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Lower the voting age

Lower the voting age

What's democracy without us? It's time for decision-makers to listen. To make our democracies stronger, we need to bridge the gap between young people and elected politicians.

Young people below the voting age are often invisible in the democratic process.

By denying them the right to vote, politicians overlook their needs and concerns, even though the policies they enact—whether on education, transport, climate, or any other issue—directly affect young people's lives. That's how trust in democracy gradually erodes, making it harder to repair later in life.

Democracy and young people



Make the invisible, visible

Democracy must work for young people, and that means granting 16 and 17-year-olds the right to vote. Studies show that voting early builds a lifelong habit of civic engagement. By lowering the voting age, decision-makers can build trust and form meaningful connections with younger people.

Why is 16 a good age to start voting?

While young people aged 18-21 often face more barriers to voting, such as no longer living in their parents house, changing addresses, limited access to transport, living abroad, etc. 16 year olds are likely to have more stability. They are also likely to still be in school, where they have access to citizenship education and support on how to register, where and when to vote.

When young people participate, our democracies become stronger, more diverse, and inclusive.

What's democracy without participation?

A healthy democracy thrives on active participation, yet millions of young Europeans are excluded from decisions that impact their future. Young people have unique perspectives and experiences that are valuable and integral to our societies. Their lived experiences and ideas are essential to shaping inclusive policies that reflect the diversity of our societies.

Rather than putting up barriers to political participation, our democracies should be opening up to allow young people to have a meaningful say on the decisions that affect them.



Did you know?

Both the Scottish referendum (2014) and national elections in Austria (2013) show that the voter turnout among 16- and 17-year-olds was actually higher than the turnout among 18- to 24-year-olds

In Scotland, 16-17 year olds were better informed than their peers in the rest of the UK, because getting the right to vote sparked their interest in politics.

What's democracy without trust?



Currently, over half of young people don't trust politicians to solve the issues that matter most to them.

By including 16 and 17-year-olds in the democratic process, decision-makers can start building that trust and show that their voices matter.

After all, lowering the voting age works! Voting at 16 is already a reality in many European countries and regions. Including 16 and 17-year-olds in elections have been shown to have positive results, in some cases with a higher turnout rate than 18-21 year olds.

Younger people are allowed to vote in:

Austria (all elections); Malta (all elections); Estonia (local elections); Scotland (Scottish elections); Wales (Welsh elections); Germany (local elections in some Länder and European elections) and Belgium (European elections). In Greece and Cyprus, people can vote at age 17.

More and more countries are examining the benefits and impact of lowering the voting age.

What's democracy without inclusion?

Excluding young people from the ballot box is especially damaging for the young people who already suffer from exclusion and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, religion or social class. The lack of representation further alienates younger people from politicians. **A democracy that doesn't include the diversity of its citizens cannot truly serve its people. Lowering the voting age is a step toward ensuring that all perspectives are represented in decision-making processes.**



What's democracy without change?

Research shows that citizens who start voting at 16 are more likely to become lifelong voters. Our democracies must evolve to meet the needs of modern societies, and lowering the voting age is one of the easiest reforms to start with. We need to lower the voting age to safeguard democracy and make sure it is suitable for today's societies.



Lowering the voting age isn't just about today—it's an investment in the future of democracy. Decision-makers must commit to making the invisible visible. Lowering the voting age is proof of their commitment to build trust in democracy and include young people in politics!

Because otherwise...

What's democracy without voting? What's democracy without us?