



IF A PERSON HAS THE
RIGHT TO VOTE, HE
OR SHE SHOULD ALSO
HAVE THE RIGHT TO
RUN FOR OFFICE. ”

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Half of the global population is under the age of 30 but only 2% are members of parliament. Efforts have been made to promote the rights of young people to run for public office, but despite the achievements, young people are still underrepresented in government and politics at every level. [The not too young to run](#) campaign aims to elevate the promotion of young people's right to run for public office.

With 73% of countries restricting young people from running for Houses of Parliament and 62 being the average age of world leaders, it is clear that young people need to be able to actively participate in electoral politics to make sure future generations grow up in thriving and representative democracies worldwide. A few change makers tell us why it is important that the voice of the young generation is heard.

According to Johanna Nyman, President of the [European Youth Forum](#) , there are still many obstacles in Europe for young people to run in elections. “One of the main problems is of course the age limit, but there is also a lot of age discrimination against young people running for office. These obstacles include funding for a campaign, but also visibility”. When it comes to whether or not any particular European country is leading by example she added that “the Nordic countries have pretty good statistics when it comes to people under 35 being involved in

parliament. But even there, we see a big discrepancy between the proportion of young people running and the number of them actually elected". In Europe, only the parliaments in Finland, Norway and Sweden have more than 10 % of members aged under 30.



Francesco Vanderjeugd (26 years old), a Belgian mayor and member of Parliament.

In Belgium, the age of candidacy is 18, but once a young parliamentarian is elected, they often face further obstacles. Francesco Vanderjeugd (26 years old), a Belgian mayor of a town in Flanders and also a member of the Flemish Parliament, confirmed that young people have to fight against a lot of prejudices such as being incapable, or not having enough experience to judge on important matters. "You really need to earn your place, by having a unique and personal contribution to the debate, and realizations." His message to young people is that you're never too young to join youth sections of political parties and participating in student political life.

For the European Youth Forum, the overall aim of the campaign is to clearly expand democracy and make sure that the younger generation is truly represented. Their president pointed out that "we see today in Europe that a lot of political decisions are made which are discriminating our generation" whereas the added value of electing young politicians is that they bring a whole new perspective to the debate. An opinion shared by Anne Lambelin (29 years old), a member of the Walloon Parliament and a champion of the campaign: "the added value of young people is the fact that they tend to dream more and therefore push more for their ideas. Renewal is essential

for democracy. Young people have the tendency to be more enthusiastic and are able to make the majority's voices heard”.



Anne Lambelin, 29 year old member of the Walloon Parliament, intervening during a parliamentary session.

Inspired by the Nigerian example #NotTooYoungtoRun, the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth initiated this global campaign in partnership with the UN Development Programme, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Inter-parliamentary Union, the European Youth Forum (EYF) and the Youth Initiative for Advocacy Growth & Advancement (YIAGA).

Additional links:

- [Not Too Young to Run](#)
- [UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth](#)
- [European Youth Forum](#)

If you're old enough to vote, you're old enough to run for office

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