

## Women and the European Parliament (video)



### Video

[https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/women-in-politics-international-women-s-day-2019\\_N01-PUB-190304-IWD\\_ev](https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/women-in-politics-international-women-s-day-2019_N01-PUB-190304-IWD_ev)

**To mark this year's International Women's Day, the European Parliament is highlighting the issue of women's power in politics ahead of the European elections in May.**

Despite the strides that have been made, women still only make up 36% of members of the European Parliament. Watch the video to see how far things have come and how far they still have to go.

Before direct elections to the European Parliament, when members were delegates from national parliaments, **female representation was marginal**. Only **31 women** were members from 1952 until the first elections in 1979.

After 1979 the **number of female MEPs started increasing** and noted feminist **Simone Veil** was chosen as the first president of the directly-elected European Parliament.

“Women’s power in politics is at the heart of women's rights because it defines women's capacity to participate and decide on the collective governing of our societies. We need to keep on fighting,” said Lithuanian S&D member **Vilija Blinkevičiūtė**, the chair of Parliament's gender equality committee.

### Action to boost gender equality

The EU has a long history of measures to promote equality between women and men. Since 1957, when the principle that the sexes should receive equal pay for equal work was included in Article 119 of the [Treaty of Rome](#), the principle of equality between women and men has gained in importance.

In a [report](#) adopted in January 2019, Parliament again underlined the importance of increasing the presence of the under-represented gender, often women, on electoral lists, and strongly encouraged the European political parties and their party members to ensure a gender-balanced representation of candidates for [elections to the Parliament in 2019](#).

During the current term, Parliament has called for [measures to prevent and combat sexual harassment in political life](#), criticised the current backlash against women's rights and gender equality, targeted, among others, the presence of women in decision-making positions, and called for a strong gender equality focus in the next parliamentary term.

In 2012, MEPs welcomed [gender quotas](#) introduced in some EU countries and urged others to consider legislating to achieve a gender balance in political decision-making.

The year before that, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) saying that women's inclusion in decision-making strengthens democracy and that it is a necessary condition for women's interests and concerns to be taken into account.

*[Find out what the Parliament does to fight gender inequality.](#)*

### **Find out more**

[International Women's Day 2019](#)

[Fact sheet](#)

[Briefing: women in politics in the EU](#)

[Briefing: a global perspective on women in politics](#)