

Mailbag

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Are Swiss 16-year-olds ready to vote?



I know many 16-year-olds whose maturity far exceeds that of people twice their age, including some politicians. I am 70 years old and notice that young people are far better informed about world events than I was at their age. It is young people who are taking the lead on climate change, the most pressing issue of our time. So I fully support the lowering of the voting age to 16.

RICHARD JAKOB-HOFF, NEW ZEALAND

I don't think it's a good idea as young people are more easily influenced the younger they are. This is like manna for extreme political parties looking to win more votes. It would be heading towards a slippery slope which could knock the country into endless political turmoil...

RENAUD WICKY, BALI, INDONESIA

Absolutely it should be lowered. At the very least, at the local and regional level. There is no reason why it can't be implemented, while keeping other things a little bit older, for example, you can do federal participation and running for office when you are also required for military or civil service. All of these things should be reassessed with a view towards the future.

MARC SPARGNAPANI, USA

I think very few people are political at the age of 16. Teenagers like to party, but ask them about politics and they will stare at you blankly. The voting age should remain at 18.

KARIN KRÄUCHI, GRAZ, AUSTRIA

First of all – what a very interesting topic. Giving 16-year-olds the vote is a good idea. People will argue for and against. The most important thing is that young people develop a feeling of responsibility for their country. We must show that we trust them.

ÖNDER ERDOGAN, TURKEY

Absolutely no, I'm from Argentina where they lowered it for one simple reason: underage people don't think about their future and they are easily attracted by ideas that sound good but in practice will doom your country. They are not mature enough to analyse and take decisions over economic and political matters.

AXEL HALLEY, IRELAND

The vote at 16, yes, to take into account the aspirations of younger people. We rely on them to improve on our mistakes. Those who are against it are looking to selfishly protect their own advantages. It would also be interesting to spend more time at school talking about business and companies, political structures, the running of household finances, etc.

JEAN PIERRE MAIRE, SPAIN

Giving 16-year-olds the vote is irresponsible. Young people at that age are not mature enough and can be influenced to an extent that would make fair decisions at the ballot box an impossibility. You need a certain amount of life experience to make important decisions. Democracy at the ballot box not only means looking after your own interests – it also means doing something for the general good.

RENATO BESOMI, JAVEA, SPAIN

Are 16-year-olds really incapable of exercising a political voice? Democratic politics is essentially all about representing the interests of the people. Are we suggesting that the interests of 16-year-olds are less relevant than those of older people? Are they less important? A glance around the globe makes me more inclined to think that the opposite is true, and to wonder whether it would make more sense to have a maximum voting age instead.

ARYE-ISAAC OPHIR, ISRAEL

Was I ready to vote when I was 18, I don't know. Would I have voted at 16 if allowed to, well yes. Would I vote the same way now that I am four times older, likely not. So what could be the objections against voting at 16? The biggest problem I encountered in voting at 18 was the lack of information. Nowadays more information is at hand and there is no reason to say that a 16-year-old person cannot make a rational decision. Is it possible that we are not comfortable reducing the voting right to 16 as it will rock the boat too much? I would support lowering the voting age to 16 any time.

KURT FEHLMANN, AUSTRALIA

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