



# EUROPEAN ELECTIONS AND ELECTION OBSERVATION



# 24

# ABOUT

European elections are of great political importance for citizens in every European Union (EU) Member State. However, over the past years, voter participation in European elections has been rather low, having seen an increase in 2019 for the first time in two decades. Low turnout often results from a weak understanding of the EU and insufficient knowledge about the electoral process. Moreover, European elections differ according to each Member State's electoral law, as there are no unified electoral rules for the whole Union.

The independent, non-partisan organisation Election-Watch.EU [1] provides these Questions & Answers (Q&A) as part of the Supporting Engagement in European Elections and Democratic Societies (SEEEDS) project. It aims to increase voters' understanding about the functioning of the European Union and the process of European elections, as well as to enhance participation in the 6-9 June 2024 elections.

Election-Watch.EU engages in voter education as part of its agenda to strengthen civil society participation in the safeguarding of electoral integrity and in the shaping of inclusive and comprehensible electoral processes. The Q&A also includes a section on election observation, which is recognised internationally as a means of supporting and strengthening democratic processes and represents the core competence of Election-Watch.EU.

This document aims to support a broad, interested public, but especially a new generation of young and first-time voters, who can engage with the issue in the run-up to the European elections and use the Q&A as a basis for discussion in civic education classes.



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[1] [Election-Watch.EU](#) is an official communication partner of the European Parliament (EP) for the 6-9 June 2024 EP elections and compiled this Q&A based on its own research and the following sources: [European Parliament Research Service \(EPRS\)](#), [EP European elections website](#), among others.

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# EUROPEAN ELECTIONS



## 1. What are the European elections?

In the 2024 European elections, citizens of 27 European Union (EU) Member States elect delegates who represent them in the European Parliament for a five-year period. The 720 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are elected in general, direct, and free elections by secret ballot.

Being among the largest democratic events in the world, the European elections have been held nine times since 1979. The last European elections took place between 23 and 26 May 2019. The next elections for the European Parliament will take place between 6 to 9 June 2024.

**'General'** means that all EU citizens - regardless of gender, religion, disability, language, or political beliefs - have the right to vote as soon as they reach the official voting age of their country of residence.

**'Direct'** indicates that voters can determine the members of the parliament directly with their vote, and not through intermediaries.

**'Free'** implies that voters can choose their candidates without influence or pressure regarding their decision.

The election is **'secret'** because measures are in place to ensure that voters can cast their ballot without anyone seeing what choice they make.

## 2. What is the European Parliament?

The European Parliament is the only directly elected EU body.

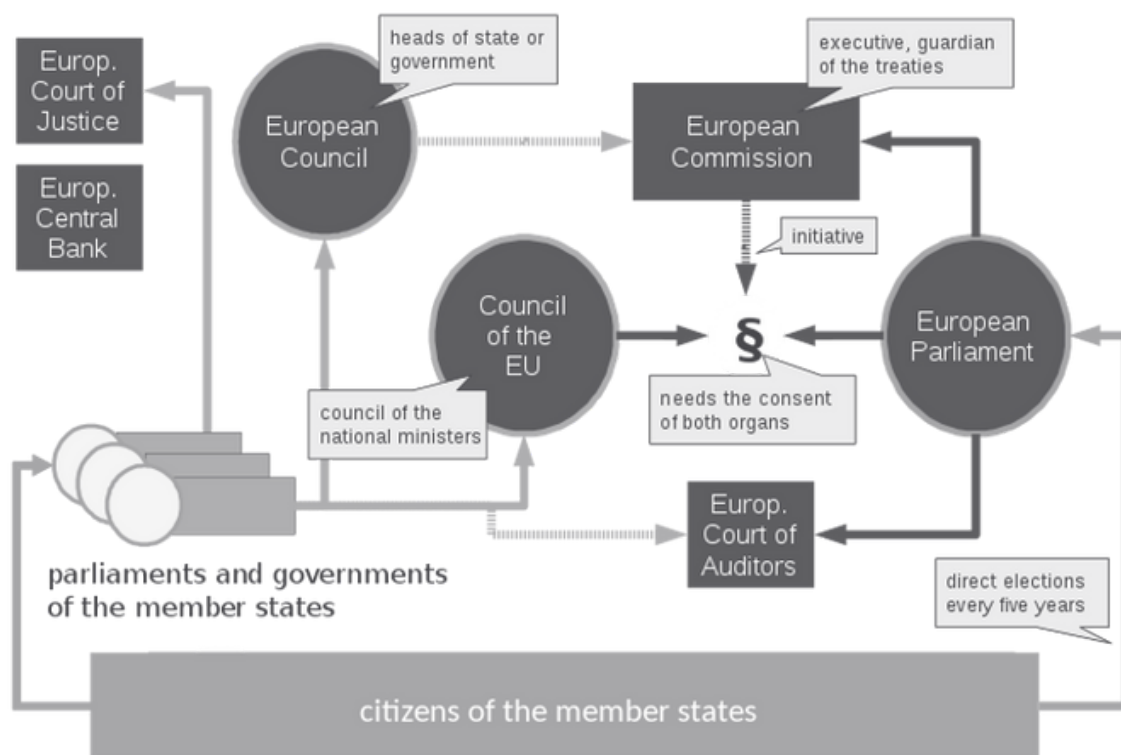


Other EU decision-making bodies are comprised of government representatives of Member States like the **European Council** including all 27 Heads of States, while the **Council of the European Union** (often referred to as "the Council") includes 27 national ministers. The members of the **European Commission** are nominated by their national governments, approved by the European Parliament, and appointed by the Council. During the same vote, the European Parliament also approves the Commission President and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy proposed by the European Council. The President of the European Commission has an important position in the EU, much like a Head of Government while the High Representative coordinates and represents the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The European Parliament's responsibilities extend to three main roles:

- **Europe-wide legislation:** The European Commission presents draft legislation, which must be approved by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union.
- **Supervisory authority:** The European Commission and the Council must regularly report to the European Parliament about their activities. If the Parliament is not satisfied with the work of the Commission or has reservations, it can express mistrust and force the Commission to resign.
- **Budgetary management:** Together with the Council, the European Parliament must approve the draft budget of the European Commission or adopt amendments.

**Table 1: Political System of the European Union**



Source: Political System of the European Union (Ziko van Dijk)

### 3. On which laws are the European elections based?

In all EU Member States, the European elections are regulated by the relevant Europe-wide legislation. In addition, the organization of European elections is determined by each respective national legislation and electoral traditions in the Member States. This results in a certain variance in the election procedures, contributing to the complexity of the European elections.



The most important legal basis of the EU for the European elections is:

- the **Treaty on European Union** (Art. 10 and 14), and
- the **1976 Electoral Act** (amended in 2002), which forms the general framework for the election.

Other important legal texts for the European elections are:

- the **Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union** (in particular Art. 223 paragraph 1 TFEU), which stipulates that the European Parliament is responsible for establishing the procedures for the direct universal election of its members and that the Council adopts these rules unanimously, following special legal procedures and after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament; and
- **Council Directive 93/109/EC** of 6 December 1993 (amended in 2012) on the details of the right to vote and the right to stand for elections for citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals.

Apart from the provisions stemming from EU legislation, the European elections are regulated by the national laws of each Member State. This includes the details of the electoral system and other electoral procedures.

#### 4. Which electoral system is the basis for the European elections?



Since the 2004 European elections, a system of **proportional representation** is used in all Member States to distribute the seats in the European Parliament among the successful candidates. In a proportional system, the number of seats corresponds closely with the proportion of the votes received by a political party.

An **electoral system** is a set of rules that determine how elections are conducted and how their results determine who will be elected to Parliament or to elected office.

This electoral system is known for fostering broader representation of various competing political forces, including smaller parties. In contrast, in majoritarian systems, voters elect a representative within a district and representation in Parliament is not proportional to the votes obtained. For the European elections, the proportional system also applies in Member States where a majority voting system is used in national elections, such as in France.

The electoral system also defines how candidates are selected from their party lists in accordance with the votes received. In **closed list** systems, candidates are allocated mandates according to their pre-stated positions on their party list. If a party receives three mandates, the first three candidates on the list become MEPs. Some Member States allow **preferential voting** whereby voters can select any candidate on the list.

Member States may have no electoral threshold like Germany or an electoral threshold of up to 5 per cent of votes cast like France. In the case of France, a contestant (list of candidates or individual candidates where permitted) needs to receive at least 5 per cent of all votes cast to win a seat in the European Parliament. A higher threshold is not allowed as it might lead to the exclusion or underrepresentation of smaller political parties.

Since the introduction of European elections, efforts have been made to standardise the electoral system throughout Europe; the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union are explicitly mandated to do so by the Treaty on European Union. However, the treaty does not stipulate a fixed timetable for this; minor amendments to standardise the elections have been implemented over the years. This includes, for instance, the provision about the electoral threshold, which was introduced through an amendment in 2002.

## 5. Do the European elections work the same way in all EU Member States?

No. Since many aspects of the European elections are based on the national legislation of the Member States, elections differ significantly from country to country. Differences include the choice of election day(s), active and passive suffrage requirements (who can vote, who can stand as a candidate), deadlines for candidate list and voter registration, campaign finance regulations, details of the electoral system, as well as ballot format and design.

In addition, the campaign around European elections is often determined by national issues, and voters choose national, not European candidates.

## 6. Who is allowed to vote?

In principle, all citizens of the EU have the right to vote in the European elections. However, there is no single EU-wide rule on who is entitled to vote. Variations apply, for example, to the requirements for the voting age and the approaches to voting by persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities and by those serving a prison sentence.

The age to qualify for the right to vote is 18 years in most Member States. In Austria, the voting age is 16 years since the 2009 European elections (since 2018 also in Malta, since 2022 in Belgium, since 2023 in Germany); in Greece it is 17 years. Among other variations, voting is compulsory in Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, and Luxembourg, but not in other Member States.



AUSTRIA  
BELGIUM  
GERMANY  
MALTA

Voters living in another EU Member State than their country of citizenship can vote either in their country of residence or in their country of citizenship. In some Member States, the right to register as a non-citizen in the electoral roll for the European elections depends on the duration of residence.

## 7. Who can be elected?

MEPs are elected from national candidate lists to represent their respective Member State. EU citizens can also be elected as candidates in countries other than their country of citizenship if they officially reside in that country. Only some EU Member States allow individual candidacy (for instance, Bulgaria, Netherlands, and Romania), and applicable requirements vary.

The age for the acquisition of the right to be elected depends on the national regulation of the host country. While most EU citizens can be elected at the age of 18, in Greece and Italy, for example, candidates must be at least 25 years old.

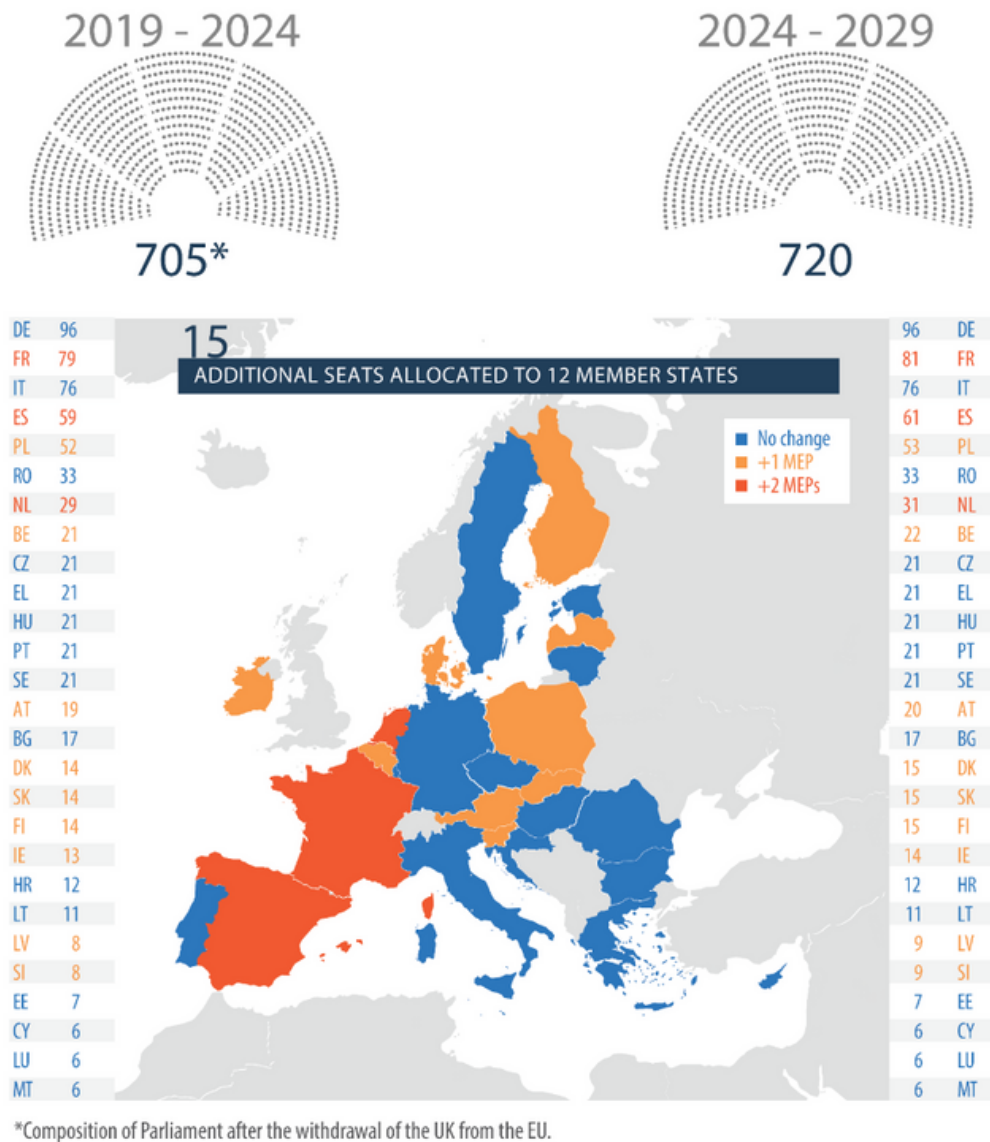
Since 2014, attempts continue to be made to establish a connection between the European elections and the nomination of the President of the European Commission through the so-called **Spitzenkandidaten** or lead candidate process. The idea is that European political parties nominate their candidate for the position of President of the European Commission ahead of the elections. The candidate of the party that gains the most seats would then be designated by the European Council and thereafter voted in by the European Parliament. This approach gives citizens direct influence on the selection of the President of the European Commission. While the lead candidate process achieved its purpose in 2014, this was not the case in 2019. There remains some uncertainty over the future of this process and its role in the institutional set-up.



## 8. How many MEPs are elected?

The number of MEPs is determined separately for each country by a decision of the European Council. In principle, larger EU countries have more MEPs, however, smaller EU countries have more MEPs per capita than larger Member States. This is called “**degressive proportionality**”. According to the EU Treaty, each EU country has between 6 and 96 elected representatives in the European Parliament. Following the UK's exit from the EU, the number of seats in the European Parliament was reduced from 751 to 705 seats (mandates/delegates). Ahead of the 2024 elections, the European Council increased the total number of seats to 720, with additional 15 seats distributed among 12 slightly under-represented Member States.

**Table 2: Distribution of seats in the European Parliament**

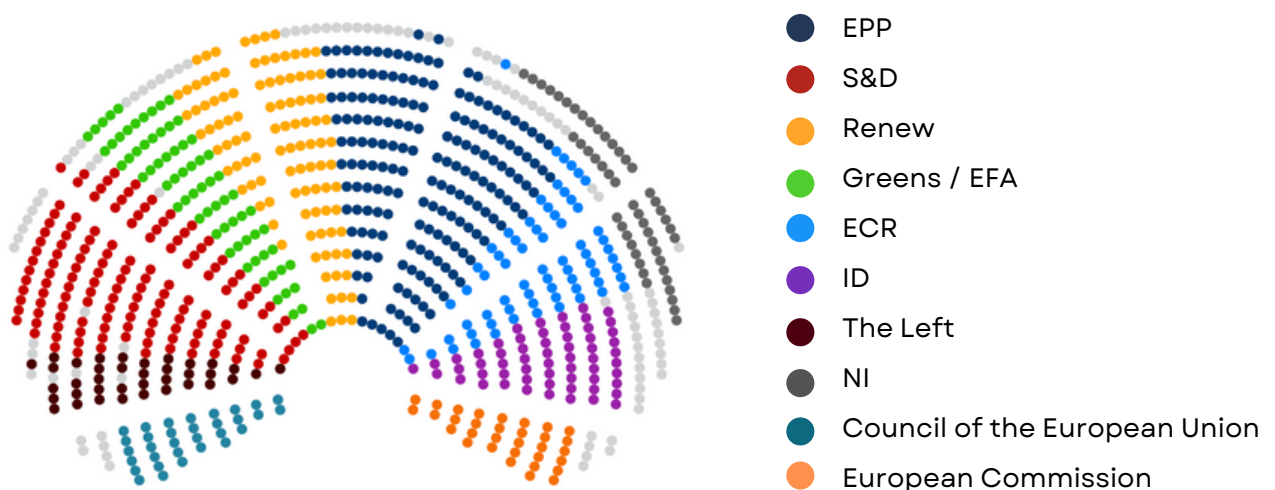


Source: [Composition of the European Parliament](#), European Parliamentary Research Service, At a Glance, September 2023

## 9. Which parties contest the European elections?

Candidates for the European Parliament are nominated on candidate lists at the national or regional level, mostly through national parties. Most political parties in the EU Member States joined political fractions at the European level, namely **European political parties (EUPPs)**. EUPPs have a limited role in the European elections, although they help to coordinate the campaigns of their national member parties and adopt common electoral programmes. It is possible for national political parties, which are not members of an EUPP to participate in the European elections. Demands for transnational European lists that can be directly elected across Member States have not yet prevailed.

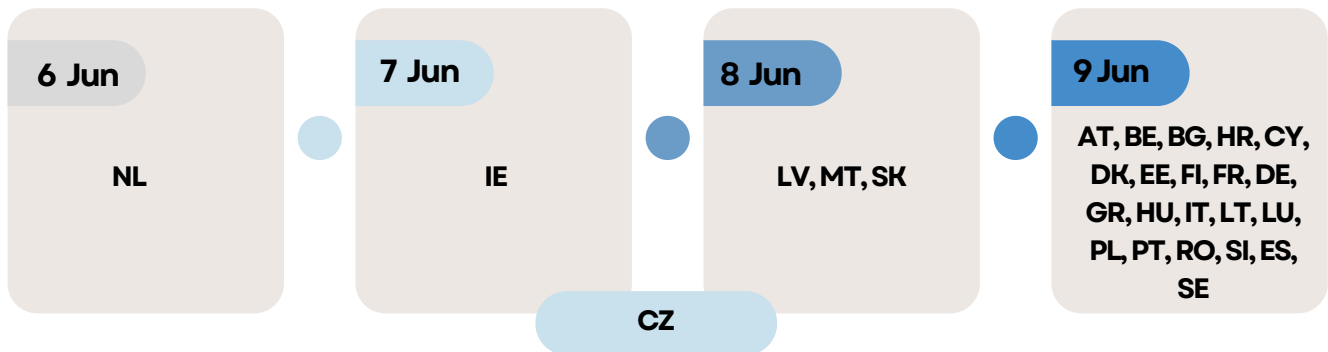
In addition to EUPPs, elected MEPs from different Member States that share similar political ideologies and goals form **political groups** to advance common political agendas in the European Parliament. Currently, the political group with the largest number of seats in the European Parliament is the group of the European People's Party (EPP), which nominated the current President of the European Commission (Ursula von der Leyen). There are also groups of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), the Renew Europe Group (Renew), the European Green Party/European Free Alliance (EGP/EFA), the Identity and Democracy Group (ID), The Left Group (GUE/NGL), and the European Conservatives and Reformist Group (ECR).[2] There are also independent MEPs who are not affiliated to any political party.



Source: [Interactive seating plan of the hemicycle of the European Parliament](#), as of 11 March 2024

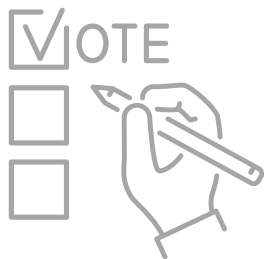
[2] The names of groups in the European Parliament do not always coincide with the names of EUPPs.

## 10. When do the elections take place?



Elections to the European Parliament are held every five years. As the EU Member States have different traditions when it comes to setting election dates, the European elections are not held on the same day. In the Netherlands, for example, election day is usually during the working week, but in Germany, Austria, and many other countries elections are traditionally held on Sundays. In the Czech Republic, it is also common for polling stations to be open for two consecutive days. In total, the European elections usually stretch over a period of four days, from Thursday to Sunday. The next European elections will take place between 6 and 9 June 2024.

## 11. How is the vote conducted and in what form can it take place?



Each person entitled to vote receives a ballot on which a candidate list of choice can be marked. In some Member States, voters also have the possibility of casting preferential votes for candidate(s) on their list of choice. National electoral laws set the requirements that need to be met for the preferential votes to be effective.

The votes cast in polling stations are counted and the results are transmitted for tabulation often first to the regional and then to the central level to sum up the final national result. The allocation of seats to the European Parliament follows national electoral rules in each Member State.

The most common voting method is for voters to cast their votes in polling stations on election day using paper ballots. However, many Member States also offer alternative voting modalities. For example, many EU countries provide a possibility for voters to receive and cast their ballots by returning them by post (so-called postal voting). Voting by citizens abroad at

embassies or per post is facilitated by most but not all Member States. Furthermore, the majority of Member States provide for voting at special institutions, including care homes, hospitals, detention centers, prisons, and home-bound voting. Some Member States provide also the option of voting over a period of time before election day (so-called advance or **early voting**). Estonia is the only Member State where **Internet voting** is possible for all voters. Bulgaria, Belgium, and France use electronic voting machines. Other countries have experimented with electronic voting machines and internet voting but have stopped it due to security concerns, among others.

## 12. Who is responsible for the administration of the European elections?

There is no EU body that organises the European elections in a centralised manner. The European elections are organised by the competent national electoral management bodies in each Member State; these vary in their institutional shape and can range from independent election commissions to ministries and courts. Usually, it is the same authorities that are responsible for organising the European elections which also conduct the respective national elections. However, improved coordination among national election authorities has been facilitated through the **European Cooperation Network on Elections (ECNE)**, and a sub-group worked on a guide to facilitate participation by citizens with disabilities.

## 13. Can EU citizens vote in other Member States?

In principle yes. Based on the 1993 Council Directive, EU citizens are allowed to vote in other Member States, provided that they officially reside in these countries. So-called **mobile EU citizens**, who reside in a Member State of the EU, which is not their country of citizenship, are in principle free to choose to vote for either an MEP of their country of residence or their home country. However, this is not possible in all Member States. Ireland, Malta, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic do not grant their citizens the possibility to vote from abroad in European elections.



## 14. Is there an on-going reform of the European elections? What are the main issues?

EU bodies and institutions have made significant efforts in recent years to reform electoral processes, focusing on enhancing the European character and harmonising procedures across Member States. Several reforms initiated before and after the 2019 European elections were pending ahead of the 2024 elections.

The latest electoral changes adopted through the European Council Decision 2018/994 have not yet entered into force due to pending approval by one Member State (Spain). The Decision envisages additional common rules for European elections, including a threshold between 2 and 5 per cent for Member States with more than 35 seats, an obligation for Member States to penalise double voting by national laws, and a three-week candidate submission deadline.

Additional two reforms have been initiated by the European Commission as part of its 2020 European Democracy Action Plan addressing the funding of European political parties and European political foundations, and strengthening the electoral rights of mobile EU citizens during EP elections. However, these two envisaged reforms are not applicable to the 2024 elections.

In May 2022, the European Parliament adopted a new expansive proposal to reform the current Electoral Act. It envisages, among other changes, the creation of a Union-wide electoral district for the election of European transnational candidates, a common voting age of 16 years, affirmative gender equality measures, and the creation of a European Electoral Authority. However, there were wide divergences among Member States on several parts of this proposal, which will not be finalised and applicable during the 2024 elections.

## 15. What latest developments and related legislative initiatives will have an impact on the upcoming elections?

There is growing impact of digital technologies on the conduct of elections in recent years. To respond to the growing global significance of cybersecurity of electoral infrastructure, foreign disinformation campaigns and the use of **Artificial Intelligence** (AI), the EU institutions agreed on and passed legislation to protect electoral integrity and enhance electoral resilience.

The 2024 European elections will be the first elections under the new Digital

**Services Act** (DSA). The DSA establishes a comprehensive framework for digital platforms, mandating the protection of user rights, combating disinformation and hate speech, and prompt removal of illegal content. The DSA prohibits targeted advertising for minors, restricts sensitive information use, and requires expedited removal of illicit content.

In the context of campaigning in the digital domain, also some parts of the newly finalised **Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising** (TTPA) will provide the framework for cross-border political advertising during the 2024 election, including by EUPPs. Another landmark legislation, the AI Act, is currently undergoing EU institutional approval procedures and does not impact the 2024 elections. The legislation aims to regulate AI and prohibit certain uses of AI technology.

## 16. What is the voter turnout in the European elections?

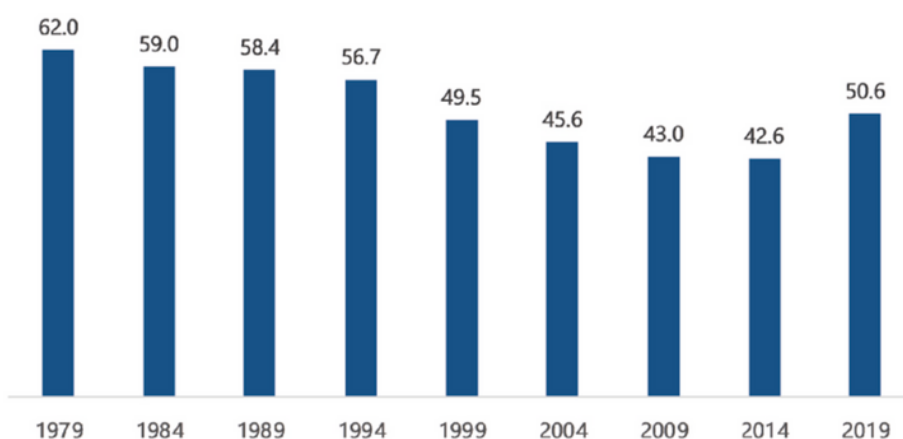


**Voter turnout** is the percentage of cast votes of the total number of eligible voters in the 27 EU Member States.

The turnout in the European elections shrank from about 62 per cent in 1979 to about 42.6 per cent in 2014, rising to 50.7 per cent in 2019. However, the number of Member States tripled between 1979 and 2014, increasing the number of eligible voters to 340 million in 2014 at that time, and to estimated 373 million in 2024.

Measures to enhance voter education and voter motivation are necessary to strengthen overall participation in future European elections. The European Parliament has launched an information campaign to encourage activities online and offline and thus contribute to a higher turnout in the European elections.

**Table 3: Voter turnout in European elections between 1979 - 2019**



Source: The 2019 Post-Electoral Survey: Have European Elections Entered a new Dimension? Eurobarometer Survey 91.5

## 17. Can the European elections be appealed?

Each Member State determines the national electoral results of the European elections. As with the respective competent authorities, the bodies, responsibilities and processes regarding complaints and appeals are also different. As a rule, courts are key institutions in this regard – in Austria, the Constitutional Court – but in some countries, the national parliament is the last level of jurisdiction for electoral complaints and appeals, as is, for example, the case in Luxembourg. However, some review mechanisms of relevance to European elections exist also at the EU level. This includes the possibility to challenge the undue implementation of EU laws by Member States or the incompatibility of national laws and practice with EU laws before the European Commission and the European Court of Justice.

## 18. What happens after the elections?

- **Formation of Parliament:** After the elections, the newly elected MEPs form parliamentary groups. To form a group, at least 23 MEPs from at least seven Member States have to come together. On 16 July 2024, the new European Parliament will convene for the first time and will elect its new President and Vice-President. In addition, the parliamentary committees will be formed.
- **Election of the President of the European Commission:** The MEPs elect the President of the European Commission with an absolute majority (at least 361 of 720 votes). The designated President of the European Commission and the governments of the Member States agree on a list of candidates for the offices of the Commission. The Commission consists of one member per Member State. The nominees have to face a hearing in the European Parliament whereby the MEPs may refuse a candidate as unsuitable for the designated position. In such a case, the Commission President-elect must reassign the portfolios among the designated Commissioners or ask the Member State concerned to propose another candidate.
- **Election of the European Commission:** After the hearings, the designated President and the Commissioners will be elected by the European Parliament to form the new European Commission. A simple majority of the votes cast is enough for the election to be successful. Following the election, the new European Commission is formally appointed by the EU Heads of State or Government (European Council) and is sworn in by the European Court of Justice before it can begin its work.

# ELECTION OBSERVATION

## 19. What is election observation and how does it work?

Election observers act as independent and impartial witnesses in electoral processes either on the basis of invitations from national governments or/and accreditation by electoral authorities. Depending on the format of a so-called **election observation mission**, experts examine and analyse the national election administration, the electoral legislation, the election campaign, and the media, visit polling stations and monitor counts and the tabulation of results, as well as possible complaints and appeals procedures. Their assessments measure compliance of laws and practice against international obligations and good practice, which stem, among others, from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. After an election, international observers usually make recommendations for possible reforms and make their reports publicly available.



There is not always a full election observation mission with a large number of observers who visit polling stations on election day (**short-term observers**/STOs) or monitor the election campaign and interview candidates in various regions ahead of the ballot (**long-term observers**/LTOs). Often, also shorter, smaller expert missions analyse the electoral legislation and administration in detail, and meet leading political and civil society actors, albeit without significant observations in polling stations on election day.

## 20. May election observers intervene in the process?

No. Election observers have a code of conduct that urges them to remain politically neutral and not to interfere in the process. Under no circumstances should they play the role of the election administration; this is the sole responsibility of national authorities. The principle of non-interference preserves the observers' independence and strengthens their assessment.



The main international election observation organisations have agreed on a single code of conduct as part of the Declaration of Principles (DoP) for International Election Observation. An analogous code also exists for national election observer organisations under the Declaration of Global Principles for Non-partisan Election Observation and Monitoring by Citizen Organizations.

## 21. Who conducts international election observation?

In Europe, international election observation is known mainly through three organisations: the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CoE). For the EU, election observation is a foreign policy instrument for the promotion of democracy and human rights within the meaning of the Lisbon Treaty. Depending on the global election calendar and on political priorities for each year, a number of elections or referenda are observed, in 2023 for example in Guatemala, Nigeria and Liberia.

Unlike the EU, for the OSCE, election observation is an organisation-internal matter. On the basis of the Copenhagen Document of 1990, the 57 OSCE participating States send election observers to each other's elections. These missions are organised by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw as well as by the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly. The OSCE/ODIHR maintains a detailed electoral calendar online, indicating which elections are observed.

Since 1990, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has been deploying election observation missions to local elections in the 46 Member States of the Council of Europe. National elections in Council of Europe countries are observed regularly by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly.

Internationally, there are also other election observation organisations, such as the US-based Carter Center and inter-governmental regional organisations such as the Organization of American States (OAS), African Union (AU), as well as non-governmental regional organisations such as the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL). The United Nations now observe elections only in exceptional circumstances but mostly provide technical support for electoral processes.

## 22. Is there international election observation in the EU?

Yes. Although the media mainly report on election observation missions deployed to countries outside Europe or in the immediate EU neighbourhood, election observation in Member States of the EU is a common practice for the OSCE. The 1990 Copenhagen Document establishes a commitment to welcome election observers from other OSCE participating States. The OSCE/ODIHR has already deployed missions to all EU Member States. Despite a 'standing invitation' to observe enshrined in the 1990 Copenhagen Document, the deployment of election-related activities by the OSCE/ODIHR requires an explicit invitation from the State holding the election.



Source: [EU Election Observation Missions - Myths & Facts](#)

In 2009, the OSCE/ODIHR also deployed a group of experts to observe the 2009 European elections. These observers visited 15 EU Member States and published a [report](#) on their findings. Ahead of the 2024 European elections, OSCE/ODIHR conducted a [needs assessment](#) and recommended the deployment of a core team to Brussels and of regional experts to visit a large number of EU Member States.

Election-Watch.EU organised a Europe-wide citizen-led Election Assessment Mission (EAM) for the first time in 2019, with election expert teams in all then-28 EU Member States. In [the EAM report](#), several recommendations were put forward to improve electoral processes in the European Union.

Based on a Pre-Election Assessment Mission and its report another EAM for the European elections 2024 is currently being prepared.

It is a standing recommendation of the OSCE/ODIHR that national and international election observation should be possible in all EU Member States, both by law and in practice. The European Commission has explicitly recommended to EU Member States to facilitate international and citizen election observation around the 2024 European elections.

## 23. What is the difference between citizen and international election observers?

When talking about election observation by independent persons or bodies, it is important to distinguish between international and citizen election observation. While international election observation missions are an instrument of foreign policy practice and inter-state obligations, citizen election observers are usually part of the national political process. They function as a civic control mechanism independent of party membership, without being aligned with specific candidates or parties.

Methodologically, citizen and international election observation are very similar. Both are based on principles ratified by the United Nations and by the main election observation organisations around the world. In many countries, national organisations are able to mobilise a larger number of observers than international organisations. Due to their wider presence, citizen election observation missions also have the opportunity to conduct a parallel vote tabulation to verify the accuracy of official election results. This additional component of national election observation has led in some cases to independent scrutiny of electoral authorities and their announcement of results in Latin American, African, and Asian countries.

Among the more renowned national observer organizations is the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) in the Philippines, which campaigned against electoral fraud in 1987 by mobilising thousands of civilian observers and led to the overthrow of General Marcos. Citizen election observation as in-country oversight of electoral processes and advocacy for democratic reforms has since been taken up by more than 250 acknowledged civil society organisations worldwide, including as part of a Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors.

## 24. Is there citizen election observation in the EU and how can it contribute to strengthening electoral processes?

Conditions for citizen election observers in EU Member States are mostly unregulated, as are the conditions for international election observers. A 2017 study by Election-Watch.EU Mapping Legislation for Citizen and International Election Observation in Europe between 2002 and 2017, showed that only five EU Member States had statutory regulated provisions and accreditation systems for observers without any further recommendations for improvement. Ahead of the 2024 European elections, such provisions were in place in seven Member States (Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia).

Five other Member States have a legal framework and an accreditation system for international but not for national election observers. This includes Austria (only OSCE), the Czech Republic (only presidential elections), Hungary (only OSCE), Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Belgium only permits international observers; Estonia and Slovakia permit election observation without accreditation (in the latter only of voting and counting); and Latvia accredits international and national observers without a corresponding legal framework. In six Member States (Denmark, France, Germany, Malta, Spain, Sweden), while legislation does not contain explicit provisions for election observation, voting and counting, processes are open to the public. The remaining five Member States (Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Italy, and Portugal) do not have any framework for election observation.

National election observation offers an opportunity for non-partisan civil society participation in political processes beyond voting. As with international election observers, their assessments are based on international and regional commitments, such as the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN ICCPR), the Copenhagen Document of the OSCE, and the “Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters” of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe. National observers provide their own reports based on their observations and interviews – with representatives of the election administration, political parties, constitutional experts, and non-governmental organisations – and thus contribute to a public opinion-making process. On the basis of their knowledge and insights, national election observers can formulate recommendations regarding the electoral process and advocate for electoral reforms with government, legislators and through media following elections.

