

Lack of political engagement by the general populous

The general population's lack of political engagement, respectively engagement in public affairs, leads to a country with a severely flawed democracy. With time, I have started to see these aspects, which in my opinion help to contribute to the feeling of the public that our system is not representing the interests of the people, but rather the interests of unknown groups or the politicians themselves. We are put in front of a distraught society, with a lack of party membership and worker's unions. Problems, that I see as keystones for a functioning democracy, that we need to deal with to move forward to a better future.

A major fact, which contributed to the lack of engagement by the public is the history of the Czech Republic. Over 40 years of a totalitarian regime, which suppressed political opposition and endeavoured into a one-party system had made a great impact on today's society. One of the aspects of this, which affected politics, is the problem of party membership. As it was broadly mandatory to be a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, it has been seen as more of a step to secure your career ambitions, rather than true membership in a political party. People seen joining the Communist Party were perceived as opportunists. This aspect of the totalitarian regime has been transformed to today's time with the party membership being seen as taboo, something not sought and for people pushing their way into politics. To give an example of this, one of the biggest parties in the Czech Republic, Hnutí ANO 2011 has about 2 626 members. Compared with the population-wise smaller neighbouring Austria, one of the biggest parties in Austria, SPÖ has about 170 000 members. This is a huge gap between the Czech democracy and the established western democracies. It shows that politics in the Czech Republic is more of a hobby for people, rather than an important part of our society. This goes hand in hand with memberships and formations of worker's unions in the Czech Republic. Workers and employees on most occasions do not seek to unionize and rely more on the support of the current government than on themselves, this is another aspect which had been hereditarily given to us from our history, where the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia revolved around unions and workers. Employees on most occasions do not seek to fight for fair pay, those who partake in unions are ostracized by the general public as people who go outside of what they are supposed to do at work not realizing that fighting for better working conditions is a standard in western European democracies, another taboo just as the party memberships.

Both of these aspects are just a small part of the whole problem, the whole defeatist outlook of the population on politics and their contribution to public affairs paint the picture of our politics. It is not a coincidence that it is said that the deputies we have in our chamber are a reflection of the society we are living in. It might be seen by the text written, that the solution is to unionize in workplaces and become more active in political parties, voicing our problems in the groups we sympathize with. Those are solutions that I try to voice, however, the main aspect of our society, which would help the most is the most basic and can be perceived as most elementary. These are that we have to have empathy for each other, we must be able to communicate, voice our needs and lead a constructive conversation about our public affairs. As elementary as they can be seen, these are things not supported in our society. If it is protests or strikes, they are thrown

upon. Seen as something anti-systemic, being against our country and our people. Growing frustration and discourse in our population further spikes fights between us. We do not see each other as people in one society, we see each other more as people disconnected, individuals living our own lives. This is the biggest problem of our society, if we will not realise that we need to communicate with each other, try to reach meaningful conclusions and lead constructive debates then our political culture will not change, as we will not change our perception of politics without the understanding that our society is one, we need to work together to help each other and to use politics and debate as a tool, which will help us to cooperate and develop a better environment for everyone.