

Voting at 16

Read the following text about the „10 FACTS“ given by the UK Youth Parliament Organisation and have a close look at its arguments.

Votes@16: 10 Facts

The facts about voting and young people in the UK.

1. The **current age of 18** has been in place **since 1970**, when the 1969 Representation of People Act came into effect and reduced the age from 21.
2. **Citizenship education** is now a **compulsory** part of the national curriculum in England at key stages 3 and 4 (from the age of eleven to sixteen) and it is an optional part of the curriculum for key stages 1 and 2 (from the age of five to eleven).
3. There is a **great inconsistency about the age** at which a person gains various **civil rights**. Before a person can vote, at the age of 18, they can:
 - Leave school (16)
 - Take up full time employment (16)
 - Get married (16)
 - Leave home (16)
 - Claim some benefits if they need them (16)
 - Join the armed forces (16)
 - Learn to drive a car (17)
 - Pay taxes (16)
4. A number of countries use the **voting age of 16**, including **Brazil, Nicaragua, Cuba and Bosnia Herzegovina**. Indonesia has a voting age of 17. There are moves in Austria to lower the voting age to 16.*
5. The **Electoral Commission** was asked by the government to set up a **consultation** and report back. When **the report** was published in April 2004 it recommended that the voting age should remain at 18.
6. Depending on the timing of general elections, a person eligible to vote at 18 may not get the **chance to vote until** they are 23.
7. **Local councils** have started to debate having policy on lowering the voting age.
8. There are **81 current members of the House of Commons** who benefited directly from the last lowering of the voting age in 1970. These include Prime Minister **Gordon Brown**, Liberal Democrat MP **Simon Hughes** and former Conservative Trade and Industry Secretary **John Redwood**.
9. The **Isle of Man**, the first country in the world to introduce votes for women, lowered the official voting age to 16 in 2006.
10. England has over **11 million children** and young people – that's about **one in five** of the population!

* Austria introduced the voting age of 16 in 2007

Source: www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/votes_at_16/pages/facts.html (15.9.2008)