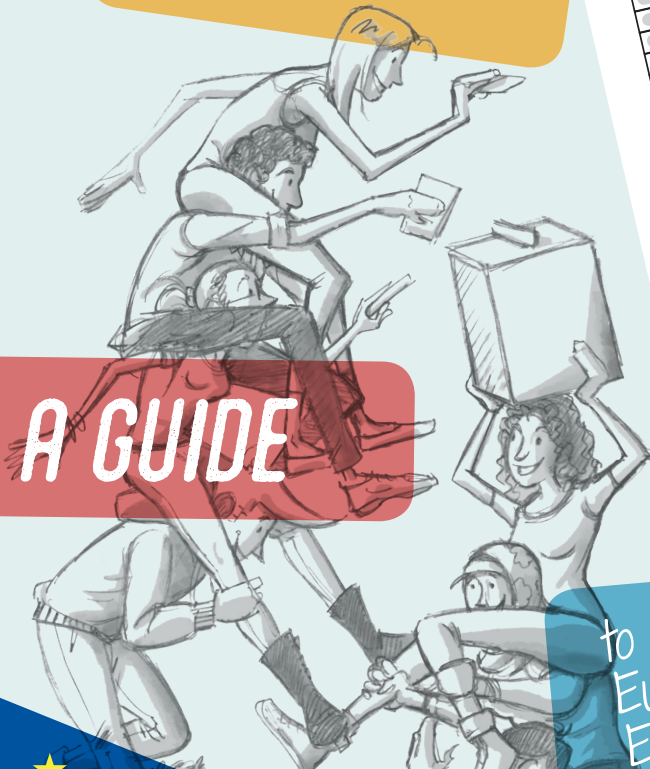


**I'M VOTING!**



**A GUIDE**

to the 2019  
European  
Elections



On the initiative  
of the Belgian  
network



With the  
support of



The Belgian network Infor Jeunes have produced this brochure with the support of the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency (ERYICA).

ERYICA and Infor Jeunes Belgique may not be rendered liable for the information provided in this brochure. Although our goal is to disseminate up-to-date and accurate information, it cannot be considered legally authoritative.

### **Responsible publisher**

#### **For Infor Jeunes Belgique**

Marie-Pierre VAN DOOREN  
Fédération Infor Jeunes Wallonie-Bruxelles asbl  
Rue Armée Grouchy, 20 - 5000 Namur - Belgique  
+32 81 98 08 16 - federation@inforjeunes.be

#### **For ERYICA**

Eva REINA  
ERYICA - The European Youth Information and Counselling Agency  
Route de Thionville, 87 - 2611 Howald - Luxembourg  
+352 24873992 - secretariat@eryica.org

Translator: Brittany Freeman

Copyright Infor Jeunes and ERYICA asbl 2019. All rights reserved.  
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License  
ISBN: 978-2-9199519-5-6

# INTRODUCTION

*The European elections allow for every European citizen to choose their representatives and to decide on the policies that will guide Europe in the years to come – particularly regarding issues such as security, migration, climate change or the future of the ERASMUS+ programme. In spite of this, voter turnout at the last European elections was only 43.09%!*

*Voting in the European elections is the opportunity to make your voice heard. If you have any concerns or questions – don't panic! This handbook will explain everything you need to know: you will learn about your right to vote, who can vote and on behalf of whom, how the voting system is organised and European multi-level governance.*

*Everything you need is in this one brochure – all you need to be an active and well-informed citizen. So if you're ready, let's get started!*



**Due to the uncertainty surrounding the UK's departure from the EU (Brexit) by the time this guide is being drafted, we have decided to consider the UK as a EU Member State that might participate in the European elections. For more information about Brexit, see page 26.**

# TABLE OF CONTENT

## WHEN CAN I VOTE?

6

## WHY SHOULD I VOTE?

8

An acquired right	9
A duty	9
A personal decision	9
An informed choice	10

## WHO CAN VOTE?

11

Voting Terms and Conditions	12
The right to vote in your country of origin	13
The right to vote from abroad	13
If you decide to vote for a candidate from your country of origin	13
If you decide to vote for a candidate from your country of residence	14

## HOW SHOULD I VOTE?

15

The voting system	16
Setting up the constituencies	16
Establishing a minimum threshold	16
How seats are allocated	17
Closed list	18
Preferential Voting	18
Single transferable vote (STV)	19

## WHO SHOULD I VOTE FOR?

20

Conditions for being a candidate	21
The right to vote in your country of origin	22
The right to vote from abroad	22
What is a political group?	22

## WHAT ARE THE INSTITUTIONS?

24

The European Union	25
Brexit	26
The European Political Institutions	27
The European Council	27
The European Commission	28
The European Parliament	28
The Council of the European Union	30

## LEXICON

32

## TO GO FURTHER

33

# WHEN CAN I VOTE?

*First and foremost, we have to pay attention to the electoral calendar...*

*The amount of time that a political representative can serve in office is limited. In Europe, it is restricted to 5 years. This means that by voting, electors can renew their trust in their preferred candidate or choose someone new.*

*Each Member State decides the day and time that the European elections will take place in their country, in accordance with its own electoral calendar. This has to be within a four-day period between Thursday and Sunday, the day preferred by the majority of Member States.*

*Conversely, vote counting occurs at the same time across all Member States and the results are communicated at the same time. There are some countries – such as Belgium, Spain and Ireland – that benefit from organising their national, regional and / or local elections all on the same day.*

For 2019, the European elections will take place

**BETWEEN 23<sup>RD</sup> - 26<sup>TH</sup> MAY**



# Election Calendar by Country<sup>1</sup>

Thursday 23rd May

*The Netherlands*

Friday 24th May

*Czech Republic  
Ireland*

Saturday 25th May

*Czech Republic  
Latvia  
Malta  
Slovakia*

## **Notes :**

The countries in bold are those where voting is **mandatory**.

Sunday 26th May

*Austria  
**Belgium**  
**Bulgaria**  
Croatia  
**Cyprus**  
Denmark  
Estonia  
Finland  
France  
Germany  
**Greece**  
Hungary  
Italy  
Lithuania  
**Luxembourg**  
Poland  
Portugal  
Romania  
Spain  
Slovenia  
Sweden*

<sup>1</sup> At the time this brochure is being drafted, due to Brexit the UK has not stated yet if the country will participate in the European election.



# WHY SHOULD I VOTE?

*In a democracy, employing your right to vote is a way to exercise your citizenship; it allows you to elect your representative. This is why it's important to be informed about the candidates, the parties and their ideas. In doing so, you will be able to decide which ideas fit most closely with your own, as well as those of your family, friends, school, town, region, country – even your continent!*

*Voting is therefore about following the political trends and choosing which ideas you believe in, whilst they are up for debate during key political decision-making.*



## An acquired right

In the last century, the right to vote has advanced significantly across the different EU Member States. In the past, far from being considered a universal right, voting was generally reserved to a governing elite - in other words, the wealthiest men. During this time, there were a number of other criteria that excluded a person from voting, such as their age, gender, nationality or religion...

This system has gradually evolved and today we have universal suffrage, which allows everyone to make their voice heard, regardless of their income. The first European Parliament elections based on direct universal suffrage took place in 1979.

## A duty

We all have a duty to participate in political life, whether it is that of Europe, your country, region or town. In some countries – such as Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg – there is even compulsory voting and penalties may be imposed on those who fail to vote.

In any case, by exercising your right to vote in the European elections, you will be able to influence future decision making that affects your everyday life: the budget that goes towards youth mobility programmes, consumer protection, energy... the list goes on.

## A personal decision

Voting is anonymous; this is to ensure that you don't feel pressured to vote in the same way as your parents, teachers, friends or neighbours.

It's important to know yourself well, to know what is a priority for you across the key topics and the different parties, to question the choices of others and to ask yourself what it is that you want or do not want in society, when choosing whom to vote for.

# An informed choice

As well as taking into account your own choices and priorities, you should also take the time to research the different parties and candidates who are running in the May 2019 elections.

The following are useful questions to consider when comparing the electoral agendas of the different parties.

Is the candidate **FOR** or **AGAINST** :

*Making the fight against youth unemployment a priority?*

*Creating a European army?*

*Strengthening the fight against terrorism?*

*Developing methods of involving citizens in decision-making? E.g. referendums.*

*Working to fight against climate change?*

*Reducing jurisdiction from the European Union?*

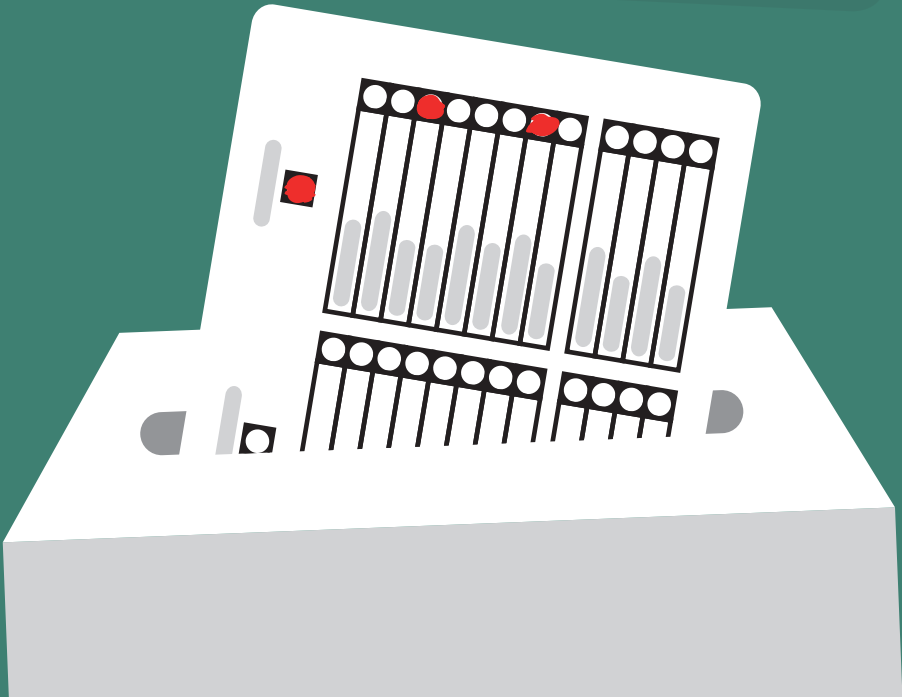
*Promoting free trade agreements with other countries? E.g. CETA.*

*Better regulating the posting of workers to other EU Member States?*

*Ensuring a minimum of social protection for all European citizens?*

It's important to be critical in the face of disinformation and propaganda campaigns that seek to influence your opinion, including fake news, targeted ads and photo or video montages.

*WHO CAN VOTE?*



# Voting Terms and Conditions



To be able to vote in the European Parliament, you must:

Be a citizen of the European Union

Be aged 18 or over

**Watch out!** The voting age is now 16 years old in Austria and Malta.

Be a resident of a country of the European Union

**Watch out!** The meaning of 'residence' varies from country to country: it can mean the place where you live or your main place of residence (Germany, Estonia, France); the place where you spend the majority of your time living (Denmark, Greece, Ireland) or where you are a part of the electoral register (Belgium, Czech Republic). Some countries, such as Luxembourg, the Czech Republic and Cyprus, stipulate that citizens of other Member States have to spend a minimum period of time in the country to earn the right to vote.

Meet the same voting criteria as other people living in the country

***For example,*** to continue to benefit from your civil and political rights and not be deprived of your right to vote, either temporarily or permanently.



*This brochure is not only about the European Parliament, but also other elections (regional, local...) that take place in your country. Just remember that electoral terms and conditions can vary between different elections.*

# The right to vote in your country of origin

As a citizen of a country that is a part of the European Union, you have the right to vote in the European elections. You should therefore respect the electoral rules and only vote for candidates that come from your own country.

To find out more, don't hesitate to get in touch with the relevant authorities in your country.

## The right to vote from abroad

As a citizen of a country that is a part of the European Union, you also have the right to vote in the European elections, even if you live abroad<sup>2</sup>. In this case, you have a choice:

- Either you decide to vote for candidates from your country of origin.
- Or you decide to vote for candidates from your country of residence.

**Watch out!** You can only vote once.

*If you decide to vote for a candidate from your country of origin*

You should comply with the electoral rules of your country of origin and vote only for representatives from this country. Currently, almost all Member States (except Ireland, Malta, Czech Republic and Slovakia) allow voting from abroad, but some countries also require that you register with their national electoral authorities before a specific deadline, in order to vote from abroad.

It's important to find out about the voting procedures and the ways in which you can cast your vote: what methods are available in the country where you are voting? Can you vote by electronic voting, postal vote or by proxy?

In all cases, all Member States are required to adopt sufficient measures to ensure that the results are reliable, votes are confidential and personal data is protected.

<sup>2</sup> This chapter only covers the hypothesis that your country of residence is an EU Member State. If it's a non-EU country, it's important to find out about the electoral rules for that country, as they are country specific.

## Voting procedures for citizens living abroad

Austria (AT)		Ireland (IE)	Non authorised
Belgium (BE)		Italy (IT)	
Bulgaria (BG)		Lithuania (LT)	
Cyprus (CY)		Luxembourg (LU)	
Czech Republic (CZ)	Non authorised	Latvia (LV)	
Germany (DE)		Malta (MT)	Non authorised
Denmark (DK)		Netherlands (NL)	
Estonia (EE)		Poland (PL)	
Greece (EL)		Portugal (PT)	
Spain (ES)		Romania (RO)	
Finland (FI)		Sweden (SE)	
France (FR)		Slovénia (SI)	
Croatia (HR)		Slovakia (SK)	Non authorised
Hungary (HU)		United Kingdom (UK)	

Postal vote  
 Embassy  
 Voting from abroad is only possible from another EU country  
 Proxy  
 Electronic voting

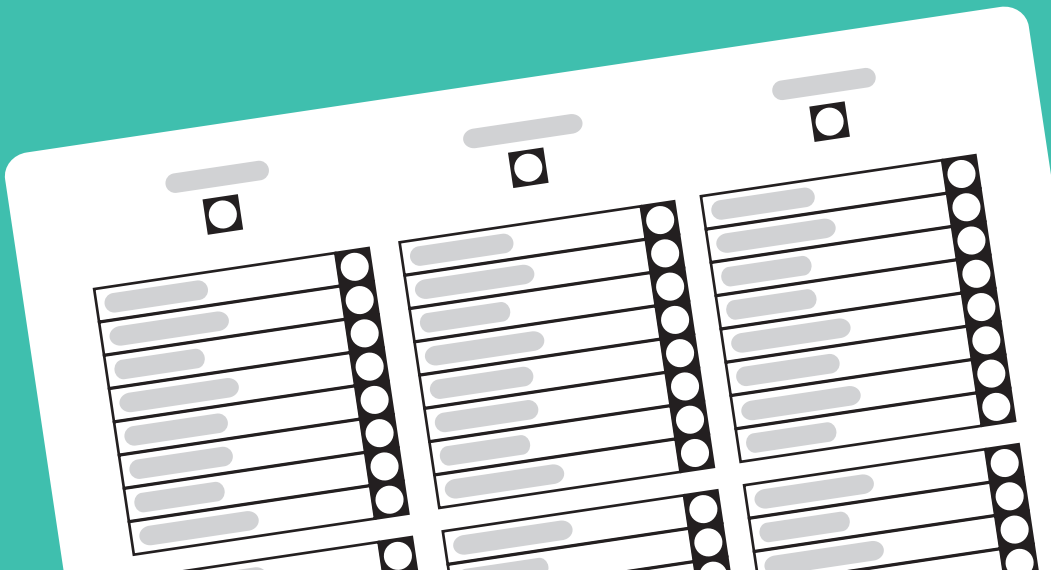
## If you decide to vote for a candidate from your country of residence

You will be subject to the same electoral rules as other nationals from your country of residence, and you should vote for candidates from this country only. If you live in a country where voting is mandatory (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Luxembourg) and you choose to vote in that country, you will have to vote or face the same financial penalties as other nationals of this country.

Similarly, you will need to read up on the voting procedures and methods of this country, as they may be different from your country of origin – for example, the use of electronic voting. To avoid being caught off guard, get in touch with the relevant authorities ahead of time.



# HOW SHOULD I VOTE?



# The voting system

All MEPs in the European Parliament will be elected under some form of **proportional representation**, regardless of the voting method that exists in each individual country.

This system works on the premise that each party gains seats in direct proportion to the number of votes that they receive. The objective is to reflect the will of the people as much as possible, in order to reinforce the legitimacy of the parliament. This is the most widely used system in place across Europe.

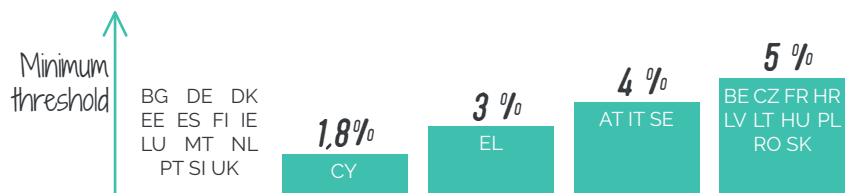
Each country is free to determine other aspects of the voting procedure, such as how it establishes its electoral constituencies, setting a minimum threshold and the method of allocating seats.

## Setting up the constituencies

The majority of Member States consider their country to be a constituency when it comes to the European elections. This means that all citizens of the country will be able to vote for the same list of candidates. Conversely, there are other countries (Belgium, Ireland, Italy, Poland and the United Kingdom) that have decided to divide into multiple constituencies. This means that you will have a different list of candidates, depending on your constituency.

## Establishing a minimum threshold

Each Member State can decide whether or not to set an obligatory minimum threshold for the allocation of seats; at the national level, this is set at 5%.

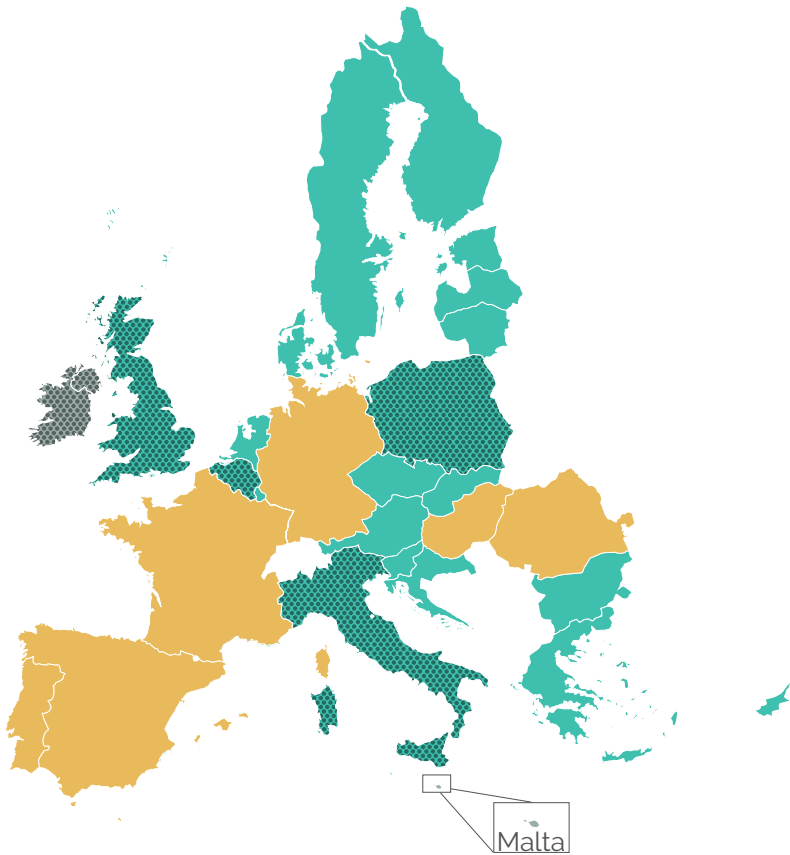




# How seats are allocated

The Member States<sup>3</sup> are all required to respect the principle of proportional representation, but they alone can decide what form this representation should take. They usually base this on the electoral system in place in their country. For the European elections, there are three methods of allocating seats:

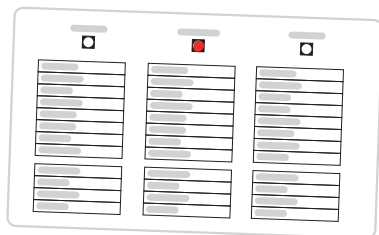
- Closed list
- Single transferable vote (STV)
- Preferential Voting
- Multiple constituencies



<sup>3</sup> It's important not to forget the outermost regions that are also a part of France, Spain and Portugal; this includes the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands, Mayotte, Reunion, Guyana, Guadeloupe, Martinique and Saint Martin.

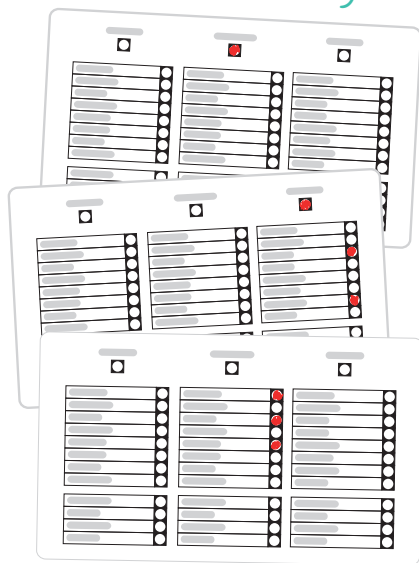
## Closed list

This system functions so that electors vote for a political party rather than a particular candidate. They are only able to vote for one list, and do not have the power to change the order of the candidates; hence the name 'closed list'.



The seats are then allocated to the different parties, in proportion to the number of votes that they have obtained. The elected candidates are taken from the winning lists in order of preference. This is the preferred system for France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Romania and Spain.

## Preferential Voting



This system functions whereby electors vote for a political party and also for the candidate(s) of their choice.

They can indicate their preference for a candidate and this changes the position of the candidate on the list. The seats are then allocated based on the order of preference established by the votes.

This system exists in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Italia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

In principle, you can only vote for one candidate from one list. There is one exception; in **Luxembourg**, electors are free to vote for candidates from **different lists**.

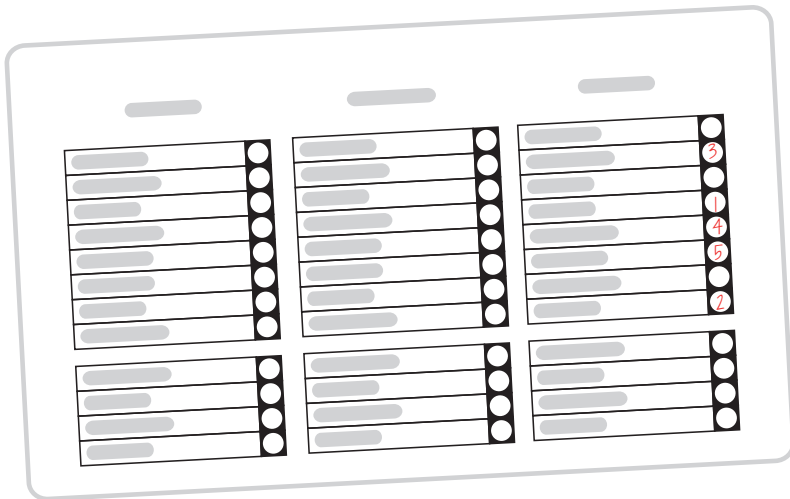
## Single transferable vote (STV)

The single transferable vote is a voting system designed to achieve proportional representation through ranked voting.

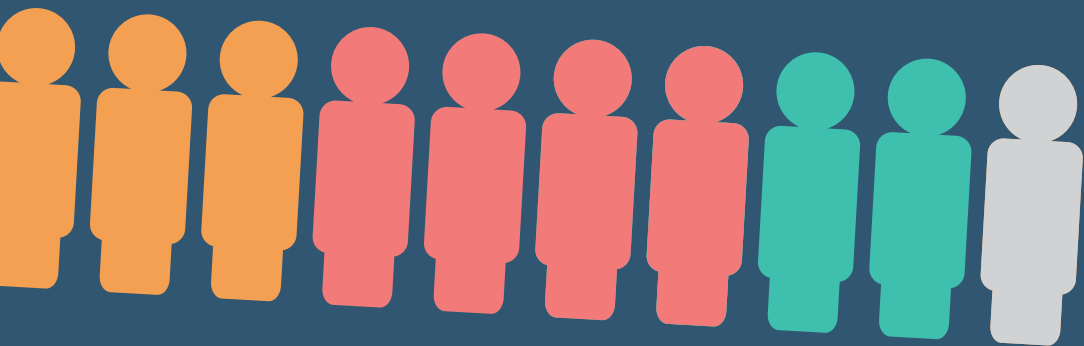
Like proportional voting, this system functions through electors voting for a political party and also for the candidate(s) of their choice.

Under this system, an elector has a single vote that is initially allocated to their most preferred candidate. They also rank the remaining candidates by order of preference.

The votes are counted; if a candidate achieves the electoral quota, he / she is then elected. The surplus votes are then transferred to the second choice and so on, until the required number of seats is filled<sup>4</sup>. This system exists in Malta and Ireland.



<sup>4</sup> Threshold necessary to be elected



*WHO SHOULD I  
VOTE FOR?*



# Conditions for being a candidate

**To be eligible** as a candidate, you should:

Be a citizen of the European Union

Be of the required age, as follows:



18

AT DE DK ES FI  
FR HR LU MT  
NL PT SE SI UK



21

BE BG CY CZ  
EE IE LV LT PL  
SK



23

RO



25

EL IT

Be a resident of a country within the European Union

**Watch out!** The meaning of 'residence' varies from country to country: it can mean the place where you live or your main place of residence (Germany, Estonia, France); the place where you spend the majority of your time living (Denmark, Greece, Ireland) or where you are registered on the electoral register (Belgium, Czech Republic). In some countries, such as Luxembourg, Czech Republic or Cyprus, stipulate that citizens of other Member States must have spent a minimum period of time in the country, to earn the right to vote.

To still be legally allowed to vote i.e. to not have been deprived of your right to vote

To not operate a mandate that is incompatible with the functions of the European Parliament

***For example,** the mandate of a member of the European Parliament is not compatible with that of a member of government of a Member State, a member of the European Commission, attorney general or the Head of the Justice Court.*



Meet the same criteria as is required by each Member State

*For example, in Germany, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, Czech Republic and Sweden, only political parties can participate in the European elections, whereas in other countries, individual candidates can participate, provided that they have received the required number of signatures.*

## The right to vote in your country of origin

As a citizen from a country within the European Union, you have the right to run in the European elections, as a candidate for your country, provided that you respect the electoral guidelines in place.

To know more, don't hesitate to get in touch with the relevant authorities in your country of origin

## The right to vote from abroad

Equally, as a citizen from a country within the European Union, you also have the right to run in the European elections, even if you don't live in the country you are from. In this case, you have a few options:

- Either you can run in your country of origin
- Or, you can run in your country of residence

**Watch out !** You can only run in one country.

You must also respect the electoral rules of the country that you wish to run in. Once again, don't hesitate to get in touch with the relevant authorities to learn more.

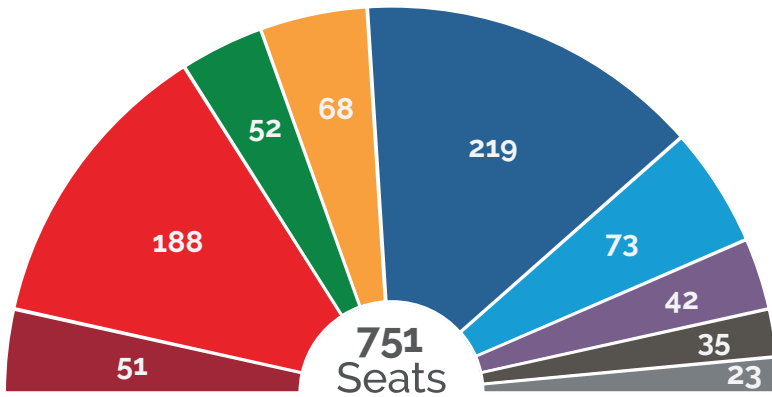
## What is a political group?

A political group exists when a group of people with likeminded opinions and ideas come together within the European Parliament. Once the election results are announced and the seats are allocated, the deputies come together by political group. As a result, representatives aren't arranged by country but by their political ideology.

To form a group, you need to have **a minimum of 25 deputies**, from at least 7 different countries. This can include a deputy who doesn't wish to subscribe to a particular group; part of the non-affiliates, or independents.

The European Parliament has a peculiarity; whilst it operates as a representative system, it must not form a clear majority. Therefore, for a motion to pass, it needs to obtain a simple majority, so **50% of the votes +1**.

Current composition of the Parliament resulting from the 2014 elections:



**European United Left - Nordic Green Left**  
Extreme left and ecologists

**Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats**  
Left and centre-left

**Greens - European Free Alliance**  
Greens and regional parties

**Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe**  
Liberal

**European People's Party**  
Centre-right

**European Conservatives and Reformists**  
Conservatives and Eurosceptics

**Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy**  
Populist

**Europe of Nations and Freedom**  
Extreme-right

**Non-Attached Members**

MEPs assemble by political group to discuss on-going projects, although are not required to vote according to their group. They can vote freely in Parliament and are not required to follow the opinion of the majority.

The background of the page features a blue gradient. In the top left corner, there is a partial view of the European Union flag, showing a blue field with twelve yellow stars. In the top right corner, there is a white outline map of Europe. The main content is enclosed in a white rounded rectangular border.

# WHAT ARE THE INSTITUTIONS ?

*It may sometimes seem that the European Union and the decisions made there are distant from what happens in your everyday life – but in fact, it's the opposite! A lot of laws that are made in the European Union might appear quite basic, but are in fact the result of many hours of negotiation, with long periods for trial and implementation.*

*Here are some examples: Because of the principle of free movement of people and the Customs Union, you can now study, work or travel within the EU, without needing a VISA or passport. Equally, if you fall ill or have an accident abroad, you have the right to medical care on site and at the same cost as nationals of the country. You can also call or use mobile data from abroad, without paying extra. The European Union not only provides financial support to students participating in the ERASMUS+ programme, but also invests in farming and culture for the most disadvantaged regions in Europe.*

*Having now explained the issues in Europe, let's have a look at how the European Union and its institutions work!*



# The European Union

The EU, not to be confused with Europe as a continent (50 countries), is **an organisation that brings together 28 countries** and 24 official languages, who work together to resolve political, economic, monetary and social issues.

The EU has its roots in the 1950s, and was started in the aftermath of the Second World War, to sustain peace, prosperity, stability and democracy; to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to create solidarity among European people.

Members of each EU Member State come together regularly to make key political, judiciary, economic, monetary, social and environmental decisions, that have an influence on our everyday lives.

***For example,** thanks to the EU, we can travel from country to country without a passport or having to exchange money (if we're traveling through one of the 19 countries within the Eurozone). We can also study or work abroad as a result of different EU programmes, frameworks, scholarships and other financial or administrative supports. Through the EU, there are also certain beauty or cleaning products that are banned in order to protect the environment.*

The EU comprises **28 Member States** (more than 500 million people), including (by order of when they joined): Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (the six founding countries), Denmark, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Finland, Sweden, Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia.

There are still a number of candidate countries: 3 of which are currently under consideration (Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey), and Albania and North Macedonia, who haven't yet started negotiations. More countries will no doubt be candidates in the years to come.

Every EU Member State must give up some elements of their independence in order to abide by the rules, demands and common decisions of the union. A country with pending status often has to make changes, sometimes even fundamental ones, in how it functions in order to be a part of the EU. To be admitted, the country needs to respond to different political and economic criteria, such as the fundamental rights and freedoms of its people, the stability of its democratic institutions,

and there is also a maximum percentage that its public debt should not exceed.

## Brexit

You've almost definitely heard people talking about **Brexit**; an event that has been in the news since 2016 and which isn't yet over! A short reminder – Brexit is an abbreviation of '**British Exit**', which refers to the UK's departure from the European Union.

This historic decision was taken following a referendum organised by the United Kingdom on the 23rd June 2016: the citizens of the United Kingdom were called upon to vote on whether or not the UK should stay in the EU. The majority of the votes were negative (52% to 48%), and as a result, soon the UK will no longer be a part of the EU.

29th March 2017 marked the start of procedures to launch the UK's divorce from the EU. It was agreed that there would be a transition period of 2 years, to give time for both parties to agree upon the elements of the divorce, before the separation is finalised at the end of March 2019.

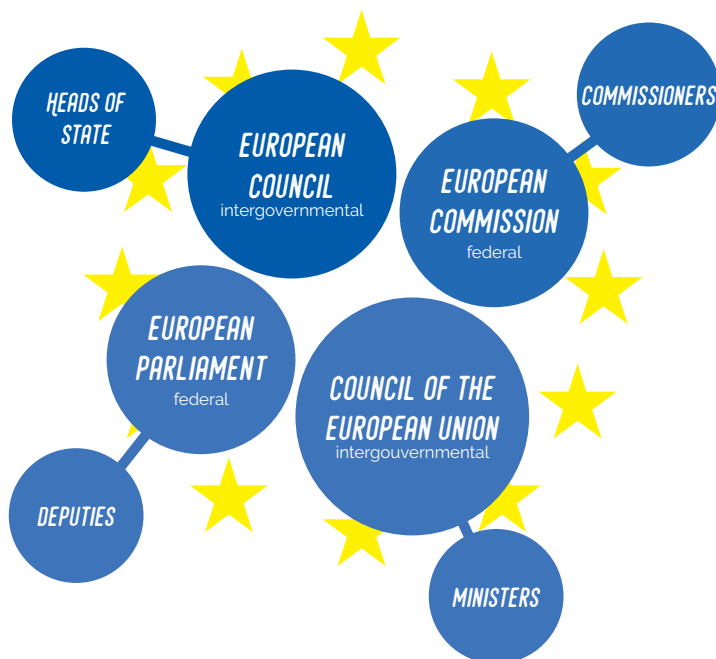
However, on the 15th January 2019 and on 12th March 2019, the British Parliament rejected the leave deal, throwing the UK into a period of uncertainty about its future. For now, the UK is still a member of the EU and the rights and obligations that come with its membership will continue to stand.

With the departure of the UK, different EU institutions will see a reduced number of British representatives, including removing 1 head of state from the European Council, 1 Commissioner from the European Commission, 74 members from the European Parliament and ministers from the Council of the European Union.

To conclude, the consequences of the UK leaving the EU are difficult to foresee, particularly given that the negotiations between the UK and the EU are on-going. There will certainly be an impact on the UK's economy, as well as that of other EU Member States, but this will depend on the future trade agreements, such as whether or not the UK will stay a part of or leave the single market. So, keep following the news...!

# The European Political Institutions

The EU is comprised of **two economic institutions** (the Central Bank and the European Court of Auditors), **a legal institution** (the European Court of Justice) and last but not least, **4 political institutions**: The **European Council**, the **European Commission**, the **Council of the European Union**, and the **European Parliament**.



## The European Council

The **European Council** has regular meetings, which bring together the Heads of State or Government of all the countries within the EU, the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council, who chairs the meeting.

These meetings aim to set a general direction and to prioritise policy, as well as to resolve the most complex issues of intergovernmental cooperation. The European Council does not have the power to pass European legislation.

It meets in Brussels **two times every six months**, and, if necessary, additional special meetings, as and when called by the President.

**Watch out!** This institution should not be confused with the Council of Europe, which is not a body of the EU, but an intergovernmental organisation, comprised of 47 Member States, of which 28 are also a part of the EU. Headquartered in Strasbourg, the Council of Europe aims to promote democracy and protect human rights across Europe.

## The European Commission

The main aim of the European Commission is to draw up legislative and budget proposals, and to submit them to the Council of the European Union and the Parliament. If they choose to adopt this legislation, the European Commission is then responsible for their application.

The Commission is comprised of **28 commissioners** (including the President), elected by each Member State for a period of 5 years, with 1 Commissioner per country.

The European Parliament must approve the Commission, before its members can take office. The Parliament can pass a vote of no confidence against the Commission, or some of its members, forcing them to resign.

The Commission is composed of **33 branches** and **11 specialised departments**. A Director General, who reports to the Commissioner, heads each branch. The Commissioner has overall political responsibility. The European Commission is headquartered in **Brussels**.

## The European Parliament

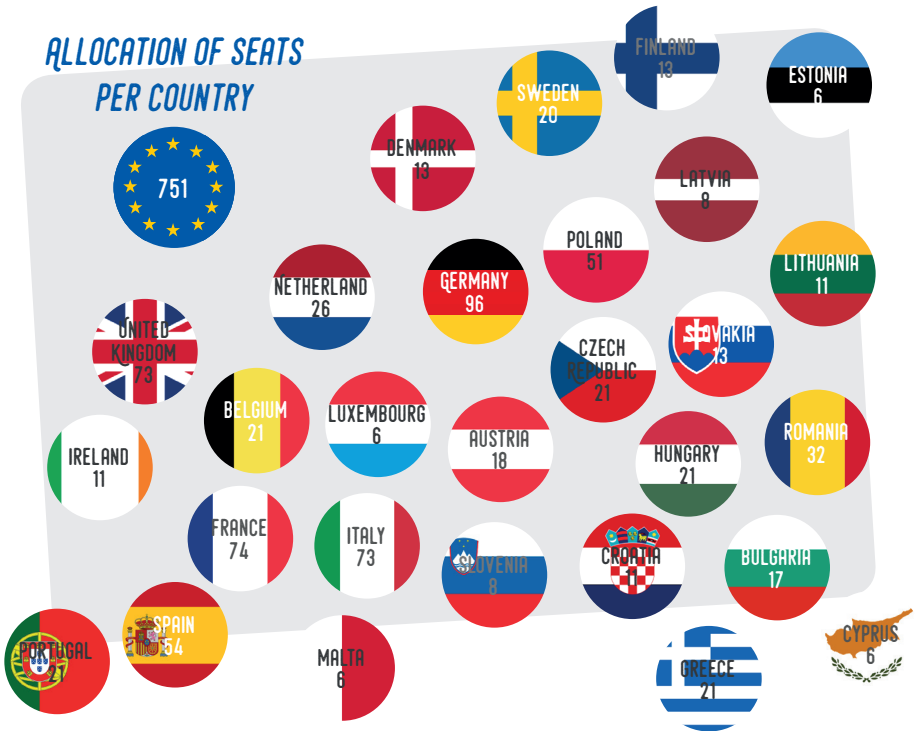
Since the Treaty of Lisbon (2007), the European Parliament has gradually increased its power, particularly in regard to looking after the interest of its citizens, those of its Member States. Moreover, it is the only EU body whose members are directly elected by its citizens. The MEPs are therefore elected by direct universal suffrage. These are the deputies that you will be voting for in 2019.

The European Council unanimously passes the initiatives of the European Parliament, and in doing so defines the EU's policy agenda. The representatives from 28 Member States are voted in **every 5 years**.

The principle of **digressive proportionality** ensures that citizens are fairly represented, with a minimum threshold of 6 representatives (members) and a maximum of 96 members per Member State.

Since the 2014 European elections, the European Parliament is composed of **751 MEPs<sup>5</sup>**, from across the **28 Member States**, which is proportional to its number of inhabitants.

## ALLOCATION OF SEATS PER COUNTRY



The Parliament meets monthly in **Strasbourg**, and can also come together in exceptional circumstances, at the request of parliamentarians, the Council of the European Union or the European Commission in **Brussels**.

<sup>5</sup> Following the Brexit vote in the UK's referendum, if the UK does not participate in the European elections, 27 of the UK's 73 seats will be redistributed to other countries, while the remaining 46 seats will be kept for future enlargements. This means the number of MEPs to be elected would be 705.

The **European Parliament** has **three key roles**:

- 1.** It examines and adopts European legislation, with the help of the Council of the European Union. Ever since the Lisbon Treaty, the areas in which these two institutions cooperate has grown, and now includes issues such as the environment, consumer protection, immigration, the legal system, public health etc. Additionally, Parliament needs to give its approval for certain decisions to be made, such as for new countries to become EU Member States.
- 2.** It aims to supervise how other institutions operate; to ensure that how they function is democratic.
  - It must approve the appointment of new members to the Commission;
  - It can issue a no confidence vote to the Commission, forcing its members to resign.
- 3.** It examines and controls the budget, with the help of the Council of the European Union.

The Parliament includes **20 permanent parliamentary committees** (and 2 sub committees) each responsible for a different area of governance. This includes the Employment and Social Affairs Committee; the Committee on Culture and Education; the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee – new and specialist committees can also be created.

## The Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union assembles the relevant ministers for each government of the 28 Member States. According to the agenda of the day, each country will put forward its representative for the issue under discussion (foreign affairs, finance, social affairs, transport, agriculture etc.). The presidency of the Council of the European Union is entrusted to a different country for a period of 6 months. Here is the calendar for the presidency for the next 2 years to come:

## ROMANIA

January - June 2019

## FINLAND

July - December 2019

## CROATIA

January - June 2020

## GERMANY

July - December 2020

The minister in charge of the issue of the day will chair the meeting. For example, meetings concerning the justice system will be chaired by the Romanian Minister of Justice, when it's the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

**The Council of the European Union** is responsible for:

- Adopting the legislation of the European Union: on the basis of the European Commission's proposals for laws, it adopts and votes on the directives and regulations that Member States will include in their respective legislation, by carrying out the necessary reforms;
- Coordinating the general direction of economic policy of its Member States; including signing agreements between the EU and other countries or international organizations;
- Approving, with the help of Parliament, the annual budget of the Union;
- Defining the EU's common foreign and defense policy.

The Council of the European Union is headquartered in **Brussels**.

# LEXICON

Here, you will find the meaning for the different country codes used on pages 16 and 21.

✓ AT	Austria	✓ IE	Ireland
✓ BE	Belgium	✓ IT	Italy
✓ BG	Bulgaria	✓ LV	Latvia
✓ CY	Cyprus	✓ LT	Lithuania
✓ CZ	Czech Republic	✓ LU	Luxembourg
✓ DK	Denmark	✓ MT	Malta
✓ DE	Germany	✓ NL	Netherlands
✓ EE	Estonia	✓ PL	Poland
✓ EL	Greece	✓ PT	Portugal
✓ ES	Spain	✓ RO	Roumania
✓ FI	Finland	✓ SI	Slovenia
✓ FR	France	✓ SK	Slovakia
✓ HR	Croatia	✓ SE	Sweden
✓ HU	Hungary	✓ UK	United Kingdom



## TO GO FURTHER



If you would like to learn more, here are some useful links:

**Infor Jeunes:** <https://www.inforjeunes.be>

**ERYICA:** <https://www.eryica.org>

**European elections 2019:** <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/elections>

**Erasmus+ :** [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/node_en)

**How the EU budget is spent:** [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-budget/expenditure\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-budget/expenditure_en)

**How the elections work:** <https://www.european-elections.eu/how-elections-work>

**Members of the European Parliament:** <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/home>

**European political parties:** <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/eng-pub/contracts-and-grants/en/20150201PVL00101/Political-parties-and-foundations>

**EU institutions:** [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies_en)

**Brexit:** [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/brexit-negotiations\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/brexit-negotiations_en)

**European Central Bank:** [https://www.ecb.europa.eu/home/html/index\\_en.html](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/home/html/index_en.html)

**European Court of Auditors:** <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/ecadefault.aspx>

**European Court of Justice:** [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/court-justice\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/court-justice_en)

**The European Council:** <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/european-council/>

**The European Commission:** [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/index\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/index_en)

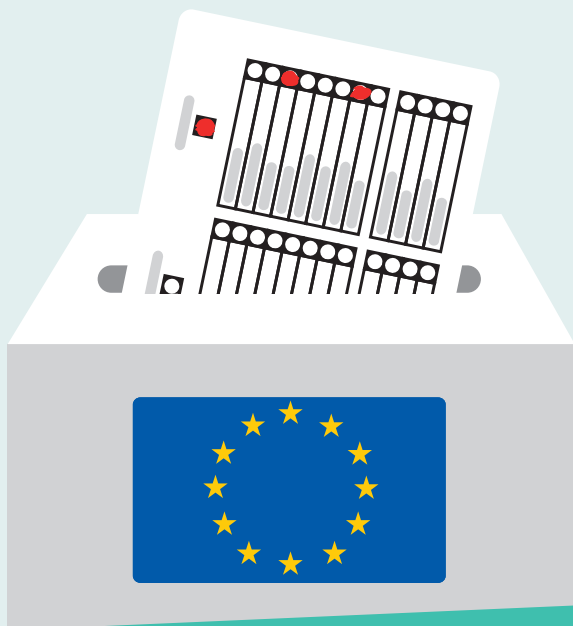
**The Council of the European Union:** <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/>

**The European Parliament:** <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/portal/en>

**Council of Europe:** <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal>

**European legislation:** [https://europa.eu/european-union/law\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/law_en)

*YOU'RE NOW READY TO VOTE  
FOR THE ELECTIONS OF MAY  
2019*



*Follow us on social media*



On the initiative  
of the Belgian  
network



With the  
support of



european youth information  
and counselling agency