

Universität für
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**Evaluation Report of the Austrian 'Klimarat'
UWK, Assessment of the Perspectives of the Members
and the Public**

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This report presents the results of the **Scientific assessment of the Austrian Citizens' Assembly (SACCA)** conducted by the University for Continuing Education Krems (UWK). The evaluation was done in close cooperation with the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU).¹

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Summary

The Members: Evaluation of the Impact of the 'Klimarat'

- The members assessed the Climate Assembly ('Klimarat') very positively. This result was reflected both in the survey and the interviews, where the reasons were discussed in more detail: On the one hand, having the experience of working in a group with people who think very differently but nevertheless coming to concrete results contributed to this positive assessment. On the other hand, having worked on something important and hopefully also being listened to added to the positive feeling. It is likely that the organization/moderation team played a large role in the positive evaluation, with all interviewees praising the team extensively.
- The participants of the Climate Assembly were already very concerned about climate change at the beginning of the Assembly (59 percent "very worried" and 37 percent "rather worried"). There was no increase in the participants' concern about the climate change over the course of the 'Klimarat'. On the contrary, the concern decreased. The interviewees though stated that inputs by climate change experts on the current state of play regarding climate raised their personal level of concern. Nevertheless, they also mentioned now being active and being able to direct their concerns in a meaningful direction as some sort of relief.
- Compared to the public, members of the Climate Assembly were more concerned about climate change. This means that on average they
 - were more worried about climate change
 - agreed more that humans are responsible for climate change
 - disagreed more that individuals do not need to restrict themselves to combat climate change
 - disagreed more that Austria as a small country cannot contribute much
 - disagreed more that the topic of climate change is exaggerated.
- With respect to their knowledge and evaluation of the Austrian Government's activities in the field of climate policy, the opinions of the Climate Assembly members did not differ from those of the general public.
- The participants of the Climate Assembly articulated that they had benefited from an increased knowledge on the topic of the climate change. 39 percent estimated that they know more about the topic at the end of the assembly than

they did before. Their only complaint was about not having enough time on all six weekends, which resulted in scientific lectures being too fast. However, participants also emphasized that it was always possible to ask the researchers for more explanations if needed.

- The majority of the participants did not change their position on climate change. If they did change their opinion, it was always in the direction of climate protection (e. g. human beings as the cause of climate change, the necessity of restricting individuals for the sake of climate protection, or the essential contribution of the “small country Austria”).
- The members of the ‘Klimarat’ were already very interested in Austrian politics when the assembly started (41 percent “very interested” and 53 percent “rather interested”). For a majority of the participants this political concern did not change over the course of the Climate Assembly. Indeed, more participants stated that their political interest actually diminished. This is where a slight difference between the results of the survey and the interviews becomes visible: some of the interviewees said that they now think more politically about climate change than before, while others said they were now more committed or at least equally engaged regarding the topic.
- Compared to the public, members of the Climate Assembly showed greater interest in politics, a higher feeling of external political efficacy (i.e. the feeling to be able to change something), had already contacted a politician or worked themselves in a political party to a larger proportion.
- Already at the beginning of the Climate Assembly 45 percent of the general public reported that they have heard about the assembly. This proportion increased to 53 percent at the end of the assembly. Yet, 44 percent reported not to have heard about the Climate Assembly.
- The media played a very important role in distributing information about the Climate Assembly. At the end of the assembly, 86 percent of those who knew about the assembly stated that they had heard about it on the media (especially TV and/or their internet sites). Social media played a comparably small role (19 percent of those who had heard about it on the media, had read it on social media).
- There is a majority that finds citizens’ assemblies useful (21 % “very useful” and 53 % “rather useful”). Equally, citizens’ state that politicians should listen to the results of citizens’ assemblies (29 % “yes, definitely” and 52 % “rather yes”).

1. Introduction

Citizens' Assemblies

Democracies worldwide are coming under increasing pressure (Boese, et al., 2022; Freedom House, 2022). One institutional response to these situations of crisis are Mini publics. Mini publics can be defined as “democratic innovations that are made up of ordinary, non-partisan, lay citizens” based on the Athenian method of representation by lot (Elstub, 2014, p. 167). There are different types of mini publics: Citizens' juries, consensus conferences, planning cells, deliberative polls, and citizens assemblies. These mini publics differ in key features such as the number of citizens and number of meetings as well as the results of the deliberative process (Fournier, van der Kolk, Carty, Blais, & Rose, 2011).

Citizens' assemblies usually consist of 100+ citizens who meet several times and days throughout the process, are based on random selection of its members, consist of information, consulting and deliberation activities and work on policy recommendations that are then decided on by politicians or in a referendum. Compared to the other mini publics listed above, they thus represent the most intensive form of deliberation (Elstub, 2014, p. 170).

Citizens' assemblies in general and citizens' assemblies to address the issue of climate change more specifically have become more popular over the last decades. Over the 2000–2020 period, 105 citizens' assemblies were held in European countries at the national or sub-national level (Paulis, Pilet, Panel, Vittori, & Close, 2021). Tackling the issue of climate change, countries such as Germany (Bürgerrat Klima, 2021), Great Britain (Elstub, Farrell, Carrick, & Mockler, 2021a & 2021b), France (Fourniau, Apouey, & Tournus, 2020) or Ireland (Devaney, Torney, Brereton, & Coleman, 2020) most recently held citizens' assemblies.

History of the 'Klimarat'

The origin of the Austrian Climate Citizens' Assembly ('Klimarat') can be traced back to a petition on climate held in the summer of 2020. Civil society organizations demanded, among other things, that climate protection should be anchored in the constitution in order to reduce the country's dependence on fossil energy. The establishment of a citizens' assembly on climate change was also a demand. 380,590 citizens, or 6 percent of all Austrian voters, signed the petition. The threshold of 100,000 signatures required for the issue to be addressed by the Austrian parliament was therefore crossed.

In response, the parliament (the 'Nationalrat') passed a resolution comprising of a series of measures to be undertaken by the government with respect to climate protection. In this list of demands, again, we find the request to implement a citizens' assembly on climate protection. The resolution found support from the governing parties Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the GREENS as well as from the opposition party The New Austria and Liberal Forum (NEOS). The Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) as well as the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) did not support the resolution, albeit for different reasons.

The Federal Ministry of Climate Action, led by Minister Leonore Gewessler (GREENS), acted upon the request and implemented the first national citizens' assembly on climate change (*Klimarat der Bürgerinnen und Bürger*). The 'Klimarat' started in January 2022 and held 6 weekend-sessions between January and June 2022. On the 4th of July, the members of the 'Klimarat' presented their results to Minister Gewessler and to Minister of Digital and Economic Affairs, Martin Kocher (independent, nominated by the ÖVP).

The Evaluation Process

The aim of SACCA is to evaluate the Austrian 'Klimarat' and to present recommendations for the future role that citizens' assemblies should play in the Austrian political system. We conducted our analysis along the dimensions of input (representativeness/selection criteria), process (discourse quality) and output (effects on policies/participants/accountability (also see Galais, Fernández-Martínez, Font, & Smith, 2021). Furthermore, we used the recommendations for conducting citizens' assemblies developed by the OECD (2020; 2022) as well as the experiences of other evaluation teams from previous citizens' assemblies on climate change as our yardstick for the analyses.

The evaluation is split into six work packages (WP), each tackling one specific aspect of the process. The first work package examines the selection criteria of the members of the citizens' assembly and evaluates whether they are representative for the Austrian population, a central criterium for citizens' assemblies. The second work package focuses on the effects and impacts the citizens' assembly had on its members. The third work package analyses attitudes on climate change and politics among the Austrian general public. The fourth work package looks at deliberation, facilitation, and the decision-making processes in the assembly. The fifth work package looks at the impact the citizens' assembly has had on polity, policy, and politics. Finally, the sixth work package presents the policy recommendations for future Austrian citizens' assemblies.

This report presents the results from WP 2 on the effects and impacts on the assembly members, WP 3 on the effects and impacts on the general public as well as the corresponding policy recommendations developed based on this work in WP 6. The UWK used both quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate the Citizens' Climate Assembly. First, we conducted a quantitative panel survey among the members of the 'Klimarat' in three waves as well as an online mass survey among Austrian citizens in two waves. Second, we conducted a series of qualitative interviews with 8 participants (10 % of the overall number). Taken together, we aim to provide a multifaceted view of the 'Klimarat'.

2. Methods

The aim of the second work package is to evaluate the Climate Assembly from the participants' point of view, and to make **the assembly's impact on the participants visible**. Thus, this part deals with questions about the effects of the Climate Assembly on the **attitudes towards climate change** on the one hand and **attitudes towards democracy** on the other hand.

Methodologically, the second work package is based on a **quantitative participant survey and qualitative interviews with the participants**.

The quantitative survey was distributed to the participants of the Climate Assembly on site as a written questionnaire on three different occasions. The first wave of the survey took place at the beginning of the first assembly weekend on January 15th, 2022. The questionnaire was handed out to the participants as part of the initial registration process involving distribution of the name tags, information materials, etc. The second wave of survey happened at the beginning of the fourth Climate Assembly weekend in April 2022 and again, the questionnaires were distributed as part of the registration process. Finally, the third wave took place on the sixth and final weekend in June 2022. The concluding voting took place on Saturday and the questionnaires were distributed on Sunday directly before the start of the program. A very high response rate was achieved on all three survey dates (see Table 1).

Table 1. Organization and Structure of the quantitative Survey

Survey wave	SACCA weekend (SW)	Date	Present participants	Completed Questionnaires
Wave 1	1. SW	15.01.2022	82	76 (93 %)
Wave 2	4. SW	23.04.2022	72	64 (89 %)
Wave 3	6. SW	11.06.2022	75	70 (93 %)

For the qualitative survey eight participants of the Climate Assembly were interviewed. The selection also took place on the first day (January 15th, 2022) by addressing the participants in the registration foyer. First of all, a short preliminary discussion clarified what federal state the person was from for the statistics and the interview method as well as the data protection guidelines were explained. Since some of the participants who agreed to the interview became unavailable due to the pandemic or due to time constraints, additional Assembly members were approached between the fifth and the sixth weekend of the 'Klimarat'. At the same time, a few informal conversations were held with other members. Those results were only for control purposes and therefore do not flow directly into this evaluation. However, all statements of those participants also appeared in at least one of the official interviews.

The interviews served to generate background information to add to the survey (see also Elstub, Farrell, Carrick, & Mockler, 2021b). Although the interviews were not about quantity, an attempt was made to achieve a representative picture of the participants. In the end, four men, three women and a queer person were interviewed. They came from six different federal states, the age range was from still at school till retirement, the professions ranged from entrepreneur to crafts(wo)man, to teacher, and citizens from villages, small towns as well as large cities were represented. Due to the pandemic, not all interviews could take place in person, therefore three interviews were conducted via Zoom. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Some discussions went into great depth in terms of climate change and environmental issues. This is not presented in this report but gets mentioned here to emphasize that some of the participants have dealt very intensively with the topic, in some cases even much more than they would have had to for the work in the Climate Assembly.

The method chosen for the interviews was storytelling, as it is common in oral history interviews. Thus, after re-explaining the privacy policy and the purpose of the interviews, all participants were asked the same introductory question. As a result, a conversation developed that followed the rhythm and initiative of the interview partners. Although there were certain topics and questions that were addressed in all interviews, an attempt was made to give the participants as much freedom as possible in the

sequence of topics and the type of answer. Digressions were therefore desired, not least in order to learn more about the background of the participants' answers and attitudes. Thus, there was the attempt to provide a pleasant atmosphere (the majority of these conversations took place in coffee houses or pub gardens), to ensure that the interviewees had the feeling they could answer confidentially and that they did not have to follow any pattern. What all interviews had in common was a starting question and a question at the end. Thus, every interview started with asking what came to mind immediately, when hearing the term Climate Assembly. The last question was about their personal wishes.

3. WP 2: The Assembly Members: Assessment of the Effects and Impacts

3.1. Assembly Members' Perspectives on the Climate Assembly ('Klimarat')

For most of the members, participating in a citizens' assembly was a completely new experience. During the first wave of our members survey, **75 percent** of the members said that they have **never heard of the instrument "citizens' assembly"** before they had been invited to join the 'Klimarat'. Thus, only 25 per cent of the members had heard of citizens assemblies before. This was the same for the majority of the interviewed participants. However, they were **even more surprised** by the fact that they of all people **were chosen to participate**.

The proportion of members who answered the open-ended question on their personal reasons to participate with words such as **"interest"** or **"curiosity"** was correspondingly high. Further motives to participate in the climate assembly were the fact that members deemed it as "important" or because they wanted "to contribute" and "to have a say". Interestingly, relatively fewer members said that they wanted to influence policy and that this was their main reason for participation. In addition, members showed quite realistic expectations on what will happen with their recommendations. Most of them understood their work as giving **"recommendations" or some kind of "guideline" to politics**. These understandings were followed by the hope "that politicians will try to implement" their recommendations. A wrong impression – meaning that members thought that they themselves will implement their results/implement laws – was not present among the members (survey assembly members, wave 1).

When asked by the interviewer what came to mind when hearing the term Climate Assembly, the answers went from **"commitment, optimism and hope"** to "exciting". Others said, "new territory, which aroused interest" or **"many people, different know-how and many diverse perspectives"** or "there was a really nice exchange". One person chose the words "more, now", meaning that they had not

previously known what was coming and how much they would learn over the course of the 'Klimarat'.

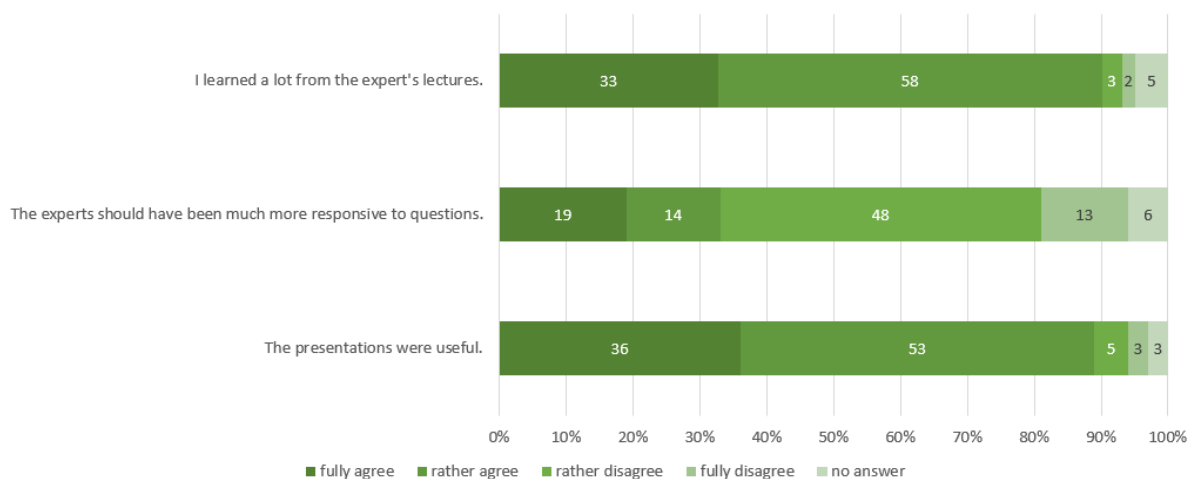
Overall, members evaluate the citizens' assembly rather positively. In the second wave of the members survey, members rated the 'Klimarat' with an average score of 1.8 on a 5-point-scale that ranged from "very good" (1) to "not enough" (5), mirroring the Austrian school grading system. In the third wave, the average rating improved slightly to 1.4 (survey assembly members, waves 2 and 3). Adequately, it was emphasized in the interviews that the participants were happy to be part of "the 100" (even though only around 82 people actually took part in the end). It also seems to have become clear quite quickly after the invitation to the 'Klimarat' that one wanted to participate. One person mentioned that it looked good on the CV and that the money helped, another one no longer wanted to sit at home and others said they wanted to "use their voice". Another participant affirmed that "in such an environment, I thrive." And one interviewee emphasized, "I'm a shy guy, but then I thought to myself, **the topic is bigger than me, that's why I joined in**", adding, "**We did our job. I'm happy with what we have done.**" By contrast, one interviewee commented critically that although it was a very good project, one quickly lost oneself in too many small things, and one had seen that academics and people who often present at their work were more eloquent and thus were listened to more frequently than others – also at the 'Klimarat'.

In addition to these evaluations, we asked members in the second wave to explain their evaluation of the whole process in their own words. Particularly **positive feedback** was given **with respect to the deliberation process**, that is the discussions and the exchange of opinions during the 'Klimarat'. Members said that there were "open discussions, everybody was heard", that there were "many ideas" and a "general freedom of speech". Frequent positive mentions were also made with respect to the organization, the moderation, and the structure of the process itself. Also, the scientific input was mentioned frequently and positively. Compared to the positive feedback, the amount of negative feedback was low. The **most frequent critique** issued with respect to the 'Klimarat' was **the structure of the process**, meaning that there were "too long

introductory rounds at the beginning” or that the process “was too strongly structured” which left “no room for spontaneous (group) processes” (survey assembly members, wave 2).

The ratings of the **scientific inputs** were **positive** (see Fig. 1). 91 percent said that they had learned a lot from the scientific lectures. A majority of 61 percent said that they did not agree with the statement that the experts should have been much more responsive to questions. Finally, 89 percent found the presentations helpful. Yet, **not all of the members found it easy to follow the experts’ lectures from the beginning**. Presented with three alternatives, 33 percent of the respondents reported that at the beginning it was hard to follow the experts’ lectures, but that it became much better over time. 61 percent on the other hand found the lectures easy to understand from the very beginning. None of the members said that the lectures were hard to understand. Note that six percent of the members did not want to answer this question (survey assembly members, wave 2).

Fig. 1. Members’ evaluation of the experts (in percent)



Source: Survey assembly members (wave 2).

Note: N=64. German question wording: „Bitte sagen Sie mir jeweils, ob Sie den folgenden Aussagen sehr, eher schon, eher nicht oder gar nicht zustimmen. Ich habe sehr viel von den Vorträgen der Expertinnen und Experten gelernt./Die Expertinnen und Experten hätten viel mehr auf Fragen eingehen sollen./Die Vortragsunterlagen waren sehr hilfreich. (stimme sehr zu/stimme eher zu/stimme eher nicht zu/stimme gar nicht zu/keine Angabe).“ Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

In the third wave of our members' survey, we asked the members whether they felt pressured to think of the issue of climate change from a certain perspective. Overall, the members did not feel pressured. However, **16 percent said that they did feel pressure to think of the issue from a certain perspective.** The corresponding statement reads as follows: "I felt pressured to think of the issue of climate change from a certain perspective." and members were asked to assess whether they "fully agree" (6 %), "rather agree" (10 %), "rather disagree" (23 %), or "fully disagree" (59 %) with the statement. Three percent refused to answer this question (survey assembly members, wave 3).

Finally, members **were very satisfied with the organization of the 'Klimarat'**. 86 percent fully agreed with the statement that the organization of the 'Klimarat' worked well. 13 percent rather agreed with this statement. Nobody disagreed with this statement and only one percent of the participants refused to answer. At the same time, **49 percent of members said that the duration of the 'Klimarat' was too short** and **40 percent said the duration was adequate.** None of the members hold the opinion that the duration was too long. 7 percent could not assess the question and 4 percent did not want to answer the question (survey assembly members, wave 3).

Almost identical results were obtained from the interviews. Here participants emphasized that despite very different opinions on some topics, meaningful compromises had been reached so far, and a large part of that success could be attributed to the **organizing team.** The team was praised exceptionally, ranging from, "they were great" to "they have all my respect, also for their background work" and from "**perfect**" to "**it's so valuable how respectfully they did it**". Finally, one interviewee went a step further and said, "those who chose the organizing team did a very good job." The team of experts also received positive appraisal, albeit less enthusiastically than the moderators.

For the interviewees, the time aspect was also viewed negatively, with meetings always too short and therefore for some of the participants difficult to follow because of the high amount of input. However, it was always possible to ask questions and

contrary to reports made by some media outlets, none of the interviewees got the impression that anybody tried to manipulate them. Criticism was raised regarding one point of the academic input: too little information was provided about what had already happened at the EU-level, while too much of an emphasis was put on Austria.

One interview partner complained that he/she had not been listened to and therefore felt deeply offended. A few weeks after the end of the 'Klimarat' that person called and told the interviewer that he/she wanted to revise his/her former statement because the final report mentioned everything the person had brought up. Contrary to what he/she had anticipated, the team had listened well and thus, he/she was now very satisfied and felt the need to clarify that.

The **representatives of interest groups** and in particular **the political parties** performed quite differently. In the interviews the former were accused of not knowing exactly what their position was or of not being interested in the opinions of the 'Klimarat' participants, which resulted in leaving an impression of not even trying to listen to them. As one interviewee claimed, **“the presentations were not worthy of their institutions.”** The **politicians**, on the other hand, were (with the exception of one party) **described as disinterested, arrogant and only interested in hearing their own voices**. One participant summed it up as follows: "Two were there with their heart, the rest was disappointing." Another participant reflected that those politicians were probably not aware that the time for not being interested in climate change is now over. This certain distrust towards political actors of several groups could also be found in interviews with climate assembly members in Germany and France (Kuntze, & Fesenfeld, 2021, p. 6).

Members evaluated their own results (i.e. their recommendations to the politicians) very positively. In answer to the question whether they think their recommendations are adequate to reach the **goal of climate neutrality by the year 2040**, **43 percent evaluated their measures as “very adequate”** and **50 percent as “rather adequate”** (4 % “rather not adequate”, 1 % “not adequate at all”, 1 % “no answer”). In addition, we asked members to imagine that they were politicians

responsible for implementing measures to protect the climate. 16 percent said that they would implement all measures proposed by the 'Klimarat'. **71 percent said that they would implement a large majority of their measures.** Only 10 percent of the members would implement around half of the measures and 1 percent some of the measures (none of the members would want to implement only certain measures or no measures at all, 1 % refused to answer). When asked about their **expectations of what politicians will do with their proposal, respondents were split.** More specifically, we asked whether respondents agree with the statement that politicians will try to implement their measures. 13 percent “fully agreed”, 41 percent “rather agreed”, 37 percent “rather disagreed” and four percent “fully disagreed”. Four percent did not answer this question (survey assembly members, wave 3).

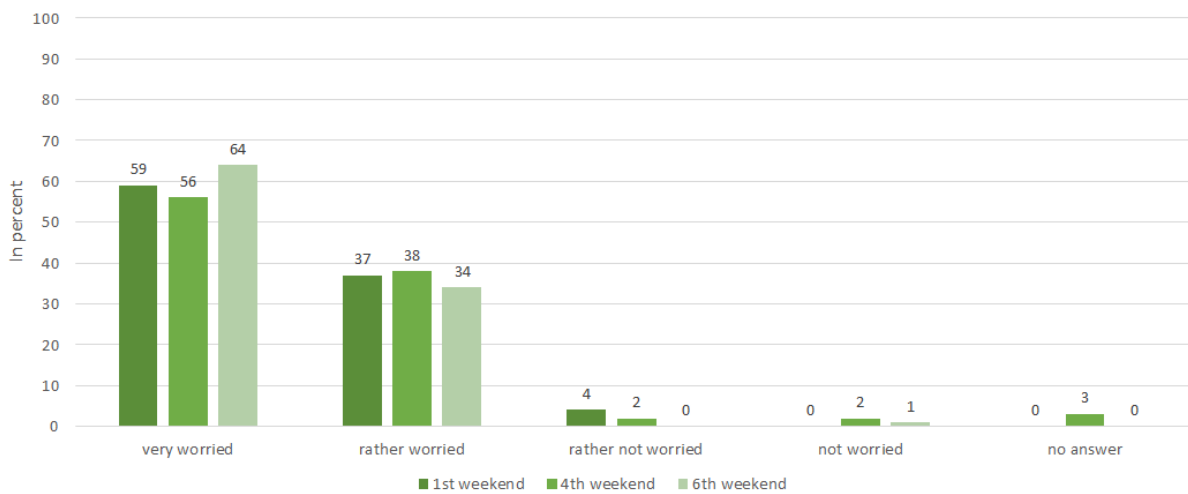
3.2. Assembly Members' Attitudes on Climate Change

We measured the citizens' assembly's impact on its members with respect to their attitudes on climate change from three perspectives: First, we asked them whether they were worried about climate change. Second, we were interested in their subjective evaluation of their own knowledge on climate change. Third, we presented them several statements about climate change and asked them whether or not they agree with these statements. All three perspectives were included in more than one wave so that changes could be made visible.

Worries about climate change

We asked members whether they are worried about climate change. Four answer categories – “very worried”, “rather worried”, “rather not worried”, “not worried” – were presented to the respondents.

Fig. 2. Worries about climate change (in percent)



Source: Survey assembly members (wave 1, 2, 3).

Note: N=76. German question wording: „Das Klima in Österreich und auf der Welt verändert sich. Manche Menschen betrachten den Klimawandel mit Sorge, andere Menschen hingegen nicht. Wie ist das bei Ihnen? Sind Sie über den Klimawandel sehr, eher schon, eher nicht oder gar nicht besorgt?“ (sehr besorgt/eher schon besorgt/eher nicht besorgt/gar nicht besorgt/keine Angabe).

The members of the ‘Klimarat’ were **already very worried about climate change at the beginning of the process**. Almost all participants reported that they were “very worried” or “rather worried” at the beginning of the first weekend. Nobody said that they are “not worried” at all (see Fig. 2). This assessment largely remained stable over time. Mid-way through the process, 56 percent reported being “very worried” and 38 percent that they were “rather worried”. At the end of the ‘Klimarat’, 64 percent and 34 percent said that they were “very worried” and “rather worried”, respectively.

Whether members became more worried after being invited to participate in the ‘Klimarat’ or if they had been worried even before they had been invited, cannot be answered based on this data. Elstub et al. (2021a, p. 39), who evaluated the British citizens’ assembly on climate change, reported an increase in worried members between the invitation and the actual start of the climate assembly. This difference, however, was not statistically significant.

As the interviews started after the first wave of the survey had taken place, the results of this question in the survey and interviews cannot be compared directly.

Nevertheless, it is quite interesting to see that the interviewees consistently reported that they remembered that shocking facts about climate change had been presented on the first weekend, which made the majority of the participants very thoughtful as they had not been aware of this intensity. While this knowledge increased the worries during the first weekend (which was after the first wave of the survey), it also aroused interest in the topic. This leads us to the interpretation that the more details the participants learned about climate change and the more they dove into the topic, the more their concerns rose. As we can see later, this feeling did not endure; it instead turned into passion. At least one interlocutor said: "I never thought I could be passionate about this topic."

58 members answered the question on being worried about climate change both at the first and at the final waves. Since each questionnaire asked for an anonymous abbreviation generated individually from each member, responses can be connected at the individual level and changes can be made visible. **In contrast to our expectation, members did not become more worried over the course of the climate assembly.** Only 17 percent were more worried at the end, compared to the beginning of the 'Klimarat'. 24 percent did not experience a change in their level of worry and 59 percent were less worried than at the beginning.

Here, too, one can interpret the findings with the help of the interviews: the fact that the participants worked together intensively for a few weeks and finally found a consensus for so many recommendations might not be a reassurance, but it at least contributes to the feeling that there is still something to be done and that there is still hope – at least this is how the interviewees explained it.

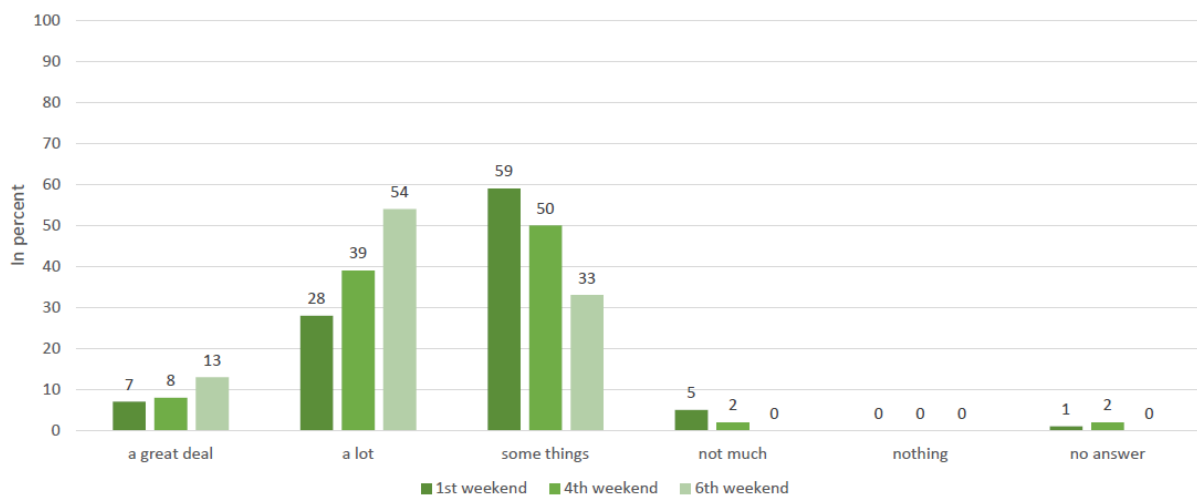
Knowledge on the Issue of Climate Change

We asked respondents to subjectively evaluate their own knowledge about climate change. Five answer categories – "a great deal", "a lot", "some things", "not much", "nothing" – were presented to the respondents.

Figure 3. presents this subjective evaluation of the members' knowledge on climate change. At the beginning of the process, 7 percent reported knowing "a great

deal” and 28 percent reported knowing “a lot” about climate change. More than half of the respondents (59 percent) said that they know “some things” about the issues and only 5 percent said that they know “not much”. None of the members reported knowing “nothing”.

Fig. 3. Knowledge on the issue of climate change



Source: Survey assembly members (wave 1, 2, 3).

Note: N=76. German question wording: „Ganz allgemein, wie schätzen Sie Ihr eigenes Wissen zum Thema Klimawandel ein? Würden Sie sagen, Sie wissen sehr viel, viel, manches, wenig oder überhaupt nichts zum Thema Klimawandel?“ (sehr viel/viel/manches/wenig/überhaupt nichts/keine Angabe).

The **results clearly show the knowledge gain experienced by the members of the ‘Klimarat’**. At the start of the fourth weekend, there were 8 percent of the members who knew “a great deal” and already 39 percent knew “a lot” on the issue of climate change. At the sixth and final weekend, these numbers increased again: 13 percent knew “a great deal” and 54 percent knew “a lot” on the issue of climate change.

This increase in knowledge is measurable at the individual level as well. 59 members answered the question on their own knowledge both at the beginning and at the end of the process. **39 percent showed an increase at the end of the ‘Klimarat’** compared to their assessment at the beginning. **61 percent reported the same level of knowledge** at the beginning and at the end of the process. None of the members reported a lower level of knowledge in our last survey wave.

Likewise, all interviewees talked about having more knowledge now, at least in some areas. Some **said they would continue to use this to educate others** from now on. At the time of the interview, some had already done this in their personal networks or during school visits. Only one person mentioned that they hardly ever talked about the ‘Klimarat’ because it offended those around them. The majority, on the other hand, spoke of **positive reactions** to their participation. One interviewee had received negative and climate change-denying emails after a TV interview, but supposedly this did not burden them much. A further two participants emphasized that the purpose of the Climate Assembly indeed was that **each participant brings impulses to the outside world**, and that is what they planned to do.

Positions on Climate Change

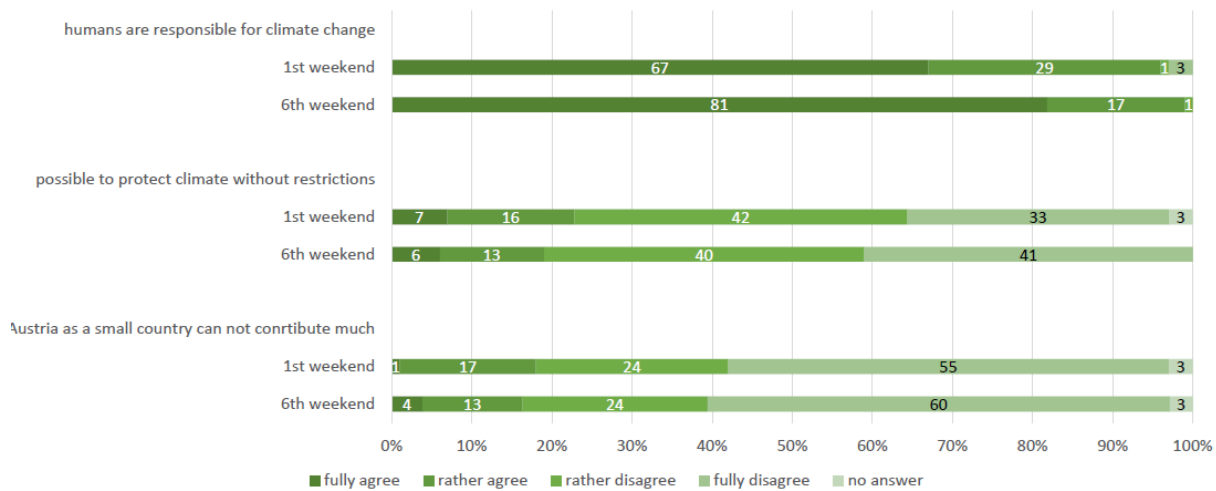
Finally, we asked respondents about their positions on specific aspects of climate change. Members were shown three statements and they were asked to report whether and to what extent they support these statements. Four answer categories – “fully agree”, “rather agree”, “rather disagree”, “fully disagree” – were presented to the respondents.

Already at the beginning of the ‘Klimarat’, a large majority agreed that humans are responsible for climate change (67 percent). 29 percent “rather agreed” with this statement (see Fig. 4).

The statement that it is possible to protect the climate without restrictions saw more disagreement. 33 percent “fully disagreed” and 42 percent “rather disagreed”.

Similarly, members disagreed with the statement that Austria, as a small country, cannot contribute much to the issue of climate change. 55 percent “fully disagreed” and 24 percent “rather disagreed”.

Fig. 4. Positions on climate change



Source: Survey assembly members (wave 1, 2, 3).

Note: N=76. German question wording: „Kommen wir zum Thema Klimawandel. Bitte sagen Sie mir jeweils, ob sie den folgenden Aussagen sehr, eher schon, eher nicht oder gar nicht zustimmen. Der Mensch ist die Ursache für den Klimawandel./Es ist möglich das Klima zu schützen, ohne Einschränkungen für den einzelnen Menschen./Österreich kann als kleines Land nichts Wesentliches zum Klimaschutz beitragen.“ (stimme sehr zu/stimme eher schon zu/stimme eher nicht zu/stimme gar nicht zu/keine Angabe). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

At the end of the process, we saw **an increase in the number of members who agree that humans are responsible for climate change**. 81 percent “fully agree” with the corresponding statement; an increase of 14 percentage points. This increase can be measured at the individual level as well. 57 members answered the relevant question both at the beginning and at the end of the process. 14 percent changed their position into the direction of more agreement and only 5 percent changed their assessment into the opposite direction. Overall, the majority did not change their opinion (81 percent).

On the other hand, we see an **increase in members who “fully disagree” with the statement that climate protection is possible without restrictions for individuals**. At the sixth weekend, 41 percent of the members “fully disagreed” with the statement. Equally, we can measure this increase at the individual level (based on 57 members who answered this question in both waves). 23 percent changed their position towards greater disagreement; compared to 19 percent change towards more agreement. A majority of 58 percent did not change their opinion.

An **increase of 5 percentage points** among the members **can be seen with respect to the statement that Austria as a small country cannot contribute much to climate protection**. 55 members answered this question in both waves. 27 percent moved towards greater disagreement; 20 percent moved towards greater agreement. Again, a majority of the members (53 percent) did not change their position.

3.3. Assembly Members' Attitudes towards Politics

We measure the citizens' assembly's impact on its members with respect to their attitudes towards politics from two perspectives. First, we asked respondents about their interest in politics. Second, we asked them how satisfied they are with democracy in Austria. Both aspects were part of the first and the third wave of our survey among the assembly members. This allowed us to evaluate changes over time.

Interest in Politics

The respondents' interest in politics changed from the beginning till the end of the 'Klimarat'. At the beginning of the process, **41 percent of the members** reported that they are **“very interested”**, **53 percent** that they are **“rather interested”** and 7 percent that they are “not very interested” in politics.

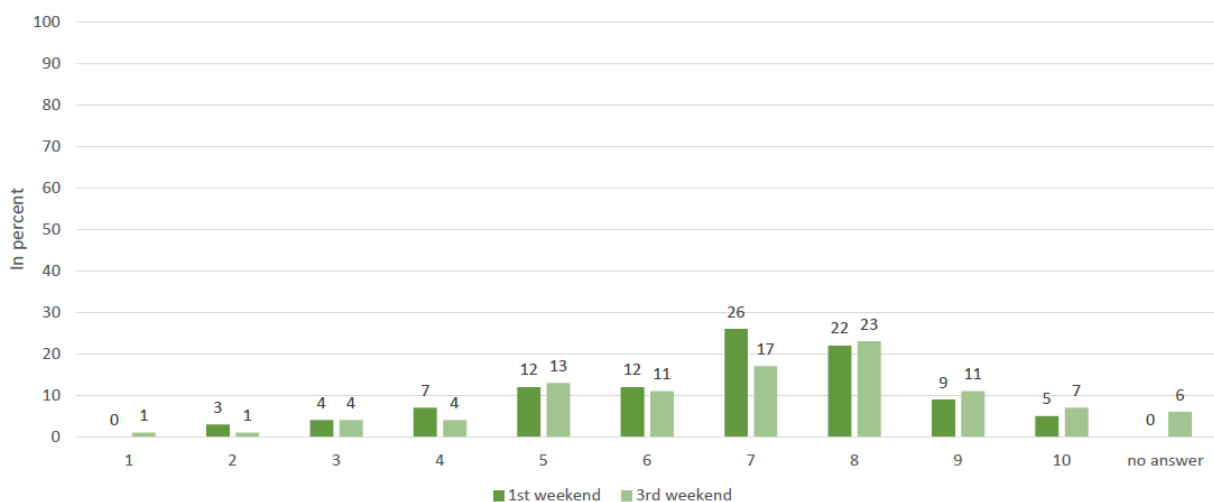
In contrast to our expectation that interest in politics will increase while participating in a citizens' assembly, the **results of the third wave show a lower interest in politics** compared to the figures at the beginning. Only 29 percent report at the end of the process that they are “very interested” (- 12 percentage points, PP), and 53 percent that they are “rather interested” (+/- 0).

This surprising result is also supported by our findings from charting the level of interest in politics of individual members of the 'Klimarat'. 58 members answered the question in both waves and their responses can be connected through the anonymous abbreviations they provided. 31 percent report a decrease in interest in politics after the 'Klimarat' and only 5 percent report a higher interest in politics. 64 percent reported no change with respect to their interest in politics.

Evaluation of Austrian Democracy

Figure 5 shows the level of satisfaction with Austrian democracy among the members of the 'Klimarat'. At the beginning of the citizens' assembly, **36 percent rated the state of democracy with one of the highest marks** from 8 to 10 on a 10-point scale, ranging from 1 "not democratic" to 10 "fully democratic". **7 percent were not satisfied** and rated the state of democracy with a mark from 1 to 3.

Fig. 5. Evaluation of Austrian democracy



Source: Survey assembly members (wave 1, 3).

Note: N=76. German question wording: „Und wie demokratisch wird Österreich derzeit regiert? Bitte verwenden Sie wiederum die Skala von 1 bis 10, wobei 1 bedeutet ‚Überhaupt nicht demokratisch‘ und 10 bedeutet ‚Vollkommen demokratisch‘.“

These **figures remained largely stable** throughout the duration of the citizens' assembly. At the end of the 'Klimarat', 41 percent rated the state of Austria's democracy with one of the three highest marks from 8 to 10 (+5 PP) and 6 percent with one of the three lowest marks from 1 to 3 (+1 PP). Consequently, the average rating of Austria's democracy did not differ greatly between the waves (6.7 to 6.8 points) and **no increase in members' satisfaction with democracy** was measurable.

Looking at the individual level, 55 members answered this question in both waves. 29 percent gave a higher mark at the end of the process, while 27 percent gave a lower mark. 44 percent did not change their assessment of Austria's democracy.

Equally, in the interviews some participants talked about democracy. One participant stated that it was **very valuable to live in a democracy that enables something like a ‘Klimarat’**, and others found similar words. Furthermore, there was general agreement that something had to be done to counter climate change. To the interviewees it made sense to ask the so-called ordinary citizens, because this could be a trustworthy signal for other citizens to get involved, and it might show politicians that the population definitely wants to contribute. This demonstration of civil commitment is only possible with direct democratic tools, they said.

A good indicator of attitudes towards this participatory instrument is the interviewees’ indications that they would immediately join in if they were invited to another citizens’ council one day, even though all stated that it had been **really hard work**. It was not always easy for participants to find the necessary time, because the workload far exceeded the time of merely six weekends but, as one participant put it, "We are here to work and change something". Nevertheless, all interviewees agreed that the citizens’ assembly was an important and useful instrument, and a symbol of an active civil society (see also Oross, Mátyás & Gherghina, 2021, p. 127). One person would like the participation to be obligatory like a jury duty but at the same time he/she insisted we should not forget that such a citizens’ council can only advise and recommend but is not democratically legitimized.

3.4. Assembly Members’ Further Opinions (Qualitative Interviews)

Inspired by (negative) media reports, the interviewees were asked whether they saw the group as well mixed. One person argued that **more migrants should have been brought in**, because they had a lot to contribute. The **rest saw a successful mix** in terms of professions, social groups, city/country, age and opinions. A young participant said that there were too few 20- to 30-year-olds, However, also noted that he/she noticed this particularly because he/she him-/herself belonged to that group and felt a little lonely. Overall, the interviewees were keen to emphasize that it was possible to be committed to the ‘Klimarat’ without necessarily being a Green Party voter. Naturally, in the interviews nobody was asked about their party preferences.

The interviewees only partially agreed with the **media coverage** on the 'Klimarat'. The opinions articulated in the interviews about media coverage were much more diverse than on any other topic. Some participants believed the **journalists had reported neutrally** and understood very well what the 'Klimarat' was all about, others lamented that the **media anyhow report what they want**. It should be noted that the interviews showed us that the media use of the interviewees also differed.

Some of the participants (also represented among the interviewees) were interviewed by journalists over the course of the 'Klimarat'. All but one interviewee found those quite satisfactory. This participant had offered the interview to a local newspaper and the journalist from that newspaper's environmental department apparently had never heard of the 'Klimarat'. Overall, the participants rated the media reports as satisfactory, because it was a chance to reach the population: **"Better a critical discussion than none at all,"** as one participant said.

On the other hand, the campaign **"Klimarat asks for advice"** was evaluated exclusively critically. While the basic idea to involve the public was praised, it was agreed that participation or even just reading the many contributions was **far too time-consuming**. Several participants would have found it better to highlight the contributions from the 'Klimarat' more clearly and saw this as a lost opportunity to win over the interested population.

When asked how optimistic they were for the future or for the implementation of the recommendations, one participant summed it up as **"skeptical and hopeful"**. They said that the proposals were developed realistically and could be implemented, and that more and more people understood that something has to be done. That is why it is important not to stop acting because the 'Klimarat' has ended, and even though the Ukraine war is currently overshadowing everything else. The participants founded an organization ('Verein') resulting their work in the 'Klimarat', with six of the eight interview partners immediately declaring their willingness to join. One goal is to build awareness in the population and to remind the politicians of the urgency of the topic (a similar enthusiasm was found in interviews with members of the Climate Assembly UK

(Cherry, Capstick, Demski, Mellier, Stone, & Verfueth, 2021). Furthermore, they argued that it was not enough to only do something about climate change. It is now also important that this is done in a socially just way, they said, “and we want to continue to work for this”.

The final question of each interview was what they would like to see in terms of the results. The majority stated they wanted to be taken seriously by the politicians, and that the recommendations should be discussed seriously and then acted upon jointly. To quote the words of more than one participant, **"I wish that truly every point is also discussed publicly. I'd rather it would be kicked than forgotten."**

4. WP 3: The Public: Assessment of the Effects and Impacts of the 'Klimarat'

The third work package aims to evaluate Austrian **citizens' attitudes towards climate change and politics in general**. From a methodological perspective, the third work package is based on a **quantitative online panel study (two waves)**. The characteristic of a panel design is that respondents from wave 1 are also invited to participate in wave 2. This allows us to measure stability or changes in opinions at the individual level.

The **polling station Gallup** is responsible for conducting the field work. Following the design of the Austrian citizens' assembly, the relevant **target group are Austrian residents, aged 16 years or older who have held a permanent residency in Austria for at least five years**. Field work for the first wave was conducted after the first weekend of the 'Klimarat', from 24th of January until the 7th of February 2022. Field work for the second wave was conducted after the last weekend of the 'Klimarat', from 13th of June until 27th of June 2022. In order to reach around 1,500 respondents in both waves, wave one started with a sample of 2,000 participants. In the second wave, all of these 2,000 respondents were contacted again and 1,407 of these people also participated in the second wave. Additionally, 266 people were invited from a fresh pool in order to meet the guaranteed number of 1,500 participants as well as a representative structure of the sample. Overall, 1,673 people are included in the second wave.

4.1. Citizens' Perspectives on the 'Klimarat'

Around half of the citizens knew of the 'Klimarat' at the beginning of the process. In the first wave, 45 percent reported that they had heard about the 'Klimarat'. At the end of the process, this number increased by 8 percentage points so that 53 percent reported that they had heard about the 'Klimarat'.

If people had heard about the 'Klimarat' then it was via the media. 9 out of 10 respondents answered the respective question with the option "via the media". The second more common answer was "personal talks with family, friends, colleagues, ..." (12 %) and the "government" (11 %, multiple answers were possible, mass survey, wave 1).

A large majority of respondents is in favor of the 'Klimarat'. 16 percent and 49 percent see the 'Klimarat' as "very useful" or "rather useful", respectively. On the other hand, 18 percent see it as "rather not useful" and 9 percent as "not useful" (mass survey, wave 1, wave 2: 14 % "very useful", 52 % "rather useful", 19 % "rather not useful", 10 % "not useful", 5 % no answer).

Furthermore, a **large majority of respondents wants political actors to use the recommendations of the 'Klimarat' as a yardstick for climate policy**. 34 percent responded with "yes, definitely" and 42 percent "rather yes" when asked whether politics should listen to the citizens' assembly's recommendations. However, 7 percent and 5 percent of respondents argue respectively that political actors should "rather not" and "no, definitely not", listen to the recommendations (mass survey, wave 1, wave 2: 33 % "yes, definitely", 43 % "rather yes", 10 % "rather no", 4 % "no, definitely not", 10 % no answer).

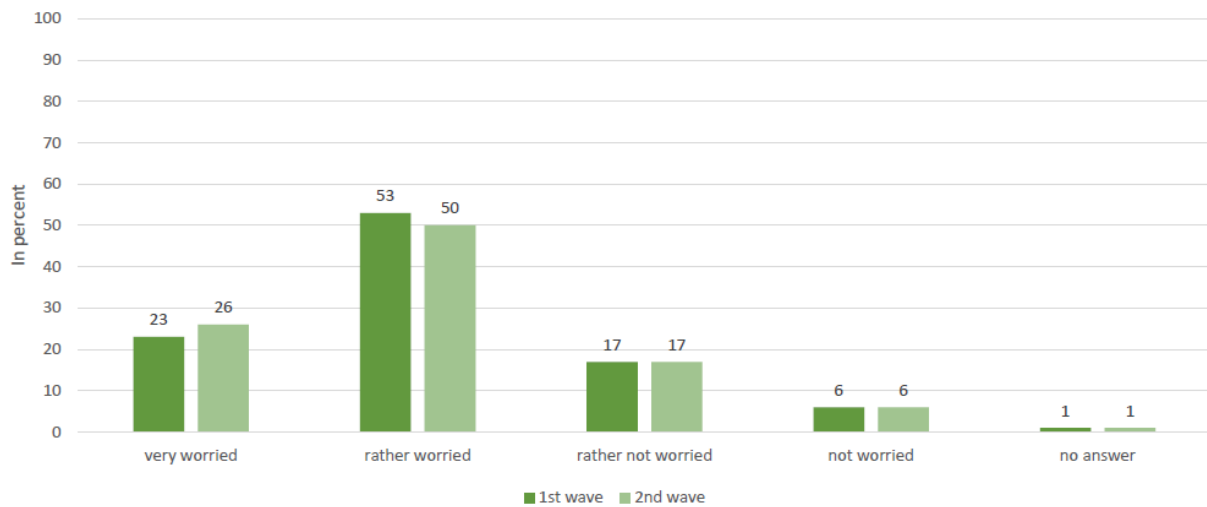
4.2. Citizens' Attitudes on Climate Change

The identical questions from the members' surveys were used in the mass surveys to assess citizens' attitudes on climate change. We present their answers on the extent to which they are worried about climate change, their subjective evaluations of their own knowledge, as well as their positions on the issue of climate change.

Worries about climate change

The respondents were asked to report, whether they are worried about climate change. Four answer categories – "very worried", "rather worried", "rather not worried", "not worried at all" – were presented to the respondents.

Fig. 6. Worries about climate change (in percent)



Source: Mass survey (wave 1, 2).

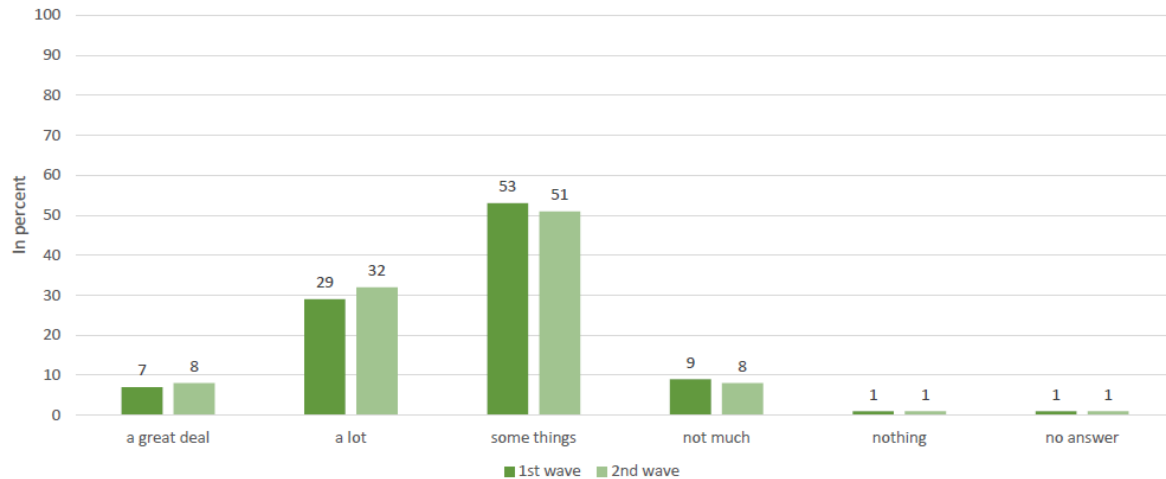
Note: N=2,000/1,673. German question wording: „Das Klima in Österreich und auf der Welt verändert sich. Manche Menschen betrachten den Klimawandel mit Sorge, andere Menschen hingegen nicht. Wie ist das bei Ihnen? Sind Sie über den Klimawandel sehr, eher schon, eher nicht oder gar nicht besorgt?“ (sehr besorgt/eher schon besorgt/eher nicht besorgt/gar nicht besorgt/keine Angabe).

Roughly one quarter of the respondents were “very worried” and 50 percent were “rather worried” about climate change at the beginning of 2022 (see Fig. 6). Only 17 percent were “rather not worried” and 6 percent were “not worried at all”. Thus, climate change represents a topic that worried a large majority of the Austrian population. Interestingly, these attitudes remained stable throughout the process of the ‘Klimarat’. An increase in the concern about climate change during the citizens’ assembly and the related media attention to the topic is not visible.

Knowledge on the Issue of Climate Change

Respondents were also asked to assess their own knowledge of climate change. On a five-point scale, respondents were asked to choose between “very much”, “a lot”, “some things”, “not much”, and “nothing”.

Fig. 7. Knowledge on the issue of climate change



Source: Mass survey (wave 1, 2).

Note: N=2,000/1,673. German question wording: „Ganz allgemein, wie schätzen Sie Ihr eigenes Wissen zum Thema Klimawandel ein? Würden Sie sagen, Sie wissen sehr viel, viel, manches, wenig oder überhaupt nichts zum Thema Klimawandel?“

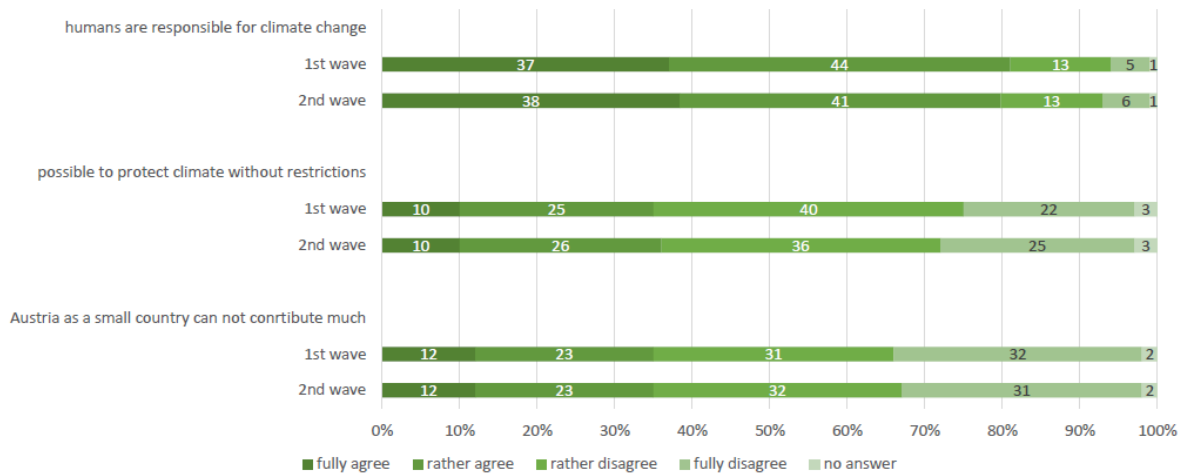
Figure 7 shows that less than ten percent of the respondents report that they know “a great deal” about **climate change**. Roughly **one third of the respondents stated that they know “a lot”** and **50 percent stated that they know “some things”**. Around 10 percent of the respondents knew “not much” and 1 percent “nothing” about the issue of climate change.

Comparing the results from the first and the second wave reveals that the subjective evaluation of respondents’ own knowledge remained stable during the first half of 2022.

Positions on Climate Change

Finally, respondents from our mass survey were presented with the same statements on climate change as the members of the citizens’ assembly. Again, respondents were asked to assess the extent of their agreement with each statement. The four answer categories were “fully agree”, “rather agree”, “rather disagree”, and “fully disagree”.

Fig. 8. Positions on climate change



Source: Mass survey (wave 1, 2).

Note: N=2,000/1,673. German question wording: „Kommen wir zum Thema Klimawandel. Bitte sagen Sie mir jeweils, ob sie den folgenden Aussagen sehr, eher schon, eher nicht oder gar nicht zustimmen. Der Mensch ist die Ursache für den Klimawandel./Es ist möglich das Klima zu schützen, ohne Einschränkungen für den einzelnen Menschen./Österreich kann als kleines Land nichts Wesentliches zum Klimaschutz beitragen.“ (stimme sehr zu/stimme eher schon zu/stimme eher nicht zu/stimme gar nicht zu/keine Angabe). Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

A large majority of the respondents agree that **humans are responsible for climate change** (Fig. 8). At the beginning of 2022, 37 percent of the respondents “fully agreed” and 44 percent “rather agreed” with the corresponding statement. These values remained stable between the two waves.

Further, a **clear majority** thinks that climate protection requires measures that **will demand restrictions from the individual**. At the beginning of 2022, 62 percent and midyear of 2022, 61 percent rather or fully disagreed with the statement that it is possible to protect the climate without restrictions.

A similar picture reveals itself with respect to the question of Austria’s role in global climate protection. A **stable majority rather or fully disagrees** with the statement **that Austria as a small country cannot contribute much to protect the climate** (63 % rather/fully disagreed in both waves).

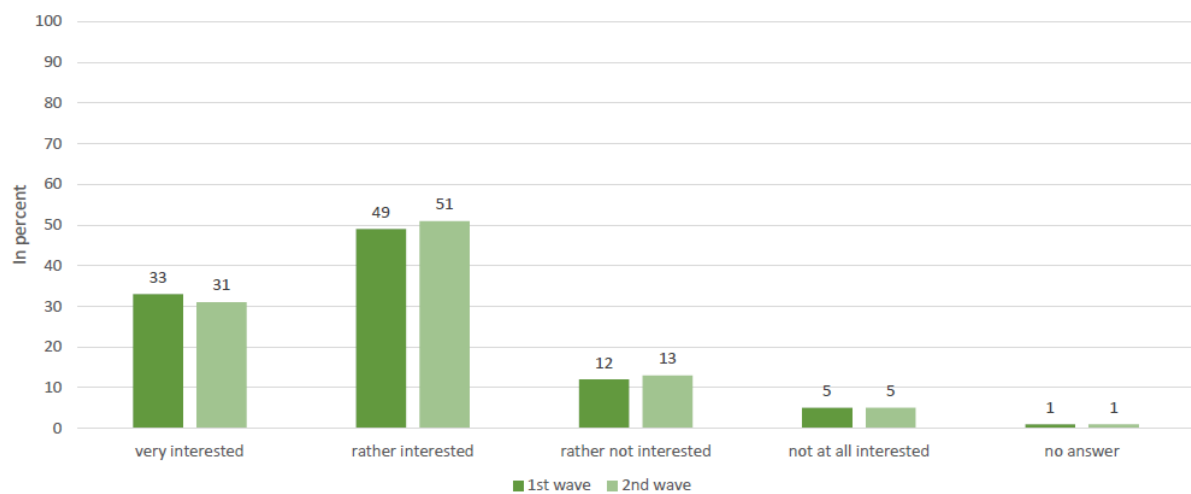
4.3. Citizens' Attitudes towards Politics

Following the questions used in the members' surveys, we asked respondents about their attitudes towards politics and democracy. More specifically, we wanted to know how much interest citizens show in politics and how satisfied (or unsatisfied) they are with Austria's democracy.

Interest in Politics

We asked respondents to assess their interest in Austrian politics on a four-point scale. The answer categories were "very interested", "rather interested", "rather not interested", and "not at all interested".

Fig. 9. Interest in politics



Source: Mass survey (wave 1, 2).

Note: N=2,000/1,673. Question wording in German: „Kommen wir zur Politik. Ganz allgemein, sind Sie an der Politik in Österreich sehr, eher schon, eher nicht oder gar nicht interessiert? (sehr interessiert/eher schon interessiert/eher nicht interessiert/gar nicht interessiert).“

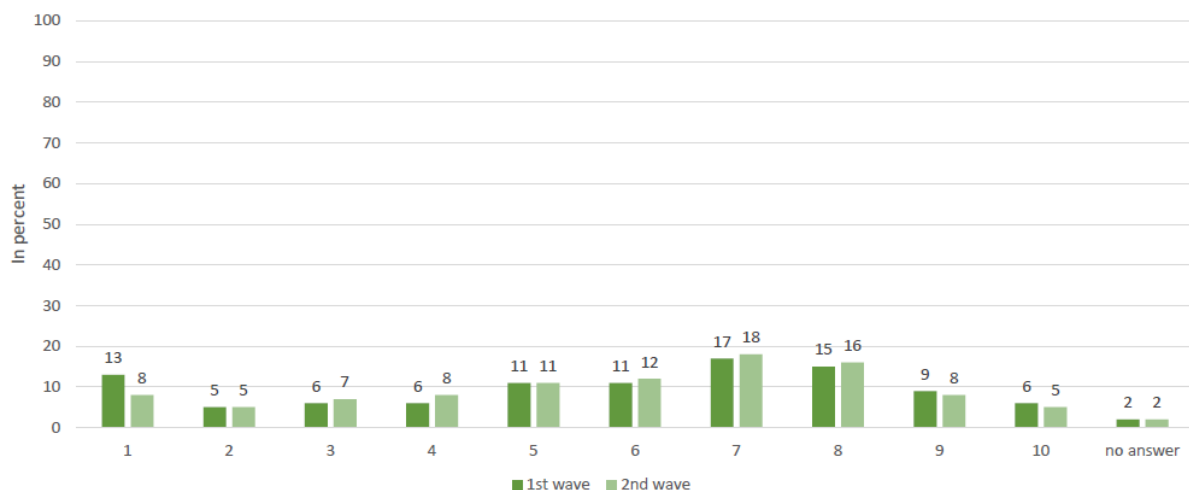
The results shown in Figure 9 reveal that around **one third of the Austrian respondents** were “**very interested**”. Around **half of the respondents** were “**rather interested**”. Only around 10 percent and 5 percent stated that they are “**rather not**” and “**not interested at all**”, respectively.

There are no relevant differences between the first and the second wave of the mass survey concerning changes in level of political interest.

Evaluation of Austrian Democracy

Finally, respondents were asked to assess the quality of Austria's democracy (specifically, how democratically the country is currently governed) on a ten-point scale that ranges from 1 "not democratically" to 10 "fully democratically".

Fig. 10. Evaluation of Austrian democracy



Source: Mass survey (wave 1, 2).

Note: N=1,018/1,673. German question wording: „Und wie demokratisch wird Österreich derzeit regiert? Bitte verwenden Sie wiederum die Skala von 1 bis 10, wobei 1 bedeutet ‚Überhaupt nicht demokratisch‘ und 10 bedeutet ‚Vollkommen demokratisch‘.“

Figure 10 shows that the values vary across the full scale. At the beginning of 2022, **30 percent** rated the way that **Austria is currently governed with one of the three highest** marks from 8 to 10. An almost identical value is found in the second wave, where 29 percent gave one of the three highest marks. Looking at the other end of the scale, at the beginning of 2022 **24 percent** rated the way Austria is currently governed **with one of the three lowest rankings** from 1 to 3. 20 percent used these values in the second wave. On average, we see **evaluations of Austrians democracy of 5.7 in the first wave** and **5.9 in the second wave** measured on a ten-point-scale.

5. WP 6: Recommendations

The following recommendations are the result of the members survey as well as the population survey on the citizens' assembly 'Klimarat' and the interviews that were taken with 10 per cent of the participants. Naturally, the recommendations go into two directions, first of all there are recommendations regarding the results of the 'Klimarat', secondly recommendations for potential future citizens' assemblies follow.

Recommendations for Dealing with the Results of the 'Klimarat':

- The 'Klimarat' was the first citizens' assembly at national level in Austria, which was organized on a governmental level (by the Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology). Thus, it not only stands on its own, but **will influence other citizens' assemblies in the future**. Therefore, the **results should be dealt with very carefully by the Ministry of Climate Action as well as by Parliament**. This means that the political actors should make it transparent as to which of the recommendations will be implemented and how. This includes to explain in case recommendations will not be enacted.
- One possibility of dealing with the recommendations carefully is a **parliamentary conference ('Parlamentarische Enquete')** to which not only scientists but also representatives of the Climate Assembly are invited. Its goal should not be to re-discuss the climate change again, but to translate the assembly's **results into concrete actions by the politicians – and with support from the parliamentary conference**.
- The 'Klimarat' is over, autumn brings new challenges for politics. This should not lead to being put on hold with the citizens' assembly's results. On the contrary, some of the current challenges, such as the energy issue, are closely linked to climate change. In this respect, the topic has been strengthened by the current crisis situation. This should **remain in the consciousness of the**

population and be ensured that the recommendations of the 'Klimarat' are made better known to the population than has been the case so far.

- A suitable tool for that does already exist, because with the project '**Climate council asks for advice**' ('**Klimarat fragt um Rat**'), many ideas from the climate council participants and other parts of the population have already been collected. As the evaluation showed, the idea of including the general public was good, but the results were overwhelming in their diversity and mass. Thus, the **criticism of the members** (including the interviewees) **was high**. However, this does not have to mean the end of the project. By clustering the ideas and presenting them again and in a clearer manner, these results of the platform **can be used** to pass on information on climate change to interested parties, (as an educational gadget especially for schools). On the other hand, one can keep the discussion open and present what has already been implemented.
- The 'Klimarat' can shape trust or mistrust in dealing with direct democracy. In contrast to other countries, participatory methods lead a bit of a shadowy existence in Austria. Therefore, the opportunity should not be missed to **show that the cooperation and participation of the population is taken seriously politically**. It will be important to **discuss the results of the climate council in public** and in a sustainable way. Even more important is a conclusive implementation of at least some of the recommendations of the assembly.
- The energy of the participants of the 'Klimarat' and their environment shall not be underestimated. An association has already been founded, a trip to Brussels has been planned to also network with participants from other countries. This commitment should be used, for example for the transfer of the acquired knowledge in schools. It is not only about knowledge relating to climate change but also knowledge regarding participatory processes. Both can **strengthen confidence in democracy**. In addition, citizens can sometimes more easily accept political knowledge or recommendations from other citizens – in this case the committed participants of the 'Klimarat' – than from politicians.

Recommendations for future Citizens' Assemblies:

- There is of course the **question of representation** of an average of the Austrian population. The survey as well as the interviews show that some parts of the population were missing. Therefore, it will make sense to **find a more motivating way to involve citizens**, e.g. from minorities or from certain age groups. The impersonal way of writing a letter is obviously not enough encouragement for participation of all groups of society.
- Accordingly, in a future citizens' assembly, the question of the attitude of the persons concerning the topic of the council should not only be asked when selecting the participants, but also then used as a selection criteria. Since it has been shown that **critical voices are rather unwilling to participate** in a citizens' assembly, more motivational work would have to be done to convince them to participate, especially for this part of the population.
- Since the surveys have additionally clearly shown that the **political interest of the participants is higher** than among the average population, more emphasis should be placed on involving less politically interested persons; especially as experience has shown that **participation in direct democracy processes can strengthen interest as well as trust in democracy**.
- **Interest groups** should be involved more closely and not only present what their position is. It would also be wise to **take the time to listen** what concerns the population has on the given topic.
- The situation is similar with the **political parties**. They should take their involvement in the relevant citizens' assembly more seriously, but above all listen more closely to what the population needs – regardless of whether they as a party support the respective citizens' assembly or not. After all, the participants are a representative sample of the population, thus, **their own voters are also among the participants**. Furthermore, it will also be important not only to send anyone, but politicians who are familiar with the topic.

6. Zusammenfassung und Empfehlungen (auf Deutsch)

Zusammenfassung

- Die Teilnehmenden beurteilten den Klimarat sehr positiv. Das gilt für die Umfrage ebenso wie für die Interviews, wo vertiefend auf die Gründe eingegangen wurde: Dies war einerseits die Erfahrung, in einer Gruppe mit sehr unterschiedlich denkenden Menschen zusammengearbeitet und schließlich doch zu konkreten Ergebnissen gekommen zu sein, andererseits das Wissen, an etwas Sinnvollem mitgearbeitet zu haben, und hoffentlich auch gehört zu werden. Einen großen Anteil an der positiven Beurteilung dürfte das Organisations-/Moderationsteam gehabt haben, das von allen Interviewpartner*innen als äußerst unterstützend und positiv dargestellt wurde.
- Die Teilnehmenden des Klimarats waren bereits zu Beginn sehr besorgt über den Klimawandel (59 Prozent „sehr besorgt“ und 37 Prozent „eher schon besorgt“). Es konnte bei den Teilnehmenden keine Zunahme der Sorge über den Klimawandel im Laufe des Klimarats festgestellt werden. Im Gegenteil: die Sorge über den Klimawandel nahm ab. In den Interviews wiederum wurde festgestellt, dass die wissenschaftliche Aufklärung über den tatsächlichen Stand des Klimawandels die Sorgen steigen habe lassen. Allerdings wurde der Umstand, nun aktiv zu sein und die Sorgen in eine sinnvolle Richtung zu lenken, als Erleichterung gesehen.
- Verglichen mit den Befragten aus der Bevölkerungsumfrage waren die Mitglieder des Klimarats besorgter wegen des Klimawandels. Im Durchschnitt:
 - waren sie besorgter über den Klimawandel,
 - stimmten sie eher zu, dass Menschen für den Klimawandel verantwortlich sind,
 - widersprachen sie häufiger der Ansicht, dass es ohne Einschränkung des*r Einzelnen möglich sei, das Klima zu schützen,

- widersprachen sie eher der Meinung, dass das kleine Land Österreich nicht viel ausrichten könne
 - und widersprachen sie häufiger der Ansicht, dass der Klimawandel in der öffentlichen Debatte übertrieben werde.
- Was ihr Wissen über und die Beurteilung der Aktivitäten der österreichischen Regierung in Bezug auf die Klimapolitik betrifft, unterschieden sich die Meinungen der Klimaratsmitglieder nicht von jenen der Öffentlichkeit.
- Die Teilnehmenden des Klimarats profitierten durch eine Zunahme an Wissen zum Thema Klimawandel. 39 Prozent gaben an, ihrer Einschätzung nach am Ende des Klimarats mehr über das Thema zu wissen. Lediglich über Zeitmangel an allen sechs Wochenenden und daraus resultierender Geschwindigkeit in der wissenschaftlichen Aufbereitung wurde geklagt – wobei auch betont wurde, dass man stets nachfragen konnte, wenn man Erklärungen oder Hintergrundinformationen brauchte.
- Die Mehrheit der Teilnehmenden hat ihre Positionen hinsichtlich des Klimawandels nicht verändert. Wenn es zu Veränderungen kam, dann gingen diese jeweils stärker in Richtung Klimaschutz (Mensch als Ursache des Klimawandels, Notwendigkeit der Einschränkung des Einzelnen zum Klimaschutz, wesentlicher Beitrag durch das kleine Österreich).
- Die Teilnehmenden des Klimarats waren bereits zu Beginn sehr an Politik in Österreich interessiert (41 Prozent „sehr interessiert“ und 53 Prozent „eher schon interessiert“). Bei einer Mehrheit der Teilnehmenden ist dieses politische Interesse im Laufe des Klimarats nicht gestiegen. Bei mehr Teilnehmenden hat sich das politische Interesse sogar verringert. Hier zeigte sich ein leichter Unterschied zu den Gesprächen. Ein Teil gab an, jetzt politischer zu diesem Thema zu denken als vorher, während andere erzählten, nun engagierter oder zumindest gleich engagiert zu sein.

- Im Vergleich zu den Befragten der Bevölkerungsumfrage zeigten die Klimaratsmitglieder ein höheres Interesse an Politik, ebenso ein stärkeres Gefühl, etwas beeinflussen zu können und hatten in höherem Maße bereits vor dem Klimarat eine*n Politiker*in kontaktiert oder in einer politischen Partei mitgearbeitet.
- Schon zu Beginn des Klimarats gaben 45 Prozent in der Bevölkerungsumfrage an, bereits einmal vom Klimarat gehört zu haben. Dieser Prozentsatz stieg bis zum Ende des Klimarats auf 53 Prozent. Dennoch hatten 44 Prozent noch nie davon gehört.
- Die Medien hatten einen wichtigen Anteil an der Informationsvermittlung über den Klimarat. Am Ende sagten 86 Prozent jener Personen, die angegeben hatten, vom Klimarat gehört zu haben, dass dies über Medien erfolgt sei (besonders TV und/oder Internet). Soziale Medien hingegen spielten eine vergleichsweise geringe Rolle (19 Prozent von jenen, die vom Klimarat gehört hatten, hatten dies über die Sozialen Medien getan).
- Eine Mehrheit der Bevölkerung findet Bürger*innenräte sinnvoll (21 Prozent „sehr sinnvoll“ and 53 Prozent „eher schon sinnvoll“). Weiters sagen Bürger*innen, dass die Politiker*innen auf die Ergebnisse des Klimarats hören sollten (29 Prozent „ja, auf jeden Fall“ and 52 Prozent „ja, eher schon“).

Empfehlungen

Die folgenden Empfehlungen ergeben sich einerseits aus den Ergebnissen der Umfragen unter den Klimaratsmitgliedern sowie den Bevölkerungsumfragen und in der Folge aus der Auswertung der Interviews, die mit 10 Prozent der Klimaratsmitglieder geführt worden sind. Naturgemäß gehen diese Empfehlungen in zwei Richtungen, einerseits Empfehlungen zum Umgang mit den Klimaratsergebnissen und andererseits Empfehlungen, die potentielle zukünftige Bürger*innenrate betreffen.

Empfehlungen zum Umgang mit den Ergebnissen des Klimarats:

- Der Klimarat war der erste Bürger*innenrat auf nationaler Ebene in Österreich, der auf Regierungsebene (Bundesministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie, Mobilität, Innovation und Technologie) organisiert worden ist. Damit steht er nicht nur für sich allein, sondern **wird auch zukünftige Bürger*innenräte beeinflussen**. Daher sollte mit den **Ergebnissen sowohl von Regierungsebene als auch vom Parlament sehr sorgfältig umgegangen werden**. Das bedeutet, dass die politischen Akteur*innen transparent machen, welche der Empfehlungen umgesetzt werden und wie. Dazu gehört auch zu erklären, falls Empfehlungen nicht umgesetzt werden und warum dies der Fall ist.
- Eine Möglichkeit dieses sorgfältigen Umgangs könnte eine **Parlamentarische Enquete** sein, zu der nicht nur Wissenschaftler*innen, sondern auch Klimaratsmitglieder eingeladen werden. Es geht dabei nicht um eine nochmalige Diskussion der Klimaratsergebnisse, sondern darum, **diese von den Politiker*innen in konkrete Maßnahmen umzusetzen – und sie dabei zu unterstützen**.
- Der Klimarat ist zu Ende, der Herbst bringt neue Herausforderungen für die Politik. Dies sollte nicht dazu führen, dass die Ergebnisse des Klimarats auf Eis gelegt werden. Im Gegenteil, einige der aktuellen Herausforderungen, wie die

Energiefrage, sind eng mit dem Klimawandel verbunden. Insofern wurde das Thema durch die aktuelle Krisensituation gestärkt. Dies sollte **im Bewusstsein** der Bevölkerung bleiben und weiters sichergestellt werden, dass die Empfehlungen des Klimarats der Bevölkerung bekannter gemacht werden, als dies bisher der Fall war.

- Ein geeignetes Werkzeug dafür gibt es bereits, denn mit dem Projekt „**Klimarat fragt um Rat**“ **wurden** bereits viele Ideen von den Klimaratsteilnehmer*innen und anderen Teilen der Bevölkerung gesammelt. Wie die vorliegende Evaluierung zeigt, war die Idee, die breite Öffentlichkeit einzubeziehen, sehr gut, aber die Ergebnisse waren in ihrer Vielfalt und Masse überwältigend und nicht userfreundlich. So war die **Kritik der Klimaratsmitglieder dementsprechend groß**. Dies muss jedoch nicht das Ende des Projekts bedeuten. Durch die Bündelung der Ideen und deren **erneute – vereinfachte – Präsentation können diese Ergebnisse der Plattform genutzt werden**, um Informationen zum Klimawandel an Interessierte weiterzugeben (als pädagogisches Werkzeug speziell für Schulen). Auf der anderen Seite kann man die Diskussion offenhalten und präsentieren, was bereits umgesetzt worden ist.
- Der „Klimarat“ kann sowohl das Vertrauen als auch das Misstrauen in den Umgang mit direkter Demokratie beeinflussen. Im Gegensatz zu anderen Ländern führen partizipative Methoden in Österreich ein wenig ein Schattendasein. Insofern sollte die Gelegenheit nicht verpasst werden, **zu zeigen, dass die Partizipation der Bevölkerung politisch ernst genommen wird**. Daher wird es wichtig sein, die Ergebnisse des Klimarates öffentlich und nachhaltig zu diskutieren. Besonders wichtig diesbezüglich wird eine konkrete Umsetzung zumindest einiger Empfehlungen des Klimarats sein.
- Der Enthusiasmus der Klimaratsteilnehmer*innen und ihrer Umwelt ist nicht zu unterschätzen. Es wurde bereits ein Verein gegründet, eine Reise nach Brüssel ist geplant, um sich auch mit Teilnehmer*innen aus anderen Ländern zu

vernetzen. Dieses Engagement sollte genutzt werden, zum Beispiel für den Transfer des erworbenen Wissens an Schulen. Dabei geht es nicht nur um Wissen rund um den Klimawandel, sondern auch um Wissen über partizipative Prozesse. Beides kann **das Vertrauen in die Demokratie stärken**. Zudem können Bürger*innen politisches Wissen oder Empfehlungen von anderen Bürger*innen – in diesem Fall den engagierten Teilnehmer*innen des Klimarats – manchmal leichter annehmen als von Politiker*innen.

Empfehlungen für zukünftige Bürger*innenräte:

- Es stellt sich bei einem Bürgerrat natürlich die **Frage nach der Repräsentativität** eines Durchschnitts der österreichischen Bevölkerung. Sowohl die Umfrage als auch die Interviews zeigen, dass einige Teile der Bevölkerung gefehlt haben. Daher wird es in Zukunft sinnvoll sein, **einen motivierenderen Weg zu finden, um Bürger*innen**, z.B. aus Minderheiten oder aus bestimmten Altersgruppen, einzubeziehen. Die unpersönliche Art, einen Brief zu schreiben, stellt offensichtlich keine ausreichende Ermutigung für die Teilnahme aller Gesellschaftsgruppen dar.
- Dementsprechend sollte für zukünftige Bürger*innenräte die Frage nach der Haltung zum jeweiligen Ratsthema nicht nur bei der Auswahl der Teilnehmer*innen gestellt, sondern in der Folge auch als Auswahlkriterium herangezogen werden. Da sich gezeigt hat, dass **kritische Stimmen eher weniger bereit sind**, sich an einem Bürger*innenrat zu beteiligen, müsste gerade für diesen Teil der Bevölkerung mehr Motivationsarbeit zur Teilnahme geleistet werden.
- Da die Umfragen zudem deutlich gezeigt haben, dass das politische Interesse der **Klimaratsteilnehmer*innen höher ist** als bei der durchschnittlichen Bevölkerung, sollte mehr Wert auf die Einbeziehung weniger politisch interessierter Personen gelegt werden; zumal die Erfahrung gezeigt hat, dass

die **Teilnahme an Prozessen der direkten Demokratie sowohl das Interesse an als auch das Vertrauen in die Demokratie stärken kann.**

Die verschiedenen **Interessensvertretungen** sollten stärker eingebunden werden und nicht nur ihre Position beim Bürgerr*innenrat darlegen. Es wäre auch für Interessensvertretungen ratsam, **sich die Zeit zu nehmen, intensiver zuzuhören**, welche Bedenken und Sorgen die Bevölkerung beim jeweiligen Thema hat.

- Ähnlich verhält es sich mit den **politischen Parteien**. Sie sollten ihr Engagement beim jeweiligen Bürger*innenrat ernster nehmen, aber vor allem genauer hinhören, was die Bevölkerung braucht – unabhängig davon, ob sie als Partei den betreffenden Bürger*innenrat unterstützen oder nicht. Schließlich stellen die Teilnehmer*innen eine repräsentative Stichprobe der Bevölkerung dar, was bedeutet, dass sich **auch eigene Wähler*innen unter den Teilnehmer*innen** befinden. Darüber hinaus wird es auch wichtig sein, nicht nur irgendjemanden als Vertretung zu schicken, sondern Politiker*innen, die mit dem Thema des Rats vertraut sind.

7. References

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