



TIME TO GIVE YOUNG CITIZENS THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Adopted by FYEG General Assembly on 27 May 2017 in Madrid, Spain

A basic idea of democracy is that all people in society should have the same right to influence political decisions, no matter who we are. Public governance is not just for the smartest, those with the best education or the most mature; it is for everyone. The more excluded from the right to vote, the more distorted becomes our representative democracy.

It is easy to get used to society's current organization and take the rights of the present for granted. For many people who already have the right to vote, it may not seem like a big thing to put a ballot paper in a voting box. But the effect of the current restrictions on voting and running for parliament is that almost one in six EU citizens are shut out of democracy. This obviates the legitimacy of the political system.

It is clear that the vision of age-neutral voting is important. On the other hand, the idea of a reduced voting age has begun to arouse greater hearing. Numerous countries choose to lower their limits from the typical 18 years to 16 or 15. Still, this is development in a green direction can just be seen as a small, first step.

The Federation of Young European Greens is convinced that young people in general are interested in politics and want to influence and change the society they live in. For example, a Swedish report from 2013 showed that 71 % of all youths had, in one way or another, participated in a political activity. Europe's young people long to make their voices heard.

The issue of age limits is not just about rights. Electoral design affects the debate itself, and therefore shapes the actual content of the policies. When German federal states lowered their regional voting age, the parties suddenly began to take young people's ideas seriously. The result became an increased political commitment among young people. Responsibility stimulates the will to learn.

The same tendencies can be seen in several other states. In Austria, where inhabitants have the right to vote from the age of 16, voting participation is higher among 16 to 18 year olds than among the rest of the population. In 2011, Norway introduced a reduced voting age on trial in some municipalities in the local elections. Among the 16 to 18 year old Norwegians, more people voted than among other young Norwegian inhabitants with voting rights.

However, when it comes to the voting age to the European parliament, almost every member state have kept the age limit at 18 years old. This means the average age of a first time voter in a European election is about 20-21 years old. Some individuals are as old as 23 the first time they get to vote in a European election or run for the European parliament.



Article 165 in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that the union shall act to encourage the participation of young people in Europe's democratic life. Reducing the age limit to 16 years and proper and obligatory political education would invigorate the political engagement of young people and increase their interest for European party politics. The Federation of Young European Greens believes that the European Union should be a place for truly progressive reforms. Now is the time to take a common step towards a world where more people can vote.

FYEG advocates:

1. that all countries in the European Union firstly introduce obligatory political education in primary schools then lower their voting age in the European election to 16 years.
2. that all countries in the European Union lower the age limit to run for the European parliament to 16 years.
3. that the European Union strives to formulate common laws bringing political education to primary schools and fixing the age limit on voting in the European election and running for the European parliament to 16 years in all member states.