



Positions to Democracy 2.0

How to participate in the information society

Innovative methods, which would allow citizens to better participate in the political process are largely available. They have however to a large extent not yet been implemented. Digital progress has led to new, creative methods of political participation and integration opportunities for citizens. If these opportunities remain ignored, and new forms of participation are not established, representative democracy will continue to lose credibility. Mass demonstrations and public-opinion polls are evidence of citizens' dissatisfaction with politics and demonstrate that many current political structures are outdated. The demands of a changing society need to be taken seriously and acted upon: a new **digital culture of participation** needs to be established.

The aim is to develop a digital culture of participation, with innovative, digital elements and openness to new creative concepts. This is an important opportunity to renew the information, communication and participation process between citizens and politics. **Three steps** should be considered when discussing new forms of participation:

1. Citizens feel inadequately **informed**. The large amount of information provided, which cannot be processed by citizens, is as problematic as too little or inconsistent information. Improved transparency can help prevent discontent.
2. There is insufficient „**real dialogue**“. Citizens expect a dialogue with their politician, to obtain the opportunity to explain and discuss their issues and influence politicians' opinions and decisions. Dialogue can prevent citizens' desire to vote separately on specific issues (i.e a referendum). Dialogue generates understanding, especially for political decisions.
3. The possibility **to vote** on specific issues exists in Germany in various forms (referendum and petition for a referendum in the federal states). This is however often not sufficient. If the steps “information” and “dialogue” prove inadequate, then as a last resort the individual should be able to decide by voting.

Communication does not end after the elections. Rather it is vital in forming a powerful and active democracy. The classical methods of external communication, such as information desks before elections, citizen consultations or other public events are important but not sufficient. Also here we need to implement innovative concepts which can be used as an interface between citizens and politics. Existing interfaces are for example websites or social media applications - Twitter allows real time communication with “Followers”. Innovative developments in the digital world, constantly provide for opportunities. These should be used in order to im-

prove communication with citizens. Another example is the website: www.demokratie.de, used by the enquiry committee "Internet and Digital society" in the German Parliament. Citizens use this platform to discuss their proposals, first amongst each other and then form majority opinions. The proposals are then integrated into the work of the project groups of the committee. This process is technically supported by the software "adhocracy", which is a software based on the theory of liquid democracy.

The advancement of digital technology can enrich democracy by allowing more participation. It is therefore important for parliaments to adapt and adjust to the new aspects of the information society. The digital society offers the opportunity to obtain easy and quick access to documents. Expanding e-government solutions extensively is essential. Barrier-free access to all public documents online, as well as transparent information by the public authorities is also extremely important. A large number of documents available online can lead to confusion. Providing documents demands a certain amount of responsibility, and help should be provided by the state where necessary. Communication is not successful unless everyone is adequately informed.

Democracy 2.0 provides many opportunities and has differing effects on the various aspects of political and social participation. An active participation culture is desired and should be developed by all governments. Digitalization allows for improved citizen participation in the following three areas: Transparency of information and clarification, profound dialogue, and last but not least direct influence on the decision-making process by vote.