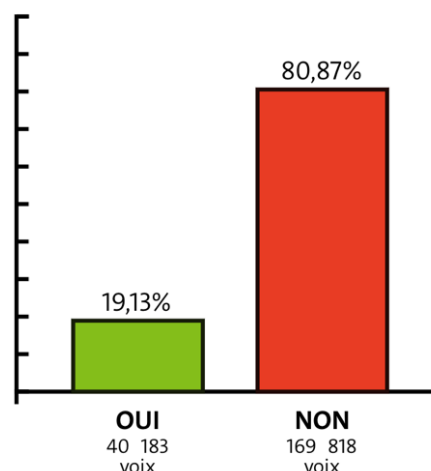


## Lowering the voting age

Elections are held in Luxembourg every 6 years, the legal age for voting being 18 years old or over. These elections help shape the upcoming future of Luxembourg and its people, especially for young people as it is a big part of their future the election will affect. So then why are young people put at such a minority during voting? How come people over the age of 75 are still eligible to vote while on the other hand people under the age of 18 are still not allowed? Many teen voices tend to get blocked out and cast aside while adults get more say and freedom. This is why lowering the voting age even by a few years will not only draw more teenagers to be more in touch with politics but also allow them to be more aware in the society they live in.

### 2015 Luxembourg Constitutional Referendum

In 2015, there was a referendum held in Luxembourg that related to the drafting of the new constitution. There were three referendum questions on the table, one of the questions being the optional right to vote for Luxembourgers that were over 16 years of age. Lowering the voting age down to 16 has already been done in a few European countries such as Austria. Alongside Italy, Austria is ranked number 1 in voter turnouts from ages 15-30. That is 79% of all young Austrians who voted which is 15% more than the European average. Following this example, Luxembourg could also do something similar. Unfortunately this idea was harshly turned down by the majority of people. It was announced on the [\*Le site officiel des élections au Grand-Duché de Luxembourg\*](#) that a huge percentage of 80,87% voted for the rejection of this idea, while only 19,13% people approved of it. And though this was not approved 7 years ago, I think the voting age being lowered to 16 years old is a good way to help young people play a bigger part in shaping their future.



### Are 16 year olds mature enough?

For some people, they may see 16-17 year olds as not yet old enough, not yet knowledgeable enough or even not trustable enough to be able to vote. One argument that is commonly passed around is that 16-17 year olds are not mature enough emotionally, that they bend too easily into peer pressure or make too many impulsive decisions. This doesn't exactly mean that this will show during the voting. Yes, teenagers, statistically speaking, tend to take more physical risks and act without thought but this does not directly mean that when faced with contemplative decisions teenagers will react the same way. Usually most aspects of emotional and intellectual maturity reaches to adult level from ages 15-22. But things that require thoughtful decision-making, also called "cold cognition", is achieved to adult level at quite an early age of 16. On the other hand "hot cognition", which is when people are put in situations in which they feel pressured by time and emotion, is reached at 18-22 years old. For things such as voting, which is put under the "cold cognition" category, a 16 year old should be capable of being independent enough to vote for what they think is best

### Giving young people the right to vote for their future

A common barrier that teenagers face is adults not taking their opinions on the world seriously. They have a hard time trying to be heard while adults are able to talk more freely without having to fear being cast aside for being too young or ignorant. There are a few ways teenagers can actually make a change in society



such as joining clubs or organisations for youth, but sometimes that may not be enough. For example, many young people talk about climate change. It is something that is already taught in most schools in Luxembourg and it is something particularly concerning future generations. Climate change may not be very obvious now but it will definitely have a huge impact in the future which is why we should take action as early as possible, preferably now.

Many young people have already started contributing what they can to help with the climate change problem but there is only so much they can do. Giving teenagers the right to vote will let them take more control of their future and the future of the earth they live in.

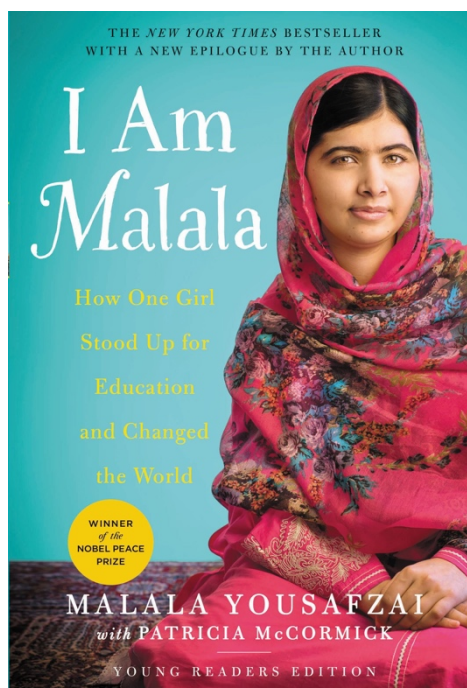


### Teenaged activists

There are many young activists around the world but there are a few that particularly stand out. They have shown that teenagers can take responsibility and if they work hard enough they can catch the eyes of adults and bigger organisations. If these teenage activists can achieve so much who says that teenagers can't do something as small as voting?

Greta Thunberg, a 19-year old girl who is known internationally as a climate activist. She was just 15-years old when she sparked the *Fridays for Future* movement. But that was only the start as a year later the teen delivered a big speech at the United Nations Climate Action Summit. At only 16-years old Greta was talking in front of leaders and lawmakers. In the same year she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Award and in the two consecutive years after that she was nominated again each year.





Malala Yousafzai, currently 24-years old, is a human rights activist. As a child she lived in Pakistan's Swat Valley. She became a target of the Taliban when she started speaking out against the ban on girls education and at 11-years old Malala survived an assassination attempt against her. At age 15 she launched the Malala fund, a global girl's education charity and when she was just 16-years old she made a speech on gender equality at the United Nations. A year later she wrote an autobiography called *I am Malala*. With it Malala won a Nobel Peace Prize at 17-years old making her the youngest winner of a Nobel Award.

And though not all teenagers are as aware or influential as Thunberg or Malala it still shows that young people can still take charge and responsibility. Not to mention that these two aren't the only teenage activists, there are many more in the world. Some are famous globally and over social media while others aren't as well known, they are even teenage activists in Luxembourg. Giving teenagers the right to vote will give young activists in Luxembourg a chance to make society a better place.

As you can see not all teenagers are immature or uneducated. They're already many teenagers who are more than ready to vote and if the voting age was lowered then maybe other teenagers who may not be as educated on world problems as others would start to become more aware. I am not saying that lowering the voting age will fix everything, it will take more for teenagers to truly be able to feel confident in speaking freely and to be heard. But I do think lowering the voting age is a good first step towards a better future.