



**FEDERAL COMMITTEE
MEETING**

**31 October –
2 November 2014
Bologna
Italy**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION

**‘Lowering the active right to vote to the age
of 16’**

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Young people in Europe face higher obstacles than previous generations. The peak in youth unemployment and a bigger demand in mobility for educational or labour purposes, coupled with reduced investment in young people and youth work, as well as a strong activation orientation on the labour market is limiting their resources from an early start. Yet their participation in the political processes is marginalized. Changes in the structure of tertiary education require more and more early uproot out of family structure and expect more autonomy of young people. After leaving home additional obstacles for voting registration decrease the likelihood of first time voting.

On the other hand, voter turnout is continuously shrinking, especially amongst young people. In the last elections for the European Parliament, only about ~ 25% of the first-time voters made use of their votes, raising fears of generating a lost generation. Whilst early participation in most cases leads to consistent participation, missing out on the first vote is a trend that is hard to overcome.

Whilst the entrance in the labour market is pushed further down to earlier ages, as university degrees finish after three years to qualify for the labour market and secondary education ends at age 16 to 18 and whilst most countries already introduced legislation to allow young people to obtain a driver’s license before adulthood, young people still are considered too immature to vote at age 16. Local youth parliaments show that young people can provide relevant insights and argumentation from their personal background from ages as early as 10 years old.



Participation is of utter importance to become a full part of society. Young people are expected to fulfill their part in society without being properly represented in the decision making processes. Society leans more and more on the shoulders of young people as it ages. In 2020, there will be about twice as many retired people as young people between 15 and 24, increasing the pressure while at the same time reducing the importance of young people as a voter group.

Denmark and Scotland already discuss very vividly the issue of voting age 16 in their election system. First positive examples can be gathered for this form of inclusion from the 2008 elections in Austria, as well as in local elections in Germany and Switzerland. Those experiences showed that young people vote in similar patterns than the other voter groups. Also Hungary, Norway, Slovenia and the UK give the possibility to take part in elections when 16 but only under special circumstances.

For the fore-mentioned reasons, JEF-Europe calls upon the Member States to:

Lower the active right to vote to the age of 16, matching the rights and responsibilities of young people in society, keeping in mind the mandatory or voluntary nature of the respective national election systems;

Substantially strengthen civic education in the curricula from an earlier age, with a specific focus on participation and fundamental rights, preparing them to make full use of their rights;

Consider possibilities to further lower the voting age for local democratic processes;

Enter a dialogue with young people to enable them to express their opinions and perspectives, also outside the election period;

Support the public campaign and the tools of public expression to lower the voting age in order to enable young people to participate in democratic electoral process.