



'Europeanisation' of the 2014 EP elections

The European Parliament (EP) is the institution most often cited by EU citizens as guarantor of the representation of citizens' interests at EU level. However, elections to the EP are said to be 'second-order national elections', both regarding electoral procedure and electoral campaign topics. In order to redress this, many call for their 'Europeanisation'.

Towards more European elections

With a view to increasing the democratic legitimacy of decisions taken at EU level and in the light of [falling](#) voter turnout, political actors are seeking to ensure more lively elections to the EP. Particular emphasis is being placed on measures to make the elections more European rather than a [collection of national elections](#). To this end, [efforts](#) have been made to increase 'harmonisation' of electoral rules for the EP elections, beyond that enshrined in the [1979 Act](#) (as [amended](#) in 2002), [Directive 93/109/EC](#) and [Directive 2013/1/EU](#). However, the [diverging](#) constitutional and electoral traditions of the Member States (MS) have so far prevented any further agreement.

One of the key measures in bringing about the 'Europeanisation' of the EP elections and achieving higher participation is the nomination of candidates for President of the European Commission (EC). Citizens' disaffection would be tackled by increasing accountability of the European executive to the electorate. In this way, a clear political link between the elections to the EP and the appointment of the EC President would be created, responding to [criticism](#) that currently the EC does not need to be sustained by a parliamentary majority.

Nomination of candidates for Commission President

The Lisbon Treaty provides that the EP elects the EC President on the basis of a proposal from the European Council taking into account the elections to the EP ([Article 17\(7\) TEU](#)). This will apply for the first time for the 2014

elections. First appearing on the political [agenda](#) in the late 1990s, the idea for the political groups in the EP to nominate a candidate for the Presidency of the EC was taken up by the Future of Europe Group, consisting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of several MS. In its September 2012 [Final Report](#), it called for a 'truly European political space' to be achieved in the short term *inter alia* by the nomination of candidates for EC President by the European political parties (and, in the longer term, by direct election). The EC also embraced this approach in its [Communication](#) and [Recommendation](#) on the 2014 European elections, suggesting that national parties ensure that their electoral campaign materials and broadcasts inform citizens about the candidate they support for the EC Presidency and his/her programme.

Supporters of this idea [argue](#) that it would personalise the elections, convert them into a more trans-national event, and enable political parties to differentiate their programmes from those of competitors. A [Eurobarometer poll](#) suggests that in this case the majority of EU citizens would be more inclined to vote.

Conversely, some commentators [point](#) to the importance of retaining the separation of powers between legislature and executive at EU level as is the case in the USA. They [warn](#) against tight political ties between the EP and Commission that could weaken Parliament's scrutiny of the EC, and could undermine the Commission's role as guardian of the Treaties by compromising its independence.

The European Parliament

In its [resolution](#) of 22 November 2012 the EP called on the European political parties to nominate candidates for the Presidency of the EC, who should present their political programmes in all MS. Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee has adopted an [initiative report](#) (rapporteur Andrew Duff, ALDE, UK) on improving practical arrangements for the 2014 EP elections.