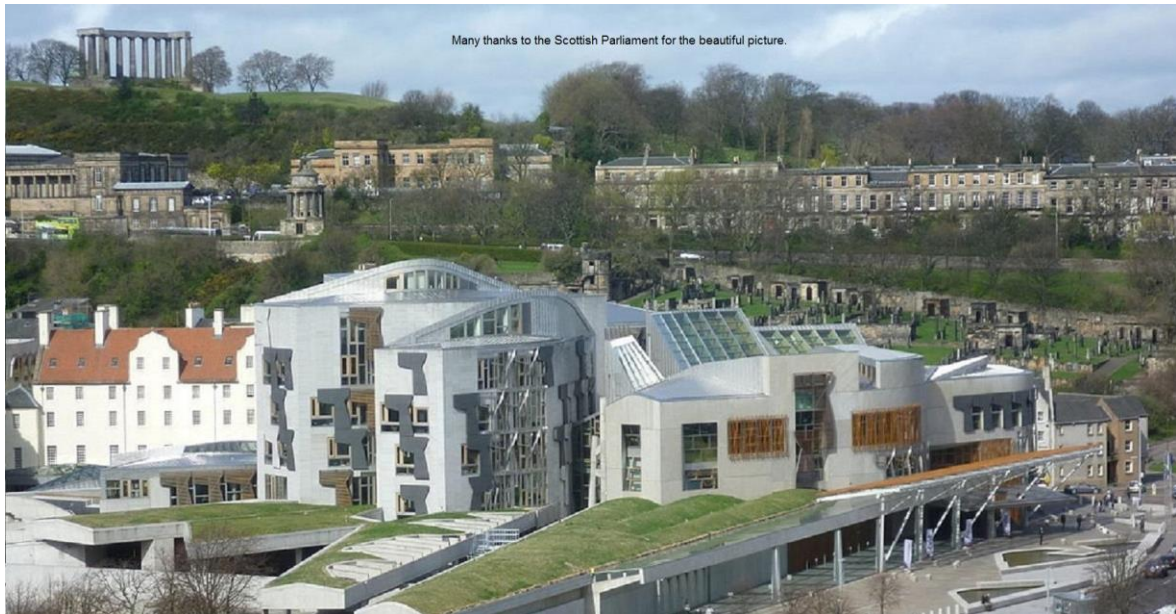


start

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This site gives information about voting rights from birth.



Full participation democracy entitles all citizens to give word to their interests in the affairs of the state, either by their own voice or on their behalf.



medallion by Andrea della Robbia

EVERYONE
HAS
INTERESTS
AND HAS THE
RIGHT
TO HAVE THESE
LOOKED AFTER,
SO FROM
BIRTH ON



democracy in action

This picture of democracy-at-work shows elegantly that a parliament with only elderly gentlemen is incomplete, hence the empty seats and the sad look on the face of the figure on the right. Maybe the Romans already noticed and felt the lack of women in their midst and that of young persons of both gender (the picture is actually "Cicero Accuses Catiline," painted by Cesare Maccari in 1888). Whatever way we look at the picture, the parliament is an excellent forum for advocating an opinion and is best done by a representative with whom one can identify. There are of course also other ways of expressing a political idea but in the parliament we are all present or so we should. In the parliament we speak and exchange with other members to convince them of an opinion. Therefore on this place the arguments in favour of voting rights for all citizens.

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A Complete Suffrage means voting rights for all citizens

Suffrage (the right to vote) for everybody poses the question who everybody is. Voting rights serve a purpose and that is to have your interests represented. Everybody has interests. Everybody means from birth on. Our interests as a citizen are already influenced by the care our pregnant mothers is given. How health care for babies, how education for children is organised and many other policies are implemented by our government, is of interest to us all. Still the persons who are

concerned most by this have no say in how it is organised, how the policies are made by our government. We now think that all citizens, all persons should be represented in the parliament which can be influenced by our vote. Parliament makes the laws of the land and controls the government. Parliament as representation of the population is sovereign, is accountable only to the electorate, all of us. Having a say in these affairs by way of a vote for our representative, is a form of participation democracy. But it is only partial participation where in most countries citizens under the age of 18 years (16 in Scotland) have no vote. Our democratic government has roots in the Greek and Roman Antiquity where only a very few people (wealthy men) had a vote. From then on the argument 'we know what is best for the rest' lost more and more credibility and it is the general belief that all citizens should have an opportunity to have their voice heard through elected representatives. About 20% of our population does not have a vote. These 20% are the people under the minimum voting age. They also have interests and in some respects these are different from the interests of all others. They at least have the greatest stake in the future where most government policies have their effect. Full participation democracy should include giving a voice to ALL citizens, so from birth on. This website discusses the argument in favour of Votes For All and also for Scotland to be the first country in the world to have Complete Suffrage.

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Some arguments in favour of complete suffrage, that is from birth on.

The three central arguments for a Complete Suffrage are:

- 1 Voting is a fundamental right of ALL citizens.
- 2 No citizen can be discriminated against because of age.
- 3 All citizens have the right to have their interests looked after.

Supportive arguments are:

- 4 It is just common sense to give them the right.
- 5 Most people agree.
- 6 It encourages parents to participate in voting.
- 7 More voters means more impact on politics.
- 8 It encourages young people to become involved.
- 9 Young persons' brains are as good as any other.
- 10 It is their right.
- 11 More voters, more views, wider understanding of reality.
- 12 Voting is a good educational tool.
- 13 Young persons also must follow the law but have no say in making it.

- 🗳️ 14 They are already active in politics, so also deserve a vote.
- 🗳️ 15 Young people are enthusiastic voters.
- 🗳️ 16 Larger voters turnout.
- 🗳️ 17 Being a voter helps to improve general living conditions.
- 🗳️ 18 Gives more importance to the interests of families.
- 🗳️ 19 Whatever young people vote for is valuable.
- 🗳️ 20 Democracy is for all people, so also for young ones.
- 🗳️ 21 Young persons already have rights, why not also voting rights.
- 🗳️ 22 Young persons already have duties but have no say in it.

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Some thoughts about counter arguments

The first thing I usually here against my proposal is that children have no knowledge about politics and therefore should not have a vote.

What I would like to say against that view is that children do have knowledge of politics, but not all of them in the same way. Unfortunately, there are many adults who lack any knowledge about politics and they also have a vote. It is not that the children themselves should go to the ballot box (what about babies crawling in and out?) but that they have an interest in the political affairs. Until they can act themselves, parents will vote on their behalf. Parents always act on the behalf of their children and are the best people to do so with the children's interest in mind.

Another criticism is the complications it will give for the electoral organisation.

Well, not really. Of course the rules must be clear and unambiguous. One option could be to give the vote for all children born on the day of announcing the election and older up to 16 years, to the mother who then can decide whether she will do the voting or that she leaves this to her child when he/she is at that day 12 years or older. There are other options imaginable with essentially the same outcome.

Young persons can not oversee the importance of a decision.

That may be true, but do you really think all adults can? The point is not how they vote, but that they have a vote. Would it not be up to the political candidates and political parties to present reasonable options to vote for. In that case a vote can never be wrong?

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Can you think of a reason, I mean a good solid one, not to give the right to vote to everyone, from birth?

No? neither can I.



Why Scotland could be the First country in the world with Complete Suffrage.



Scotland is a young country with a long history. The new Scottish Parliament was a mere reinstatement of the parliament dissolved in 1707. Strong movements in Scotland for self-rule early in the 20th century suggested a Scottish Assembly for domestic affairs. This ultimately led to the devolved Scottish Parliament in 1999 and soon this became a mature institution with the freshness of being

young and with the awareness of its history. On many occasions the Scottish Parliament has shown to be able to hold its Government to account and to be in the forefront of nationwide developments. Lowering the voting age to 16 years was unanimously accepted by the Scottish Parliament. The Referendum of 2014 and the following Parliamentary Elections have shown an increasing commitment of the Electorate. The high level of argument exchange with mutual respect are testimony of a population and country capable of dealing with its own affairs. The Scottish Parliament has retaken its place in the row of National Parliaments. Irrespective of being in the UK or independent, Scotland will rise further in the esteem of the nations. Here it could give the example to other nations of a Complete Suffrage.



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Democracy for all, an argument for complete suffrage

Suffrage is one of the most important and visible institutions of democratic government. Universal suffrage is the voting right for all. The only restriction is residency for local elections, citizenship for nationwide elections and a minimum voting age. The suffrage enables the people to participate in the government by electing a representative. The representative voices the opinion of the electors on their order or as seen in their interest. This elected representative embodies the participation of the constituency in the governing of the country. The exclusion of everyone under the age of 16 years (in most countries 18 years) from the universal suffrage is generally accepted because of the cognitive development of this group of people. This is not supported by the general theory of representation. This theory implies the representative to act in the general interest of the citizens of the constituency as well as the wider community. The young people out with the franchise do not have a say in the choice of the representative and are not electorally respected. An argument against exclusion of the under 16-18 is that their interests are not given weight through a vote according to the principle of one-man-one-vote. Since the beginning of this century an increasing amount of literature has

appeared exploring the possibility to increase the franchise by lowering the voting and ultimately from birth on. Opponents to such an extension stress the lack of maturity as the main argument for their view. An important argument in favour of the extension is the further increase of democratic development of society.

An essay about this subject explaining democracy and representation with a voting age from birth on, can be downloaded (for free) from the link on the site.

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This could be the first Parliament in the world
to approve a Complete Suffrage.

What can we do?

- Make contact with your MSP/MP who will be able to help you find another interested representative.
- Go online. The best is to have one outlet point (such as this website) and have other media link to it.
- Be a spokesperson for the subject. Use every opportunity to present the message.
- Contact the media. Find someone to network with in your national broadcasting organisation.
- Even if you are a single-person organisation, try to find like-minded people
- Contact the writing press. Most journalists have a wide network.

- Join electoral groups. They are all interested even if they do not agree with you, but it helps you further.
- Make contact with all political parties in your country.
- Keep yourself educated by reading books, journal and newspaper articles, attend courses in person or online

COLOFON

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This site hosts a FORUM with submitted essays about the voting rights for young persons.



[your webmaster](#).

This whole page as a pdf-file (feel free to disseminate)

[votes 4 all](#) is an organisation to promote Complete Suffrage and is without affiliation to any political party, political organisation or any government and does not receive any financial support from these or any other source. © www.votes4all.org * 2017-2021.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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The photos on this page are from the World Wide Web, with special thanks to the Scottish Parliament. The selfie was taken at home. Other images on this website are subject to copyright as indicated on the location.

The medallion by Andrea della Robbia is one of several in the colonnade of the Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence. See for yourself some pictures:



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