



SOCIAL POLICY COMMISSION 17/18

Meeting #4
University of Malta, the KSU Common Room
10th October 2017, 17.30

MINUTES

1. Approval of agenda
Agenda approved
2. Approval of minutes
Minutes approved
3. Update on legalisation of marijuana
Gabriella Sutton (Commissioner): The subcommittee is looking at the research and educational aspect of legalising marijuana in Malta to create a better research background and subsequently take an informed decision. The report will be finalised and sent via email. Both medical and recreational uses were analysed, including all implications and effects.
4. Vote16
Gabriella Sutton (Commissioner): The government's budget included the analysis of the way forward with regards to vote16. This was previously discussed in KPS and the conclusion reached was that a strong educational campaign should be implemented. The question we can start the discussion with is: are 16 year olds informed enough to be granted civil responsibility?

Jean Gove' (GhST): The argument should be framed in light of the common good? Would it serve the common good? There's a pitfall of political parties using young age to their advantage. Maybe it's easier to get a 16 year old to vote for you. If the vote were to be allowed, a certain independent body needs to be there to provide impartial information about the election at hand and the issues at play. This is a step in the right direction in ensuring that a well-informed generation is being raised.

Sean Ellul (KNZ): As a representative of KNZ, I can confirm that education is definitely something something that we push for and it's something we always include in our Press Releases. Is it better for the common good? If you are to take an assessment of previous elections, such as Brexit and spring hunting referendum, from a voting perspective, the campaigns would have swayed in a completely different way if 16 and 17 year olds were to have a right to vote. These are statistics released by higher authorities and they're proof towards the fact that if these individuals were to have the right to vote, the outcome can be different. These people already have the necessary education but we should advocate for further education.

Fleur Abela (Pulse): We have always been in favour of vote16. My organisation contests various election in JC, MCast and KSU. Our counterpart is SDM. Students



know well who they're voting for. They are responsible enough to make decisions for their future but when it comes to voting it's not a matter of the common good. Don't forget that they already have a vote in local councils. Is their opinion relevant when they 18 because it's the common good but when you're 18 it's not, when most likely they'll have the same opinion when they're 16?

Jean Gove (GhST): It would be in favour of the common good were it to allow a vote for 16 year olds as voting is a duty. Are we looking at it from a rights based argument or a duty based argument?

Fleur Abela (Pulse): There are still parts of society who are not well-informed but get to vote. My obligation is towards what's best for my country. The young generation has hope. The older you get the more that diminishes.

Sean Ellul (KNZ): This topic has been exhausted. We've been discussing this for quite some time. The debate started because people were asking do they have the right. The answer should be yes.

Rakele Fiott (MUHS): A 2 year difference is huge. They are entitled to their opinion but this doesn't necessarily imply that they have a right to vote.

Karl Baldacchino (MIRSA): I know students at an advanced level who find the issue to be complex and tedious. Not that I wouldn't trust the experiment of them contesting but the question is how much authority are we willing to hand to them. Will they take it seriously?

Sean Ellul (KNZ): If an individual has a right to vote, he should have the right to contest. That decision is in the hand of the electorate. If a 16 year old decides to contest for Prime Minister, there's a 99.9% chance that it won't happen. Even though he's free to put in his nomination, the electorate will have to choose. Ultimately, the citizens can make whatever decision they want.

Rakele Fiott (MUHS): Let them be part of politics and let them have a say but I don't think they're informed enough to be part of government.

Sean Ellul (KNZ): But who decides if they're informed enough? 16 year olds pay a percentage of their income to the government and they don't have a right to decide who represents them.

Rebecca Farrugia Xerri (JEF): I personally think it's ridiculous that we're comparing tax with the right to vote. It is not the 19th century. If they can vote, are they entitled to other rights that they don't have yet at this age? Most 16 year olds haven't yet been exposed to certain realities. They would have had more discussions on the topic by the time they're 18.

Karin Cassar (Betapsi): From my perspective, since the age of 3, we're in the same school and within the same spheres. The word opinion has been mentioned. We shouldn't vote based on opinion but rather on what's out there. At that point we



wouldn't have had the opportunity to experience things from different perspectives. Without excluding that 16 year olds can vote, contestation is a different element.

Jake Camilleri (ELSA): I have to continue on Rebecca's point. Where misinformation is concerned, the comment that people from other age groups have such an enshrined opinion that they can never be well-informed cannot be left out. Another question to also keep in mind is: Do we trust them to vote but not to drive?

Cynthia Chircop (We Are): A lot of valid points have been mentioned. If we do give them the right, then we should also push for better democratic processes. They need to experience what it feels like and what it is.

Mahbuba dehkandjaeva (SIERA): Tax isn't a solid reason. What if someone doesn't make the tax bracket? It cannot be a decision based on that. Can you imagine secondary schools becoming political grounds because I can definitely imagine that? Is it what we want?

ESN: Everyone ends up going back to education. If the subject such as Systems of Knowledge is revamped and you can educate, you can move forward. You'd be making them more mature. 16 year olds can be more knowledgeable than a 40 year old voter. Someone who's younger can be better informed.

Lara Attard (GhSL): from a comparative point of view, the age to get licensed varies according to countries. A possibility is to take a comparative approach to capacity of voting.

Kayrin Gauci (JEF): We tend to live in a university bubble where we're detached from reality. The truth is our country has some of the highest school leaving rates. We need to incorporate this in real life. This subject has to be compulsory and how will we reach people who actually leave school? It has to be tackled from grassroot levels.

Rebecca Farrugia Xerri (JEF): tax cannot be an excuse. Vote16 is an easy thing to sell but the right to contest comes hand in hand with it and is this something we really want? These people will represent our country. In some countries they wouldn't even be able to drink.

Jean Gove' (GhST): The whole argument rests on this idea of tax. If you have a right to pay tax you have a right to vote and if you have a right to vote you have a right to contest. From a legal perspective that is the whole point.

Jasmine Farrugia (KNZ): As KNZ we're promoting civic education. Irrespective of age, it is important that we continue being educated. It's time for us to ask the government what the legal opinion is. We need to put forward the questions we came up with tonight. It is currently the situation that if someone is 16, he cannot sign a contract but a mayor has to sign a lot of contracts.

Fleur Abela (Pulse): Personally, I think that it will be more representative. 16 year olds will want someone who can voice their concerns. An older person has different



concerns. With regards to whether 16 year olds should be given the right to contest the election, if you have the right to vote you have the right to contest. It all boils down to using this timeframe to debate it further. At this point we are the main factors in this agenda. We are representing the youth of today and hopefully the leaders of tomorrow.

Kayrin Gauci (JEF): With regards to ageing population, a balance still won't change the youth within the parliament.

Gabriella Sutton (Commissioner): From the discussion we managed to gather there were various opinions. Our aim is to move forward in a concrete manner. The best way forward would be to put these questions in a document and present them to a consultation session.

The vote is this: a vote to open a subcommittee to draft the document which will be presented in front of the government.

Vote passed
1 abstention Sean Ellul

5. Upcoming events

Gabriella Sutton (Commissioner): Tomorrow there shall be an event called women in leadership. Her excellency will deliver the opening speech and several other speakers will give their insight on the topic in the form of a debate. We strongly encourage you to attend. With regards to domestic violence, we'd like to thank all the organisations that are working with us on it. Well done for all the work carried out! The final debate will be held on the 6th of December. This weekend there's campus fest. Come and join us for two days of fun.

6. Arising matters

Gabriella Sutton (Commissioner): The budget was announced yesterday and a reaction to it has been drafted. We will be sending it to you tonight and if you have any feedback, kindly send it by tomorrow at noon.

Meeting adjourned: 19.00