**Democracy and its principles**

**Democracy** – the notion consists of two Greek words: demos = people, kratos = to rule – literal translation is „rule of the people“.

**Democracy** – a form of political establishment that enables the citizens enjoying the full right to participate in the running of the state.

**Origins of democracy** – in ancient Greece – in 6th – 7th century BC.

* Greek democracy was direct democracy – all citizens took directly part in running of the state
* Free people made the decisions – adult citizens – men (i.e. no women, no slaves);
* They gathered at assemblies where they passed the laws and decided upon some important questions.

**Basic principles of democracy:**

1. Guarantee of basic human rights and civil liberties;
2. Sovereignty of people that is the legitimate carrier of power and the only source of state power;
3. Government of the majority that must guarantee the basic human rights for all citizens and so the rights of the minority;
4. Division of the state power reflects the division to three individual branches: legislative, executive and judicial;
5. Regular free elections based on general, just and direct right to vote with secret balloting; the right to be voted;
6. Right to be part of public administration directly or through chosen representatives;
7. Political pluralism or existence of several political parties, movements, organizations, societies, and institutions that enable the competition of political parties and so on;
8. Economic pluralism, economic system based on free entrepreneurship, the right of private ownership and its protection.

**Forms of democracy:**

* **Direct democracy –** is based on direct attendance in political decision-making – the citizen decides directly by using his vote**.**

In its cleanest form it existed only in ancient Greece. Due to the number of citizens and the complexity of relationships is the previous form of democracy unfeasible. Today's democracy is mostly indirect (representative) supplemented with some features of direct democracy.

Forms of indirect democracy:

* Referendum - direct vote of the citizens about serious political questions – for example joining NATO.

Types of referendum:

*Mandatory –* referendum required to be voted on if certain conditions are met for certain actions to be taken. With this type of referendum the fundamental law can be confirmed, in which the state enters a union with another state or terminates such a bond.

*Optional –* the constitution defines which questions of the public interest can or cannot be asked in a referendum; the subject of the referendum cannot contain questions about basic human rights and freedoms, taxes and state budget.

*Ratification –* confirms the laws passed by the parliament (some countries do not know this type of a referendum).

*Governmental –* the impulse for such a referendum is initiated by the head of the state, parliament or government.

*Popular –* initiated by the citizens, held when asked for in a petition (the number of minimum request differs depending on the country and its laws)

* Plebiscit – popular voting about any question in a form of a „yes/no“ question.
* Initiative – related to the right of the citizens to organize a petition where they join an initiative oriented to one of the state authorities using their signature.
* **Indirect democracy -** “representative democracy“– the citizens take part in decision-making indirectly through chosen officials (deputies).