

C2 Time to expand the right to vote

Proposer: Swedish Young Greens
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Text

1 A basic idea of democracy is that all people in society should have the same
2 right to influence political decisions, no matter who we are. Public governance
3 is not just for the smartest, those with the best education or the most mature;
4 it is for everyone. The more excluded from the right to vote, the more distorted
5 becomes our representative democracy. Consequently, the political platform of
6 the Federation of Young European Greens prescribes a total ban on fixed voting
7 ages.

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

14 It is clear that the vision of age-neutral voting is important, but we recognise
15 that this goal probably lies far ahead in the future. On the other hand, the
16 idea of a reduced voting age has begun to arouse greater hearing. Numerous
17 countries choose to lower their limits from the typical 18 years to 16 or 15.
18 This is a development in a green direction.

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

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

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

35 among other young Norwegian inhabitants with voting rights.

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

41 Article 165 in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that
42 the union shall act to encourage the participation of young people in Europe's
43 democratic life. Reducing the age limit to 15 years would invigorate the
44 political engagement of young people and increase their interest for European
45 party politics. The Federation of Young European Greens believes that the
46 European Union should be a place for truly progressive reforms. Now is the time
47 to take a common step towards a world where more people can vote.

48 **FYEG advocates:**

49 1. that all countries in the European Union lower their voting age in the
50 European election to 15 years.

51 2. that all countries in the European Union lower the age limit to run for the
52 European parliament to 15 years.

53 3. that the European Union strives to formulate a common law fixing the age
54 limit on voting in the European election and running for the European parliament
55 to 15 years in all member states.