

## European elections: abuse of data to be penalised



Parliament wants to avoid parties taking advantage of people's personal data during elections ©AP images/European Union-EP

### **Parliament wants to protect democratic debate in the European elections by introducing financial penalties for EU parties and foundations abusing data in political campaigns.**

More than two thirds (67%) of [internet users in the EU](#) are concerned that online personal data is used to target the political messages they see, undermining the free and fair competition between all political parties.

The EU has launched several measures to [protect our data](#) and is working to make sure that the European elections are not distorted by the misuse of European voters' personal data.

Ahead of the [European elections on 23 - 26 May](#), [MEPs approved rules](#) on 12 March to dissuade and penalise European political parties whose members deliberately infringe data

protection to influence the outcome of elections.

## **Sending a very clear message**

The MEPs responsible for steering the proposal through Parliament hailed the legislation as an important step forward.

"Especially after the data protection scandal around Facebook and Cambridge Analytica, people are more aware of the usage of personal data," said German EPP member [Rainer Wieland](#), one of the report authors. "This regulation is an important step in restoring citizens' faith in the EU and democratic participation as a whole."

Italian S&D member [Mercedes Bresso](#), one of the other report authors, said: "I don't think that any party or foundation will risk misusing personal data from European citizens for their own profit. However, it is our responsibility to reinforce the procedures around infringement and sanctions in order to send a very clear message to the very few individuals or groupings that could be tempted to not play by the rules."

## **European political parties**

- European political parties are composed of national parties and individuals.
- National parties contest European elections but are often associated with a European political party. After the elections they can join like-minded parties from their political family to form a political group in the European Parliament.

## **How the new rules would work:**

National data protection supervisory authorities are in charge of monitoring elections at national level. European political parties organise complementary campaigns at European level including those for the [lead candidate](#), which are also sometimes referred to with the German term *spitzenkandidat*.

If a national supervisory authority decides that an infringement has occurred, it would have to notify the [Authority for European political parties and foundations](#), which then decides on the penalty.



## Video

<https://www.europartv.europa.eu/en/programme/eu-affairs/european-elections-the-lead-candidate-process>

## Next steps

The [Council adopted the new provisions](#) on 19 March 2019. The new rules will be binding and directly applicable in all member states on the day of the regulation's publication in the EU's official journal.

## Find out more

[Draft report](#)

[Procedure](#)

[Regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties](#)