many challenges and two of the most noteworthy ones are not being understood well, and being perceived as a threat. Democracy should be a fair game, and we have to always keep in mind: the well-being of others is our own well-being. Ms Holzegger, answering a question about challenges, mentioned social media: messages, comments and attacks on a personal note should be discussed, especially on the level of civil policy. Different opinions coming together strengthens democracy. Mr Subotić gave us the advice that for being courageous, it is easier to act as a group and to be surrounded with people who have the same goal as we do. Mr Subotić told us that it is important to trust in ourselves, and that we need to articulate our opinions.



We can create a better society!



Doing good for others is also for your own good.

Regarding the question about how we can create a stronger community, Ms Holzegger told us that humanity starts with questions like “Can I help you?” or “Do you need something?” because it is important that everyone looks after each other and it creates a better society. Mr Subotić said that, when he was young, he

wanted to be the best in every area that was important to him. Maybe he was not the best, but he always gave his best. He always spoke up for all people, because it made others listen to him. He gave us the advice that being good in something makes others listen to you.



Solidarity is an important value in the EU.





For us, being brave means...

... not shying away from discussions.

... trying something, even if scared.

... doing the "right" thing for the common good.

... knowing how to react and what to do in a moment of need.



# How Ukrainian youth understand their rights and democracy

Zlata (14), Yaroslava (13), Kvitoslava (13), Heorhii (14), Artem (14) and Yeva (14) from Ukraine

Everybody has a right to...



We are ready to stand for our freedom and justice.

## About Democracy

Very important rights in a democracy are:

freedom of speech, the right to protest

and the right to vote. Ukrainian

people are ready to fight for these

rights and they have proven this

in 2004 and 2013, when they

demonstrated a wish to follow the

way of European development. Now

our country is experiencing difficult

times, but we are ready to defend democratic

values such as freedom, equality

and respect for human

rights.

## Children's rights

If children's rights are

violated, it's possible to

reach out, like to national

hotlines for young people,

or to the national police.

Justice  
FREEDOM  
EQUALITY



A thought from the group:

Today we talked about human rights, equality, and justice. We listened to politicians' opinions and advice. We made a conclusion: If I have a dream, I have to follow it. Sometimes, it's really important to hear other ideas. They may help you, especially if someone has more life experience, they may change your opinion.



In this picture, scales symbolise justice and fair treatment of courts.



## Our Thoughts on Justice & Rule of Law

We live together in freedom and make the world better,  
do everything together. We are all the same.

Everybody is equal, and should get  
treated the same way!

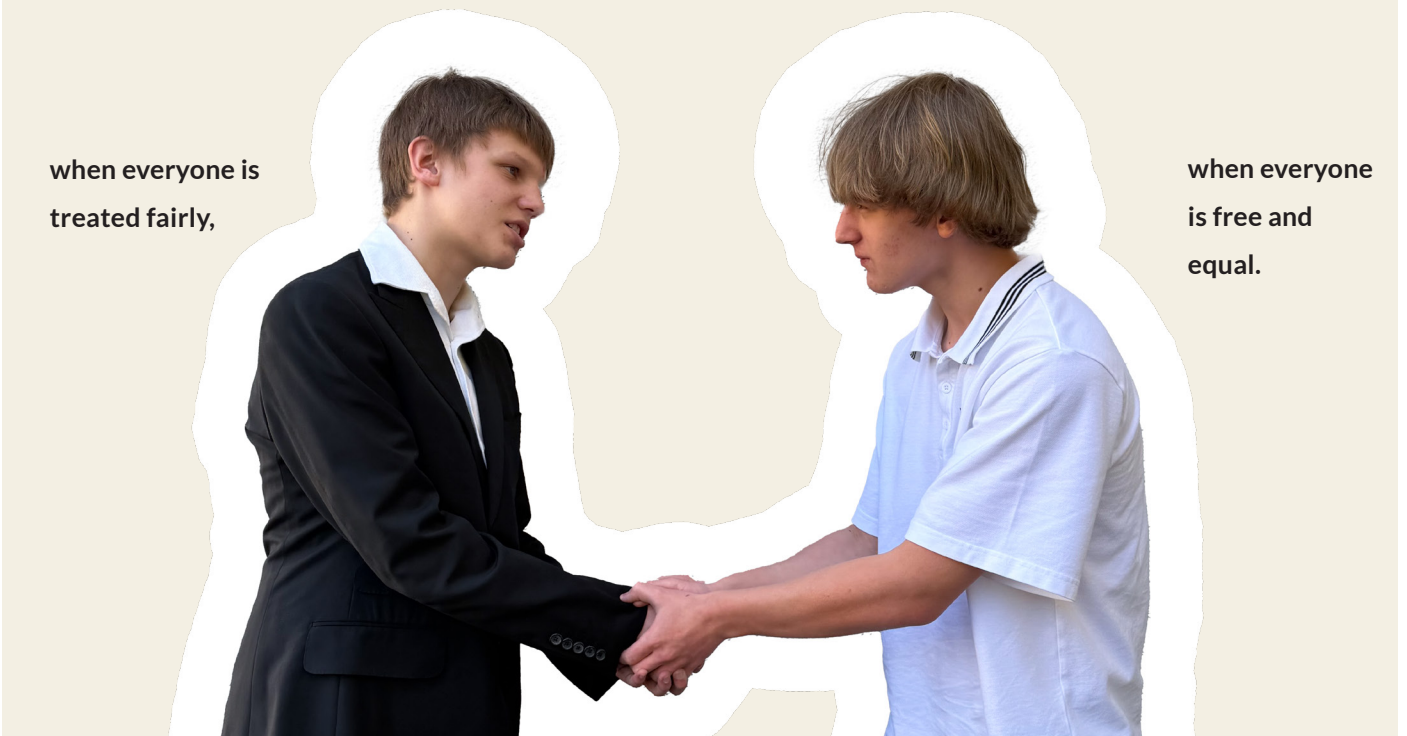
Everyone has the same rights!



Justice: That's when everybody takes responsibility for her or his actions,

when everyone is  
treated fairly,

when everyone  
is free and  
equal.



### Interview with MP Ines Holzegger & MP Jovan Subotić

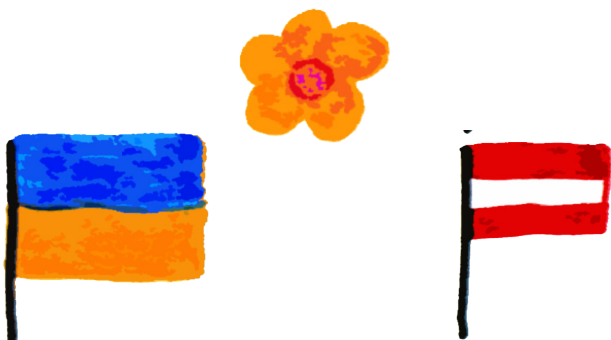
Q: What should we do to understand politics as young people?

Mr Subotić: In order to understand politics, you would start from the basics and what your community needs, what your town needs, what your area needs and then what your country needs. All of those align somewhere.

Ms Holzegger: What is also important is to find your passion, a cause that you think is worth fighting for and to find a group of people that share this passion. It doesn't have to be a political youth organization, it can be the scouts, it could be different groups, but if you have that, you're already set on a good path.



### Children & Youth in Ukraine wish for peace in the world.



“What advice will you give to young people who want to be a politician?”

“Don't let anyone discourage you!”

**MPs**



We were really excited to talk to the Members of Parliament!



# Imprint

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**Parlament  
Österreich**

**Participating Schools:**

- ◆ Deutsch Albanische Schule in Tirana
- ◆ Ismail Qemali Primary School in Pristina
- ◆ Elementary School “Milija Nikcevec” in Nikšić
- ◆ Elementary School “Blaže Koneski” in Skopje
- ◆ Secondary School Millennium N318 in Kiew
- ◆ Škola pre mimoriadne nadané deti a Gymnázium in Bratislava

