

**January 2024**

The European Parliament is the only directly elected institution of the European Union, with the next elections to take place from 6 to 9 June 2024. Although the possibility to develop a uniform electoral process is enshrined in the Treaties, the European elections are still governed for the most part by national laws. Only certain principles, such as proportional representation, minimum thresholds (in certain cases) and the common electoral period, are regulated at EU level. With a view to increasing the democratic legitimacy of decisions taken at Union level, the European Parliament is promoting measures that make the elections more European – rather than simply a collection of national elections. To harmonise further the rules for the EU elections, Parliament has proposed changes to the European Electoral Act on several occasions, most recently in May 2022.

### 2024 European elections: National rules

*'At a glance' note by Giulio Sabbati and Kristina Grošek*

This two-page infographic provides information on various key provisions applicable in the 2024 European elections. On the first page, readers will find information on the election day in each country, the voting systems used and the number of MEPs to be elected in each Member State, the minimum age to stand as a candidate in each country, and the rules governing voting from outside one's home Member State. With the total number of MEPs set to rise to 720, the infographic shows how the 15 additional seats will be distributed among Member States. Additional information and clarifications are provided on the second page of the infographic.

### Youth participation in European elections

*Briefing by Micaela Del Monte EPRS, December 2023*

After declining ever since the first European elections in 1979, electoral turnout for the 2019 elections was an unprecedented 50.6 % – up 8 percentage points from 2014. This increase was largely the result of greater youth participation, demonstrating young people's desire to participate in politics, including by casting their vote. Lowering the voting age is one way to increase youth participation in elections. Other methods include introducing youth quotas, offering online or postal voting, decreasing the age to stand as a candidate, and promoting civic education in schools.

### Artificial intelligence, democracy and elections

*Briefing by Michael Adam with Clotilde Hocquard, EPRS, September 2023*

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a powerful tool thanks to technological advances, access to large quantities of data, machine learning and increased computing power. AI presents an opportunity to improve the democratic process in our societies. With AI, citizens can gain a better understanding of politics and engage in democratic debate, while politicians can use AI to interact with and better represent their constituents. This alignment between citizens and politicians can be employed in electoral campaigns and make the policymaking process more accurate and efficient. However, AI also poses risks for democracy, as it is a powerful tool for disseminating disinformation and misinformation, potentially triggering tensions and leading to election-related conflict and even violence.

### Composition of the European Parliament

*'At a glance' note by Silvia Kotanidis, EPRS, September 2023*

Following a vote in the Constitutional Affairs Committee in September 2024, the European Parliament gave its consent to a decision of the European Council establishing Parliament's composition for the next term. This sets the number of European Parliament seats at 720, taking into account demographic changes that have occurred since the 2018 decision that redistributed the seats following the UK's withdrawal from the EU.



## Length of the election campaign and the electoral silence period in European Parliament elections

Briefing by Micaela Del Monte, Silvia Kotanidis, EPRS, September 2023

Currently, European Parliament election campaigns are largely regulated at national level, which means that there are differences among the EU Member States as to the activities allowed during the election period. Pending the adoption of an electoral reform intended to harmonise at least some of the aspects of the election campaign, such as its start (no earlier than 8 weeks before Election Day) and its end, as well as the start and the end of the election silence period (48 hours before Election Day), this briefing looks at the Member States' national rules on the length of the election campaign period and the election silence period.

## Voting from abroad in European Parliament elections

Briefing by Carmen-Cristina Cîrlig, EPRS, September 2023

Legal and practical arrangements for voting in the European elections for citizens who live, or who are temporarily outside, their home state vary greatly between EU countries. This briefing provides an overview of the national provisions concerning voting from abroad in the 27 EU Member States.

## Towards gender balance in the European elections: Electoral quotas – What can they achieve?

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, September 2023

The European Parliament is one of the world's most gender-balanced representative assemblies, but there are still significant divergences between EU countries. Several EU countries elect men and women in almost equal numbers, but others are still far from such a balance. Analysing the tools that have allowed certain Member States to close the gender gap is essential for further progress. In May 2022, the European Parliament drafted a legislative proposal that supports a binding objective of gender balance for European elections, but the Council has yet to endorse it.

## Prisoners' voting rights in European Parliament elections

Briefing by Martina Prpić, EPRS, September 2023

The current European Electoral Act does not contain any specific provisions concerning the exercise of the right to vote by prisoners. The definition of such provisions remains within the competence of each Member State. This briefing looks at the international and European standards applicable to the right to vote of prisoners. It also examines the existing provisions in the 27 EU Member States in relation to the European elections.

## Voting age for European elections

'At a glance' note by Rafał Mańko; Graphic by: Samy Chahri, EPRS, August 2023

Under current EU law, Member States set their own minimum national voting ages for the European elections. This age is set at 16 in Austria, Belgium, Germany and Malta, 17 in Greece and 18 in the remaining Member States.

## Spitzenkandidaten or the lead candidate process: ways to Europeanise elections to the European Parliament

Study by Silvia Kotanidis, EPRS, June 2023

With the intention of informing the debate in the approach to the 2024 European elections, this study examines the historical, factual and legal aspects surrounding the *Spitzenkandidaten*, or lead candidate process, which establishes a political link between the nomination of the President of the European Commission and the political composition of the European Parliament.

## Political parties, voter mobilisation and the 1979 European elections

Briefing by Gilles Pittoors, EPRS, June 2023

This briefing traces the debates in the European Parliament on the role of political parties in preparing the European electorate for the first direct European elections in 1979, starting from the preparation of the 1960 Draft Convention on European elections. The briefing concludes with a short discussion of the evolution of Europarties and European Parliament elections after 1979, in the light of the pre-1979 debates.



## Minimum age to stand as a candidate in European elections

'At a glance' note by Rafał Mańko; Graphic: Samy Chahri, EPRS, June 2023

The European Electoral Act of 1976 allows the EU Member States to set the minimum age for standing as a candidate in European elections. While Parliament proposed a uniform minimum age of 18 in May 2022, the 2024 elections will be governed by the existing rules. The minimum age therefore varies among the Member States, ranging from 18 in the majority of countries to 25 in Italy and Greece.

## Electoral thresholds in European Parliament elections

Briefing by Micaela Del Monte, Maria Díaz Crego and Silvia Kotanidis, EPRS, June 2023

The European Electoral Act currently in force does not require Member States to apply an electoral threshold, but should they decide to do so, the threshold cannot exceed 5 % of the votes cast. Electoral thresholds range from no threshold in 13 Member States to 5 % of the valid votes cast, required in nine Member States. Italy, Austria and Sweden apply a 4 % threshold, Greece 3 % and Cyprus 1.8 %.

## Political participation of people with disabilities in the EU

Briefing by Marie Lecerf, EPRS, May 2023

Through its Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UN promotes the political participation of people with disabilities. Through its Charter of Fundamental Rights, the EU guarantees every citizen the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament and the right to vote and stand as a candidate in municipal elections. With the 2024 European elections on the horizon, the European Parliament is renewing its commitments to ensure the equal participation of people with disabilities in this major European political event.

## Revision of Council Directive 93/109/EC Electoral rights of mobile EU citizens in elections to the European Parliament

Briefing by Micaela Del Monte and David de Groot, EPRS, February 2023

Directive 93/109/EC gives mobile EU citizens the same rights to vote and to be elected in European Parliament elections as the citizens of the Member State in which they reside; Member States have varying rules on the exercise of these rights. The Commission proposal to modify the directive seeks to address some of the concerns that have been raised about its implementation.

## Towards new rules on transparency and targeting of political advertising

Briefing by Maria Diaz Crego, EPRS, January 2023

To address the new challenges posed by online electoral campaigns, the European Commission presented a proposal for a harmonised set of rules on the transparency and targeting of political advertising. These would apply to both online and offline political advertising. The proposal is currently under discussion in the European Parliament and the Council, under the ordinary legislative procedure.

## Towards new rules for European elections?

Briefing by Maria Diaz Crego, EPRS, September 2022

In May 2022 the European Parliament adopted a draft legislative act proposing to repeal the 1976 European Electoral Act. The aim is to harmonise a number of rules relating to European elections, which are currently covered by a combination of the common principles of the European Electoral Act and the different national rules implementing them. To enter into force, the proposal must be adopted by the Council unanimously, after obtaining Parliament's consent by a majority of Members. Moreover, all Member States would need to approve it per their constitutional requirements.

## European Union electoral law: Current situation and historical background

Briefing by Silvia Kotanidis, EPRS, October 2019

Despite Parliament's increased role in the EU, the current electoral rules remain only partly harmonised, to the extent that there is no uniform electoral process for all Member States. Certain fundamental principles are enshrined in the 1976 Electoral Act, but many aspects are regulated by national law. Several reforms of the EU electoral system have been attempted over the years, but not all have resulted in legislation.



## **Further reading**

### **Recasting the rules applicable to European political parties and foundations**

'At a glance' note by Maria Diaz Crego, EPRS, September 2022 (also in French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish)

### **Amending the rules governing the statute and funding of European political parties (recast)**

Briefing by Irmgard Anglmayer, EPRS, March 2022

---

[eprs@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:eprs@europarl.europa.eu) | [www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank) (Internet) |

[www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu](http://www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu) (Intranet)

You can access this Topical Digest online at the websites below,

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/TD\\_European\\_elections.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/TD_European_elections.pdf)

or by scanning the QR code:

<https://epthinktank.eu/topical-digests/>

