

Writing Section: Instructions

09.05.2007

- You have 2 hours (FP1 and 2)/ 2½ hours (FP3) in which to do this section,
- give yourself half an hour to think through your ideas and plan your essay,
- you may use your own print dictionaries,
- **write between 500 and 700 words (between 600 and 800 words if you are doing FP3)**
- write the number at the end of your essay.

Do not forget to put:

- your **registration number** at the **top of each page** of your essay,
- **which Fachprüfung** you are doing,
- and **the title of the essay**. (Do NOT invent your own title!)

PLEASE NOTE:

1. The essay should be written in a **formal, objective style**.
2. Please note that an essay is **not** a personal account or an 'inner monologue', and should be written **as far as possible from the third person perspective**.
3. You **must answer the question** (which means fulfil the task) **and include** ideas of your own.

Write an essay on the following topic

The Austrian government proposes lowering the voting age to 16.

Is this a good idea?

You MUST:

- give *reasons* for this proposal,
- describe what this will entail for *parents, teachers* and *anyone else* concerned,
- state whether this is a *good* or a *bad proposal* and say *why*.

**The Austrian government proposes lowering the voting age to 16.
Is this a good idea?**

According to the Austrian judicial system every adult to be in possession of the Austrian nationality from the age of 18 up has the right to vote. The major intention behind the government's proposal of lowering the voting age to 16 seems to be the wish to increase the number of voters as well as to include the youth's opinion in the decision making process. It is in this context that we must consider that the youth is already entitled to make use of certain rights, for instance the right to go out until 2am or drink alcohol with regard to 16 year old teenagers. Therefore it creates the impression that it seems contradicting to exclude these teenagers from political decisions by denying them the right to vote.

Due to the fact that the government's proposal addresses teenagers at the age of 16, parents will probably face problems in regard of their offspring as far as length of stay as well as the permission to go out are concerned. Broadly speaking it is a common phenomenon that as soon as youngsters are given a certain right – in this case the right to vote – they will probably start demanding even more. Therefore, it should be kept in mind that a major problem which will confront parents may be to resist the temptation of allowing everything or of influencing their young adults' decision as far as politics are concerned. Nevertheless, an advantage in regard of this issue is that parents might start treating their children more like grown-ups than little babies.

Also teachers will "enjoy" the effect of the new voting right, because they need to change the treatment of their students and adapt it in order to reach their new identity. The teaching staff needs to do justice to the new role, which will probably develop in response to the new right, of their students. Furthermore, especially History teachers have the duty to restructure their lessons, meaning that it becomes necessary to teach political education already in the 6th form instead of discussing it with students aged 18.

Not only parents and teachers, but even the government gains new duties whereby it has to expand its area of responsibility. Due to the new right given to teenagers, the state has to inform teenagers about the rights and duties the newly developed proposal will bring about. Nevertheless, the main reason for opposition remains: it is doubtful whether teenagers are already grown-up enough to take such a huge responsibility as to vote and whether the political parties are capable to address a younger clientele as well. The political parties will have to change their tactics, programs as well as their language in order to reach the new needs of teenagers as well.

The effect this new law might have on the youth itself is that the younger audience's interest in politics might increase while they probably have the opportunity to find out what they can achieve as well as how they can influence politics with their vote. The negative side of this aspect might be that it is doubtful whether there will be a great variety of laws epitomizing great importance for teenagers and if all of them will be mature enough to reach a prudent decision if standing in front of the ballot box.

The government's disparaging voting age proposal seems to have advantages as well as disadvantages. On the one hand, the youth is enabled to take part in the decision making process at a younger age, but on the other hand it is doubtful whether they can really understand what politics is about and how they should implement the law. In conclusion it can be ascertained that the proposal of lowering the voting age to 16 is definitely not the worst idea the government ever had, especially concerning the main argument in favor which is the fact that politics has actually nothing to do with *age*. The truth is that a lot of teenagers are often better informed than elder generations which can be traced back to *knowledge* triggering interest in politics, not age. In parenthesis, there is nevertheless one question which remains: If we lower the voting age to 16, why not disparaging the driving age to 16 as well?

(726 words)

Band 5**Justification**

While the text maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy, there are occasional problems with article use (*...in possession of the Austrian nationality ...*), punctuation in nondefining relative clauses, pronoun reference within sentences (*... it creates the impression that it seems contradicting ...; ... the treatment of their students and adapt it in order to reach their new identity*), tense (*... but even the government gains ...; ... the state has to inform teenagers ...*).