Podcast 2: Democracy

Marta: Hello, this is Marta from Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligungsbüro Friedrichshain- Kreuzberg. I'm here today with Szymon from Szczecin, who came for a school exchange with students from Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, Treptow-Köpenick from Berlin, and from Szczecin. And today we were just sitting and talking about what they remembered the most and what were the most interesting moments. Szymon, maybe you can tell us.

Szymon: Yes, so four days ago we had workshops. And one of the tasks in these workshops was that there was some statement and we were saying whether we agreed with it or not. We were saying in the sense that we were just standing in some place in the room and it showed whether we agreed with it or whether we disagreed with it. And there was a question: is democracy good? And I, having my own convictions, having my own thoughts, I set myself up to about 70% that it is not good.

Marta: Well, that's very intriguing. Explain to us why you think it's not good.

Szymon: I think democracy has good elements because I can't say it's completely bad. But still, in the very idea, in the very idea it is okay, only in the very execution of it is average. That is, it is enough to notice the current, the current politics in Poland, how it looks. In the previous presidential elections, 50.89% of the votes were cast for Karol Nawrocki, and 49.11% of the votes were cast for Rafał Trzaskowski. Which means that people are polarized. That there is half here and half here, which can lead to really different conflicts, including in the family. And that's just one example. But there are also others. Such as, for example, that politicians, political parties, specially deceive people only so that they vote for them. That is, having this cushion of security that by lying, people can still vote for them, because they said it nicely, they nicely put it into words.

Marta: Political marketing, right?

Szymon: Yes, that's right. Politicians nicely put it into words. Some, let's say, average Kowalski saw it, said, oh, how nice, what a nice party, I'll go vote for it. And then the party does not fulfill its promises. Mr. Kowalski will not see this, because he will not be interested enough, he will have, for example, other more important things, for example, to buy books for high school. Or for his son. Or, for example, I don't know, wash the car. That person will not know that the political party has not fulfilled its obligations. So, simply, in a democracy, political parties use the fact that they can lie to people as much as they want, in fact. And few people hold them accountable for it.

Marta: Well, yes, but it's like that everywhere, but you know, from what I know, there is a very large political polarization in Poland at the moment, but also there is a huge amount of people who go to vote, because in other countries there is not such a high frequency. And in the last two presidential and parliamentary elections, there was a huge frequency, one of the biggest in history and the history of Europe. So that's a good sign when it comes to democracy, don't you think?

Szymon: Yes, of course. That is, people, to a greater or lesser extent, should have something to say. Only, however, usually it is the case that those who vote- know less. Because often there are those who, for example, have already seen what is happening and have recognized, they all lie, so I will not go to vote for anyone. And those who still think that they simply with their voice restrain those who lie. They think that; they recognize their party as a religion. And they therefore go to vote for it, that is why there is such a high frequency, because they think that it is their obligation. That if they do not vote, then the other party will take over and suddenly there will be total evil in Poland. And that is why there is such a high frequency, because people simply recognize politics as a religion.

Marta: That is, I think it's good that there is a high frequency and that people are interested and want to take part in the elections. And they want to decide on what the future will be in a given country. And a question for you, because if you think that politicians lie to people and are not held accountable for it. How do you think it should look, because It seems to me that it is not a problem only in Poland, but generally in the whole world, there are many politicians who promise a number of things to their voters and then it does not come to fruition for various reasons. And these do not necessarily have to be reasons that are from within the party or there just through politics, but they can be reasons simply external. Because such a politician can be, for example, blocked to push through some law and in this way his promise is not brought to fruition. But if there are those that are not, let's say, fulfilled only because the politician really consciously manipulated his voters. In what way, according to you, can we prevent this? Can there be some method or some institution that should investigate this?

Szymon: I think that it should, I think that it should be done mostly by people.

Marta: You mean as a civic duty, you have in mind?

Szymon: Yes, I think so. Because people should put such pressure on the politician that he himself will explain it. That he himself will say that, for example, he did not do this because this and that forbade him to do it.

Marta: So if someone votes in the elections, should have I think it's an obligation to hold the politician accountable for his promises and to be aware of current events, and not just vote once, wave his hand, and then pretend that everyone is lying.

Szymon: Yes.

Marta: But if you say that democracy is not good, does that mean that it is bad? Is totalitarianism better or another political system?

Szymon: No, that is, I do not think that there is a political system that is good. That is, I think that everyone has their flaws, bigger and smaller.

Marta: But there is much that we could fix in democracy.

Szymon: Yes, there is much that could be fixed in democracy. And as I say, there is no golden mean, or I just don't see it. Maybe there is one, maybe I don't see it, maybe I have too little knowledge on it.

Marta: Thanks, super reflection. It's nice that you came to Berlin.

Szymon: Thank you.