

## “Spitzenkandidaten” process cannot be overturned, say MEPs

- EP ready to reject all those standing for European Commission President who are not “lead candidates” of European political parties
- “Spitzenkandidaten” (lead candidate for Commission President) process proved to be a success, 2019 elections to consolidate the practice
- Serving EU Commissioners will be allowed to be designated as “Spitzenkandidaten” ahead of EU elections

**Parliament is ready to reject any contender for EU Commission President who is not nominated as a “lead candidate” ahead of the 2019 EU elections.**

The so-called “Spitzenkandidaten” (German for lead candidate) process, in which European political parties designate one candidate each for the post of EU Commission President, ahead of the European elections, cannot be overturned, MEPs say. This system was first used in 2014, to select current Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

Parliament’s report also warns that the European Parliament is ready to reject any candidate for Commission President who has not been nominated in this way.

By establishing a link between the choice of Commission President and the outcome of the European elections, MEPs also consider that the 2014 “Spitzenkandidaten” process proved to be a success, and stress that the 2019 elections will be the occasion to cement the use of the same practice.

## Serving EU Commissioners may run as “lead candidates” ahead of EU elections

In the report adopted on Wednesday, MEPs also approved proposed changes to the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission by 457 votes to 200, with 20 abstentions.

The proposed changes will:

- allow serving EU Commissioners to run for election to the European Parliament, and to be designated by European political parties as so-called “lead candidates” - or “Spitzenkandidaten” - to become EU Commission President, without first having to take an unpaid leave of absence,
- oblige the Commission President to inform MEPs of measures taken to ensure that Commissioners standing in electoral campaigns for the EU elections respect rules on independence and integrity,
- require that Commissioners do not use the human or material resources of the Commission for any activities linked to electoral campaigns.

### Quote

“The EU has to be more democratic, more transparent, or it simply will not be. The fact that citizens know the candidates for President of the European Commission before the elections is an important step in the right direction”, said Parliament’s rapporteur [Esteban González Pons](#) (EPP, ES).

### Background

The suggested changes to the inter-institutional agreement are the result of negotiations between [Parliament's Conference of Presidents](#) (President and political group leaders) and the Commission. They were approved by the Constitutional Affairs Committee on 23 January 2018.

The modifications of the agreement will enter into force once they have been approved by Parliament and formally endorsed by the College of Commissioners.

### **More information on the “Spitzenkandidaten” process**

The Lisbon Treaty requires the European Council, acting by qualified majority, to nominate a Commission President for the European Parliament's approval, while taking into account the results of the European Parliament election. However, the so-called “lead candidate” - or “Spitzenkandidat” – procedure is not mentioned in the EU's treaty. When it was used for the first time in 2014, it was primarily an agreement between EU leaders in the European Council, the European Parliament and European political parties on how to interpret the wording in the treaties. The Spitzenkandidat procedure hands the Commission Presidency to the “lead candidate” from the European political party winning the most seats in the European Parliament. This was the case in 2014, when the European People's Party's lead candidate Jean-Claude Juncker was appointed Commission President. A European political party is a political party operating on European level, which could be funded by the European Union, and which is made up of national parties based in the member states.

Ahead of the 2014 European elections, five European political parties appointed their “lead candidates”.

### **Who's involved**

[González Pons Esteban](#)

[Adopted text will be available here \(07.02.2018\)](#)

[Watch a video recording of the debate \(07.02.2018\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

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## Political groups

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## Contacts

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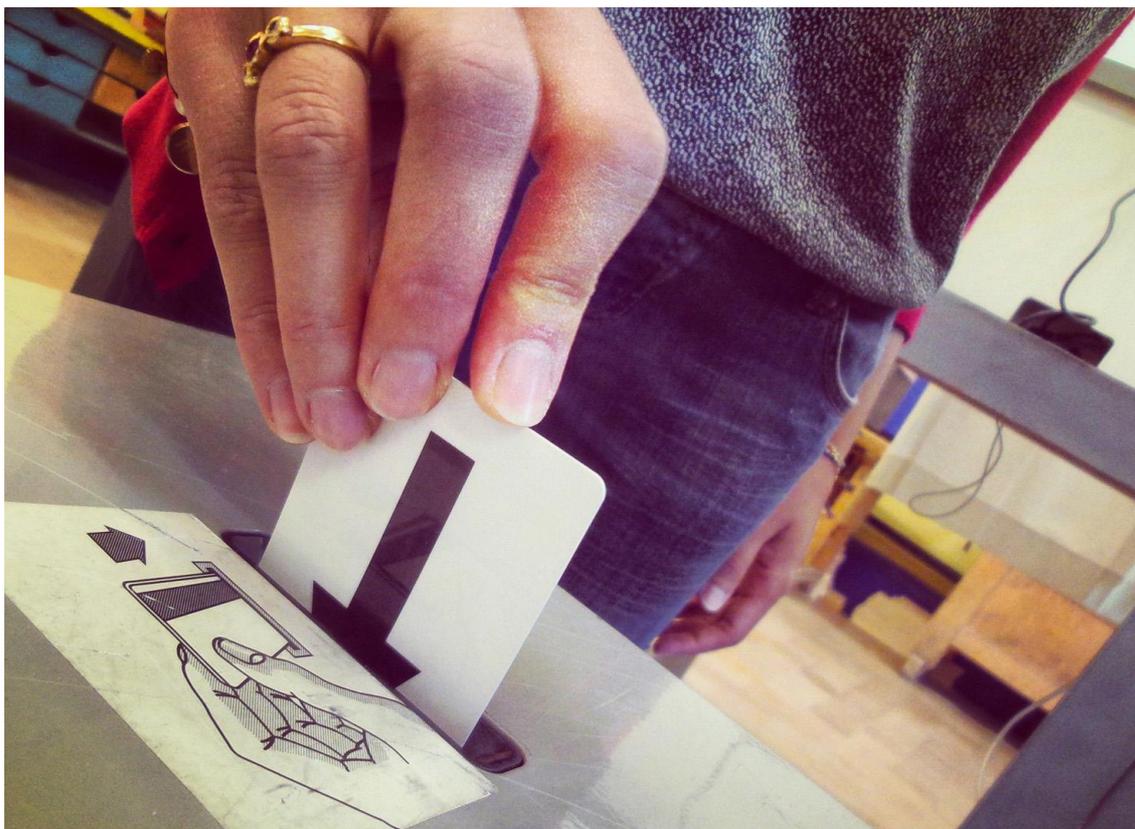
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Parliament says lead candidate (Spitzenkandidaten) process is a success and is here to stay