



Democracy Workshop

of the Austrian Parliament

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Future of Politics

Young Minds – Big Ideas

Democracy: A short summary

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“Freedom is like air, if you don’t have it, you notice it.” - This quote shows in our opinion what democracy means for all of us. More information about the importance of democracy can be found in our article.

The concept of democracy was created in Ancient Greece with the goal to give all people equal opportunities

to express themselves and realize their ideas, opinions, and goals.

Democracy isn’t just about everyone having a say, it’s about how people, even if they have completely different

ideals and opinions, are all equal and have the same worth. In a democracy, everyone should be allowed to live and make decisions freely and with equal rights. Citizens have the right to vote. This is a basic right that is granted in a democracy. In our opinion, people should always have a chance to vote freely in order to express their political point of view without pressure. Democracy means to us equality, freedom and justice for every citizen; it’s caring about what people have to say, no matter what social status they have.

In conclusion, the idea of democracy is like air,

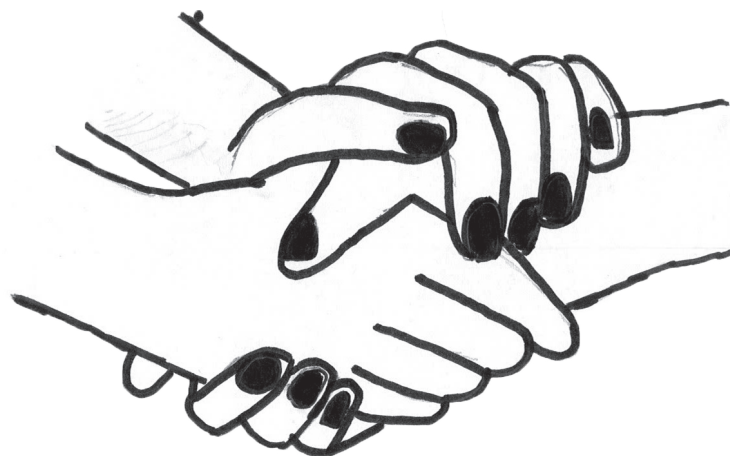
if you don’t have it, you notice it, and it is, for us, an extremely important factor in the happiness

and well-being of humans.

Our interview with Simone Jagl, Member of the Federal Council of the Austrian Parliament.

Today we had an interview with Simone Jagl,

Member of the Federal Council. We talked with her about her opinion on the importance of democracy. We interviewed her because she represents us, the people, in her function as a

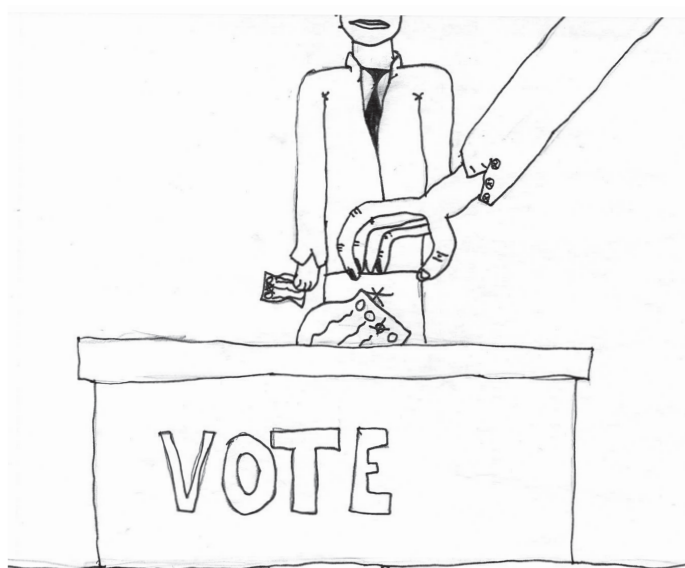


In a democracy people work together and support each other!



politician.

First, we asked her to describe democracy in three words. Our guest pointed out that for democracy “participation” (of people), “freedom” (of speech), and “voting” (of representatives) are crucial for a functioning democracy. We went on to ask her several more questions throughout the interview. When asked if she likes that Austria is a democracy, she said yes, of course, because she thinks that it is the only political system worthwhile. People are not restricted in their rights, freedom, etc. In her opinion, democracy is a special thing where every opinion is valued and respected the same way, no matter what the person’s background is. This was also her motivation to get involved in politics. Although she didn’t achieve all that she planned and wanted, she learned that every position was an important one, no matter how small the matter. Near the end of the interview, she advised us to always



Use your right to vote and participate!



Austria is a democratic republic - the people have the power!

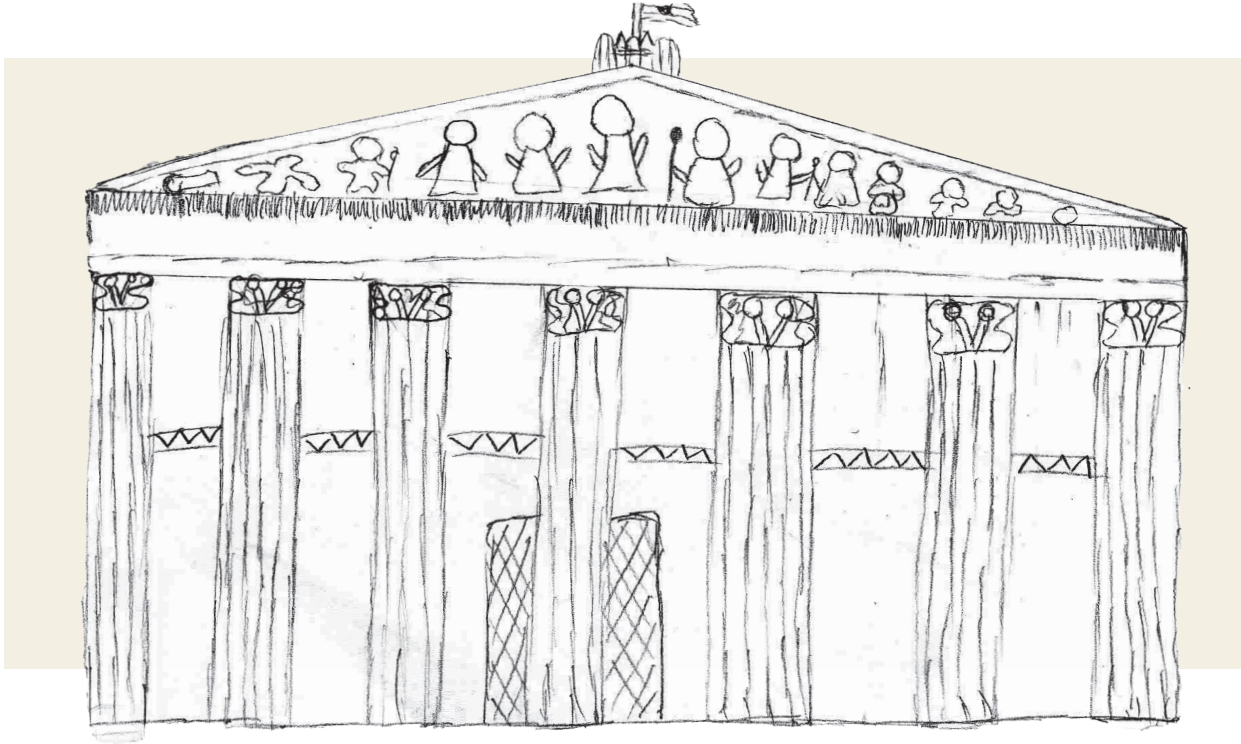
make ourselves heard and to engage in politics whenever we can, because it is important for young people to engage with politics. She also mentioned her part in it because as politicians they shouldn’t make politics for young people but with them!

Being a democracy is a choice that a country can make to make sure that their people are all equal and have fair human rights no matter of their status.



Parliament: What happens inside?

Marc (13), Joshua (13), Victoria (12), Bhavya (13), Althea (13), Stephan (13), Tashi (12) and Lea (13)



Did you ever think that parliament belongs to everyone? Me neither! People mostly think that parliament is only a somewhat important building, where politicians disagree and complain about each other's opinions. However, it is way more than that!

Parliament is a very important part of the Austrian political system, due to being the place where laws are created and determined, etc. The structure of our Parliament is pretty simple with two chambers: the Federal Council and the National Council. Parliament is also a representative body of the citizens. If you are interested, the average MP (Member of Parliament) represents around 50,000(!)

people. This way, the whole country can indirectly be part of parliament by voting for them. Also, the National Council can start a law based on an idea from the people: 100,000 have to sign a Popular Motion (Volksbegehren) to kickstart the process, for example. After that, the Federal Council investigates and looks into the bill and votes either for it or not. The Federal Council has the power to do this due to representing the interests of the federal states. In my opinion, you should always watch out who you are voting for, as they are in charge. In conclusion, parliament is a very important part of Austria's democracy and contributes to our country a lot.

In today's interview we asked Daniela Gruber-Pruner and Simone Jagl, both Members of the Federal Council, about their experiences and points of view on certain questions, one of them being, "What education do you need to be a politician in Austria?", to which they answered, there is no need for a specific education, you should be interested and passionate. When we asked them if it was stressful to be a politician, their reply was that it's fun, but can be stressful and it can be very emotional after certain discussions. When we asked them how their lives have changed after becoming politicians, they said that a lot changed because they suddenly had a lot of meetings to attend and

DEMOCRACY RULES

got a lot of invitations to discussions. Sadly, they also have less time to spend with their families. We asked the question if they thought they have personally achieved anything as a politician. They explained that in certain cases, the whole party decides together and makes a decision. In addition, they were happy about the Klimaticket they managed to introduce. In our opinion, the interview was a very fun experience. Going to parliament in general is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and we are really glad we got the chance to do it.

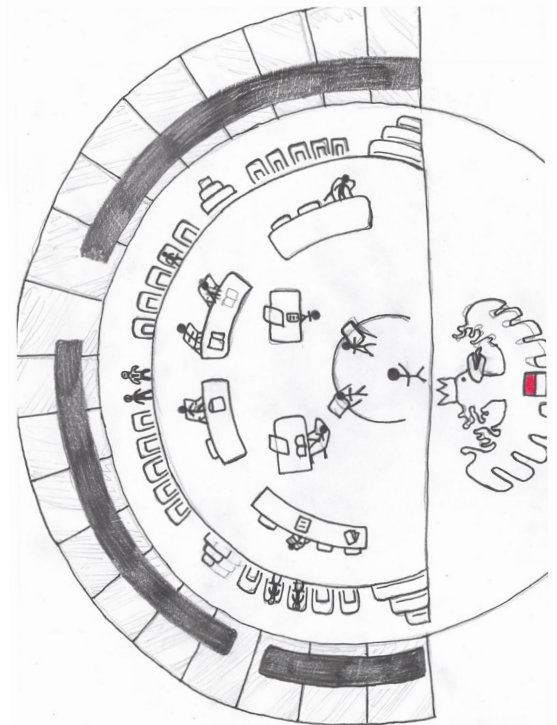
Fun facts: their favorite foods are Käsespätzle and potato salad, as children they wanted to become a flight attendant and an opera singer.



Politics

Mia S. (13), Ema (13), Lena (12), Mia M. (13), Nicky (13), Chris (13), Ben (13), Thomas (13) and Louis (13)

What do we need/want to participate and feel heard? Why does politics matter and what is part of politics?



Parliament is a place where political ideas are discussed.

What is politics you might ask yourself? That is a good question, which now, after our discussion, we can answer. Politics has many definitions, but there is not one exact answer. One of the definitions is "Politics is human action that aims to create binding regulations in communities", according to the Politik-Lexikon für junge Leute. Politics is, for us, made up of different things, for example, laws, discussions, democracy,

voting, power, rights etc. When it comes to rights, there are basic rights and human rights such as, the right to vote, to speak freely, and to live. After our discussion, we talked about what is most important to us regarding politics. A lot of people would like to stay anonymous during voting, etc., for various reasons, such as for the prevention of it having an influence on your private life or future conflicts.

What do we need to participate and feel heard?

No judgement, no peer pressure, respect, listening to the opinions of others and having others listen to us, acceptance, tolerance and freedom of speech. But how can we even participate?

We can take action on the streets, make our opinions clear to the people around us, make sure people hear our voices and respect the rights of others, make sure that every opinion is heard.

What happens if no one or only few people want to participate?

There will be consequences for the state and for our lives because you will only hear the opinions of those few who participate, which means they decide for everyone. The people who did not vote or participate should then also not get angry, because they did not participate. The system only works if we participate.



We also had the chance to talk to two Members of Parliament about this topic. What we learned from the interview is that young people need to be loud, so they can be heard. Also, if you want change, you need to be the change and take matters into your own hands. Everybody can help the environment by using public transport, eating less meat, talking to people and making them aware of the need for change.

Some fun additional facts: we asked our guests about their favorite movies. Simone Jagl likes Star Wars, Daniela Gruber-Pruner couldn't settle for a favorite movie this spontaneously.





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