The 2019 European elections: A pro-European – and young – electorate with clear expectations

European Parliament publishes first results of its post-electoral Eurobarometer survey.

A significant increase in young people with a pro-European mind-set cast a vote in the 2019 European elections, according to an in-depth Eurobarometer survey across all 28 member states. Conducted in the weeks after the elections, nearly 28,000 citizens throughout the EU answered questions about their participation in the European elections and the issues that motivated them to vote.

68% of EU citizens consider that their country has benefited from EU membership.

Source: Eurobarometer 91.5

The first results of the Eurobarometer survey released by the European Parliament today show that citizens’ support for the European Union remains at its highest level since 1983: Confirming pre-electoral surveys, 68% of respondents (+1 pp compared to Feb/March 2019) say that their country has benefitted from being a member of the EU.
Even more significant for the democratic legitimacy of the EU is the steep increase in European citizens believing that *their voice counts in the EU*: 56% of respondents share this view, an increase of 7 points since March 2019 and the highest result since this question was first asked in 2002.

“Citizens voted in these European elections based on a very strong support for the EU and with a much stronger belief that their voice counts in the EU”, said European Parliament President David Sassoli.

The overall turnout in the 2019 European elections increased by 8 points to 50.6%, resulting in the highest participation since 1994 and the first time that there has been a reversal of turnout in European elections since 1979. The most significant increases in turnout were registered in Poland (+22pp), Romania (+19pp), Spain (+17pp), Austria (+15pp) and Hungary (+14pp).
Survey results suggest that it was Europe’s young and first time voters who drove turnout figures up: 42% of the 16/18-24 year old respondents say they had voted in the European elections, youth participation therefore rising by 50%, compared to the youth turnout of only 28% in 2014. Equally strong was the turnout increase in the age group of 25-39 years, rising by 12 points from 35% to 47%. The turnout of young and first time voters exceeds any turnout increases registered for other age groups.

Voting as civic duty, as pro-European support - and because things could change

Looking at why people voted in 2019, civic duty is most often invoked as the main reason by 52% of voters, an increase of 11 points compared to 2014. Compared to the last European elections in 2014, significantly more citizens have also voted because they are in favour of the EU (25%, +11 percentage points), or because they felt they could change things by voting (18%, +6 percentage points).

“The European Parliament and its elections have become part of citizens’ normal democratic life. Yet these elections were more than just an expression of civic duty. Citizens voted because they were in favour of the EU, because they believe they can make things change by voting. The European Parliament now must live up to these expectations”, underlined European Parliament President David Sassoli.

In 27 member states, citizens primarily voted because they saw it as their duty as citizens. In all 28 member states, more respondents than in 2014 voted because they were in favour of the EU and declared this support to be their main voting motivator. Germany (39%, +14pp), Ireland
(27%, +15pp), Italy (23%, +14pp) and Spain (23%, +15pp) showed the biggest increases for this reason.

The Eurobarometer post-electoral survey also looked at the issues that propelled citizens to vote in the recent European Parliament elections. The top issues which influenced citizens’ voting decision were economy and growth (44%), climate change (37%) as well as human rights and democracy (37%). With 36% of mentions, ‘the way the EU should be working in the future’ emerged also as top voting motivator for citizens. In 16 countries, respondents cited the economy and growth as the most important voting issue, whilst citizens in eight countries named climate change as the top topic for them.

“Economic reform, climate change, the future of the EU and the defence of human rights: These are all key issues for the European Parliament. This is where we have left our mark in the past years and this is where we will continue to be strong defenders of our citizens’ expectations”, said European Parliament President David Sassoli.

Note to the editors:
The post-electoral survey of the European Parliament was conducted as Eurobarometer survey 91.5. 27,464 respondents were interviewed face-to-face by Kantar for the European Parliament in all 28 EU member states, drawn from the general population aged 15 or more. Post-election questions were filtered on respondents in the age of voting 18+ (except 16+ in Austria and Malta, 17+ in Greece). The fieldwork took place from 7 - 26 June 2019.

A full report as well as all results and data tables will be published by the European Parliament in September 2019.

Further information
Eurobarometer: first result of the European Parliament post-electoral survey

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