



Democracy Workshop

No. 1895

Monday, 10 October 2022



Politics in discourse

An exchange with politicians

Healthy democracy = Healthy life

Antonela (18), Tahmida (19), Ruth (18), Maja (19), Sarah (18), Karolina (18),
Natalia (19), Veronika (19)



“Democracy is like oxygen” says the person across from us ...

Especially nowadays, democracy is a vital part of our day-to-day life. However, we often take it for granted, or do not appreciate it enough. Nevertheless, what is democracy, and why is it so important to us? Democracy describes the process in which we, the people, take part in the formation of the government and other important decisions concerning our country. It makes sure that every opinion is heard and taken into consideration. Democracy is important to us because it gives everyone the chance to express themselves and to be treated equally.



However, this is not always a given. We had the opportunity to speak to two politicians from Albania and two from Kosovo*, and the following is what we found out.

Flutura Ačka and Florenc Spaho from the Parliament of Albania:

“Democracy is like oxygen”, said Florenc Spaho, a former doctor turned politician. Our interpretation of this statement was, analogous to a doctor with their patient: if the doctor can’t help the patients breath, they die. Similarly in a democratic system, if we don’t engage, it could die. What we learned from his colleague, Flutura Ačka, was the answer to the question “What does Democracy mean to you?”. To her it means freedom and to have a voice which is

heard. It means choosing what you do with your life, and where you go. Furthermore, we realised that in order for a democracy to function there must be a change in mindset.



Arijeta Rexhepi and Arjeta Fejza from the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo*:

Just like the previous interviewees, the politicians were very adamant about living one’s life without limitations and being able to

express themselves freely. Two aspects which were very important to them were women’s rights and supporting kids with their education. Getting them more engaged with schooling and creating scholarships which create more opportunities for pupils are also some of their goals. When we asked what part LGBTQ plays in their society, the answer was that everyone is different and people should be able to live the way they want, just like democracy promotes.



*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNCSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

A venue for discourse

Nikolaus (18), Felix (18), Leonardo (18), Lars (17), Esad (18), Laurids (18)



A parliament is where the people's ideals and interests are discussed by democratically elected representatives. Their main objective is to pass laws that serve us all.

In Austria, our parliament is made up of two chambers. But before any law can be debated in the plenary of the National Council, it is discussed in a committee. After a majority of the 183 Members of the National Council has voted in favour of a law, it requires the approval of the Federal Council in which the 61 Members speak for the federal states they represent. If a majority votes in favour of the law, it is passed, and gets signed. If declined, it is returned to the National Council for adjustments.

After a brief introduction, we asked the two Serbian politicians and professors, Đorđe Pavićević and Žika Bujuklić, several questions regarding their parliamentary system. The

first question regarded the general criteria for joining parliament. 12,000 votes are required, followed by a three month admission period, according to Đorđe Pavićević. Ostensibly, corruption is a major issue and it was suggested



that the way to combat this problem is by reducing the political power of certain agencies that are politically aligned.

As our final question, the team asked about the transparency of the Serbian legislative body within parliament. It was discussed that transparency has been declining over the past years with the reduction of access to information for the general public.

At the beginning of today's workshop, we discussed what politics actually means. After finding the definition "human action that aims to create binding regulations in communities" (Politiklexikon für junge Leute), we had conversations about the meaning of human action, binding regulations, and communities. Afterwards, we split into three groups and talked about parliament, democracy and politics. Finally, our group prepared questions for two Serbian politicians, one was from the

opposition and one from a ruling party. Each of us got the chance to ask them 1 or 2 more questions regarding the parliament in Serbia.

The politicians were more than happy to answer our questions with a lot of detail and enthusiasm.

All in all, it was a wonderful experience for us and we hope you were able to learn something new regarding the Western Balkans.



Is politics everything?

Katrin (18), Samantha (18), Jennifer (18), Angela (19), Iris (20), Ines (18), Viktoria (18)

On 10 October 2022, seven students of the International Business College had the chance to do an interview with two politicians from the Republic of North Macedonia during a Democracy Workshop. Our topic was politics and we discussed what politics means to us and why it's a component of our day-to-day life.

Politics

According to the Politik-Lexikon für junge Leute politics can be described as human actions that aim to create binding regulations, like laws in communities.

What is politics for us?

When we think of politics, we think of rules and regulations that effect our behaviour in certain ways. If we have the right to vote, we can express our opinion through elections. It is an important topic because, as we mentioned above, it affects our daily life.

How does politics work?

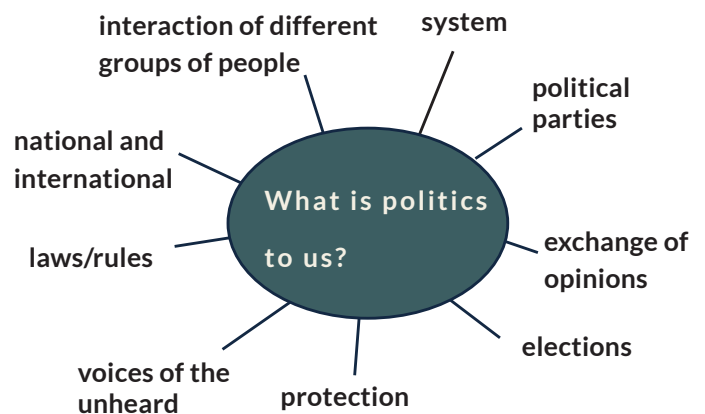
In order for a society/country to function, rules and laws need to be established. These laws are made by representatives of different parties within parliament. Through elections, the citizens of a country elect different parties.

What is political apathy?

Political apathy is when people reject the political system because they think that their politicians are not doing their job right. Political apathy is a problem because a democratic political system works best when everyone participates.

Is politics everything?

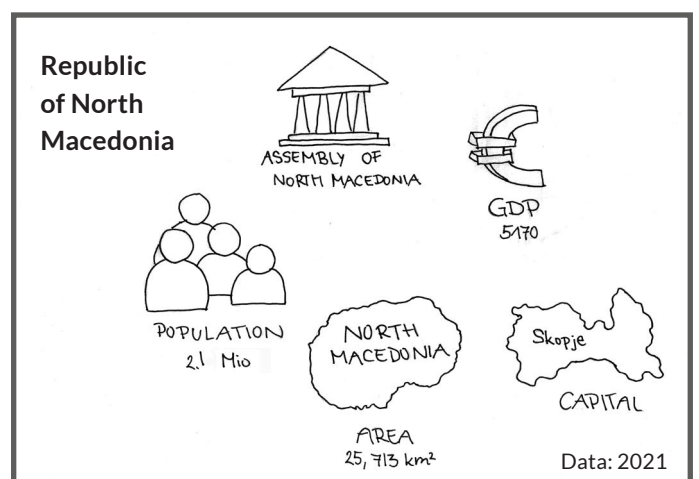
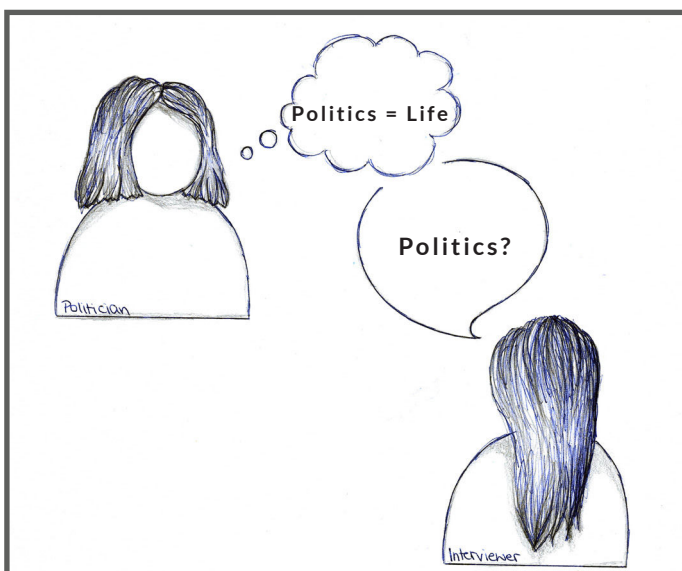
In our opinion, politics is an important component in our day-to-day life. Therefore, no voice should be left unheard!



Insights to our interview with Lolita Ristova and Zaklina Lazarevska from the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia

Our topic was politics in general and with the help of Lolita Ristova and Zaklina Lazarevska from the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia we tried to cover all our questions and managed to gain some new information about politics. At first, we asked Zaklina Lazarevska what her reasons had been for joining politics. She said that she was originally a professor and she thought that there were not enough policies on education and she wanted a change, so that was one reason for her joining politics. After that, we wanted to know more about gender equality within politics. Lolita Ristova told us that women are still a rarity in this job and she also mentioned that a woman needs to show twice the effort compared to her male colleagues to be seen as a competent politician. The question we asked next was if political apathy is a big problem in North Macedonia. Lazarevska answered that especially the youth shows no interest in

politics. She added that it is important to build youth councils, where they can be educated about politics. The last question we asked was what the dream job of Ristova had been. Her answer was, she wanted to be a doctor, teacher and shop assistant. She confessed that she never really thought of becoming a politician in her childhood. However, she is happy to work as a politician because now she can help people. In conclusion, it was a very nice experience to talk with two professional and friendly women. We learned a lot about politics in North Macedonia and managed to get answers to all our questions the way we expected.





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5BIK, BHAK und BHASCH für Berufstätige,
Hetzendorfer Straße 66-68, 1120 Wien