

Recommendation 1315 (1997)¹

Minimum age for voting

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly has, on various occasions, discussed the issue of lowering the minimum age for voting, notably in [Recommendation 1286 \(1996\)](#) on a European strategy for children and in Order No. 523 (1996) on the situation of young people in Europe: marginalised youth.
2. Various other initiatives have dealt with this issue, whether at Council of Europe level or at national level in some member states. Indeed, in Europe, the minimum age for voting has continually been reduced over recent decades; in some places it has even been brought below the age of civil majority. Nevertheless, it still varies considerably.
3. Recalling the numerous initiatives that already exist to promote the participation of young people, whether by means of specific institutions or by means of the co-management system (and by [Recommendation 1019 \(1985\)](#) on the participation of young people in political and institutional life), the Assembly stresses the need to prepare young people for their participation in democratic life and emphasises:
 - 3.1. the paramount importance which the difficult period of adolescence has for the future citizen;
 - 3.2. that the young person is already an important member of society without necessarily being a fully-fledged citizen;
 - 3.3. that a better participation in voting will help to make young people more aware of their responsibility for defining their position and role in society, and that it is essential that they be given new responsibilities along with new rights;
 - 3.4. that better civics education must be provided by education systems to enable future, fully fledged citizens to avail themselves fully of their new rights;
 - 3.5. that schools can constitute a model for democratic participation if pupils are involved in the decision-making process
4. Particular emphasis must also be placed on:
 - 4.1. a view of society in which young people have a stronger position and in which they are fully integrated despite the sociological changes taking place;
 - 4.2. the very principles of democracy, which call for the participation of the largest possible number of people in policy-making and in politics, in the noble sense of the word;
 - 4.3. the constant concern of all democrats to extend and improve the democratic functioning of our societies;
 - 4.4. the possibility of bringing new blood into the electorate and thus giving greater expression to the concerns of the younger generation;
 - 4.5. the desire to increase young people's interest in public affairs and the common good and to see them become fully involved in society's future at the dawn of the twenty-first century;

1. Assembly debate on 31 January 1997 (8th Sitting) (see [Doc. 7724](#), report by the Committee on Culture and Education, rapporteur: Mr Kollwelter). Text adopted by the Assembly on 31 January 1997 (8th Sitting).



- 4.6. the importance of effectively combating the growing danger of the exclusion of young people and the concern to do everything possible to facilitate their integration into the structures of society.
5. The recent introduction of provisions granting citizens of the European Union the right to vote in local and European elections in their country of residence, another measure to extend democracy, has similar aims.
6. The Assembly therefore calls on the Committee of Ministers to recommend that member states adopt the following course of action:
 - 6.1. rapidly harmonise the age for the right to vote and stand for election at 18 years in all countries and for all elections;
 - 6.2. create the necessary preconditions for the participation of young people in civic life through education and the promotion of community involvement.