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**Autor:** Werder, Christian  
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The right to vote at 18

## Success second time round?

Twelve years ago Switzerland's 18-year-olds were rebuffed by the voters, when a proposal to lower the voting age to 18 in Federal affairs was rejected in a referendum. On 3 March this year a second referendum was held on the subject.

February 18, 1979 was a day of disappointment for many young people in Switzerland: the voters rejected the proposal to give 18-year-olds the vote. The margin was admittedly small, but it was enough. There were 934,073 votes in favour and 964,749 against, with eight cantons and half-cantons for and 12 cantons and four half-cantons opposing

*In a national referendum on 3 March 1991 the Swiss voters and cantons approved the lowering of the voting age to 18 at federal level. Voting figures were: 983 637 (72,8 per cent) in favour and 368 246 (27,2 per cent) against.*

the measure. The "older generations" were unwilling to give up any of their political power to the youngsters.

On 3 March the question was again put to the vote. Are the 18-years-old now accepted as adults to be taken seriously or are they still regarded as big children?

The "Swiss Review" wanted to find out the views of those concerned – the young people – on the proposal to lower the voting age to 18. Summing up it can be said that no youngster has publicly come out against it!

The following is a small selection of the views expressed by apprentices and youngsters still at school.



**Karin Fürer (17):**

*"Of course I'm for lowering the voting age. Many things voted on, like environmental questions, affect our future. And there I would like to have my say and help decide."*



**Karin Bracher (18):**

*"People aged 80 and 90 are allowed to vote. So why shouldn't 18 year olds be able to?"*



**Emanuel von Erlach (17):**

*"Being able to vote at 18 would certainly arouse young people's interest in political questions by giving them the chance to share in decision making."*

**Stefanie Jones (18):**

*"I'm certainly in favour of votes at 18! Giving foreigners the right to vote would also be a good thing."*

*So far 14 cantons and two half-cantons have introduced the right to vote at the age of 18. Five more cantons are about to do so.*



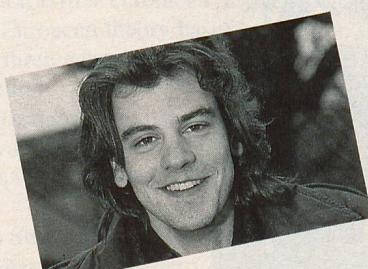
**Gaby Demme (19):**

*"I've already voted at cantonal level. The right to vote at 18 should also be introduced at federal level."*



**Brigitte Zulauf (18):**

*"I would even be in favour of having the right to vote at the age of 16. We already have responsibilities at that age. So we should also be given rights."*



**Ralph Balmer (20):**

*"We'll be living in the future, so young people should also be able to help shape it. All the same I think many young people are overtaxed by political questions."*

*Text/Survey: Christian Werder  
Photos: Hans R. Amrein*