

While other instruments to prevent the marginalisation of certain population groups – such as gender or ethnic quotas – have been investigated and discussed substantially in research and politics in recent years, the concept of “youth quotas” has not received any attention of this kind in the literature so far. This is why this journal will serve as a useful source of information for anyone who is interested in this topic and who sees the currently insufficient level of youth participation in parliaments, business, academia, and other public institutions, as a phenomenon that should be remedied, no matter to which generation one belongs. Since “youth” is a far-reaching term that might give rise to misunderstandings, it is important to clarify that, in this journal, it refers primarily to the 15–30 year olds among the population.

The contributions analyse in depth whether youth quotas are an effective means to remedy the underrepresentation of youth in parliaments, to create more “youth-friendly” policies that focus on future trends and developments with which the next generations will have to cope, and to counteract the changes in age demographics that are already visible today. The latter is particularly pertinent in the context of youth quotas, since evidence suggests that in many Western countries the percentage of young people among the whole population is constantly decreasing. For instance, Eurostat figures for population projections from 2011 indicate such a development: while in 1960, in all 27 EU countries as well as in the four EFTA countries the average percentage of the population aged over 65 was only around 9%, this proportion will increase to more than 19% in 2020 and to over 29% by 2060.

Some other key issues addressed in this journal pertain to the following questions. Can the introduction of youth quotas be justified in a democratic system? Would they really bring about intergenerationally fairer outcomes? Will young representatives necessarily defend and respect the interests of the youth? And are there more effective and justifiable instruments to enhance youth participation in parliament or other institutions? In the opening article, Juliana Bidadanure claims that the implementation of youth quo-

tas in parliaments would produce fairer outcomes for the current young generation as well as for future generations. She justifies this thesis with two different possible effects of youth quotas, namely substantive representation and symbolic representation. Substantive representation refers to the belief that young representatives in parliament may represent the interests of youth better and therefore implement more policies that have a long-term view, e.g. with regard to the environment. With the model of symbolic representation, Bidadanure also suggests that youth quotas might play a symbolic role when it comes to promoting a community of equals with the same political rights. Indirectly, this might improve political participation of youth as a whole.

In the subsequent article, Ivo Wallimann-Helmer tries to find an answer to the question of whether youth quotas will help to avoid future disasters, for instance those related to public debt or the environment. Trying to find a possible justification for youth quotas, he draws four conclusions. First, quotas are not a normative goal in themselves, but only a means to avoid unjustified discrimination. Second, in a democracy quotas are used to guarantee that the interests of different population groups are effectively translated into policy, hence they are most important for the legislative assembly. Third, in the light of recent demographic changes, youth quotas can be justified to avoid the marginalisation of young people’s interests. In this context, Wallimann-Helmer also discusses which design of quotas would be appropriate to achieve this goal. The last and most convincing argument for the implementation of youth quotas, according to the author, is that they might ensure better legitimacy of the long-term impacts of policy decisions taken today.

The third article, by Marcel Wissenburg, brings the social justice perspective into the discussion on whether or not to introduce quotas for the young. According to Wissenburg, the social justice discourse retains numerous questionable underlying assumptions, seven of which he addresses from a libertarian perspective. By adopting this perspective, he concludes that the theory of temporal justice makes clear that responsibil-

ity cannot only be borne by the young or future generations, but that it has to be shared by the population as a whole. Even though this conclusion provides him with a possible justification for youth quotas, he draws the attention to another instrument he considers more appropriate to ensure youth participation: the concept of veto rights.

In our special section, entitled “Country Report: Youth Quotas in Peru”, Christian Pardo Reyes tells the story of how he successfully started a campaign in Lima, Peru, to introduce a quota system reflecting the need to involve youth at all levels of government power. His organisation became known as *Internacional Juvenil*. In order to achieve its goals, it established strong relationships with other youth organisations, state agencies and influential political leaders. Today, its work continues in other countries of the world, such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico and Spain, where a “Youth Tithe” similar to the Peruvian model is being promoted.

The topic of youth quotas raises political, philosophical, legal, demographic, environmental and sociological questions. Interdisciplinarity is central to this new topic, which has been neglected so far by researchers in these disciplines. We hope that this issue kicks off the intensive debate that the theme deserves.

We wish you an insightful and rewarding read.

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