



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 6.6.2025
SWD(2025) 147 final

COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT
Accompanying the document

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

Report on the 2024 elections to the European Parliament

{COM(2025) 287 final}

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Commission Staff Working Document accompanies the Report on the 2024 elections to the European Parliament, detailing its findings, following the same structure.

The elections to the European Parliament, which take place every five years, are among the world's largest democratic exercises.

Between 6 and 9 June 2024, European Union ('EU') citizens directly elected 720 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) from around 18 400 candidates¹ with approximately 180 million votes cast across the EU, of nearly 360 million eligible voters². The turnout (50.74%) closely mirrored that of the 2019 elections.

The 2024 elections were organised amidst major transformations being faced by democracies in the EU and beyond. Election campaigns have moved significantly to the online sphere with social media playing an increasingly important role. As highlighted in the Commission's European Democracy Action Plan³, this has brought new opportunities for direct interactions between political actors and voters. It can encourage democratic engagement and is also particularly effective in terms of involving young people in the democratic life. At the same time, the prevalence of campaigning online has also resulted in the need to mitigate specific risks. There is a higher need to address challenges such as those posed by cyber-threats, foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), disinformation or by the misuse of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, than before. In this context, citizens show a high level of concern about various forms of interference in elections, including through disinformation, cyber attacks or the covert influence of foreign countries.

Background info on Eurobarometer

In 2023, a survey on citizenship and democracy uncovered a high level of concern about various forms of interference in elections in Europe⁴. Indeed, almost eight in ten respondents (78%) expressed concerns about disinformation influencing people's voting decisions, with almost half (47%) very concerned about this. Around seven in ten were concerned about elections being manipulated through cyberattacks (72%) and about foreign countries influencing elections covertly (70%)⁵. Alongside these concerns, more than six in ten respondents are also worried about being pressured into voting a particular way (65%), and about the results of an election being manipulated (63%). A slimmer majority (53%) express concern about people voting when they are not entitled to.

The main responsibilities regarding elections are for the Member States. It is their competence and responsibility to lay down the specific conditions for the conduct and organisation of elections, in accordance with their national legislation, international obligations and applicable EU law, and their authorities and courts have primary responsibility for exercising oversight and ensuring compliance with the relevant rules. For elections to the European Parliament, certain common principles and

¹ As reported by the Civil Society Organisation and Election Observer Network Election-Watch.EU.

² Eurostat, [Persons eligible to vote in the 2024 European Parliament elections by category of voters](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/demo_popep_esms.htm), last updated 2 August 2024. Related metadata: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/demo_popep_esms.htm.

³ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on [the European democracy action plan](#), COM/2020/790 final, 3 December 2020.

⁴ [Eurobarometer 528 on Citizenship and democracy](#). Fieldwork: April-May 2023. Publication: 06 December 2023.

⁵ About eight in ten respondents (81%) agreed that foreign interference in our democratic system is a serious problem that should be addressed, and over seven in ten (74%) agree that such interference can affect citizens' voting behaviour.

procedures are set out in EU law, including the 1976 Electoral Act⁶ and the rules enabling mobile EU citizens to exercise their right to vote and stand in the elections to the European Parliament in their country of residence.

EU action in support of free and fair elections offers important added value. Since 2019, as part of a broader effort to promote and strengthen democracy, the EU has reinforced its support to Member States in this field. Initiatives such as those under the 2020 European Democracy Action Plan⁷, the 2021 package of measures to reinforce democracy and protect the integrity of elections in the EU⁸, and the 2023 Defence of Democracy package⁹ provide new tools to reinforce the resilience of democracies and elections in the EU.

Non-exhaustive overview of actions undertaken to protect democracy in the 2019-2024 mandate

European Democracy Action Plan (2020)

- 1) Protect the **integrity of elections and promote democratic participation**:
 - See in particular 2021 package of measures to protect integrity of elections below
- 2) Strengthen **media freedom and media pluralism**
 - See different measures on media freedom presented in 2021/2022 below
- 3) **Counter foreign interference and disinformation**
 - Developing EU toolbox for countering foreign interference
 - Code of Practice on Disinformation
 - Work on media literacy

Package of measures to reinforce democracy and protect integrity of elections (2021)

- 1) Regulation on **transparency of political advertising**: proposal on political advertising (*Adopted in 2024, will fully apply as of Autumn 2025*)
- 2) Proposals to update Directives on **electoral rights of mobile EU citizens** in municipal and European Parliament elections
- 3) Proposal to amend **Regulation on European political parties and foundations**

Different measures to strengthen free media (2021-2022)

- Recommendation on safety of journalists (*Presented by the Commission in 2021*)
- Package on abusive litigation (**SLAPP**) to protect journalists and civil society: Directive (*Entered into force 2024*) and Recommendation (*Presented in 2022*)
- Package on media freedom: Recommendation on safeguards for editorial independence and ownership transparency in the media sector, and proposal for a Regulation: European Media Freedom Act – proposal for a Regulation (*Adopted, entered into force 2024, will fully apply as of August 2025*)

Defence of Democracy Package (2023)

- 1) Directive on **transparency of interest representation on behalf of third countries**
- 2) Recommendation on inclusive and resilient electoral processes (*Presented in December 2023*)
- 3) Recommendation to promote the inclusive and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policy making processes (*Presented in December 2023*)

⁶ [Act concerning the election of the representatives of the Assembly by direct universal suffrage](#), OJ L 218, 8.10.1976.

⁷ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on [the European democracy action plan](#), COM/2020/790 final, 3 December 2020.

⁸ European Commission, [European Democracy: Commission sets out new laws on political advertising, electoral rights and party funding](#), 21 November 2025.

⁹ European Commission, [Defence of Democracy – Commission proposes to shed light on covert foreign influence](#), 12 December 2023.

Other tools

- Important legislation in the **digital field**, notably the Digital Services Act (*Adopted, fully applies as of February 2024*) (and its Guidelines on the mitigation of systemic risks for electoral processes¹⁰) and AI act (*entered into force 2024, will fully apply as of August 2026¹¹*)

As part of this work, the December 2023 Commission Recommendation on inclusive and resilient elections (hereafter, ‘the 2023 Recommendation on elections’)¹², provides an important blueprint to support the preparations for and conduct of elections. It is addressed to Member States, European and national political parties, political foundations, and campaign organisations in the context of preparation for elections in the EU, including the 2024 elections to the European Parliament.

The Recommendation on elections includes measures (1) supporting voter turnout and inclusive participation, (2) encouraging election integrity and fair campaigning, (3) on transparency for affiliations and political advertising, (4) promoting election observation, (5) protecting election-related infrastructure and ensuring resilience against cyber and other hybrid threats, (6) protecting election-related information, (7) regarding funding from third countries of political parties, political foundations, electoral campaigns and candidates, (8) promoting easy access to electoral rights for elections to the European Parliament, (9) enhancing the European nature of the elections to the European Parliament, (10) addressing the risk of multiple voting in the elections to the European Parliament, and (11) strengthening election networks and electoral cooperation.

The EU toolbox also includes several legislative and regulatory measures which are relevant in the electoral context, including the Digital Services Act (DSA)¹³ and its Guidelines on the mitigation of systemic risks for electoral processes¹⁴, the Regulation on transparency and targeting of political advertising¹⁵ or the Artificial Intelligence Act¹⁶.

Preparations for the 2024 elections to the European Parliament saw unprecedented cooperation between the Member States, EU institutions and stakeholders. On 24 April 2024, the Belgian Presidency of the EU activated the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) arrangements in information-sharing

¹⁰ European Commission, [Guidelines for providers of VLOPs and VLOSEs on the mitigation of systemic risks for electoral processes](#), 26 April 2024.

¹¹ The AI Act entered into force on 1 August 2024 and will be fully applicable 2 years later on 2 August 2026, with some exceptions: prohibitions and AI literacy obligations entered into application from 2 February 2025, the governance rules and the obligations for general-purpose AI models become applicable on 2 August 2025, and the rules for high-risk AI systems - embedded into regulated products - have an extended transition period until 2 August 2027.

¹² [Commission Recommendation \(EU\) 2023/2829](#) of 12 December 2023 on inclusive and resilient electoral processes in the Union and enhancing the European nature and efficient conduct of the elections to the European Parliament, presented as part of the Defence of Democracy Package, *OJ L*, 2023/2829.

¹³ [Regulation \(EU\) 2022/2065](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act), *OJ L* 277, 27.10.2022.

¹⁴ European Commission, [Guidelines for providers of VLOPs and VLOSEs on the mitigation of systemic risks for electoral processes](#), 26 April 2024.

¹⁵ [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/900](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 March 2024 on the transparency and targeting of political advertising, *OJ L*, 2024/900, 20.3.2024.

¹⁶ Register of Commission Expert Groups and other Similar Entities, [Expert group on electoral matters - Right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections for the EP and in municipal elections \(E00617\)](#).

[Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1689](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act), *OJ L*, 2024/1689, 12.7.2024.

mode in relation to foreign interference in the 2024 European elections¹⁷, which aided the exchange of information among Member States and EU institutions.

The European Cooperation Network on Elections¹⁸ (ECNE), a network supported by the Commission and consisting of national contact points appointed by Member States, held a wide range of thematic sessions on free, fair and resilient elections, sharing best practices and information, with the participation of the European Parliament. Cooperation between ECNE and other EU networks took place, as well as engagement with a broad range of stakeholders including elections observers. In addition, a wide range of initiatives and cooperation structures were activated with new ones being set up to tackle threats such as FIMI, disinformation, cybersecurity threats or other issues affecting the integrity of elections. This includes for example the ad hoc Working Group in the European Board of Digital Services under the DSA, or the dedicated Taskforce of the European Digital Media Observatory, as well as the Expert group on electoral matters¹⁹.

The European Parliament actively supported the smooth conduct of the 2024 elections, with a communication strategy aimed at supporting and complementing Member States actions and providing a European perspective to the elections. The European Parliament also took specific measures to combat disinformation, taking an approach focusing on proactive communication, resilience-building, situational awareness and rapid response, ensuring a secure information environment for all EU citizens.

In its Conclusions on democratic resilience and safeguarding electoral processes from all forms of foreign interference²⁰ in May 2024, the Council invited the Commission to thoroughly analyse the lessons to be learned from the 2024 elections to the European Parliament²¹. In June 2024, the Council also approved Council Conclusions on enhancing and protecting free, open and informed democratic debate²².

This Staff Working Document accompanies the Report on the conduct of the 2024 elections. It follows the same structure and adds further information on the findings contained in the Report. Both documents are based on a wide variety of sources including:

- a call for evidence published in 2024²³;

¹⁷ Council of the European Union, *Foreign interference: Presidency reinforces exchange of information ahead of the June 2024 European elections*, 24 April 2024.

¹⁸ European Commission, *European cooperation network on elections website*.

¹⁹

²⁰ Council of the EU, *Democratic resilience: Council approves conclusions on safeguarding electoral processes from foreign interference*, 21 May 2024.

²¹ The Council also invited the Commission to “present comprehensive feedback to the Council on the effectiveness of the relevant mechanisms, networks, tools and measures, and report on any issues and gaps identified in the available tools so that they can be rectified”.

²² Council of the European Union, *Council conclusions on enhancing and protecting free, open and informed democratic debate*, 14 June 2024.

²³ The *call for evidence* was online from 6 November to 4 December 2024. It received 22 responses from citizens and civil society organisations. The responses addressed a diverse range of concerns and recommendations. For instance, one respondent called for higher thresholds to limit their entry of anti-democratic parties into Parliament. Issues raised also related to inadequate voter engagement and fragmented information, particularly regarding the lack of transparency on candidates, voting records, and key parliamentary decisions. Calls were made for improved communication strategies, transnational candidate lists, and better platforms to empower voters in the future. Broader concerns included the need for the EU to remain a strong, democratic bloc amid rising geopolitical tensions and the resurgence of far-right ideologies. Participants emphasized the importance of reforming voting rules to prevent individual Member States blocking decisions-making processes. The need for pluralistic and uncensored media, greater innovation in sustainability, healthcare, and environmental solutions, and more localized engagement by representatives was also highlighted. Several civil society organizations contributed analyses on election integrity, the role of digital platforms, disinformation, and the upcoming European

- responses to Commission surveys returned by Member States²⁴ and European and national political parties²⁵;
- exchanges with Member States in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections²⁶ and other relevant expert groups such as the Expert group on electoral matters (E00617), and the Network and Information Systems ('NIS') group;
- feedback from the signatories of the Code of Practice on Disinformation on the measures taken around the 2024 European Parliament elections;
- Eurobarometer and other surveys including the post-election survey published by the European Parliament²⁷, and other relevant studies;
- direct feedback from citizens including via Europe Direct Contact Centre and Your Europe Advice;
- reports from election observers, civil society, and bodies such as the European Digital Media Observatory, the High-Level Group on gender mainstreaming, the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, the European Institute for Gender Equality and the European Data Protection Board.

Democracy Shield initiative. Reports called attention to transparency and compliance issues with EU regulations, risks to democratic resilience from disinformation and technology misuse, and opportunities to generally strengthen trust and participation in democratic processes.

²⁴ 25 Member States responded to this questionnaire. The Commission received responses from Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden. The Commission did not receive responses from Cyprus and Poland.

²⁵ The Commission received 6 responses from European political parties and almost 60 responses from national political parties (see Annex).

²⁶ An overview of relevant ECNE meetings can be found in Section 3.

²⁷ [EU Post-electoral survey 2024](#).

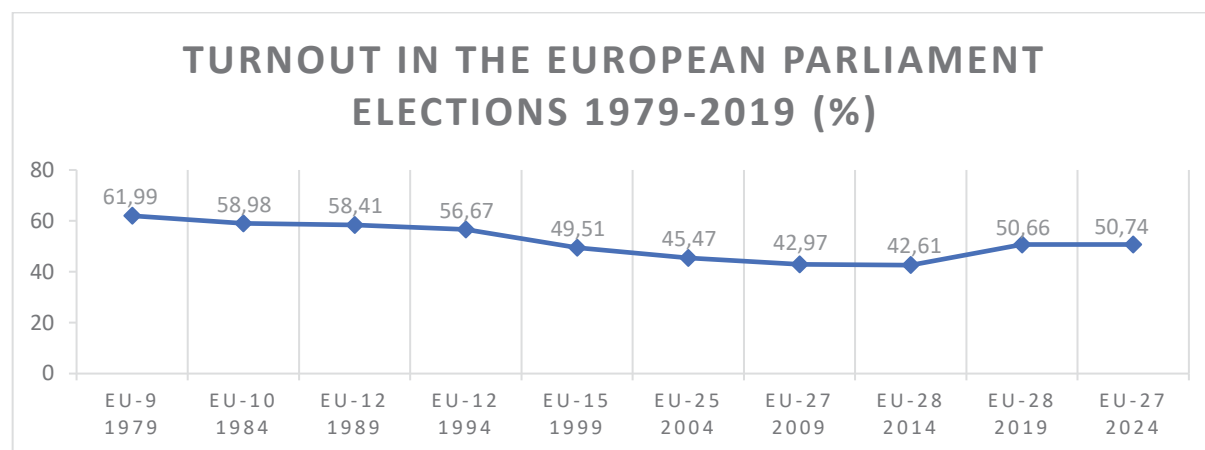
2. PARTICIPATION IN THE 2024 ELECTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2.1. Turnout

Observations

In the June 2024 elections to the European Parliament, the **overall turnout remained stable** at 50.74%, confirming the positive trend of the 2019 elections²⁸.

Figure 1: Overall turnout results 1979 to 2024



Source: European Commission (based on the [2024 European election results](#) as published by the European Parliament)

There were however **substantial differences between Member States**, ranging from 89.01% in Belgium²⁹ to 21.35% in Croatia. Turnout increased in 15 Member States³⁰, with double-digit increases on the 2019 figures in Cyprus, Hungary, Slovenia and Slovakia, and significant increases in countries where turnout was previously low, such as Czechia, the Netherlands and Portugal. Meanwhile, turnout decreased in 11 Member States³¹, including by double digits in Greece, Spain and Lithuania. There were also significant decreases in Denmark, Italy, Poland and Croatia.

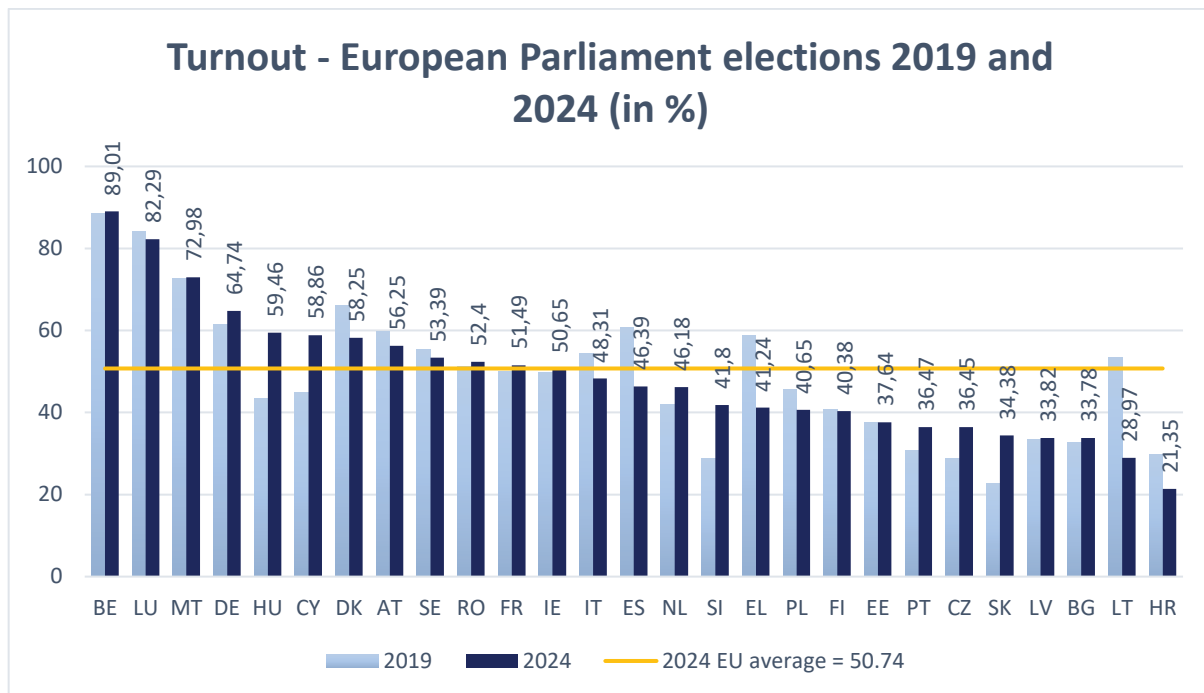
²⁸ In 2019, turnout amounted to 50.66% of eligible voters. If the UK is excluded from the results, this number rises to 52.4%.

²⁹ In Belgium, voting is compulsory. Voting is also compulsory in Bulgaria, Greece and Luxembourg. The highest turnout for the European Parliament elections can indeed be seen in Belgium and Luxembourg. At the same time, Greece and Bulgaria show lower compliance.

³⁰ In the 2024 European Parliament elections turnout increased in Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Ireland, France, Cyprus, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia compared to the previous elections in 2019. In Estonia, turnout remained stable.

³¹ In the 2024 European Parliament elections turnout decreased in Denmark, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Austria, Poland, Finland and Sweden compared to the previous elections in 2019.

Figure 2: Overall turnout results 1979 to 2024



Source: European Commission (based on the 2024 European election results as published by the European Parliament)

Several circumstances may explain the changes observed, although it is difficult to draw concrete conclusions.

One element that has an impact is whether the elections to the European Parliament are held alongside other elections. For example, in Hungary, which saw an increase in turnout of +16.10%, elections to the European Parliament were held alongside local elections. This merged election agenda seemed to have boosted participation significantly³². In Greece, Spain, and Lithuania, where turnout decreased compared to 2019, the 2024 elections to the European Parliament were not held alongside other elections, whereas this had been the case for the 2019 elections³³. At the same time, this correlation does not always hold: in Italy, a decrease in turnout of -6.19 percentage points can be noted, while local elections³⁴ were held concurrently with the 2024 European elections, a similar setup to the 2019 elections³⁵. Overall, research shows that there is indeed a significant rise in turnout for almost all countries with parallel electoral events, with a few exceptions³⁶.

Three months before the elections, the **European Parliament's spring 2024 Eurobarometer survey**³⁷ had found that 60% of Europeans expressed an interest in the 2024 elections. This represented an increase of +11 percentage points compared to the survey of spring 2019, ahead of the previous elections to the European Parliament. This increase in interest applied to all Member States (*see figure below*).

³² According to the European Parliament Spring 2024 Survey, the interest of Hungarian voters in the European elections increased by 15 percentage points since spring 2019 (from 50% of respondents in 2019 to 65% in 2024).

³³ In 2019, the European Parliament elections were held alongside the first round of local and regional elections in the case of Greece, local elections in the case of Spain, and the second round of Presidential elections in the case of Lithuania.

³⁴ In 3 698 municipalities out of a total 7 918.

³⁵ In 3 844 municipalities out of a total 7 914.

³⁶ European parliament, [Stock-taking of the 2024 European Parliament Elections: Political Representation: Turnout and Vote Choice](#), briefing requested by AFCD Committee.

³⁷ 'EP Spring 2024 Survey: Use your vote – Countdown to the European elections' with more than 26 000 respondents in all EU Member States.

Europeans also indicated they were very much aware of the importance of the elections in the ongoing geopolitical context, with more than eight in ten (81%) agreeing that it makes voting even more important. Most Europeans agreed that ‘voting is important to keep democracy strong’ (86%) and that ‘voting is important to ensure a better future for the next generations’ (84%). However, this overall increased interest in the elections to the European Parliament was not reflected in a significantly higher turnout compared to 2019. In addition, interest in the European Parliament elections has evolved differently across Member States since 2019.

Figure 3: Evolution of EU citizens’ interest in the European Parliament elections 2019-2024

	E U	B E	D K	D E	I E	F R	I T	L U	N L	E L	E S	P T	S E	A T	F I	C Z	E E	C Y	L T	L V	H U	M T	P L	S I	S K	B G	R O	H R
2019	49	48	49	57	58	46	51	57	61	50	39	38	62	55	44	16	35	36	36	33	50	57	52	41	38	35	49	37
2024	60	58	63	70	69	47	59	68	72	56	58	51	65	66	64	38	49	55	56	47	65	68	63	46	43	40	60	61
Change (pp)	11	10	14	13	11	1	8	11	11	6	19	13	3	11	20	22	14	19	20	14	15	11	11	5	5	5	11	24

Source: European Parliament Spring 2024 Survey: Use your vote - Countdown to the European elections

The **European Parliament’s post-election survey**³⁸, held in June and July 2024, showed that the main topics eventually motivating EU citizens to vote were rising prices and the cost of living (42%), followed by the general economic situation (41%). For a third of voters (34%) the international situation was a topic that encouraged them to vote, while a similar proportion mentioned defending democracy and the rule of law (32%).

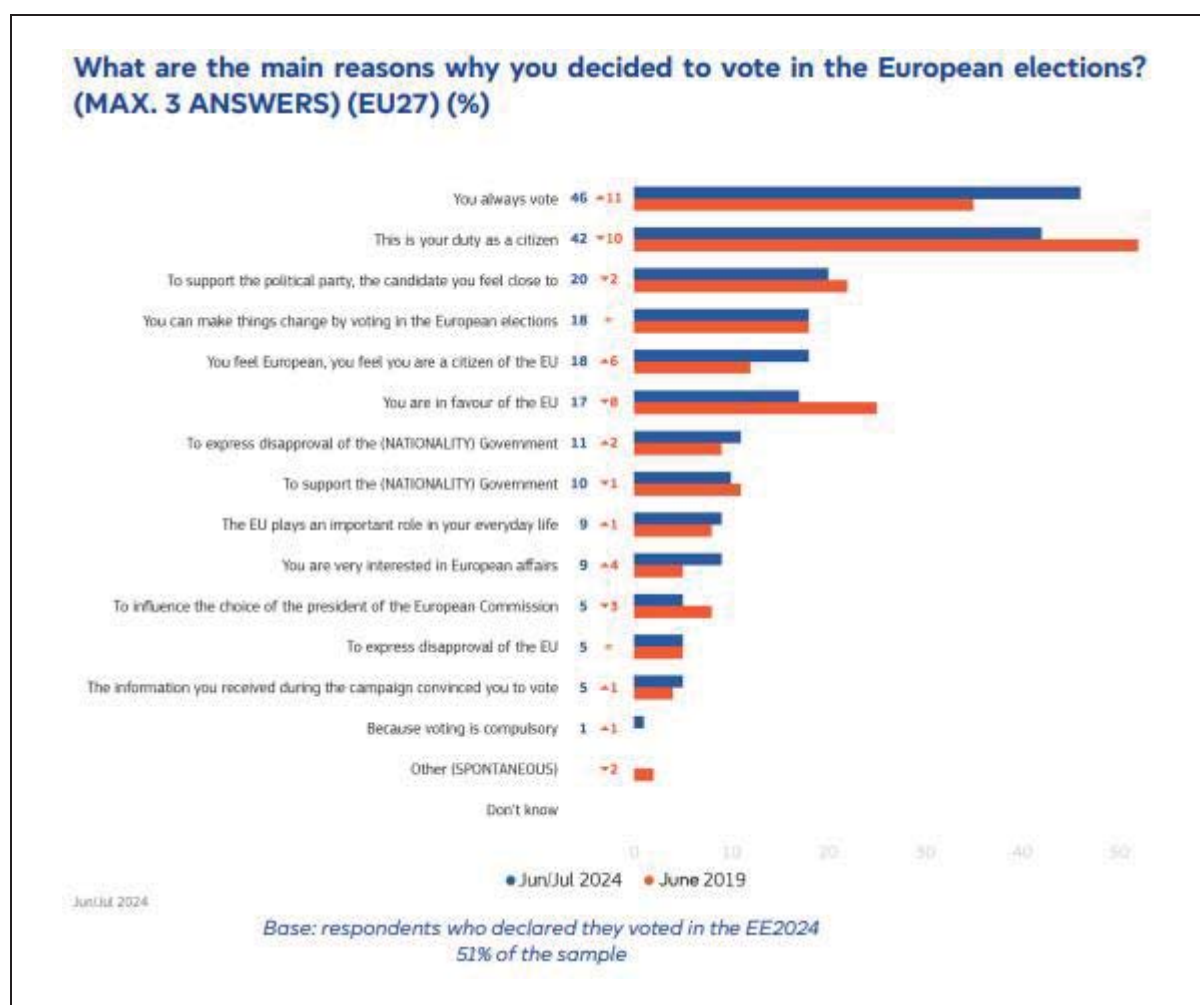
In that same survey, more than one in two EU citizens (56%) consider that their voice counts in the EU, which represents an increase of +8 percentage points compared to spring 2024. A similar, while slightly lower, increase was seen in 2019, with figures rising from 49% to 56% in the months leading up to the elections. Pro-EU attitudes translate directly into voting in the elections to the European Parliament: 67% of people with a positive image of the EU voted, compared to 42% with a neutral image and 36% with a negative image.

Voting in the elections to the European Parliament also seems to have become a democratic habit for many: asked why they voted, 46% of voters say they always do, while 42% say it is their duty as citizens. 20% say they want to support the political party they feel close to. The decision on whom to vote for in the 2024 European elections was based mainly on how close the proposals of the parties were to the ideas and values held by voters. Proposals on European issues were the most frequent reason, given by 47% (+4 percentage points since 2019) of the voters.

The two main reasons for not voting in the 2024 European elections are a lack of trust or dissatisfaction with politics in general (21%, 1 percentage point decrease since 2019) and a lack of interest in politics (20%, 2 percentage point increase since 2019). Other reasons include the belief that voting has no consequences or does not change anything (17%, 3 percentage point increase since 2019). This means that genuine political engagement reasons may explain non-participation.

³⁸ [EU Post-electoral survey.](#)

Figure 4: Main reasons to vote in the 2024 elections compared to the 2019 elections



Source: European Parliament Post-electoral survey 2024

Households' financial situation poses differences in turnout in the European elections, with the socio-economic divide widening since 2019³⁹. Those who encounter difficulties paying bills most of the time (35%, 3 percentage points less than in 2019) are much less likely to have voted than those who never or almost never do (57%, 3 percentage points more than in 2019). Another factor influencing turnout is the level of education: 59% of voters who finished their formal education at the age of 20 or older voted in the elections, while the turnout was 49% for those who finished at the age of 16-19, and 44% for those who finished at the age of 15 or younger⁴⁰. On 21 March 2024, Member States discussed about drivers for political participation, including turnout in elections, in a thematic session of the European Cooperation Network on Elections. According to research presented by Professor Kasper Møller Hansen during the session⁴¹, social aspects may affect voting behaviour and turnout more than cost or ease of voting⁴².

³⁹ EU Post-electoral survey.

⁴⁰ EU Post-electoral survey.

⁴¹ Kasper Møller Hansen is a professor of political science at the University of Copenhagen's Department of Political Science.

⁴² For instance, research by Professor Kasper Møller Hansen shows that if the mother of a household does not vote, this would affect the voting behaviour of her children their entire life, making them less prone to vote (more than in the case of the father not voting, especially for first time voters). Similarly, if the parents in a household vote, their children will most likely do so as well. It also shows the importance of the social dimension of voting, as most people go to the polls in groups.

Measures taken by Member States and political parties to increase turnout in the 2024 elections to the European Parliament

The 2023 Recommendation on elections calls on Member States to take measures in support of broad turnout. This includes taking the necessary steps to facilitate, where applicable, voter and candidate registration, including by providing the necessary information, tools and support at local level and making tools such as online registration or electronic collection of support signatures for candidates easily accessible and user friendly. The 2023 Recommendation on elections further calls on Member States to ensure that citizens are informed about the availability and accessibility of complementary voting methods, such as advance, mobile, postal, and electronic voting ('e-voting') and provide them with the necessary support at all levels, including at local level. The 2023 Recommendation on elections also calls on Member States to have in place voting hours long-enough to accommodate the needs of as many voters as possible and help ensure that the greatest number of people can exercise their right to vote.

Many Member States reported that they had taken a wide range of measures to facilitate voter and candidate registration, with a large majority providing a dedicated website⁴³. For example, Ireland's reported that, while the 31 electoral registers are run by the respective local authorities, there is a single website where the electorate could register to vote or check or update their details in less than three minutes. Hungary reported to have sent postal notices to all voters which contained QR codes leading to a dedicated website, to make electronic administration easier. All election offices also had a hotline to answer telephone and e-mail enquiries. Germany also provided an online tool to facilitate candidate registration.

When it comes to **complementary voting methods**, France reported that citizens were able to register their delegate for proxy voting completely online, without presenting themselves physically before a competent authority, for the first time. Portugal allowed for the first time voters to vote in any polling station set up in Portugal or abroad, independently from their place of residence in Portugal. Italy, for the first time, introduced new rules allowing students domiciled in a municipality outside their region of residence to vote in the municipality of temporary residence, or in the commune capital of the Region, under certain circumstances. Sweden reported that advance voting is possible both from within the country on various locations in every municipality and through mobile voting clerks (from day 18 before election day), as from abroad (from day 24 before election day). Postal voting from abroad starts 45 days before election day. Other Member States such as Latvia, Malta, Lithuania and Estonia reported that they also provided for advance voting under certain circumstances. In Slovenia, voters can vote at specific polling stations outside their district of permanent residence or sometimes even at home, under certain requirements. In Latvia, voters have the opportunity to vote at any polling station without registration in advance. In Luxembourg, every voter can use postal voting without any justification and free of charge. Estonia provides for electronic voting (i-voting). Czechia reported that voters can apply for a voter's absentee card (the voter applies to the municipal authority in his/her place of residence and then can vote at any polling station) or they can vote by mobile ballot box on request due to any serious reasons (e.g. at home or hospital). In Bulgaria, voters can cast their vote either by paper ballot or by machine (in all polling stations with at least 300 registered voters).

As regards **voting hours and days**: in most Member States⁴⁴, the polling stations were opened at least until 8:00 pm. In Czechia the polling stations were opened on 7 and 8 June, while Italy opened them on 8 and 9 June. Compared to 2019 elections, voting hours on the day of the elections remained the same in all Member States.

⁴³ Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland.

⁴⁴ Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden.

2.2. Informing about the elections, engaging with and communicating to citizens, and supporting electoral rights

National authorities, the European Parliament and the Commission, other EU institutions, bodies and agencies, as well as other stakeholders including civil society organisations, took a wide range of initiatives to inform, engage and communicate ahead of the 2024 elections.

Efforts at EU level

The European Parliament's campaign sought to provide a European perspective to the elections and showing democracy in action.

The main and final phase of the campaign centred on the call for action: 'Use your vote, or others will decide for you'. The dedicated 'one-stop-shop' website for the 2024 elections⁴⁵ (EE24 website) provided comprehensive information covering organisation and voting processes in the Member States. It was organised in close cooperation with the Commission.

The Commission also approached the 2024 elections as a communication priority. Recognising the shared interest in a resilient democracy and the common responsibility for the EU's democratic legitimacy, it complemented and supported the European Parliament's communication efforts as part of a joint interinstitutional effort.

The Commission communicated with impact both on the proactive and the defensive side. Extensive communication on the concrete results and benefits of its work for citizens during the previous mandate supported awareness of what was at stake. The Commission complemented these efforts by providing factual information to citizens about the elections, their electoral rights and the importance of voting. In this context, it activated its networks and different groups of multipliers and helped to grow the European Parliament's 'together.eu for democracy'-community. Young and first-time voters were an important target audience for EU-level activities, as were 'mobile EU citizens' (EU citizens who have moved to another Member State to work, live or study). The Commission also supported massively and amplified the European Parliament's 'Use your vote'-campaign through all its channels. Communication activities of the Commission also focused on preventing and tackling FIMI, including disinformation, as explained further in Section 4.2.

Some of the main outputs and results in key areas

1) COMMUNICATING THE COMMISSION'S ACHIEVEMENTS

- The [webpages](#) on the achievements of the College attracted 113 000 page views.
- The brochure '[Keeping our promise to YOU!](#)' aiming to inform young people about the Commission achievements, was published online in all EU languages.
- A total of 708 posts about #EUdelivers were published by the European Commission's Social Media Network (SMN), i.e., the central and local accounts, DGs and Commissioners, generating over 14 million impressions and 307 000 interactions in the first semester of 2024.
- The hashtag #EUdelivers generated 2 600 mentions in the first semester of 2024.
- European Citizens' Panels have become a regular feature of EU democracy. Since 2022, five panels took place: Tackling Hatred in Society (2024), Energy Efficiency (2024), Learning Mobility (2023), Virtual Worlds (2023), Food Waste (2022). The launch of the new digital, multilingual Citizens Engagement Platform helped reinforce the awareness of citizens that the EU is not only delivering policy for citizens but also with citizens by involving them in policymaking.

⁴⁵ European Parliament, [European Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), last accessed 12 March 2025.

- Directorate-General (DG) for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (EAC) organised the European Week of Youth 2024 (12-19 April) jointly with the Parliament with 2 056 activities across 39 countries, generating a direct reach of more than 2.3 million of which more than 1.8 million young / first-time voter participants.

2) INFORMING ABOUT THE ELECTIONS

- The Commission at all levels and through all channels informed citizens about the elections, electoral rights and the importance to vote, including through a targeted information campaign for mobile EU citizens living in another EU country or in the United Kingdom. This campaign was run by the DG for Justice and Consumers (JUST) in cooperation with DG for Communication (COMM) and the European Parliament and had a total cumulative reach of 24 million across two waves. It garnered more than 79 million impressions and drove over 350 000 clicks to the EP's elections' website.
- The [EP's elections website](#) was promoted as the main reference on elections-related information. DG JUST helped feed its 'how to vote'-section with accurate information. The [EU website](#) and the Commission core website generated 3.1 million views of pages promoting the European elections.
- The [Europe Direct Contact Centre \(EDCC\)](#) acted as citizens' elections helpline and was referred to on the EP's elections page as the single point of contact. 2 715 elections-related questions were answered.
- The hashtag #EUElections2024 generated 3 300 mentions from January to June 2024 on the Commission's social media channels.
- The Commission produced a flyer for young people and first-time voters in 24 languages: [Get ready! The countdown to the 2024 European elections has begun](#), generating close to 400 000 distributed copies, 3 036 downloads and 5 331 visits. The Commission's [Learning Corner page on European elections](#) was also actively used.
- The Commission's Visitors' Centre and Experience Europe exhibition centre in Brussels communicated about the European elections to visiting groups, reaching an overall figure of 44 796 visitors.
- The total reach of Representations' elections related actions was 213.5 million, excluding social media actions.

3) ACTIVATING NETWORKS AND MULTIPLIERS

- Commission Services, including the Representations, and Commission networks organised 4 319 events with around 3.5 million participants. As part of this effort, the EUROPE DIRECT network alone organised 3 185 events with 955 500 participants. Overall, some 40 networks were activated.
- The Commission contributed to growing [the together.eu](#) for democracy-community of the European Parliament where 380 000 people registered altogether as a result of the collective efforts.
- The Commission activated different groups of multipliers. For example, the Commission activated influencers to boost awareness and engagement with new and younger audiences. Content creators participated in a study visit and a content creator bootcamp. Both activities combined generated 52 European election-specific posts, 2.9 million impressions and 41 000 engagements (estimated reach of 3 million people). DG COMM also activated UEFA Europa League winner of 2022, Eintracht Frankfurt, who ran an elections campaign reaching almost 1 million people.
- For its part, the EEAS set up a working group with the foreign ministries of the Member States to kick off communication on the European elections outside the EU and to encourage the exchange of best practices for such information campaigns. Coordinated by the EEAS and together with Member State embassies/consulates the 145 EU Delegations reached out to citizens living outside the EU. Concrete outputs included the creation of an

EEAS European elections 2024 website as well as a dedicated European elections 2024 page on every EU Delegation website bringing together information, links and contacts. The EEAS also launched a worldwide joint social media initiative of EU Delegations and EU Member States embassies/consulates on the European elections using the social media products of the European Parliament and additional 26 campaign videos. The EEAS and EU delegations posted more than 2000 posts on the European elections which estimate have reached more than 11 million recipients and had high levels of engagement with over 600,000 views, reactions and comments across channels. The EEAS coordinated this communication with the Commission, the European Parliament and the European Parliament's Local Offices.

4) SUPPORTING THE EP'S GO-TO-VOTE CAMPAIGN

- The Commission amplified the EP's 'use-your-vote' campaign through all its channels, at a similarly ambitious level as in 2019. Across all social media platforms on the Commission's central accounts, posts with the campaign's hero video amassed over 3.7 million impressions and close to 100 000 interactions.
- The Commission used the EP campaign hashtag #UseYourVote generating 920 posts, 18.6 million impressions, nearly 470 000 interactions, and 4.4 million video views across the Commission's social media accounts, including central, Representations, DGs, and Commissioners. Thanks to the coordinated interinstitutional effort, the hero video achieved 525 million views altogether.

5) COMMUNICATING INTERNALLY AND EMPOWERING STAFF

- The Commission mobilised its staff and encouraged colleagues to engage as citizens and multipliers, too, while being mindful of their rights and obligations.
- Digital staff advocacy: the elections posts on Hailo were shared 1 810 times and generated 1 000 clicks on social media and 1 760 social media reactions.
- 757 European Commission staff members conducted a Back to School/ University visit between 31 March 2023 and 10 June 2024, and helped raise awareness about the EU and the elections, reaching 52 595 students.

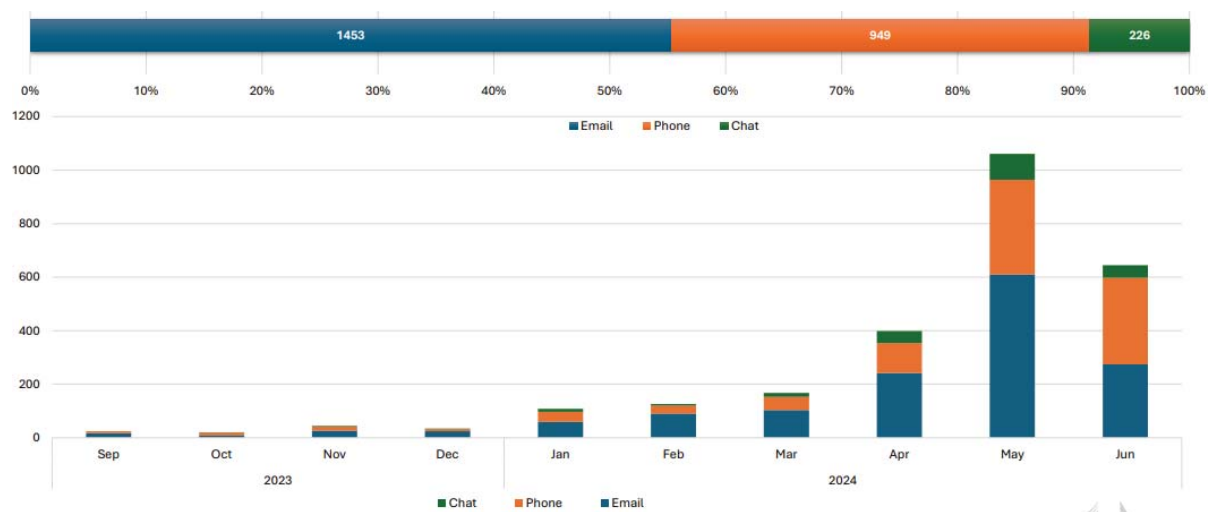
The dissemination of information was also supported by promoting the 'Guide to EU citizenship'⁴⁶. Eight Member States also explicitly reported having used the Guide in their national communication efforts⁴⁷.

The Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) acted as an 'elections helpline' for the 2024 elections at EU level. Between September 2023 and June 2024, the EDCC replied to 2 797 questions related to the 2024 elections to the European Parliament: 1 580 by webform, 975 by phone and 242 by chat. The EDCC was open during the election days (6 to 9 June, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. CET). During the election days, the EDCC replied to 377 European elections related questions, mostly about electoral rights and formalities, perceived missing information from Member States and perceived obstacles/incidents preventing citizens from voting during the election days, alleged electoral fraud, security threats and other matters related to the elections (such as, voting systems). More information about the content of the questions is included in Section 5.1.4.

⁴⁶ European Commission, *Guide to EU citizenship*, 06 December 2023.

⁴⁷ Czechia, Greece, Spain, Italy, Malta, Austria, Portugal and Slovenia.

Figure 5 European elections related questions answered by the EDCC between September 2023 and June 2024 per channel



Source: European Commission Directorate-General for Communication

The Commission used **available funding to support national authorities and civil society organisations in implementing projects** to encourage EU citizens to get involved in the democratic process, including under the 2021-2027 Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme.

Through the two CERV strands managed by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), ‘Union Values’ and ‘Citizen’s engagement and participation’, the programme provides pathways for citizens to become engaged in the democratic life of their communities. Between 2021 and 2024, these two CERV strands allocated EUR **26.5 million** to finance **46 projects** aimed at encouraging European citizens to get involved in the democratic process and promoting and enhancing the exercise of EU citizenship rights.

Under the ‘Citizen’s engagement and participation’ strand, the Commission has given the possibility to people and civil society organisations to take part in and contribute to the EU’s democratic and civic life. During these years, many activities have looked in particular at the European Parliament elections of 2024, and at innovative approaches and tools to help citizens make their voices heard and publicly exchange views on all areas of EU action, including via digital tools (e-democracy).

With regards to the actions involving local authorities (mostly Network of Towns actions), the Commission has promoted exchanges between people of different countries, with the aim to give them the opportunity to broaden their perspective and develop a sense of European belonging and identity. While maintaining a bottom-up approach, the programme has also provided an opportunity to focus on EU priorities, notably contribute to increasing the turnout and inclusive candidacy at the European Parliament elections.

Under the ‘Union Values’ strand, the aim has been to encourage and facilitate active and inclusive participation in building a more democratic EU, as well as raising awareness on rights and values through support to civil society organisations.

Under this strand, the Commission has set up 4-year framework partnership agreements with European networks, civil society organisations active at EU level and European think tanks whose statutory aims are to protect and promote Union values. It has also provided grants to support the annual work programmes of the organisations which have signed framework partnership agreements active in the area citizens’ engagement.

Examples of projects supported by CERV

- The “Digital Civic Participation”⁴⁸ project included innovative tools to raise EU citizens’ awareness of their political rights and of the procedures to participate in European Parliament elections.
- The Network of Towns project NOTE⁴⁹ (Network of Organizations and Towns for the European Elections) developed tools to encourage active citizenship and informed participation in the 2024 European Elections through and with young citizens.
- The Make your Vote! Project⁵⁰ raised awareness on the importance of the elections.
- The Citizen Z initiative⁵¹ included different innovative deliberative practices for youth engagement ahead of the 2024 European Elections.

Measures reported by Member States

The 2023 Recommendation on elections encourages Member States to provide the necessary information to citizens, including with a sufficiently wide language selection for explaining the electoral process to voters and candidates. The Recommendation also calls on Member States to promote initiatives, including at local level, aiming at increasing election accessibility and political engagement, well ahead of the election days. Such activities could include awareness-raising initiatives, information campaigns and other outreach through platforms and channels used by different groups of citizens, conferences or debates, for instance by promoting exchanges between EU citizens on EU-related topics to foster a better understanding of different perspectives. Special focus should be placed on young people, especially first-time voters, as well as on addressing the barriers limiting the opportunities of members of different groups to vote and stand as candidate. Information about elections, including its form and content, should be adapted to the special needs of those different groups.

The **Member States** also engaged in communication activities. In response to the survey launched by the Commission, most Member States reported having made efforts to support turnout, including via numerous communication and awareness-raising activities. A large majority of Member States reported to have carried out awareness raising initiatives and/or information campaigns to increase election accessibility and political engagement⁵². Some also organised debates⁵³. For example, Germany organised a ‘Use your voice’ campaign to provide information on how to vote, accompanied by specific communication activities on the electoral process and debunking of disinformation. Luxembourg also launched a wide ‘I can vote’ campaign and developed a communication kit for municipalities and associations. Ireland reported to have carried out a comprehensive six-week campaign to inform and engage the public about the elections, including advertising across traditional and social media channels. This was complimented by a programme of public engagement and events with community groups to encourage voter registration, including minority groups, young voters in schools and universities, older voters in community groups and those living in traditionally low electoral turnout areas. Hungary produced different film and radio spots. In Slovenia, a dedicated campaign on the elections and the 20th anniversary took place. Slovakia launched an extensive information campaign through municipal and city offices, official social media platforms, television, and radio. The

⁴⁸ [Digital Civic Participation – D.C.P. v 2.0](#) (a project dedicated to digital participatory e-democracy tools).

⁴⁹ [Network of Organizations and Towns for the European Elections - Fattoria Pugliese Diffusa](#), project start date 01 January 2023.

⁵⁰ Foundation for entrepreneurship, culture and education, [Make your Vote!](#), project duration 01 December 2022-31 May 2024.

⁵¹ [Citizen Z](#).

⁵² Czechia, Germany, Ireland, Greece, Croatia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Slovakia and Finland.

⁵³ Greece, Croatia, Lithuania and Portugal.

Netherlands provided communication materials to interest groups and municipalities, taking into account a wide spectrum of accessibility including on low literacy, mental disability or dementia. Malta undertook different campaigns on traditional and social media about different aspects of the electoral process, including on the new voting document delivery system. Other Member States stick to purely informing about the organisation of elections as their legislation does not allow them to promote political participation. Czechia used QR codes on their printed materials leading to the electoral website, where information could be found in easy-to-read format and also videos in Czech sign language.

Member States authorities further supported citizens' participation by **providing helplines**. For example, Austria established a hotline and call centre. In Sweden, a voter customer service received over 8 000 contacts via phone, website and social media. In Hungary, an election helpline was reached more than 100 000 times. In the context of ECNE and supported by the Commission, an overview of election helplines was prepared for the EDCC to ensure for better coordination, complementarity of the services and streamline the service to the citizens for the appropriate support.

Member States' efforts to communicate to specific groups are further explained in Section 2.3.

2.3. Participation of specific groups

2.3.1. Introduction

The inclusion of all groups is an essential element of healthy democracies. The Commission report on the 2019 elections to the European Parliament⁵⁴ had underlined, among others, that there is still progress to be made on inclusiveness and democratic participation in elections of younger people, women, citizens residing in a Member State other than their own ('mobile EU citizens'), persons with disabilities, and other groups.

The 2023 Recommendation on elections recalls that it is necessary to support the participation in elections, as voters and as candidates, of all groups of citizens, taking into account their specific needs and the challenges they are confronted with. The Recommendation suggests, among others, that to support high voter turnout and support broad citizen participation in the democratic process, Member States should pay attention to the fact that different groups, including older persons, may face obstacles when accessing internet and digital technologies or may lack skills to effectively use them. The Recommendation calls on Member States and political actors to take steps to effectively address the needs of the different groups, including in their communication activities. Moreover, it suggests that Member States should, well ahead of the election days, promote initiatives aiming at increasing election accessibility and political engagement, such as awareness-raising initiatives, information campaigns and other outreach through platforms and channels used by different groups of citizens. The 2023 Recommendation on elections puts a special focus on young people, especially first-time voters, as well as on addressing the barriers limiting the opportunities of members of different groups to vote and stand as candidate.

2.3.2. Young people

Introduction

One out of 6 people in the EU is aged between 15 and 29 years old, representing 73.6 million people⁵⁵. In the 2024 elections to the European Parliament, it was estimated that there were almost 21 million eligible 'first-time voters' (persons who have reached voting age since the last European elections in 2019), with the highest number of eligible voters expected in Germany (5.1 million persons), France (4

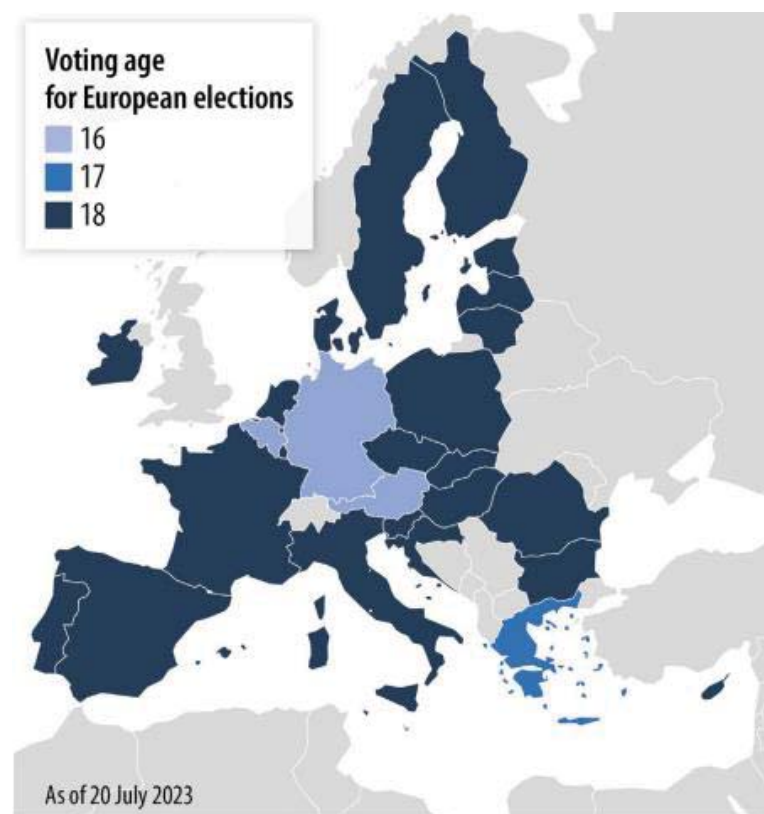
⁵⁴ European Commission, [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee - Report on the 2019 elections to the European Parliament, COM/2020/252 final](#).

⁵⁵ Eurostat, [Young people aged 15-29 years old, 01 January 2020](#), 05 January 2022.

million) and Italy (2.8 million). The highest shares of first-time voters were expected in Belgium, France and Germany with 9.7%, 8.0% and 7.9% of all eligible voters, respectively⁵⁶.

Young people may experience particular challenges to exercise their electoral rights. For example, limited access to postal or electronic voting options might be a barrier particularly for students studying abroad or from rural areas. High costs associated with sending ballots or traveling to vote might also discourage in particular young people from participating. The timing of elections, which often coincides with exam sessions, can also make it more difficult for students to vote⁵⁷.

In most Member States, citizens can vote in the elections to the European Parliament from the age of 18. The 2024 elections saw more Member States lowering the voting age and allowing citizens to vote from 16 years old (Belgium, Germany, Malta and Austria)⁵⁸. One country (Greece) gives citizens the right to vote from 17 years old⁵⁹.



Source: European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS), '[Voting age for European elections](#)', May 2023, updated in August 2023.

There are also differences in the minimum age to stand as a candidate, with most Member States requiring candidates to be 18 years old. In some countries it is 21 (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia), 23 (Romania) or 25 (Italy and Greece)⁶⁰.

⁵⁶ [European elections 2024: people eligible to vote](#), 04 April 2024.

⁵⁷ Meeting with the European Youth Forum and DG JUST, 16 September 2024.

⁵⁸ In the 2019 European Parliament elections, this was not yet the case for Belgium and Germany.

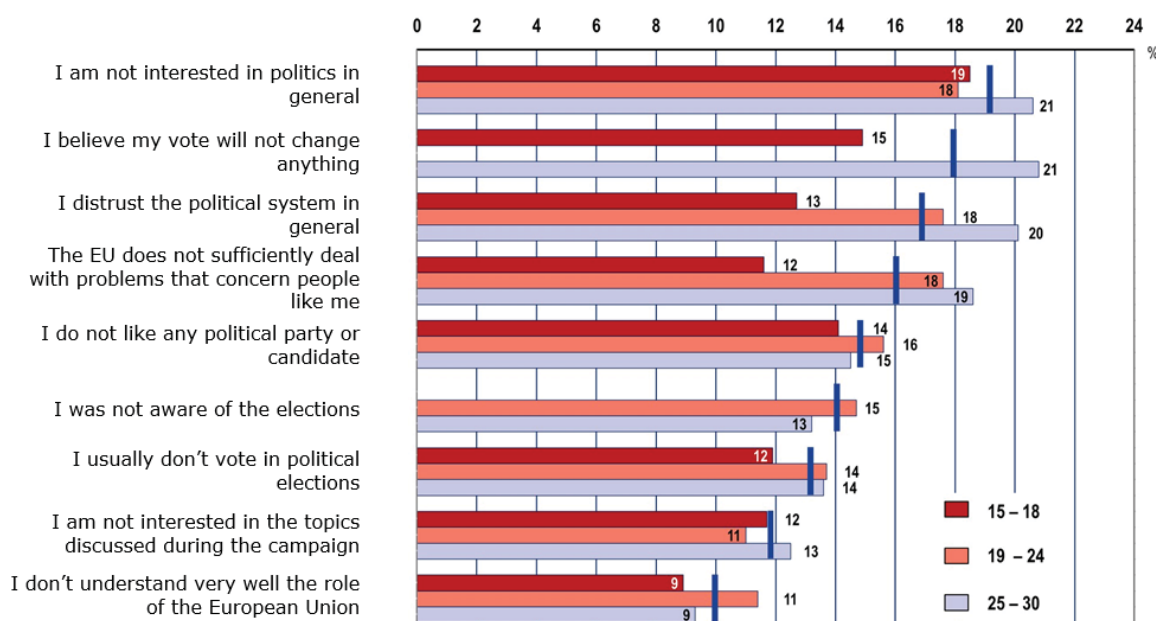
⁵⁹ Cyprus also approved a bill conferring voting rights to 17-year-olds in January 2025, which will apply as of the next national parliamentary elections in May 2026.

⁶⁰ [Briefing](#) by the Parliament on the 2024 European elections, including an overview of the legal framework framing the elections, February 2024.

Observations

Before the elections, more than 6 in 10 (64%) young EU citizens (15-30) had expressed their intention to vote in the upcoming European elections, while 13% indicated they would not vote – despite being eligible⁶¹. Among the reasons why young people did not intend to vote in the 2024 European elections, the first three related to a lack of interest in, or distrust of, the political system in general (around 19%). Among those with no intention to vote in elections, 16% did not believe the EU deals with young people’s problems or said that they did not like any political groups or candidate, while around 14% were not aware of the elections. 10% of young people declared they did not vote because they did not understand the role of the EU, while 7% did not intend to take part in the elections because they oppose to the EU.

Figure 6: Reasons not to vote in 2024 European elections, by age groups, EU average, 2024 (prior to the elections)



Source: Eurobarometer on Youth and Democracy, 2024, VOLUME B. Q14 What are your reasons for not planning to vote or being unsure about voting in the European elections? (15-18; 19-24; 25-30) [MULTIPLE ANSWERS]. Notes: Data are ordered by decreasing number of young people (15-30) not intending to vote in the next European elections. Data extracted on 13.05.2024.

According to the **European Parliament’s post-election survey**⁶², only 36% of those aged 15-24 (if eligible), and 46% of those aged 25-39 actually voted in the 2024 elections.

This represents a decrease of 6 percentage points since 2019, partially offsetting the 14 percentage points increase between 2014 and 2019. Indeed, in the 2019 elections to the European parliament, both Europe’s young and first-time voters drove turnout figures up.

⁶¹ [Eurobarometer, Youth and Democracy](#): In eight Member States the percentage of young people entitled to vote who intended to vote in the 2024 elections to the European Parliament was above the EU average (64%) with a peak in Romania and Portugal (almost 80%). Conversely, the highest share of young people stating they did not intend to vote although eligible was recorded in Malta and Luxemburg (31% and 25%). In Finland, Sweden and Latvia around 15% of young people did not know whether they were eligible to vote or whether they intended to vote.

⁶² [EU Post-electoral survey 2024](#).

Figure 7: Turnout by age group

	Voted 2019 ⁶³	Voted 2024	Difference '24-'19 (pps)
Age			
16/18-24	44%	36%	-8
25-39	49%	46%	-3
40-54	53%	51%	-2
55+	56%	58%	-2
Education (end of)			
15-	47%	44%	-3
16-19	50%	49%	-1
20+	61%	59%	-2
Still studying	53%	45%	-8
	Voted 2019	Voted 2024	Difference '24-'19 (pps)

Source: European Parliament Post-electoral survey 2024

Age remains a determining factor in voter turnout, with older people still more likely to vote than young people: 51% of those aged 40-54, and 58% of citizens aged 55 and over voted⁶⁴.

Age is also the main socio-demographic difference in *when* EU citizens decided to vote⁶⁵: older respondents mostly say that they always vote. This is lower among younger people (84% of those aged 55 or over, falling to 58% of those aged under 25). Close to three in ten voters below 25 say they decided to vote a few weeks or months before the day of the elections (28% compared with 12% of those aged 55 or over), and 14% on the day of the elections or a few days before (compared with 4%).

In the February 2025 Youth survey, young people who declared they had voted in the 2024 elections were asked why they voted for the party or candidate they chose⁶⁶. The most common reason for having voted for a specific party or candidate was that their ideas aligned with the respondent's views (selected by 30% of respondents). The second most-mentioned reason is the belief that the chosen party or candidate can change things, selected by 25% of respondents. About one in six respondents say they voted for a party or candidate because they heard or read positive things about them (17%); similar shares are found for having voted strategically to avoid the electoral success of another party (16%) and the party or candidate prioritizes matters important to young people (16%). Smaller shares mention that they usually vote for the chosen party or candidate (13%), they liked the party or candidate's electoral campaign on social media (13%), they disliked all other parties or candidates (12%), or people they trust were supporting the party or candidate (12%).

Young people who declared that they did not vote in the 2024 European elections were also asked about their main reasons for not having voted. The most common reasons are other commitments (16%) and not having enough information to make a choice (16%), followed by not finding any relatable candidate or political party that represented their views (15%) and a general distrust or dissatisfaction with politicians and politics (15%). Slightly fewer non-voters mention technical or procedural issues, such as not registering on time (12%). One in ten respondents (10%) think that their vote would not have changed anything. Less common reasons for not having voted include not knowing there were European Elections in June 2024 (7%), not understanding the role of the European Parliament (6%), and the fact

⁶³ Numbers from 2019 represent those with the UK excluded from the count.

⁶⁴ [EU Post-electoral survey 2024](#).

⁶⁵ [EU Post-electoral survey 2024](#).

⁶⁶ Eurobarometer, [Youth survey 2024](#), February 2025.

that none of their friends voted, so they did not feel like it mattered (6%). Opposition to the EU as reason for non-participation in the elections is mentioned by only 4% of non-voters.

In terms of **representation (elected candidates)** young people (under the age of 40) remain underrepresented in EU decision-making following the 2024 elections. They hold only 19.17% of the seats in the new European Parliament with 138 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). This number has decreased: in 2019, MEPs under the age of 40 held 21% of the seats⁶⁷.

Five Member States have no elected MEPs under 35 (Belgium, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg and Romania). Eight Member States have only one MEP under 35 (Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, and Lithuania)⁶⁸. Average age of MEPs per Member State ranges from 40.5 years to 62⁶⁹. The share of seats for young people also differs between the different political groups, with some allocated only 4.79% of their seats to young people while others allocated 20.75%⁷⁰.

Measures reported by Member States and political parties

The 2023 Recommendation on elections calls for Member States to promote initiatives aiming at increasing election accessibility and political engagement with special focus on young people, especially first-time voters. The Recommendation encourages Member States to support young citizens in the exercise of their electoral rights, both as voters and candidates, for example through citizenship education, organisation election simulations in schools or carrying out youth-friendly communication campaigns. Member States are also encouraged to promote the 'Guide to EU citizenship'⁷¹.

15 of the 25 **Member States** that replied to the Commission survey indicated that they had placed a specific emphasis on young people or first-time voters when it came to promoting easy access to the exercise of electoral rights⁷². For example, Croatia worked on educating high school pupils as young voters about what they need to know to participate in elections. Malta undertook specific activities to inform first-time voters.

Political parties also took measures to support turnout by young people. They sought innovative ways to engage these groups through tailored social media strategies and youth-centred initiatives. *European* political parties have made extensive use of social platforms to reach young audiences⁷³. One party even enlisted young influencers to more effectively engage with first-time voters and young people⁷⁴. Some parties reported tailoring their social media strategies to specific demographics: TikTok and Instagram for younger audiences, and Facebook for older age groups⁷⁵. Young people and first-time voters also appeared to be high on the agenda for *national* political parties. Of almost 60 national parties that replied to the survey, around 57% explicitly reported that they had addressed young people or first-time voters in the run-up to the elections⁷⁶. One notable practice was to specifically focus on topics that concern young people such as minimum wage or housing⁷⁷, and providing explanations about the elections to first-time voters⁷⁸ or hosting special events⁷⁹. Additionally, some parties made an effort to address

⁶⁷ Statistics by the European Parliament on the 2024 European elections.

⁶⁸ European Youth Forum, [European Elections 2024: Young People never had a chance](#), 31 July 2024.

⁶⁹ Luxembourg has the oldest MEPs on average, Malta has the youngest MEPs on average.

⁷⁰ European Youth Forum, [European Elections 2024: Young People never had a chance](#), 31 July 2024.

⁷¹ European Commission, [Guide to EU citizenship](#), 06 December 2023.

⁷² Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Ireland, Greece, France, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and Finland.

⁷³ European Democratic Party, Party of European Socialists, European Green Party.

⁷⁴ European Democratic Party.

⁷⁵ European Free Alliance.

⁷⁶ Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

⁷⁷ Croatia, Slovenia.

⁷⁸ Slovenia.

⁷⁹ Austria.

young people by translating election manifestos in shorter versions⁸⁰. Further efforts included a range of strategies such as creating music and video content that appealed to young audiences, targeted advertising campaigns, and even partnering with influencers to connect with younger demographics and promote their party's message effectively.

2.3.3. Women

Introduction

In its **Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025**⁸¹ the Commission committed to apply equal opportunities to women and achieve gender balance in decision-making and in politics. In the 2024 Report on Gender Equality in the EU⁸², the Commission recalled the need for an equal participation of women and men in political decision-making positions to better reflect the composition of society and strengthen democracy in the EU.

Observations

The **participation of women as voters** in the 2024 European elections fell slightly compared to the elections in 2019 (by one percentage point). The gender gap in turnout remained stable at 3 percentage points⁸³.

Figure 8: Turnout men/women

	Voted 2019	Voted 2024	Difference '24-'19 (pps)
EU27	52%	51%	-1
Man	54%	53%	-1
Woman	51%	50%	-1
	Voted 2019	Voted 2024	Difference '24-'19 (pps)

Source: European Parliament Post-electoral survey 2024

According to the European Parliament's post-election survey⁸⁴, there are some differences regarding the main reasons why women and men decided to vote in the 2024 European elections. More women declared having voted because they always vote (47% of women, compared to 45% of men) or because this is their duty as a citizen (43% of women, compared to 41% of men). Conversely, more men declared that the main reason for voting was that they are in favour of the EU (18% of men, compared to 15% of women) or because they are very interested in European affairs (10% of men, compared to 8% of women).⁸⁵

While **female representation in the European Parliament** has more than doubled since the first direct elections in 1979, in 2024 the share of women decreased by 0.9 percentage points, compared to the

⁸⁰ Luxembourg.

⁸¹ [Communication](#) from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee, A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, COM(2020) 152 final, 5 March 2020.

⁸² European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, [2024 report on gender equality in the EU, Publications Office of the European Union](#), 2024.

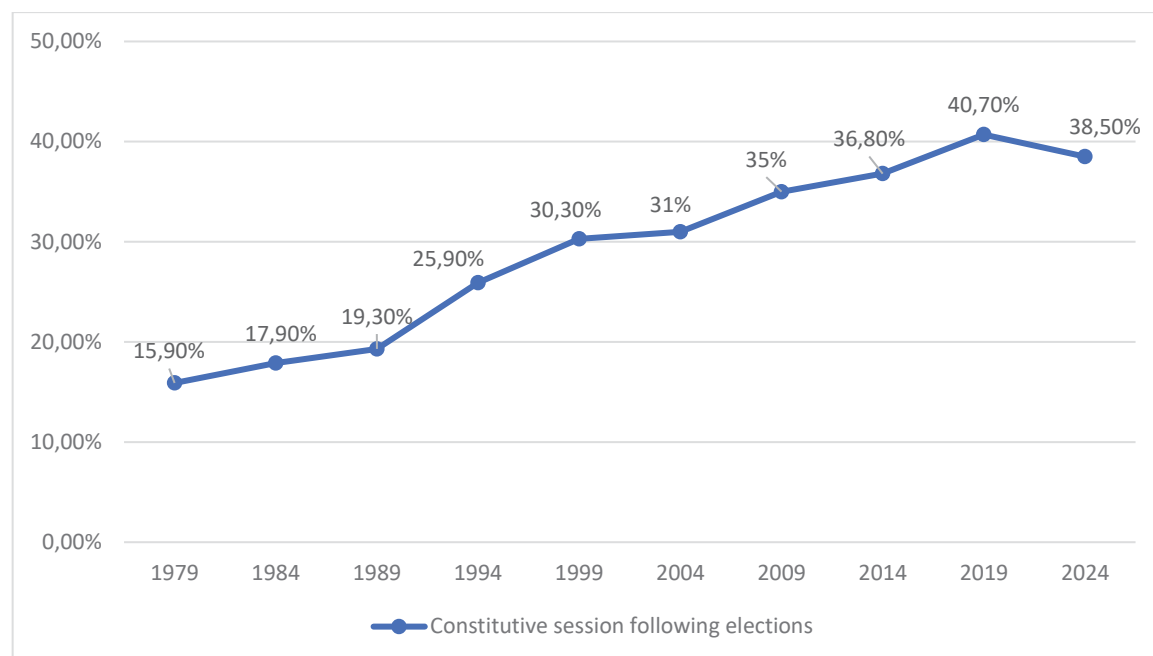
⁸³ The gender gap in voter turnout reduced from 4 percentage points in 2014 to 3 percentage points in 2019.

⁸⁴ Eurobarometer, [EU post-electoral survey 2024](#), October 2024.

⁸⁵ When asked about the main topics that encouraged people to vote, more women than men declared voting because of the rising prices and the cost of living (44% of women, compared to 40% of men), the environment and climate change (30% of women, compared to 26% of men) and social protection, welfare and access to healthcare (26% of women, compared to 22% of men). Conversely, more men declared voting because of the economic situation (45% of men, compared to 38% of women), migration and asylum (30% of men, compared to 26% of women), and the EU's defence and security (30% of men, compared to 26% of women).

2019 elections⁸⁶. This is the first time that the representation of women in the European Parliament has fallen. Women make up only 38.5 % of all MEPs⁸⁷.

Figure 9: Evolution of women MEPs in the European Parliament



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality

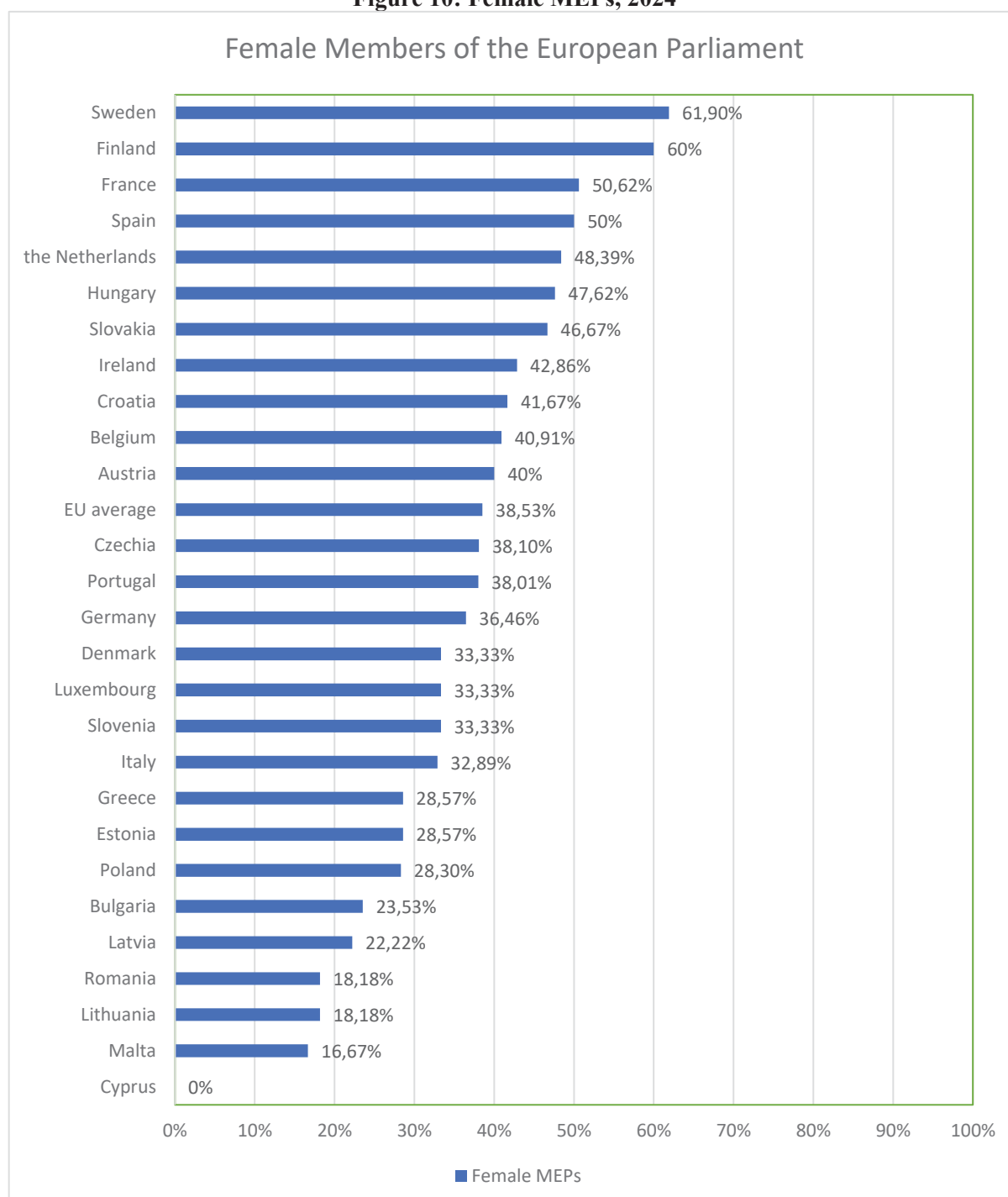
Furthermore, there remain major differences between Member States in terms of elected female MEPs.

Only Finland, France and Sweden elected more women than men with 9 of 15, 41 out of 81 and 13 out of 21 MEPs, respectively. This represents an increase compared to 2019 where only Finland and Sweden elected more women than men. In 2024, ten Member States elected at least 40% of each gender (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Slovakia, and Spain). In eight Member States women account for less than 30% of elected MEPs (Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, and Romania). As in 2019, all MEPs from Cyprus are men.

⁸⁶ Following the 2019 elections, women represented 39.4% of members of the European Parliament. This figure corresponds with the gender balance of MEPs after the redistribution of seats post-Brexit (2020).

⁸⁷ European Parliament, [MEP's gender balance by country – 2024](#), 06 September 2024.

Figure 10: Female MEPs, 2024



Source: European Parliament Post-electoral survey 2024

Five out of the 10 lead candidates put forward by European political parties were women. However, election observers⁸⁸ have pointed out that generally only around 30% of total candidates for the elections were women.

Finally, as also explained in Sections 4.7 below, female politicians also reportedly faced an acute risk of harassment, abuse, and disinformation campaigns online in the context of the 2024 elections to the

⁸⁸ OSCE/ODIHR, [Special Election Assessment Mission, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), 27 November 2024.

European Parliament⁸⁹. In the run-up to the elections, a rise in online gender-based disinformation about female EU leaders and candidates was observed⁹⁰.

Measures reported by Member States and political parties

The 2023 Recommendation on elections encourages Member States to promote measures to support gender equality regarding access to and participation in elections, such as alternating women and men on candidate lists, using other types of gender quotas, linking the allocation of public funding for political parties to the promotion of political participation of women or other similar measures. The Recommendation also encourages gender balance in governing bodies of electoral management bodies, as well as monitoring, supporting and regularly evaluating progress on gender equality in the exercise of electoral rights, including through the collection, analysis and dissemination of data on women and men both as voters and candidates in elections, in elected positions and in decision-making positions in political parties. Moreover, the Recommendation encourages political parties to put in place internal policies on gender balance, targeted training and awareness raising, as well as gender balance in electoral lists and their own governing bodies. The 2023 Recommendation on elections also encourages Member States and political parties to take measures to effectively prevent and address gender-based hate speech against politically active women that aims to discredit them or discourage them from political participation.

In response to a Commission survey, **Member States** shared insights on gender equality in the conduct of the 2024 elections. The responses revealed significant variations in efforts to promote gender equality across Member States.

Several Member States have adopted legislative mandates to support gender representation, with notable examples like Greece and Spain, where laws require at least 40% representation of each gender on candidate lists. Italy and Portugal also have implemented stringent measures, including Italy's requirement for gender alternation on lists and voters needing to choose candidates of different genders. Currently, 11 Member States have laid down quotas in their national legislation (10 of those Member States also had legislative quotas applicable for the elections to the European Parliament)⁹¹ and some go further, alternating women and men on candidate lists ('zipped lists')⁹². In addition to alternating women and men on candidate lists and using other types of gender quotas, some Member States continue to link the allocation of public funding for political parties to the promotion of political participation of women for example in Finland, Ireland and Italy. These are good practices that were highlighted in the 2023 Recommendation on elections as referred above.

Data collection, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms vary greatly across Member States. For instance, Denmark and Luxembourg have well-established systems for tracking progress through data-driven reports and statistical monitoring.

When it comes to gender balance in electoral management bodies, progress remains limited across most Member States. Although some, like Denmark and Finland encourage balance through quotas or statistical monitoring, many Member States do not promote gender parity in these roles. Notably, Latvia reports 77% of local election commission leadership positions being held by women. Emerging efforts were also reported by countries like Czechia, where a national Gender Equality Strategy (2021–2030)

⁸⁹ Global Disinformation Index, [Gendered Disinformation in the European Parliamentary Elections](#), June 10 2024.

⁹⁰ Global Disinformation Index, [Gendered Disinformation in the European Parliamentary Elections](#), June 10 2024.

⁹¹ Belgium, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia. Ireland has a quote for national elections but not for the European Parliament elections.

⁹² For example Spain, Italy and Portugal. In Spain, it is mandatory in any electoral list to have 60% of women in each group of 5 candidates. In addition, in Belgium, a quota system applies to electoral lists and the first two candidates on each list must be of different sexes.

includes measures to enhance women's political participation. Similarly, Slovakia highlighted a historic record of women candidates and elected representatives.

The High-Level Group on gender mainstreaming (E01240)⁹³ and the Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men⁹⁴ also reported on measures implemented in the Member States to promote women's participation in the 2024 European Parliament elections and their impact. In Bulgaria, a series of public political debates were organised to discuss specific challenges women encounter in participating in elections at the individual, party and system level, with the participation of female candidates for the European elections from leading political parties. In Cyprus, the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality organised an event in collaboration with civil society to promote the Cypriot female candidates for the 2024 European Parliament elections. In Ireland, state funding is provided to encourage and support women to run as candidates in elections by providing training and mentoring support.⁹⁵ In France, political parties are obliged to present an equal number of men and women for regional, municipal, senatorial and European elections in order to have their lists registered. In Hungary, gender quotas on candidate lists in elections apply so that there are no less than 40% of candidates of each sex. Lithuania provided funding for NGOs to encourage women to get involved and participate in political life and elections, as well as to reduce stereotypes related to gender in political activity through educational, informational, analytical and advocacy activities. In Finland, the Council for Gender Equality carried out a social media campaign highlighting the importance of the European Parliament and the EU for gender, and the National Council of Women of Finland together with the Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations organised a panel discussion Europe at the Crossroads on 15 May 2024. In Latvia, two NGOs held pre-election debates for candidates on various issues of women's rights. In Greece, the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family organises awareness-raising campaigns to support and empower women candidates as well as seminars for female candidates and elected officials.

At the same time, in response to a survey, the Commission's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men also reported on specific challenges women encountered in participating in the 2024 European Parliament elections. In Bulgaria, the Council for Electronic Media identified that, in the context of the 2024 European Parliament elections, the male-female ratio varied 95-69% men, 5-31% women for the 7 most influential radio and television programmes.

In response to a Commission questionnaire on supporting gender equality in the context of the 2024 European elections, *European political parties* outlined internal policies on gender balance, such as encouraging gender balance on electoral lists as outlined in their party manifestos⁹⁶, appointing the youngest-ever *Spitzenkandidatin* (female lead candidate) to demonstrate a commitment to promoting gender balance on electoral lists, or by having a 'Women's Forum'⁹⁷. In another European political party, the governing body is required to follow statutes that ensure gender balance and geographical diversity within the party's leadership⁹⁸. Additionally, gender balance was promoted in electoral lists through quotas and rules mandating that at least one co-chair or candidate must be held by a woman⁹⁹. One party took no specific measures beyond encouraging gender balance on electoral lists in accordance with national laws¹⁰⁰. Another did not report any efforts to promote gender equality in governing bodies, electoral lists, or internal party structures at all¹⁰¹.

⁹³ For more information on this committee, [see Register of Commission Expert groups](#).

⁹⁴ For more information on this committee, [see Summary on Eurolex](#).

⁹⁵ Ireland contributes funding, through the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, towards Women for Election, a civil society non-governmental organisation, which together with the National Women's Council of Ireland, held a hustings for women candidates to meet women voters in each of the three Irish European constituencies.

⁹⁶ European Democratic Party.

⁹⁷ European Free Alliance.

⁹⁸ Party of European Socialists.

⁹⁹ European Green Party.

¹⁰⁰ European People's Party.

¹⁰¹ European Conservatives and Reformists.

A similar trend can also be observed at *national* party level where some national parties reported having very ambitious internal gender policies in place for their electoral lists, governing bodies, or both, while others indicated having taken no measures at all¹⁰². For instance, one party ensured balance in electoral lists and governing bodies in accordance with party statutes¹⁰³. Another national respondent followed gender quotas for electoral lists and governing bodies¹⁰⁴, or promoted gender balance through programs designed to empower women¹⁰⁵. One response to the survey showed a very high level of inclusiveness, where rules for the governing body following e.g. a “40/60 principle” also accounted for non-binary candidates¹⁰⁶. Several respondents reportedly achieved gender balance through parity on both the electoral lists and in governing bodies¹⁰⁷. One other example of special measures to achieve gender equality within the governing body included having a special seat for women’s organizations¹⁰⁸, or ensuring that 50% of the positions in governing bodies, such as presidents, were held by women¹⁰⁹. Some national parties focused on gender equality on the electoral list, for example through parity. However, they focused less on gender equality in the governing bodies¹¹⁰. Additionally, it was reported by one national party that gender specific policies had little impact on gender equality in practice¹¹¹.

In Slovenia, four political parties signed a memorandum to use zipped systems in electoral lists, and three other parties used such zipped systems despite not signing the memorandum, and all parties put a woman in at least the second place on the list¹¹².

2.3.4. *Persons with disabilities*

Introduction

More than 100 million people in the EU have some form of a disability¹¹³. In March 2021, the Commission’s 2021-2030 **Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**¹¹⁴ announced several actions to foster participation in elections of persons with disabilities, such as working with Member States in the European Cooperation Network on Elections to support full electoral participation and accessibility of the European elections, discussing inclusive candidate practices in the framework of the high-level on elections announced by the European Democracy Action Plan, and preparing a guide of good electoral practice addressing participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral processes. The following actions were taken in follow-up to the Strategy:

- Member States took different steps to support the electoral rights of persons with a disability which were, among others, supported by dedicated discussion and close cooperation with the European Cooperation Network on Elections¹¹⁵. Member States shared within the framework of this network practices promoting electoral participation of citizens with disabilities, including in the context of the preparation of election reforms, optimisation of postal voting and Braille ballots, specific training for election officials, and use of generative artificial intelligence to increase accessibility of electoral information.

¹⁰² Czechia, Latvia, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and Slovenia.

¹⁰³ Austria.

¹⁰⁴ Slovenia.

¹⁰⁵ Austria.

¹⁰⁶ Italy.

¹⁰⁷ Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy and Sweden.

¹⁰⁸ Estonia.

¹⁰⁹ Poland.

¹¹⁰ Luxembourg and Slovenia.

¹¹¹ Finland.

¹¹² Replies to a Commission’s questionnaire by the Commission’s Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

¹¹³ Council of the European Union, *Disability in the EU: facts and figures*, last reviewed 18 February 2025.

¹¹⁴ [Communication](#) from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, COM/2021/101 final, 03 March 2021.

¹¹⁵ Meetings of 16 January, 29 March and 27 September 2023.

- At a meeting of the European Cooperation Network on Elections on 12 June 2023, the European Parliament presented its communication plans for the European elections, including as regards persons with disabilities.
- During the same meeting, the European Disability Forum presented the EU-funded project ‘Disability Rights in European Elections’ aiming to increasing political participation of persons with disabilities through mobilisation and awareness raising.
- During the high-level event on elections held on 23 and 24 October 2023¹¹⁶, a session was dedicated to measures fostering inclusive political representation of different groups, including persons with disabilities. The European Disability Forum presented the different barriers that persons with disabilities face when exercising their election rights, including in terms of insufficient funding for ensuring disability-inclusive elections. Member States, such as Spain, Austria and Czechia expounded on their constant efforts to remove all obstacles regarding the right to vote, including providing accessible information on election in different formats and modes, specific training for election officials and accessible Braille ballots. Finland presented its practices in engaging different groups, including persons with disabilities, to participate in society and politics. A further session addressed best practices for ensuring electoral rights for persons with disabilities, such as providing accessible communication and facilities.
- On 6 December 2023, the Commission published the guide on good electoral practices for persons with disabilities¹¹⁷, as part of a larger package of measures fostering EU citizenship¹¹⁸. In the preparation of the guide, the Commission relied on targeted exchanges among the membership of the European Cooperation Network on Elections and the support of a dedicated subgroup of the same network. A vast majority of Member States sent contributions to a survey launched by the Commission on electoral frameworks and practices addressing participation in elections of persons with disabilities. A network of academics supporting the Commission in its work on EU citizenship also contributed with a targeted study on the participation of citizens with disabilities in elections¹¹⁹. The Commission actively sought to involve stakeholders, including through ad-hoc consultations of all actors active on the topic of electoral rights of persons with disabilities. The Guide reflects various measures taken by Member States to address the obstacles faced by citizens with disabilities when interacting with the electoral environment, including election materials, facilities, and procedures. It aims to support efforts to ensure that citizens with disabilities can exercise their electoral rights effectively.

Findings and monitoring of election accessibility

Election observers reported that participation by persons with disabilities improved in the 2024 elections to the European Parliament, thanks to alternative voting measures, better polling station accessibility and ballot readability for example¹²⁰. However, they noted that it still varies between Member States. Election observers indicated that some Member States, including Luxembourg, improved their legislation to require polling station accessibility and facilitate participation by providing free transport or other services. However, accessibility remains an issue, especially in Cyprus, Malta or Romania¹²¹. In addition, several Member States (i.e. France, Belgium, Cyprus and Malta) do not provide

¹¹⁶ European Commission, [High-level event on Elections](#), 23/24 October 2023.

¹¹⁷ [Guide](#) of good electoral practices in Member States addressing the participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process, Brussels, SWD(2023) 408 final, 06 December 2023.

¹¹⁸ The 2023 Citizenship package included a Compendium of e-voting and other Information and communication technology practices, prepared in cooperation with Member States and the Council of Europe. The Compendium also addresses the needs of persons with disabilities, fostering election accessibility.

¹¹⁹ Election-Watch.EU, [Election Assessment Mission, Final Report, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), September 2024.

¹²⁰ Election-Watch.EU, [Election Assessment Mission, Final Report, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), September 2024.

¹²¹ Election-Watch.EU, [Election Assessment Mission, Final Report, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), September 2024. For instance according to data collected by other electoral observers (expertforum.ro) in

any alternative to vote in-person for persons with disabilities who cannot physically visit polling stations on election day¹²².

As regards persons with disabilities being elected, underrepresentation still persists in 2024. While official figures are not available, it seems that there are three MEPs with disabilities in the new European Parliament (compared to seven MEPs with disabilities in the previous Parliament)¹²³. Civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders working on disability-related issues continue to call for accessible electoral procedures and more candidates with disabilities, including by referring to Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which the EU and all its Member States are parties¹²⁴.

Measures reported by Member States and political parties

The 2023 Recommendation on elections calls on Member States to support the electoral participation of persons with disabilities, both as voters and candidates, and prevent and remove the barriers they encounter when participating in elections. Such barriers include the blanket removal of electoral rights of persons with intellectual and psycho-social disabilities without individual assessment and possibility of judicial review.

The Recommendation also encourages Member States to make best use of the guide of good electoral practices, and to continue to work with the Commission in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections, also taking into account views expressed by entities representing the interests of persons with disabilities.

Additionally, the Recommendation invites Member States to consider implementing practical measures to ensure accessibility of polling stations, including by making use of means such as QR codes, Braille, large printouts, audio and easy-to-read guides, tactile stencils, magnifying glasses, extra lighting, stamps, and accessible writing utensils. Political parties are also called to address the needs of persons with disabilities in their campaigning, for example by organising events in accessible locations and by using means, modes and formats of communication. Member States and political parties should also consider providing other forms of support, such as telephone assistance, sign interpretation, accessible transport and accessible procedures for requesting accommodation. Member States should also support the participation of persons with disabilities as election officials and ensure the wide dissemination of best practices supporting participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process.

Most **Member States** took specific measures to support participation in elections by persons with disabilities. In doing so, 20 of the 25 responding Member States explicitly stated that that responded to the Commission's survey explicitly stated they had made use of the Commission's guide addressing the participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process¹²⁵.

A wide range of national good practices can be highlighted in this regard. Austria improved the ballot paper by adding a bevel on one side for persons with visual impairments, to be used together with a template, and ensured suitable guidance for blind persons. In addition, a template with Braille lettering for signing the affidavit for postal ballots was introduced. Furthermore, new legislation ensured that in

Romania, the electoral process is not fully accessible to persons with disabilities even though there have been some improvements. There are no special tools for assisted voting (eg. Braille) and 225 out of the 917 polling stations visited by election observers on election day in Romania were not accessible to persons with disabilities.

¹²² Election-Watch.EU, [Election Assessment Mission, Final Report, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), September 2024.

¹²³ As indicated by the Vice-Chair of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee Katrin Langensiepen.

¹²⁴ [Disability Intergroup: 2024 EU elections and re-establishment of the intergroup - European Disability Forum](#)

¹²⁵ Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden.

every building where polling stations are located, at least one has to be fully accessible for people with disabilities. Belgium put in place free adapted transport service for persons with disabilities to get to the polling stations and enabled persons with disabilities to act as election officials. It also piloted the use of Braille ballots in two electoral cantons. Slovenia¹²⁶ and Czechia passed legislation enabling all persons with disabilities to vote, regardless of their legal capacity. Slovenia's new rules were already applicable for the 2024 European Parliament elections, Czechia's rules will be applicable as of January 2026. Czechia also published information in accessible format, advised municipalities to place the polling station, if possible, in accessible buildings and publish this information, and spread information through relevant representative organisations, among other measures. Greece made available online a specially adapted ballot and ensured full accessibility of official election information. Spain extended accessible signage on elections¹²⁷ to all the capital cities of the Autonomous Communities, and to the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla. It also supported election officials with disabilities by making provision in its legislation for the use of free magnetic induction loop service for deaf or hearing-impaired people who use hearing aids (both holders and stand-in). Blind or severely visually impaired persons were provided with the necessary tools and mechanisms to enable them to carry out their duties with due autonomy. Estonia developed a checklist for the accessibility of polling stations and trained polling staff on the needs of voters with disabilities. In France, polling stations must be accessible to all types of disability; they must have at least one polling booth that is accessible to people in wheelchairs; the ballot box must be accessible and the president of the polling station must take all necessary measures to facilitate independent voting by persons with disabilities. French Electoral Code also obliges candidates to ensure campaigns' accessibility. Croatia made specific efforts to train and guide its election officials on how to ensure the accessibility of the voting process, and made available election information through more than one sensory channel.

Hungary supported the accessibility of election information and political advertising broadcast on audio-visual media services and provided Braille templates for voters with visual impairments. Germany indicated polling station accessibility on voter notifications and ensured that blind and visually impaired voters were able to use free ballot paper templates provided by associations for the blind, allowing them to vote independently. These templates included tactile markings and audio instructions, ensuring secrecy and accessibility in the voting process. For orientation purposes, the upper right corners of all ballot papers were punched or cut off and the upper right corner of the ballot paper template was also cut off.

Ireland put in place visual aids like photographs and emblems on ballots, large-print ballot displays, and ballot paper templates for visually impaired voters. It also conducted extensive outreach, including in cooperation with disability organisations. Malta supported persons with visual impairments by providing Braille templates, as well as a playback listening devices and implemented priority queues for persons with disabilities (within a specific time bracket). Luxembourg facilitated transportation of persons with disabilities to the polling stations, made use of tactile templates to ensure independent voting, organised targeted political sessions for voters encountering difficulties in understanding political programmes and took additional steps to improve the legibility of ballot papers.

The Netherlands organised a webinar and a workshop on accessible elections for election officials. It provided accessible voting documents and subsidised various initiatives to disseminate accessible information about which facilities can be found in polling stations to make voting more accessible for persons with disabilities ([waarismijnstemlokaal.nl](https://www.waarismijnstemlokaal.nl)), to organise livestreams for persons with hearing

¹²⁶ In January 2024, the Slovenian Parliament confirmed an amendment to the National Assembly Election Act, which restores the right to vote to all adult citizens, who were deprived of the right to vote because they were placed under guardianship due to intellectual and psychosocial disabilities or parental rights were extended to their parents.

¹²⁷ Spanish Ministry of the Interior, Elecciones Europeas, [Provisional Results](#), last accessed 19 February 2025.

impairments with information on the European Parliament elections and to help municipalities recruit persons with intellectual disabilities as polling officials and support them doing this work.

Portugal took specific measures to follow up on the Commission's guide of good electoral practices for persons with disabilities, including by raising awareness, improving accessibility of election information in cooperation with disability organisations, and using Braille matrices and enlarged printouts. Romania conducted a comprehensive assessment of the accessibility of the voting process with the consultation of disability organisations and provided election information in accessible formats and modes. Slovakia provided sound recordings of candidate lists for the persons with hearing impairments and supported the accessibility of political debates, including by using sign language. Sweden produced information materials regarding when, where and how to vote in different forms of media and languages, for example videos in sign language, "easy to read Swedish", and Braille.

Regarding measures taken by **political parties** to increase participation in elections of persons with disabilities, about 26% of the almost 60 national political parties that replied to a Commission's questionnaire indicated that they had taken such specific measures for the 2024 European Parliament elections.¹²⁸ These measures included adding subtitles to campaign materials for individuals with hearing impairments, distributing accessible campaign materials, creating resources for the persons with visual impairments, hosting events in accessible venues, and using sign language during events. Only one party explicitly mentioned having candidates with disabilities¹²⁹, while another reported lacking data on this aspect.¹³⁰

In this regard, the European Disability Forum conducted tests on the accessibility of websites of seven European Political Parties ahead of the 2024 European Parliament elections, finding that they are vastly inaccessible to users with disabilities, with some components even reversing default accessibility measures¹³¹.

2.3.5. *Mobile EU citizens and EU citizens residing in third countries*

Introduction

Mobile EU citizens (EU citizens who have moved to another Member State to work, live or study) have the right to vote and stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament in their Member State of residence under the same conditions as nationals of that Member State, in line with EU law¹³². Under national electoral rules and procedures, mobile EU citizens can also choose to vote in their Member State of origin¹³³. The number of mobile EU citizens on 1 January 2023 was 14 million¹³⁴. It is not known how many of them are eligible to vote or to stand as candidates.

¹²⁸ Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

¹²⁹ Spain.

¹³⁰ Greece.

¹³¹ European Disability Forum, [Access Denied: The \(in\)accessibility of European Political Party websites](#), 11 April 2024. The findings are also endorsed by the [Funka Foundation](#), a Swedish knowledge centre on accessibility.

¹³² This right, enshrined in Article 22(2) TFEU and Article 39(1) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, is given effect in Council Directive 93/109/EC of 6 December 1993 laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals, OJ L 329, 30.12.1993, p. 34–38. Mobile EU citizens may vote on the lists of their countries of origin in line with applicable national law (e.g. postal voting, vote in consular posts etc.).

¹³³ All but four Member States (Czechia, Ireland, Malta and Slovakia) allow for some possibility of voting from another Member State, either at an embassy/consulate, by post or on the internet. Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Cyprus and Malta limit the right to vote in the European elections in their state of origin when their citizens have been resident outside their territory for a certain period. Conditions vary.

¹³⁴ On 1 January 2024 there were 13.974.500 mobile EU citizens. [EU population diversity by citizenship and country of birth - Statistics Explained](#).

In addition, there are around 25-30 million EU citizens residing in third countries, outside the European Union, who have the right to vote in elections to the European Parliament, according to national electoral procedures. This opportunity, if provided by national law, allows them to participate in the democratic processes of their home Member State, maintaining their involvement with the EU despite being geographically distant.

Observations

Turnout among mobile EU citizens in the 2024 elections appears to have remained lower than that of nationals. The availability of relevant data varies greatly between Member States. Data received from Member States shows that the registration of mobile EU citizens in the Member States of residence remains low across the EU from 0.28% of registrations in Latvia to 22.03% in France. There also positive signs, however. For example, in Luxembourg, despite the proportion of mobile EU citizens registering to vote in the elections only being around 17.82% for 2024, this is the highest number ever recorded in Luxembourg. This figure has consistently increased since 1994, when it was just 7.4%.

Most Member States do not collect data on the turnout of mobile EU citizens who registered to vote. Where data are available, turnout of mobile EU citizens ranges from one third to two thirds of those who registered: 27.2% in Finland, 40.1% in Lithuania, and 59.63% in Czechia¹³⁵.

Table 1: Number of national and non-national (mobile) EU citizen voters on the electoral roll, 2024 European elections

Member State	Resident nationals on electoral roll in own country	Resident non-national EU citizens	Resident non-national EU citizens on electoral roll in resident country	Proportion of non-national EU residents to national residents on roll	Proportion of resident non-national EU citizens on electoral roll (of all resident non-national EU citizens)
Belgium	8.359.908	845.687	76.464	0,91%	9,04%
Bulgaria					
Czechia	8.208.687		3.498	0,04%	
Denmark	4.283.496	229.890	15.602	0,36%	6,79%
Germany	61.760.719	3.848.716 ¹³⁶	202.301	0,33%	5,26%
Estonia	980.014		1.753	0,18%	
Ireland	3.510.970		40.660	1,16%	
Greece	581.075		13.023	2,24%	
Spain	35.361.672	1.989.947	302.991	0,86%	15,23%
France	47.667.283	1.221.770	269.127	0,56%	22,03%
Croatia	3.515.07				
Italy	49.552.399		83.438	0,17%	
Cyprus	683.981		11.840	1,73%	
Latvia	1.362.341	16681	46	0,00%	0,28%
Lithuania	2.410.924	7162	340	0,01%	4,75%
Luxembourg	288.883	171.713	30.605	10,59%	17,82%
Hungary	7.672.167	137.201	4.635	0,06%	3,38%

¹³⁵ 3498 mobile EU citizens registered for the elections in Czechia, while 2084 voted.

¹³⁶ Based on the population as of 31 December 2023 as determined by the 2011 Census.

Malta	355.082		15.102	4,25%	
Netherlands	13.452.006	648.622	67.766	0,50%	10,45%
Austria	6.281.282		45.186	0,72%	
Poland					
Portugal	9.262.075		11.255	0,12%	
Romania	18.025.329		9.699	0,05%	
Slovenia	1.581.304	18.865	1.151	0,07%	6,10%
Slovakia	4.377.093		7.945	0,18%	
Finland	4.293.213		7680	0,18%	
Sweden	7.708.624	269.554	43.189	0,56%	16,02%

Source: Replies from Member States to the Commission's questionnaire, 2024

On the basis of data available, 135 mobile EU citizens exercised their right to **stand as a candidate in the elections** in 15 Member States. The overall number of mobile EU citizens candidates would be roughly consistent compared to 168 candidates in 2019 and 170 in 2014, as mobile EU citizens continue to represent approximately 1% of the total number of candidates that stood in the elections. A notable change from 2019 is the reduction in the number of Member States where mobile EU citizens stood as candidates, decreasing from 21 Member States in 2019 to 15 in 2024, due to the absence of mobile EU candidates for these elections in Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Lithuania, Romania and Portugal.

In certain Member States, while the overall number of candidates increased compared to 2019, a drop is observed for mobile EU citizens candidates (Germany, France, Latvia). In other Member States, the number remained stable (Ireland, Luxembourg, Slovakia). Conversely, other Member States experienced an increase in mobile EU citizens standing as candidates (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Austria).

Two MEPs were elected (one in France and one in The Netherlands). This could be considered consistent compared to 2019, when three MEPs were elected in France and two in the United Kingdom.

Table 2: national and non-national ('mobile') EU citizens candidates in EP elections 2024

Member State	Own National candidates	Non-national EU citizen candidates	Non-national EU citizens elected
Belgium	280	45	0
Bulgaria		3	
Czechia	671	3	0
Denmark	167	2	0
Germany	1413	8	0
Estonia	78	0	0
Ireland	72	1	0
Greece	1168		0
Spain	2250	15	0
France	3078	21	1
Croatia	300	0	0
Italy	784	0	0
Cyprus	63	0	0
Latvia	270	1	0

Lithuania	319	0	0
Luxembourg	76 ¹³⁷	2	0
Hungary	306	0	0
Malta	39	0	0
Netherlands	493	4	1
Austria	234	21	0
Poland			
Portugal	478	0	0
Romania	542	0	0
Slovenia	98	0	0
Slovakia	310	1	0
Finland	231	1	0
Sweden	1333	7	0
Total	11912	135	2

Source: Replies from Member States to the Commission's questionnaire, 2024

Measures reported by Member States

The 2023 Recommendation on elections calls on Member States to take appropriate measures to increase mobile EU citizens awareness of their electoral rights and obligations, both as voters and candidates. It encourages Member States to create conditions in which mobile EU citizens can easily access information about the progress and status of their registration. Where local authorities are competent to enter mobile EU citizens on the electoral rolls, it encourages Member States to take the necessary steps to support those authorities, including via administrative guidance, in their actions to inform mobile EU citizens about their electoral rights under EU law. It further encourages Member States, in line with their electoral rules, to equally take measures to inform their citizens living in third countries on how and where they can exercise their right to vote.

20 Member States¹³⁸ conducted targeted information campaigns to increase awareness of electoral rights and obligations among mobile EU citizens. Member States also used a variety of languages to communicate with mobile EU citizens, including English, the official language of the country, and other languages such as French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Finland provided information in 17 languages, while Sweden provided information in 41 languages, both Member States including non-EU languages such as Arabic, Russian, Somali, Northern Sami, Inari Sami, Skolt Sami, Albanian, Chinese, Karelian, Sorani, Turkish, Vietnamese.

Ireland and Malta published information leaflets on the electoral process, which were made available in multiple languages, organized events and meetings with mobile EU citizens and partnered with organizations to provide them with information on the electoral process.

¹³⁷ Luxembourg informed that, of the 76 candidates having the Luxembourg nationality, 9 also have a second EU nationality. 1 candidate with a double nationality (Luxembourg & Portugal) has been elected. We do not have such information from other Member States so candidates with double nationality are not explicitly reflected in this table.

¹³⁸ Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

Some Member States¹³⁹ have digital supports and online platforms to provide information and facilitate the registration of mobile EU citizens and offer ‘online self-check’ tools and portals for registration and information access where citizens can verify their electoral registration status and receive updates¹⁴⁰.

Direct communication with eligible voters through individual letters or emails is used in half of the Member States¹⁴¹ about their registration status and how to register or deregister, where relevant. As explained in Section 2.2, Ministries and electoral commissions provide support via email, telephone, and municipal offices to assist citizens with queries related to registration and voting procedures.

Electoral observers¹⁴² in particular highlighted Belgium’s dedicated elections website¹⁴³ that took into account mobile EU citizens and provided information in all EU official languages.

Several Member States took measures to support local authorities in informing mobile EU citizens about their rights and the procedures of registration on electoral rolls. Various ministries and departments provided guidelines, handbooks, circulars, and digital materials to assist municipalities. Training for local officials, hotlines for queries, and templates for registration were also offered. Online registration options and federal or ministerial support for technical and organizational questions were available in some instances, alongside written or digital guidance provided through government websites.

In the Netherlands, municipalities handle the registration of mobile EU citizens wishing to vote, guided by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. The Ministry provided a registration form (Y 32 form), translations in several languages, and advised municipalities to actively inform citizens. They also developed flyers and web text examples. All information was shared with municipalities and made publicly available online.

In Ireland, significant electoral reforms have led to rolling or continuous registration, replacing annual canvassing. The Department supported local authorities with workshops and made administrative process improvements to handle the expected increase in European Parliament election applications.

In Italy, the Central Directorate for Electoral Services has issued circulars addressed to the municipalities for the dissemination of information on the arrangements for access to voting by particular categories of voters, including mobile EU citizens; some of these circulars and other information to facilitate voting were published on the Ministry’s website, in particular in the form of FAQs.

EU citizens residing in third countries

Concerning **EU citizens abroad**, all Member States¹⁴⁴ that allow their citizens to vote from third countries have reported measures to inform them about how and where they can exercise their right to vote. These measures include the creation of dedicated official resources¹⁴⁵ like Electoral Commission’s websites, social media pages and press releases providing information on registration and voting procedures with information available in multiple languages. Ministries of Foreign Affairs and embassies played a crucial role, disseminating information through their official platforms¹⁴⁶.

¹³⁹ Finland and Sweden.

¹⁴⁰ Greece and Spain.

¹⁴¹ Hungary and Slovenia.

¹⁴² [Election-Watch.eu](https://election-watch.eu)

¹⁴³ <https://europeanelections.belgium.be/node/111322>.

¹⁴⁴ 21 Member States.

¹⁴⁵ Spain, France, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden.

¹⁴⁶ Czechia, Croatia, Latvia and Slovakia.

Various media campaigns, including TV spots¹⁴⁷, radio programs¹⁴⁸, and social media initiatives, have also been deployed to ensure timely communication to voters abroad of all necessary information, including on when and how to register.

Personalized letters¹⁴⁹ or emails¹⁵⁰ have been sent to citizens abroad to inform them of their voting rights and/or registration status. In Spain, electoral reforms concluded in 2022 have ensured that electoral documentation is now sent automatically to registered citizens abroad without the need for an application. In Austria, legal obligations require municipalities to notify citizens listed in electoral register about postal voting options immediately following election announcements.

Information on electoral processes and procedures in third countries has also been shared through diaspora organizations to reach wider audiences¹⁵¹. Sweden highlighted the cooperation with Swedish Armed Forces to ensure that material was distributed to soldiers as well as contacts with shipping companies to reach voters on board vessels on foreign water.

Dual nationals

EU citizens can be nationals of more than one Member State, one or all of which may use compulsory voting for the European Parliament elections. Where a Member State of nationality of a dual national imposes an obligation to vote, they may be prevented from voting in the other Member State of nationality even if they wish so, and even if they reside there. Currently, Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece and Luxembourg have laws which require citizens to vote and punish the failure to vote without a valid excuse. The specific conditions and penalties vary.

2.3.6. Other groups

*The 2023 **Recommendation on elections** calls on Member States to foster broad and inclusive democratic participation in elections in the EU and to offer accessible and user-friendly registration tools for candidates and voters, taking into account the needs of different groups. Inclusiveness of elections and participation of all groups can be supported by Member States and political parties through specific actions and measures, which consider the needs and challenges of different groups (e.g., demographic background, geographical location, etc.).*

The EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025¹⁵² points out the Commission's intention to work with European political parties, the European Cooperation Network on Elections and civil society to improve participation of groups susceptible to marginalisation, such as people with a racial or ethnic background. As highlighted in the 2020-2030 EU Roma Strategic framework¹⁵³, the participation of Roma people to the political life should be encouraged in Member States, in particular some with a significant Roma population, including their registration as candidates and voters. During the high-level event on elections held on 23 and 24 October 2023¹⁵⁴, a session was dedicated to measures fostering inclusive political representation of different groups, which addressed the participation of Roma people in particular.

¹⁴⁷ Greece and Hungary.

¹⁴⁸ Greece and Portugal.

¹⁴⁹ Belgium, Hungary, Finland (so called 'notice on the right to vote') and Sweden (so called 'voting card').

¹⁵⁰ Greece and Lithuania.

¹⁵¹ Latvia and Portugal.

¹⁵² European Commission, [EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025](#), 18 September 2020.

¹⁵³ European Commission, [The new EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation \(full package\)](#), 07 October 2020.

¹⁵⁴ European Commission, [High-level event on Elections](#), 23/24 October 2023.

Measures were implemented in some Member States to foster electoral inclusion and representation among underrepresented groups including minorities. Slovenia and Sweden reported offering ballots and other electoral materials in minority languages. Ireland reported having introduced targeted communication measures to specific groups (such as traveller communities) to support and encourage to register to vote (e.g., Ireland's national Migrant Integration Strategy).

About 14% of the almost 60 national political parties that replied to a Commission's questionnaire on the 2024 elections, indicated that they had candidates from national minorities¹⁵⁵. While the specific minorities were mostly not detailed, two parties mentioned a Roma candidate¹⁵⁶.

In the absence of official data, civil society organisations have published their own analyses. They have reported on challenges faced by specific groups, including on the basis of demographic background or geographical location, such as people with a minority racial or ethnic background. For example, the civil society organization Election-Watch.EU reported that, during the previous mandate, the European Parliament included 4 out of 705 members of Roma origin (0,5% in total) from Spain, Germany, Hungary and Slovakia. Of the eight known Roma candidates to the 2024 elections to the European Parliament, none was elected¹⁵⁷.

3. COOPERATION IN SUPPORT OF FREE, FAIR AND RESILIENT ELECTIONS

The Commission has actively supported Member States' authorities by organising regular meetings of the European Cooperation Network on Elections since early 2019. ECNE consists of national contact points appointed by Member States to represent their national networks on elections and serve as a liaison point between national and European levels of coordination.

All Member States have appointed contact points for ECNE. The contact points vary across Member States in terms of the functions of nominated individuals or bodies, and can include (representatives of) electoral authorities, ministries of the Interior, Justice, Public administration, or the State Chancellery. Many representatives have remained the same for several years, which has helped build relations and foster collaboration also beyond the meetings of the Network.

The Network has organised more than 25 meetings since 2019.

*The 2023 **Recommendation on elections** calls on Member States to strengthen cooperation on election-related matters in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections, including through operational work streams addressing covert funding from third countries, and on awareness raising activities and strategies, among other issues. The Recommendation also refers to cooperation of this Network with other relevant European networks including the Rapid Alert System and the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services. Member States have been encouraged to continue exchanging best practices and perspectives on promoting the exercise of electoral rights and supporting democratic conduct of elections and a high turnout in the 2024 elections to the European Parliament and beyond.*

ECNE discussions were held in close cooperation with other relevant structures such as the Rapid Alert System¹⁵⁸, in relation to FIMI, and the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services

¹⁵⁵ Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Austria and Sweden.

¹⁵⁶ Czechia and Italy.

¹⁵⁷ Election-Watch.EU, [Election Assessment Mission, Final Report, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), September 2024.

¹⁵⁸ The Rapid Alert System is set up among the EU institutions and Member States to facilitate the sharing of insights related to disinformation campaigns and coordinate responses. It consists of a dedicated digital platform and a network of 28 national contact points.

(ERGA) in relation to the issues within its remit¹⁵⁹. The European Data Protection Board also participated in meetings on issues related to the application of EU data protection law in the electoral context.

Interactions were also fostered with international organisations, such as the Council of Europe and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

In the lead-up to the 2024 elections to the European Parliament, the work of the European Cooperation Network on Elections intensified. In October 2023, the Commission organized a High-Level Event on Elections with the membership of the Network. In November 2023, the Network took part in a joint tabletop exercise on cyber security of elections (see Section 4.5).

In addition to regular meetings, in the run-up to the elections eight thematic sessions were organised in the framework of the Network, including on inclusive participation and communication, countering disinformation and ensuring cyber security, the smooth organisation of voting for different groups of voters, and candidate safety.

<i>Examples of meetings of the European Cooperation Network leading up to and after the 2024 elections, and topics covered</i>	
Meeting	Topics (non-exhaustive)
12 th meeting – January 2022	E-voting; election accessibility for persons with disabilities; high election standards during pandemics
13 th meeting – May 2022	Strategic lawsuits against public participation (anti-SLAPP); e-voting; parity of treatment and balanced media coverage during elections
14 th meeting – September 2022	E-voting; election accessibility for persons with disabilities; joint mechanism of electoral resilience; preparation of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament including Code of Practice on Disinformation and tabletop exercise
15 th meeting – November 2022	Joint sessions with expert group on electoral matters; preparation of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament including election observation; crypto tool
16 th meeting – January 2023	Preparation of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament including inclusive democratic participation and gender balance; Defence of Democracy
17 th meeting – March 2023	Cybersecurity and disinformation; Defence of Democracy
18 th meeting – June 2023	Preparation of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament including supporting turnout and inclusive participation; cyber security; electoral participation of persons with disabilities; absentee voters abroad; protecting the information environment
19 th meeting – September 2023	Preparation of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament including presentation by the European Data Protection Board; turnout and inclusive participation (including women); cybersecurity; voting in third countries; AI and disinformation
20 th meeting – December 2023	Joint session with expert group on electoral matters; Preparation of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament including communication and support to high turnout; election observation; youth participation; cybersecurity and feedback from tabletop exercise; EU Citizenship Package

¹⁵⁹ A new independent European Board for Media Services, composed of representatives from the national media authorities or bodies and assisted by a Commission secretariat, will be set up and will start operating in February 2025. The Board will replace the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) that was established under the Audiovisual Media Services Directive.

21 st meeting – February 2024	Preparation of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament including electoral disputes and election information systems; protection information environment including from disinformation; voter turnout; cybersecurity; election observation; campaign funding and awareness raising on electoral integrity; European Political Parties; data collection for post-election report
22 nd meeting – March 2024	Preparation of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament including exchange on recent developments and best practices; women's participation: resilient ICT systems in elections including AI and deepfakes in electoral context; encouraging election integrity and fair campaigning
23 rd meeting – May 2024	Preparation of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament including exchange on recent developments and best practices; the media and information environment around elections; mutual support to address threats; measures regarding funding from third countries
24 th meeting – July 2024	First experiences of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament including exchange on recent developments and best practices; political advertising
25 th meeting – October 2024	Experiences of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament, including a keynote intervention by Vice-President Jourová; feedback discussion and exchange on recent developments and best practices; inclusiveness and resilience of elections; participation in elections and politics including by women. First participation of certain candidate countries.

Cooperation between Member States' authorities was facilitated among others through a collaborative space, a mapping of the roles and responsibilities of different EU networks and bodies that support the organisation of free, fair and resilient elections to the European Parliament and contact lists to support operational exchanges during elections.

In December 2023, the Commission presented a Guide of good electoral practices in Member States addressing the participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process (see also above in Section 2.3.4), and a Compendium of e-voting and other ICT practices in December 2023 (see also further below in Section 4.5). Both tools were prepared in close cooperation with the Network.

Several Member States¹⁶⁰ reported having taken into account the 2023 Recommendation in the context of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament. For instance, 2 months before the elections, in Croatia, the National Election Cooperation Network (NECN) established on February 2019¹⁶¹ held a meeting to ensure its full compliance with the 2023 Commission's Recommendation.

Elections networks are formally established in 10 Member States¹⁶². 12 Member States indicated that Digital Services Coordinators had been integrated to their elections network or consulted in the context of the 2024 elections¹⁶³. A broad majority of Member States noted their engagement with stakeholders such as researchers and academia, elections observer, media platforms¹⁶⁴.

¹⁶⁰ Czechia, Germany, France, Croatia, Malta and Portugal.

¹⁶¹ In compliance, values and objectives of the 2018 Commission's Recommendation on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents and fighting disinformation campaigns in the context of elections to the European Parliament.

¹⁶² Czechia, Denmark, Greece, Spain, Latvia, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

¹⁶³ Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Austria, Romania and Slovenia.

¹⁶⁴ Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Sweden.

The final report of Election-Watch.EU¹⁶⁵ notes that ECNE has become a valuable forum for facilitating contacts between Member States, mutual learning, and inspiring improvements, with national representatives increasingly coordinating and exchanging on good electoral practices.

4. PROTECTING THE INTEGRITY AND RESILIENCE OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

4.1. Preparedness, monitoring and response

Leading up to the 2024 elections to the European Parliament, the Commission and other EU institutions launched several key actions to strengthen the EU's preparedness and ability to respond to challenges to the integrity of the electoral process, in close collaboration and coordination with Member States and different entities such as the media, fact-checkers and civil society organisations. This effort allowed those involved to share insights, exchange experiences and best practices and coordinate responses to FIMI and disinformation, as well as cyberattacks, the inappropriate use of AI and other threats.

The 2023 Recommendation on elections includes different recommendations on protecting the integrity and resilience of the electoral process. For example, it encourages Member States to take measures to protect the information environment around elections and ensure that voters receive correct information. It recommends building resilience and developing public awareness, media literacy and critical thinking to address information manipulation, interference and disinformation related to elections. It also calls on Member States to develop training to relevant authorities and to facilitate cooperation among relevant stakeholders to tackle the information manipulation risks. It also encourages European and national political parties to consider making their political advertising available with information about the identity of the political party which sponsors it and where applicable, meaningful information about the targeting of the advertising and on the use of AI systems. The Recommendation also encourages Member States to take several measures to protect the election-related infrastructure and ensure resilience against cyber and other hybrid threats.

On 24 April 2024, the Belgian Presidency of the EU activated the **Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR)** arrangements in information-sharing mode in relation to foreign interference in the 2024 elections to the European Parliament¹⁶⁶. Under the coordination of the Commission, this facilitated the exchange of information among Member States and EU institutions.

Monitoring and response were ensured also through the Commission's Network against Disinformation (NaD), in association with the Parliament and EEAS, including through a specific subgroup ensuring swift exchange of information and response.

The Vice-President of the Commission responsible for values and transparency visited several Member States to support preparedness for the 2024 elections as part of a Democracy Tour¹⁶⁷.

Member States had continued to come together in the framework of the **European Cooperation Network on Elections** to discuss practical solutions to a wide range of threats. One of the operational tools that the Commission has made available to support Member States' authorities in building their capacity to detect and react appropriately to threats in the context of elections is the **joint election**

¹⁶⁵ Election-Watch.EU, [Election Assessment Mission, Final Report, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), September 2024.

¹⁶⁶ Council of the European Union, [Foreign interference: Presidency reinforces exchange of information ahead of the June 2024 European elections](#), 24 April 2024.

¹⁶⁷ After the elections, the Vice-President presented an [initial assessment](#) of known interference operations during the June 2024 elections for the European Parliament which was presented to the European Cooperation Network on Elections.

resilience mechanism¹⁶⁸. That mechanism supports exchanges among Member State experts, which several Member States used in the run-up to the elections.

Use of the Joint Resilience Mechanism by Member States

11-12 December 2023, Helsinki – Cybersecurity and Elections; Disinformation and Election Interference. The Finnish Ministry of Justice invited ECNE Member States to participate in an expert exchange meeting to discuss election security related issues. Experts from Estonian State Electoral Office, Estonian Information System Authority, The Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania and National Cyber and Information Security Agency (Czech Republic) responded to the activity request.

12-13 January 2023, Stockholm – the Swedish Election Authority organized an expert exchange visit for the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania. Focus for the meeting was election security and protection of electoral infrastructure, cybersecurity and IT-systems, national election cooperation network as well as postal voting from abroad.

6-7 October 2022, Vilnius - Expert exchange of the electoral management bodies from Croatia and Lithuania to strengthen cooperation in elections. During the meeting the experts from electoral management bodies exchanged experience on the topics on voting technologies, political finance, electoral communication, and training.

16 May 2022, Bucharest - The first visit of a joint expert team under the mechanism on election resilience, organised in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections, brought to Bucharest experts from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, between 16 and 20 May 2022. The agenda of the visit spanned a variety of topics such as new technologies and cybersecurity in elections, countering electoral threats and protection of electoral infrastructure, and oversight of online political advertising.

The **European Parliament** also stepped up its activities in this area and strengthened networks both internally and with other EU institutions, Member State authorities and external partners. For example, in December 2023, the European Parliament hosted an elections-themed meeting of the Rapid Alert System, with the European Cooperation Network on Elections and the Council Horizontal Working Party on Enhancing Resilience and Countering Hybrid Threats (ERCHT). In November 2023, the European parliament hosted a three-day conference “Fact-checking and beyond“, organised in collaboration with pan-European fact-checking organisations European Fact-Checking Standards Network (EFCSN) and the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). EU institutions and fact-checkers from across the EU and beyond exchanged views on how to counter disinformation ahead of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament. The EE24 website included a section dedicated to integrity, providing practical tips.

The **Digital Services Act (DSA)**¹⁶⁹ is a horizontal regulatory framework which seeks to ensure a safe digital space for recipients of intermediary services, while ensuring that fundamental rights are respected. It does so by imposing obligations on providers of intermediary services in the Union and by taking a tiered approach to the regulation of such services. Obligations apply asymmetrically, with the strictest due diligence obligations applying to providers of very large online platforms (‘VLOPs’) and of very large online search engines (‘VLOSEs’)¹⁷⁰. This includes assessing and mitigating systemic risks stemming from the design, functioning or use made of their designated services related to civic

¹⁶⁸ European Commission, [European cooperation network on elections](#), last accessed 18 February 2025.

¹⁶⁹ Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act), *OJ L 277*, 27.10.2022.

¹⁷⁰ European Commission, [Supervision of the designated very large online platforms and search engines under DSA](#).

discourse and electoral processes, including through disinformation, intentional and, oftentimes, coordinated manipulation and use of their services or tactics involving artificially generated content. It has been a critical step in ensuring that providers of VLOPs and VLOSEs uphold higher standards of transparency and accountability on their services, as it requires them to adopt a risk-based approach, conduct yearly risk assessments and independent audits and address illegal and harmful content and behaviour on their services, including disinformation. In connection to the **Digital Services Act**, specific actions were taken for election preparedness¹⁷¹.

In this regard, the Commission issued **guidelines on recommended risk mitigation measures** providers of VLOPs) and VLOSEs should take to mitigate systemic risks related to elections¹⁷². As a follow-up to these guidelines, the Commission organised a stress test in the form of a tabletop exercise to prepare providers of VLOPs and VLOSEs, civil society organisations, Digital Services Coordinators (DSCs) from the Member States and other stakeholders for information manipulation scenarios, and exercise coordinated responses within the framework of the DSA.

At the time of the elections to the European Parliament, the Commission had also initiated formal proceedings under the DSA against Meta and X for matters related to platforms manipulation, coordinated inauthentic behaviour and deceptive advertisements used to disseminate disinformation campaigns¹⁷³. The Commission also sent several Requests for Information (RFIs) to designated providers of VLOPs and VLOSEs about election risk mitigation measures and disinformation¹⁷⁴.

During the first meeting of the **European Board for Digital Services** (EBDS) on 19 February 2024, an ‘Ad Hoc Working Group on Elections’ was established, with the aim of gathering expertise of DSCs and competent authorities on electoral issues at the national level falling within the scope of the DSA. The Working Group on Elections has proven to be a successful collaborative effort by the Commission and DSCs to engage in dialogue, learn of country- and context-specific challenges and support efforts to curb systemic risks to civic discourse and electoral processes¹⁷⁵.

The **Code of Practice on Disinformation**, the first worldwide industry-led framework in the digital field and source of industry best practices to limit the spread of online disinformation, also played a key role in supporting preparedness for the elections. It constitutes a comprehensive multistakeholder framework established through consensus among online platforms, fact-checkers, researchers, civil society organisations (CSOs), advertisers and other specialised players. The Code sets out detailed commitments by major online platforms and other players (ad industry, factcheckers, CSOs, smaller platforms etc) to addresses online disinformation from key angles: demonetisation, transparency of political advertising, integrity of services, empowering users, researchers and factcheckers.

Under the Code, online platforms signatories (Meta, TikTok, Google and Microsoft) made a series of commitments to tackle disinformation including in the context of elections. Signatories have implemented a series of actions to ensure preparedness during the electoral period, including enhanced cooperation with other civil society and factcheckers signatories.

¹⁷¹ European Commission, [European Board for Digital Services publishes post-election report on the EU elections](#), 29 July 2024.

¹⁷² European Commission, [Guidelines for providers of VLOPs and VLOSEs on the mitigation of systemic risks for electoral processes](#), 26 April 2024.

¹⁷³ [Supervision of the designated very large online platforms and search engines under DSA | Shaping Europe’s digital future](#).

¹⁷⁴ [Supervision of the designated very large online platforms and search engines under DSA | Shaping Europe’s digital future](#).

¹⁷⁵ The Ad Hoc Working group has since been integrated into one of the permanent working groups of the EBDS., Working Group 4 – Integrity of the information space. See [Working Group 4 of the European Board for Digital Services – Integrity of the information space | Shaping Europe’s digital future](#).

The signatories of the Code of Practice on Disinformation committed to collaborate during special situations such as elections and, as foreseen in the Code, set up a **Rapid Response System (RRS)** for elections in the context of the 2024 European Parliament elections. The system ensured a streamlined exchange of information between civil society organisations, fact-checkers and online platforms to ensure rapid and effective cooperation between them ahead and during the election period. This collaborative initiative allowed non-platform signatories to swiftly report time-sensitive content, accounts, or trends that they deemed to present threats to the integrity of the electoral process and discuss them with the platforms in light of their respective policies.

Signatories of the Code also published – ahead of and after the European elections – reporting on the measures put in place to reduce the spread of disinformation in relation to the European elections, based on the Code’s commitments.

The Code also comes with a solid monitoring framework and since 13 February 2025 when the Commission issued its positive assessment (following a formal request by its signatories), it is under the DSA regulatory framework, offering pertinent risk mitigation measures to its signatories in the context of their legal obligations under the DSA.

The **European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)**, which is an independent network of fact-checkers, researchers and media literacy practitioners covering all EU Member States set up a Taskforce dedicated to the 2024 elections to the European Parliament to monitor the European information space during the electoral period¹⁷⁶. The Task Force played an important role in exposing disinformation during the elections. EDMO issued daily briefs, weekly insights, early warnings and targeted investigations during the electoral period. It also ran a dedicated EU-wide media literacy campaign #BeElectionsSmart, to raise awareness about the risks of disinformation around the 2024 elections to the European Parliament. It also provided training series for journalists and other stakeholders dedicated to election integrity.

In April 2024, a new **Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising** entered partially into application. The regulation will make it easier for citizens to recognise political advertisements, understand who is behind them and know whether they have received a targeted advertisement, so that they are better placed to make informed choices. It will also ensure that online targeting and ad delivery of political advertising are subject to strengthened requirements, which will limit abusive use of personal data to potentially manipulate voters. All online political advertisements will be available in a European repository of online political advertisements. Sponsoring political advertising from outside the EU will be prohibited three months before elections.

While most of the provisions of the new **Regulation on transparency and targeting of political advertising**¹⁷⁷ will take effect as of 10 October 2025, within the scope of application of this Regulation, Article 3 (definitions) and Article 5 (provision of political advertising services in the Union), paragraph 1 were already applicable during the elections to the European Parliament, ensuring in particular that political advertisement services would not be restricted to a ‘European political party’ or a political group in the European Parliament, solely on the basis of its place of establishment.

A series of actions were taken by the European External Action Service (EEAS). The **Rapid Alert System (RAS)** coordinated by the EEAS, supported cooperation across Member States, including during the elections to the European Parliament. Updates were regularly provided to the European Cooperation Network on Elections, which provides a wider scope for cooperation regarding issues related to electoral processes.

¹⁷⁶ European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), [EDMO Taskforce on 2024 European Elections](#).

¹⁷⁷ [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/900](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 March 2024 on the transparency and targeting of political advertising, *OJ L*, 2024/900.

Finally, in 2022 the Council had adopted the Strategic Compass on Security and Defence¹⁷⁸, which features an **EU Hybrid Toolbox** bringing together all the relevant instruments to tackle hybrid threats to elections, including the **FIMI Toolbox**¹⁷⁹.

4.2. Foreign information manipulation, interference and disinformation

Introduction and preparedness at EU level

According to the Eurobarometer, 81% of the EU citizens agree that news or information that misrepresent reality or is even false is a problem for democracy. At the same time, it remains difficult to understand exactly how and if such disinformation impacts voting behaviour¹⁸⁰.

Foreign interference in the information domain, often part of a broader hybrid operation, may be carried out by a foreign state or its agents as part of coercive and deceptive efforts to disrupt the free formation and expression of individuals' democratic choice¹⁸¹. FIMI is a pattern of behaviour that threatens or has the potential to negatively impact values, procedures and political processes. Such activity is manipulative in character, conducted in an intentional and coordinated manner. Actors of such activity can be state or non-state actors, including their proxies inside and outside of their own territory¹⁸².

The Commission, the Parliament and the EEAS, closely monitored the foreign information manipulation and interference and disinformation threats before and during the elections and coordinated responses, actively intervening to support a fair electoral space. The activation of the IPCR arrangements contributed to ensuring swift situational awareness updates and to detect and counter FIMI.

The three institutions have cooperated in the setting of the Tripartite, consisting of a series of coordination meetings to share situational awareness and inform each other about counter-disinformation activities during the elections.

As of 8 April 2024, the EDMO Taskforce dedicated to the 2024 European elections¹⁸³ issued daily and weekly briefs describing disinformation narratives being spread in the EU, with the inputs of its 14 regional hubs (covering 100% of the EU)¹⁸⁴. It conducted in-depth investigations, for example by analysing election-related risks based on 1000 fact-checking articles published in the context of past elections¹⁸⁵, and another uncovering FIMI operations such as the Pravda network¹⁸⁶.

Providers of online platforms reported under the Code of Practice on Disinformation on the measures taken to protect the integrity of electoral processes based on the Code's commitments, and under the DSA's transparency database¹⁸⁷ on the number of content moderation decisions taken. Platforms have multiple policies, which are reflected in their terms and conditions, to mitigate risks for electoral processes and civic discourse. In addition, these policies can differ per platform, depending on the specificities of their service. Therefore, a precise comparison cross-service on the scale of

¹⁷⁸ Council of the EU, [A Strategic Compass for a stronger EU security and defence in the next decade](#), 21 March 2022.

¹⁷⁹ EEAS, [Tackling Disinformation, Foreign Information Manipulation & Interference](#), 14 November 2024.

¹⁸⁰ See for example: Misinformation Review, [Misinformed about misinformation: On the polarizing discourse on misinformation and its consequences for the field](#), 03 October 2024.

¹⁸¹ [Communication](#) from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the European democracy action plan, COM/2020/790 final, 3 December 2020.

¹⁸² European External Action Service, [2021 Stratcom Activity Report](#), 24 March 2022.

¹⁸³ European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), [EDMO Taskforce on 2024 European Elections](#).

¹⁸⁴ European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), [EU election Disinfo Bulletin](#).

¹⁸⁵ European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), [Second edition \(March 2024\): Disinformation narratives during the 2023 elections in Europe](#).

¹⁸⁶ European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), [Russian disinformation network "Pravda" grew bigger in the EU, even after its uncovering](#).

¹⁸⁷ European Commission, [DSA Transparency Database](#).

disinformation spread is difficult to make. The reports from signatories of the Code of Practice on Disinformation show that the cooperation under the Code was seen as successful by all actors involved.

The EUvsDisinfo website¹⁸⁸ and social media, run by EEAS and supported by their situational analysis capability and strategic communication, reported regularly about attempts of election interference by Russia and its proxies.

A dedicated series of articles¹⁸⁹ and social media products were published in the months leading up to the elections to analyse, expose and pre-bunk Kremlin/ Russian state-affiliated actors' deceptive narratives as well as tactics, techniques and procedures. The Russian malign activity focused on creating or stimulating splits and division in societies by spreading false information or flooding the information space with inauthentic content. Other tactics include smearing political leaders, sowing distrust and undermining public authorities¹⁹⁰. This outreach helped raise public awareness including among journalists, academia and civil society.

Observations

While there was an increase in the volume of information manipulation around the elections¹⁹¹, no large-scale disinformation or information manipulation incident or campaign was detected during elections days.

According to EDMO's estimates, EU-related disinformation increased from 5% in January to 15% in May 2024¹⁹².

According to the EDMO, the main disinformation narratives about the EU encountered on social media platforms were:

- False stories questioning election integrity.¹⁹³
- False narratives alleging the escalation of the war in Ukraine and direct involvement of EU countries in the conflict.¹⁹⁴
- Recurring false narratives on climate change.
- False content portraying migrants as "seizing power" in the EU.

Disinformation questioning election integrity suggested that EU voting procedures were unfair or raising fears about rigged elections, manipulated outcomes and invalid ballots. There were significant disinformation stories aimed at reducing participation in the elections or pushing citizens towards practices that would invalidate their votes. For example, in Italy, false claims circulated regarding how low voter turnout could trigger a withdrawal from the EU. In Germany, false stories suggested that voting in the EU elections could be considered a crime or that ballots with holes or corners cut are invalid when in fact these were put in place to help blind and visually impaired citizens to vote. In

¹⁸⁸ [EUvsDisinfo](https://euvsdisinfo.eu/).

¹⁸⁹ <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/european-elections/>.

¹⁹⁰ The product material saw a very good pick-up which is in line with the trend of increased growth of users of EUvsDisinfo material (cfr. at least 38 million users reached in 2024 vs. ca. 25 million in 2023).

¹⁹¹ As confirmed by the activation of the Integrated Political Crisis Response arrangements for addressing foreign interference. Council of the European Union, *Foreign interference: Presidency reinforces exchange of information ahead of the June 2024 European elections*, 24 April 2024.

¹⁹² European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), *Final Report – Outputs and outcomes of a community-wide effort*, 24 July 2024.

¹⁹³ A [study](#) carried out to assess the structural indicators under the Code of Practice on Disinformation showed that only 5% of the disinformation posts detected in the sample were directly referring to civic and election integrity.

¹⁹⁴ For instance, the Commission's Representation in Berlin and the German Ministry of Finance debunked a false narrative about the EU introducing a solidarity levy to finance support for Ukraine.

Bulgaria, social media, websites and traditional media were used to spread disinformation around fake polls.

Disinformation also targeted political figures and parties. False narratives portrayed the Slovak opposition leader as a foreign agent, alleging his involvement in planning a coup. In Spain, false allegations were made that Volt, a registered political party since 2019, was a fake and was created to divert votes from the political party Vox¹⁹⁵.

Disinformation also deployed general anti-EU narratives, political hate and other deceitful narratives. Russian narratives on social media in Germany¹⁹⁶, France¹⁹⁷, Italy¹⁹⁸, and Poland¹⁹⁹ aimed to discredit Western governments and criticized support for Ukraine, while also trying to boost support for far-right political parties in the EU. In the Netherlands, messages on social media falsely alleged how the EU's Green Deal was destroying Europe's food supply²⁰⁰. Further disinformation to discredit the EU has been circulating in the Baltic States, claiming falsely that the EU mandated the immediate adoption of electric cars, banning repairs of older vehicles and prohibiting the use of firewood for heating²⁰¹. Other well know narratives were re-tailored specifically for the elections to build false stories around EU policies²⁰².

EDMO's reporting showed that most narratives have cross-border spillovers. It also shows that they are often adapted to the specific national contexts. This matches the experiences of Member States as reported in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections, where they informed of measures to taken to protect the information environment around the 2024 European elections and described disinformation narratives identified during the electoral period.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Special Election Assessment Mission found that disinformation, especially online and in social networks, including the use of deep fake videos discrediting politicians, was used across Member States, often in connection with negative campaigning and reportedly as foreign interference.²⁰³

Beyond online platforms, the automated clustering of articles from a list of websites repeatedly found by fact-checkers to be publishing disinformation shows that the main topics covered by such websites are similar to those covered by disinformation narratives on social media. The peak in the production of articles on such websites was found to have happened in the period from two weeks ahead of the ballots until election days. This is an indication of efforts to influence the elections. The same pattern was recognised in the case of national elections in some of the Member States in 2023²⁰⁴.

A handful of major Kremlin-linked operations that remained active during the elections period have been exposed by the EEAS.

¹⁹⁵ EDMO Task Force on 2024 European Elections, *Disinfo Bulletin – Issue n.43*.

¹⁹⁶ Reuters, [Russia-lined propaganda campaign pushes to undercut German support for Ukraine](#), 18 February 2025.

¹⁹⁷ France24, [Russia behind dozens of disinformation campaigns targeting Ukraine and allies, France says](#), 7 May 2025.

¹⁹⁸ The Guardian, [Disinformation networks 'flooded' X before EU elections, report says](#), 12 July 2024.

¹⁹⁹ Reuters, [Poland says Russia is trying to interference in presidential election](#), 06 May 2025.

²⁰⁰ Euronews, [Conspiracy theorists have turned from COVID to climate. How will it impact the EU elections?](#), 30 April 2024.

²⁰¹ European Digital Media Observatory, *Disinfo Bulletin-Issue n.44*; European Digital Media Observatory, [Old cars, immigrants and war-how EU related misinformation is spread in the Baltics](#), 07 June 2024.

²⁰² Global Disinformation Index, [Disinformation in the European Parliamentary Elections: Analysis and Policy Context](#), 08 July 2024.

²⁰³ OSCE/ODIHR, *Special Election Assessment Mission, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024*, 27 November 2024, Statement of preliminary findings and conclusions, preliminary conclusions.

²⁰⁴ European Commission, Vera Jourova Memo, [Known information interference operations during the June 2024 elections for the European Parliament](#), October 2024.

According to the 3rd EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats²⁰⁵, the EEAS detected 42 incidents linked to Russian FIMI activity around the 2024 elections to the European Parliament, which escalated in the weeks leading up to the vote, peaking between 6 and 9 June, and continuing well beyond that. The pattern used was not new: setting up the FIMI infrastructure well in advance, attacks on the democratic process, cyber-enabled interference, a surge in activity just before the vote, and post-election efforts to undermine trust in the results.

According to internal documents assessed in an extensive FBI affidavit as well as by a consortium of independent media outlets²⁰⁶, the Russian Social Design Agency ('SDA') is responsible for a range of Kremlin led information interference operations around the world, including in EU countries. Operations Doppelganger, Matryochka, Overload, and Portal Kombat share characteristics of SDA's strategies, though the exact boundaries between operations is at present unclear.

Doppelganger²⁰⁷ activities targeting the European Parliament elections were detected in France, Germany, Poland, Italy and Spain. This was the most notorious case of FIMI in the context of the 2024 European Parliament elections. The EEAS investigation found that 7 legitimate media outlets were impersonated, while 47 other inauthentic news outlets were used to promote FIMI about the elections²⁰⁸. Thousands of inauthentic accounts on X and Facebook were used to drive traffic to over 100 articles that mentioned the elections. Over 1 200 posts were discovered on X during June 2024 that appear to follow the sharing pattern associated with Doppelganger²⁰⁹. The focus of the posts was to cease support for Ukraine, discredit Western governments and political parties, and to generate fear around the decline of the West. Those posts generated over 4 million views.

Another Russian campaign named Operation Matrioska attempted to manipulate fact-checkers globally, creating numerous social media accounts and sending fake emails to distract media and fact-checkers from real disinformation. The campaign operated since at least August 2023²¹⁰.

The Counter Disinformation Network²¹¹ reported, among other cases a pro-Russian disinformation campaign "Operation Overload", targeting fact-checkers, newsrooms, and researchers worldwide, aiming to deplete their resources and encourage them to amplify false narratives. The actors operate through a coordinated email campaign, an ecosystem of popular Russia-aligned websites, and networks of Telegram channels and inauthentic accounts on X. They also reported violations of bans on Russian media entities and individuals, which were accessible on TikTok: early June 2024 at least 29 TikTok channels of Russian media entities banned by the EU or posing as such, were accessible to EU audiences, including the official Spanish-language account of Russia Today with 2.9 million followers.

Measures reported by Member States

The 2023 Recommendation on elections encourages Member States to take measures to protect the information environment around elections and ensure that voters receive correct information. It aims

²⁰⁵ EEAS, [3rd EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats, Exposing the architecture of FIMI operations](#), March 2025.

²⁰⁶ *United States of America v Certain Domains*, Case No.: 24-mj-1395.

²⁰⁷ Doppelganger is an operation attributed to two Russian companies that initially produced clone websites of trusted entities, such as established media sites and governmental websites. Their content was primarily distributed through posts and comments by coordinated and inauthentic profiles on Facebook and X. The techniques of the operation have evolved, likely due to measures taken on the affected platforms, such as domain blocking. Recently, the operation distributes image-based content, such as cartoons, through paid advertising published by inauthentic accounts and pages, particularly on Facebook.

²⁰⁸ European External Action Service, [Doppelganger strikes back: FIMI activities in the context of the EE24](#), June 2024.

²⁰⁹ European External Action Service, [Doppelganger strikes back: FIMI activities in the context of the EE24](#), June 2024.

²¹⁰ European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), [EDMO Taskforce on 2024 European Elections](#).

²¹¹ The Counter Disinformation Network gathered 40 organisations and independent researchers, and monitored information manipulation in the context of the 2024 European Parliament elections.

*among others to build resilience and develop public awareness, media literacy and critical thinking to address information manipulation, interference and disinformation related to elections, including the 2024 European elections. The Recommendation encourages Member States to support projects building resilience and developing public awareness, media literacy and critical thinking, including by promoting EU funding opportunities such as the CERV Programme. Training of election and other relevant authorities on how to efficiently pre-bunk and debunk information manipulation, interference and disinformation, online and offline, about election procedures is particularly relevant in this context. One of the operational tools that the Commission has been using to support Member States' authorities to build their capacity to detect and react appropriately to disinformation in the context of elections is the **joint election resilience mechanism**, which several Member States used to prior to the elections.*

Member States also took various measures to protect the information environment around the 2024 elections to the European Parliament from disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference.

In response to the Commission survey, 15 Member States reported that they had taken measures to support or facilitate the transmission of swift messages and responses to protect the information environment (such as message pre-bunking or debunking information manipulation and disinformation)²¹². 14 Member States reported that they had provided specific support for independent media and factchecking organisations²¹³, while 13 developed training for election or other relevant authorities²¹⁴. 10 Member States reported specifically to have made use of tools such as actions contained in the FIMI toolbox or the Rapid Alert System²¹⁵. Regular meetings and information sharing with Member States were organised within the Rapid Alert System before and during the election period.

Some examples of measures taken are as follows: Austria raised public awareness, held awareness classes and security briefings, set up a network against disinformation and organised a tabletop exercise regarding the interministerial cooperation in cases of election related disinformation. In order to guarantee proper coordination and preparedness among the different departments involved in the detection, analysis and response to disinformation campaigns, Spain put in place a special coordination plan in the framework of the Standing Committee against disinformation, which was integrated in the national election network for the security of elections. The Plan led to a joint risk analysis report, a protocol for information exchange and periodical reports on the evaluation of threats that were shared among the departments involved. Ireland published a Framework on Online Electoral Process information, Political Advertising and Deceptive AI Content²¹⁶. The Framework was developed in response to concerns and evidence from a range of international bodies and actors including the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Affairs and the European Digital Media Observatory regarding the potential for disinformation, deceptive use of artificial intelligence and other online activity to compromise the integrity of electoral processes and undermine democratic values and principles. The Netherlands developed a reactive approach, also based on analysis of media early reports and fact checkers' reports on possible disinformation about the electoral process. In Portugal, the National Electoral Commission (CNE) has signed a collaboration protocol with ISCTE - University Institute of Lisbon, through its MediaLab CIES-ISCTE research project, for the monitoring and screening of political disinformation

²¹² Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

²¹³ Belgium, Czechia, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Sweden.

²¹⁴ Belgium, Czechia, Estonia, Ireland, France, Greece, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Sweden.

²¹⁵ Belgium, Czechia, Estonia, Spain, France, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

²¹⁶ Irish Legal News, [Electoral commission tackling 'deceptive use of AI' ahead of elections](#), 24 April 2024.

in the context of the electoral campaign. In Slovenia authorities organised training with public officials on disinformation. There is a task force dedicated to counter disinformation and FIMI. Anti-disinformation campaign under slogan “stop the disinformation, read, think, check” was launched as well as awareness-raising campaign on 20th EU accession anniversary.

Media literacy

To support people navigating the information space around the elections, a specific emphasis was placed on measures aimed at improving societal resilience and preparedness. This included support for digital and media literacy and critical thinking.

Specific initiatives taken by the EU institutions to improve societal resilience

- A dedicated joint multi-channel and multi-lingual awareness-raising campaign on risks related to information manipulation and the importance of developing critical thinking was carried out by the Commission and the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA) and broadcast in the Member States. The campaign video²¹⁷ generated 217 million impressions on social media, 7 million YouTube views as well as reaching 53 radio and TV channels in 17 countries whose population total 330 million.
- The Commission’s toolkit on how to spot disinformation²¹⁸ was updated, encouraging secondary school teachers to equip their students with the essential skills to navigate the online landscape. A new webpage²¹⁹ provided a single access point to all useful information and resources on strategic communication and combating information manipulation, including short videos and factsheet.
- The statistical office of the European Union (Eurostat) launched a data and fact checking service for the European elections which facilitated journalists and fact-checkers’ access to data and statistics on the EU²²⁰.
- The European Parliament produced and distributed written and audio-visual material for the public. The European Parliament published on Meta, LinkedIn, YouTube, X and TikTok with content giving users tips to counter disinformation in the two months prior to EE24. This led to a total of 2,3 million video views. This included for instance a video series ”How to spot disinformation: the tactics used to trick you - 435,000 organic view, and a series of TikTok/Instagram videos with tips on how to spot disinformation - 426,000 organic views.
- For together.eu volunteers, the youth and general audiences, the European Parliament produced a leaflet “10 ways to tackle disinformation”, completed by an interactive quiz to learn about disinformation.
- The EEAS produced a dedicated series of articles and insights on foreign information manipulation and interference²²¹.

On media literacy, it can also be noted that the EU-funded projects (EACEA open call for cross-border media literacy projects) and the Media Literacy Expert Group met to discuss the European elections²²². The meeting was very successful in mobilizing the media literacy community ahead of the European elections, inform about relevant EU initiatives, as well as exchanging best practices from Member States in preparing for elections.

²¹⁷ <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-256994>.

²¹⁸ https://learning-corner.learning.europa.eu/learning-materials/spot-and-fight-disinformation_en.

²¹⁹ https://commission.europa.eu/topics/strategic-communication-and-tackling-disinformation_en.

²²⁰ Eurostat, *Eurostat launches data and fact-checking service for the European elections*, 10 May 2024.

²²¹ European Commission, *European elections: EU institutions prepared to counter disinformation*, 05 June 2024.

²²² A meeting of the Media Literacy Expert Group, held on 26/02/2024 in Brussels, which had a special focus on elections.

4.3. Use of AI

Introduction

The 2024 elections also brought AI increasingly into focus. Artificial intelligence has the potential to improve the efficiency, precision, and openness of election processes by positively changing voter interaction and the administration of elections. AI-driven solutions, like interactive virtual assistants, can deliver tailored communication, offering up-to-the-minute details about polling sites, candidates' policies, and how to vote, thus making the voting process easier for the public to navigate. In addition, AI can help optimise the management of electoral data by enabling the precise gathering, storage, and evaluation of large datasets, helping election authorities make better decisions, swiftly recognize patterns, and minimize human error. AI can also improve election security by strengthening cybersecurity defences, spotting irregularities, and uncovering possible fraudulent activity, thereby protecting the integrity of electoral systems²²³.

However, AI also presents challenges, notably in the context of disinformation and FIMI, and the use of generative AI. When misused, AI-based tools can be used to undermine electoral integrity, erode trust in democratic processes and polarize entire societies. Sometimes these attempts to deceive consist of flooding the information space with an abundance of false and misleading information, all with the aim of hijacking the public debate. Often top politicians and leaders are targeted by information manipulation campaigns.

Observations

In the weeks before the vote, the amount of fact-checked disinformation containing AI-generated content detected by EDMO remained constant, at around 4% of the overall amount of fact-checked disinformation (5% during the months before)²²⁴. AI was used both as a tool for disinformation and FIMI, and part of the domestic political communication.

Civil society, researchers, and fact-checkers uncovered at least 131 instances of undeclared generative AI content during the election campaign especially from parties at national level (i.e. five different political parties in France, Belgium, and Italy)²²⁵.

With limited exceptions, highly-manipulative 'deepfakes' were not prominent during the 2024 elections. Instead, AI was used to produce 'shallowfakes', combining out-of-context captions with images of politicians or events, and 'cheapfakes', with rather obvious manipulation of video and image²²⁶. EDMO points to a case where a deepfake audio was used to target a political leader,

²²³ United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, [Can artificial intelligence \(AI\) influence decisions?](#), 07 June 2024.

²²⁴ European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), [Final Report – Outputs and outcomes of a community-wide effort](#), 24 July 2024.

²²⁵ In the context of domestic political communication, investigations by DFRLab, Alliance4Europe and AI Forensics collected 131 instances of unlabelled generative-AI content shared by European and national political parties on platforms such as Instagram, X, Facebook, V Kontakte and Telegram. The DFR Lab reported that far-right parties such as Rassemblement National and Lega used AI-generated content to spread misleading and inflammatory messages. According to Alliance4Europe, Salvini's Lega party used AI-generated images to deepen societal divisions and promote false narratives, such as the "Muslim Great Replacement." Using AI-generated images without watermarks is not in line with commitment 3.b of the 2024 European Parliament Elections Code of Conduct signed by all European political groups.

²²⁶ European Commission, Vera Jourova Memo, [Known information interference operations during the June 2024 elections for the European Parliament](#), October 2024.

demonstrating how easily and cheaply false information can be spread to discredit candidates and undermine the integrity of the entire election process²²⁷.

A satirical video featuring Chancellor Olaf Scholz was created with deep fake technology by activist group the Centre for Political Beauty (ZPS). In the video, Scholz appears to announce a ban on the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party at the Federal Constitutional Court on the fifth anniversary of the death of Walter Lübcke. The video was part of a wider campaign by ZPS that includes a website collecting "incriminating information" about the AfD and an installation outside the chancellery in Berlin. This has prompted the German government to consider legal action and review its approach to deepfake technology²²⁸.

In the context of FIMI, AI was used in influence operations from Russia, including Doppelganger²²⁹. In a report published on May 30, OpenAI, the company that owns ChatGPT, disclosed that its AI tools were exploited by state actors from Russia, China, Iran, and Israel in covert online influence campaigns. However, the campaigns struggled to gain significant traction, according to OpenAI²³⁰. This marked the first disclosure by a major AI company of its tools being used in FIMI operations, highlighting concerns about AI's role in online disinformation²³¹.

Another risk AI poses to elections is using generative AI, particularly in large search engines. These systems can discourage users from checking original sources, instead promoting AI-generated responses that may contain errors or biases. This limits access to reliable, fact-checked information, a key component of informed decision-making²³².

An experiment by *Correctiv* – an investigative and fact-checking organization part of the EDMO network – revealed that three of the most used chatbots (Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, and ChatGPT) fail to provide accurate answers to political questions, especially about the upcoming EU elections. The chatbots either fabricate information, recommend non-existent Telegram channels, or provide incorrect details about candidates. For instance, none of them correctly identified the German front-runners for the EU elections, and in some cases, they even suggested content from far-right sources.

Preparedness and EU legislation

Europe is leading the way in making AI safer and more trustworthy, while ambitiously addressing the risks posed by its misuse. Important new legislative tools in this regard, including the AI Act²³³ and the Regulation on transparency and targeting of political advertising were not yet, however, fully in application for the 2024 elections.

At the same time, providers of very large online platforms (VLOPs) and very large search engines (VLOSEs) are already subject to a clear obligation to assess and mitigate systemic risks to electoral processes and civic discourse, including when linked to the spread of manipulated content. In this

²²⁷ Vera.ai, AI4Trust, AI4media, Titan, [Generative AI and Disinformation: Recent Advances, Challenges, and Opportunities](#), February 2024.

²²⁸ Vera.ai, AI4Trust, AI4media, Titan, [Generative AI and Disinformation: Recent Advances, Challenges, and Opportunities](#), February 2024.

²²⁹ Meta, [2024 European Parliament Post-Elections Report Digital Services Act - Elections Guidelines](#), 21 November 2024.

²³⁰ European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), [EU election Disinfo Bulletin](#), issue no 38.

²³¹ OpenAI, [Disrupting deceptive uses of AI by covert influence operations](#), 30 May 2024.

²³² AI Forensics, Algorithm Watch, [Generative AI and elections: Are chatbots a reliable source of information for voters?](#), December 2023.

²³³ [Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1689](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act), OJ L, 12.7.2024.

context, the DSA Guidelines for providers of VLOPs and VLOSEs on the Mitigation of Systemic Risks for Electoral Processes therefore also recommend mitigation measures linked to generative AI that providers of VLOPs and VLOSEs should take. This includes recommendations in the area of watermarking, labelling AI-generated content, but also testing such systems and the input data and sources used to generate content. In view of the elections, the Commission sent requests for information on generative AI risks to six Very Large Online Platforms and two Very Large Online Search Engines²³⁴.

In addition, the Permanent Taskforce of the Code of Practice on Disinformation, composed of representatives of signatories, the European Regulators' Group for Audiovisual Media Services, EDMO and the EEAS, includes a specific AI subgroup for signatories to reflect on and address the challenges raised by AI in the context of disinformation, including in the context of elections.

To support the identification of AI related issues, the EDMO Task Force was assisted by a pool of AI experts to swiftly detect and expose deceptive or misleading AI-generated content.

The European Cooperation Network on elections also tackled the topic of AI in the context of disinformation in a plenary session on 27 September 2023. Member States highlighted the future of threats emerging in the cyber and information areas and discussed the benefits, threats, and risks of AI. They also discussed the possibility of promoting voter turnout with AI and using machine learning to predict different voter patterns. Additionally, AI can simplify voter registration processes, and AI powered language translation can help reduce language barriers and improve accessibility of elections for voters with disabilities.

In addition, the 2023 Recommendation on elections encouraged political parties to adopt campaign pledges and codes of conduct on election integrity, which should encompass in particular the pledge to refrain from manipulative behaviour, in particular producing, using or disseminating falsified, fabricated, doxed or stolen data or material, including deep fakes generated by AI systems. Political parties should also provide information about the use of AI systems in election campaigns. The Recommendation also led to a joint Code of Conduct for political parties (see Section 4.6.1). The AI Act, whose provisions will apply as of August 2026²³⁵, aims to ensure trustworthy development and use of AI in the EU. It categorises AI systems by risk levels: minimal risk systems face no obligations, specific transparency risk systems (like chatbots) must disclose their nature, and high-risk systems (like those used in recruitment) must comply with strict requirements. Unacceptable risk systems, such as those manipulating behaviour or enabling social scoring, are banned. The use of generative AI and deep fakes is regulated by the AI Act, including as regards labelling by the content creator, and risk management obligations.

The Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising (most of its provisions will take effect as of 10 October 2025) will ensure that all political advertising is labelled as such and that additional information is provided with the ad or from it (e.g., with a link) about the sponsor, the money used for the ad and its sources, and, where relevant, the linked elections, referendum, legislative or regulatory process, and the use of targeting and ad-delivery techniques, including the use of AI systems in the targeting.

²³⁴ European Commission, [*Commission sends requests for information on generative AI risks to 6 Very Large Online Platforms and 2 Very Large Online Search Engines under the Digital Services Act*](#), 14 March 2024.

²³⁵ The AI Act entered into force on 1 August 2024, and will be fully applicable 2 years later on 2 August 2026, with some exceptions: prohibitions and AI literacy obligations entered into application from 2 February 2025, the governance rules and the obligations for general-purpose AI models become applicable on 2 August 2025, and the rules for high-risk AI systems - embedded into regulated products - have an extended transition period until 2 August 2027.

Measures reported by political parties

The 2023 Recommendation on elections stresses that AI can be used to generate or manipulate image, audio or video content that appreciably resembles existing persons, places or events and would falsely appear to a person to be authentic (so called 'deep fakes'). It highlights the role of civil society, media organisations, research institutions and academia in developing public awareness, media literacy skills and critical thinking, which are key to equipping citizens with the skills required to exercise judgment in complex realities affecting the democratic sphere, particularly in the context of the increasing role of AI, including in election campaigns for instance when citizens use AI systems to inform their electoral choices. It encourages European and national political parties to consider making their political advertising available with information about the identity of the political party which sponsors it and where applicable, meaningful information about the targeting of the advertising and on the use of AI systems. Competent national authorities are invited to further develop and update practices on the identification, mitigation and management of risks to the electoral process, including by making use of AI detection tools. It also encourages political parties adopt campaign pledges and codes of conduct on election integrity, which should encompass in particular the pledge to refrain from manipulative behaviour, in particular producing, using or disseminating falsified, fabricated, doxed or stolen data or material, including deep fakes generated by artificial intelligence systems.

The 2023 Recommendation on elections also led to a joint Code of Conduct for political parties which addresses AI (see Section 4.6.1).

In the Commission survey for political parties, only a few respondents mentioned that they had refrained from using AI-generated content²³⁶, labelled it accordingly²³⁷, or even shared a specific code of conduct for AI and social media platforms like TikTok²³⁸. Most national respondents did not provide details on their use of such new technologies.

4.4. Data protection

Introduction

The 2024 elections were the second European elections to which the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)²³⁹ applied. In 2018, the Commission had published specific guidance²⁴⁰ on the application of EU data protection law in the electoral context which remained relevant for the 2024 elections²⁴¹. In this context, the national data protection authorities (DPAs) were called on to make full use of their strengthened powers to address possible infringements, in particular those relating to the micro-targeting of voters.

²³⁶ Finland.

²³⁷ European Free Alliance.

²³⁸ European Green Party.

²³⁹ [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/679](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation), *OJ L 119*, 4.5.2016, p. 1–88.

²⁴⁰ European Commission, [Guidance on the application of Union data protection law in the electoral Context—contribution from the European Commission to the Leaders' meeting in Salzburg on 19-20 September 2018](#), COM(2018) 638 final, 12 September 2018.

²⁴¹ The guidance provides clarity to those actors involved in election processes - national electoral authorities, political parties, data brokers and data analytics companies, social media platforms and online advertising networks on the principles and obligations of GDPR regarding the lawfulness of processing of personal data (including sensitive data such as political opinions), transparency requirements, automated decision-making and micro-targeting. It called on the national data protection authorities, as enforcers of the GDPR, to make full use of their strengthened powers to monitor the situation and address possible data protection breaches.

Observations and measures taken by data protection authorities

In the context of the 2024 elections, the European Data Protection Board, composed of Member States' data protection authorities (DPAs), sent questions by DG Justice and Consumer Protection, inquiring about the DPAs' involvement in national election networks, specific measures taken to ensure compliance with data protection rules, potential infringements identified, and any engagement with social media platforms or other actors, particularly regarding the use of new technologies such as artificial intelligence in the electoral context. Fourteen DPAs responded²⁴².

They reported varying levels of involvement in election-related activities as enforcers of the GDPR.

While some DPAs were indeed involved in the work of national election networks, other DPAs reported limited to no involvement in that work²⁴³.

Various DPAs took proactive measures to address data protection issues and ensure compliance with data protection rules in the electoral process. Belgium's *Data Protection Authority*²⁴⁴ issued recommendations on the provision of copies of voters' registers to political parties and candidates for the purposes of carrying out electoral advertising activities by mail. It also issued info notes on data processing in the context of electoral communication, and two opinions (no 160/2023, no 61/2024) on relevant draft legislation. Croatia's *Personal Data Protection Agency*²⁴⁵ promoted compliance with data protection rules by issuing recommendations on the processing of personal data during the electoral campaign. In Cyprus, the *Commissioner for Personal Data Protection*²⁴⁶ issued instructions to the Ministry of Interior and candidates before the elections and conducted audits on election day to monitor compliance. In France, the *CNIL*²⁴⁷ engaged in several meetings with political parties to raise awareness about data protection. It sent letters to top candidates, party leaders and service providers to remind them of their responsibilities and updated its guidelines for political communication. The CNIL also updated its guidelines on political canvassing and examined the impact of AI on electoral processes through a detailed study. The Irish *Data Protection Commission* provided guidance for campaigners on canvassing and elections. In Luxembourg, the *CNDP*²⁴⁸ updated its electoral campaign guidelines and raised awareness about data protection as well as fair and free elections. Malta's *Office of the Information and Data Protection Commissioner*²⁴⁹ published guidance on data protection for political campaigns. In Poland, the *Personal Data Protection Office*²⁵⁰ reviewed an amendment to the Election Code and updated its election data protection guide. Other DPAs reported no specific measures to monitor compliance with data protection rules in the context of the 2024 elections²⁵¹.

²⁴² Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Spain, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Austria, Malta, Poland and Romania.

²⁴³ While Croatia and Ireland reported that their national data protection authorities had been involved in the work of the national election network, Austria, Belgium, Germany and Malta reported no involvement with this work. The Data State Inspectorate of Latvia (DSI) was not directly involved in the election network but consulted occasionally with the national electoral authority upon its request. In Estonia, a data security expert participated as an observer in the e-voting process. In Romania, the Romanian Supervisory Authority was involved in the approval procedure of several normative acts initiated by the Permanent Electoral Authority and participated in a workshop on 'Digitalization to increase the level of transparency, ethics and integrity of electoral management activities and financing of political parties and of electoral campaigns'. In France, meetings were set up with the CNIL and several national authorities and state departments during the election period.

²⁴⁴ Autorité de la protection des données - Gegevensbeschermingsautoriteit (APD-GBA).

²⁴⁵ Agencija za zaštitu osobnih podataka.

²⁴⁶ Γραφείο Επιτρόπου Δεδομένων Προσωπικού Χαρακτήρα.

²⁴⁷ Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés.

²⁴⁸ Commission Nationale pour la Protection des Données.

²⁴⁹ Kummissarju għall-Informazzjoni u l-Protezzjoni tad-Data.

²⁵⁰ Urząd Ochrony Danych Osobowych.

²⁵¹ Estonia, Croatia and Austria.

Several DPAs conducted investigations based on information on suspected non-compliance reported to them and on complaints submitted under Article 77 GDPR²⁵².

Most DPAs had limited or no engagement with social media platforms or other actors in this context²⁵³. In France, no major engagement with social media platforms was reported, though the DPA worked with the Audiovisual and Digital Regulation Authority (Arcom) to ensure that the major online platforms and major search engines comply with relevant obligations. The Irish DPA reported no specific social media engagement related to elections. At the same time, it reported significant ongoing engagement with many of the leading social media and internet platforms as EU Lead Supervisory Authority on a broad range of matters concerning those entities' compliance with the GDPR. In Spain, there was significant engagement with social media platforms, in particular to prevent potential data misuse and AI-driven targeting practices.

Measures taken by political parties

A survey conducted among national **political parties** to assess how they ensured compliance with data protection rules in the context of the elections provided only limited insights. A number of national parties have declared their compliance with the GDPR, but they did not provide further specifics in the questionnaire on how they are implementing it in practice²⁵⁴. Although detailed reports on data protection measures from national parties were limited, several national parties report that they had adopted comprehensive data protection strategies, employed a dedicated data protection officer for campaign activities, implemented specific technical security measures such as encryption, developed a data delivery process or reviewed data breach incident response plans²⁵⁵. One party highlighted their data protection plan, which includes information and consent forms, secure data processing, staff training, and cooperation with data protection authorities²⁵⁶.

4.5. Protecting election-related infrastructure and ensuring cyber resilience

Introduction and preparedness at EU level

Voter registration databases, e-voting systems and other information systems used to manage electoral operations such as the counting, auditing, and displaying of election results, and post-election reporting to certify and validate results, could be at risk of cyberattack. The physical security of polling stations

²⁵² Estonia, Ireland, Austria and Romania did not report on complaints. The Litigation Chamber of the Belgian SA issued three decisions related to personal data processing by Belgian political parties. The French CNIL received 167 alerts resulting in reprimands to four different political parties, focusing on practices like SMS and email campaigns without the consent of the concerned persons. In Cyprus, two complaints regarding political messages were received, but no issues related to processing of personal data with new technologies, such as AI, were reported. In Germany, two complaints were submitted at Länderlevel and none at federal level. In Latvia, several complaints were received, including on concerns about the personal data of election candidates and issues involving the national electoral authority's processing of personal data. None related to AI technologies or new forms of data processing. In Luxembourg, several complaints were received regarding data processing of personal data but no significant issues related to AI or new technologies were identified. In Malta, few complaints were received, mainly concerning unsolicited campaign messages. In Poland, the DPA received three complaints related to data protection in the electoral process, including on improper data sharing and SMS campaigns. One alleged data breach concerning a voter list was reported, but no corrective administrative proceedings followed. In Spain, the DPA handled several complaints related to electoral data processing, including high-profile cases involving Meta's electoral applications. A precautionary measure was issued to halt Meta's plans for new electoral functionalities in Spain.

²⁵³ Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria and Poland reported no engagement with social media platforms.

²⁵⁴ Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

²⁵⁵ Greece, Spain, Austria and Poland.

²⁵⁶ Greece.

and counting places, and facilities, assets and systems for the printing, transportation and storage of ballots and other relevant election materials, such as specifically secured ballot boxes or stamps must also be ensured.

Several **networks for cyber and hybrid action** have been set up to address these risks (e.g. the NIS Cooperation Group, the Joint Mechanism for Electoral Resilience, the Computer Security Incident Response Team Network, and the EU Cyber Crisis Liaison Organisation Network).

The Commission worked with Member State authorities to manage such risks also in the context of the 2024 elections.

The Commission, with the support of the EU Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) and in cooperation with the European Parliament, organised a **tabletop exercise on cybersecurity** involving the membership of the European Cooperation Network on Elections. The exercise was funded by the Commission through the joint electoral resilience mechanism. It sought to test and support preparedness of Member States against cyberattacks and hybrid threats, including in the framework of information manipulation and disinformation campaigns.

Also following up on the 2023 Recommendation on elections and the tabletop exercise is the update of the **Compendium on the Cybersecurity of Election Technology** by the Network and Information System (NIS) Cooperation Group supported by the Commission, ECNE and ENISA. It lays out recommendations to Member States, steps to take and useful guidance in managing potential cyber incidents throughout the election processes. Amongst the proposed measures are best practices on information sharing, awareness raising and trainings together with risk management, cybersecurity support for campaigns, parties and candidates, as well e-voting technology.

In addition, as part of the measures announced in the European Democracy Action Plan, the Commission also presented a **Compendium of e-voting and other information and communication technology practices**. This Compendium was developed in cooperation with Member States in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections and the Council of Europe. The compendium highlighted the importance of robust measures addressing cyber risks, such as hack-and-leak operations to gain access to voter information and interfere with the electoral process, or distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks, preventing voters from accessing connected online voting services and websites.

The **European Cooperation Network on Elections** frequently discussed cybersecurity risks in its works. The Commission provided a mapping on the roles and responsibilities of different networks and bodies supporting the organisation of free, fair and resilient elections to the European Parliament, to facilitate cooperation of different authorities and networks in Member States and at EU level, ensuring that authorities and networks were aware of each other and could, where necessary, contact each other in the course of carrying out their tasks.

The **NIS Cooperation Group, the Computer Security Incident Response Team Network, and the EU Cyber Crisis Liaison Organisation Network** also strengthened their cooperation ahead of the elections. Cyber-preparedness exercises were organised with Member States and European institutions. An inter-institutional Cyber Crisis Task Force, involving Commission services, EEAS, ENISA, Europol and CERT-EU was also set up.

Measures reported by Member States and political parties

The 2023 Recommendation on elections encourages Member States to take several measures to protect the election-related infrastructure and ensure resilience against cyber and other hybrid threats. This includes, among others, promoting awareness of and planning for all contingencies that could have significant disruptive effects on the smooth running of elections; identifying the entities operating election-related infrastructure that are critical for the organisation and conduct of

elections, and taking the necessary measures to enhance the resilience of those entities and helping them address the risks inherent in their operations. It also calls on Member States to take measures ensuring preparedness for, responsiveness to and recovery from cybersecurity incidents related to elections, and in particular, ensuring that technology used in elections is designed, developed and produced to ensure a high level of cybersecurity; to cooperate with private entities involved in the cybersecurity of elections; to increase awareness on cyber hygiene of political parties, candidates, election officials and other entities related to elections; to carry out or update risk assessments regarding the resilience of election-related infrastructure and of entities operating it, and collect and aggregate data resulting from such risk assessments.

Some Member States protect physical election infrastructure by restricting access to certain facilities to accredited personnel, sealing off certain areas from public access, conducting regular assessments and setting up contingency plans for the interruption of voting, increasing security and surveillance of polling stations. For instance, in some cases extra voting locations are set up as back up for physical election-related infrastructure issues. Specific training and cooperation with police are also in focus.

Some Member States identified as critical entities public and private stakeholders, such as telecommunications providers, energy suppliers, cloud services, police authorities, cybersecurity teams, regulators, government IT and cybersecurity organisations. Measures to enhance resilience include multi-entity collaboration, audits, evaluations, and workflow definitions with precise response times. One Member State reported that evaluation, auditing, and testing are periodic, phased, and adapted based on lessons learned from previous elections.

Most Member States reported that they had carried out or updated risk assessments of the infrastructure and took measures to ensure a high level of security. Almost all Member States reported that they had conducted test crisis managements and contingency plans, offered support and training to all relevant stakeholders.

Several Member States reported that they had cooperated with private entities to ensure a high level of cybersecurity²⁵⁷, while a majority noted that the authority responsible for cyber security had been involved in their national electoral network. Portugal indicated that creation of a permanent an Information Sharing and Analysis Centers (ISACs) dedicated to elections cybersecurity was being discussed. Ireland reported its collaboration with the European Centre of Excellence of Countering Hybrid Threats.

Many Member States also made efforts to increase awareness of the online safety of political parties, candidates and elections officials²⁵⁸.

Member States also reported on the extent to which they took specific measures described in the revised Compendium on the Cybersecurity of Election Technology and the Compendium of e-voting and other information and communication technology practices. A large majority of Member States reported to have ensured effective testing and auditing (24 out of 25 replying Member States), ensuring that elections officials receive appropriate training (20 Member States), and relying on secure digital identification (16 Member States). Other common measures to protect election-related infrastructure and ensure cyber resilience included using state of the art ICT (15 Member States), including cybersecurity requirements in procurement and outsourcing contracts (14 Member States) or ensuring that no state, region or municipality is in a situation of long-term electoral dependency on a specific private provider (9 Member States).

²⁵⁷ Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Austria, Romania, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

²⁵⁸ Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Netherlands, Austria, Portugal and Slovenia.

While not directly related to the elections, it is also relevant to mention Operation Endgame²⁵⁹. This operation, coordinated from Europol's headquarters between 27 and 29 May 2024, targeted droppers including, IcedID, SystemBC, Pikabot, Smokeloader, Bumblebee and Trickbot. The actions focused on disrupting criminal services through arresting High Value Targets, taking down the criminal infrastructures and freezing illegal proceeds. This approach had a global impact on the dropper ecosystem. The malware, whose infrastructure was taken down during the action days, facilitated attacks with ransomware and other malicious software. Following the action days, eight fugitives linked to these criminal activities, wanted by Germany, were added to Europe's Most Wanted list on 30 May 2024. The individuals are wanted for their involvement in serious cybercrime activities.

This was the largest ever operation against botnets, which play a major role in the deployment of ransomware. The operation, initiated and led by France, Germany and the Netherlands was also supported by Eurojust and involved Denmark, the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition, Armenia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland and Ukraine also supported the operation with different actions, such as arrests, interviewing suspects, searches, and seizures or takedowns of servers and domains. The operation was also supported by a number of private partners at national and international level including Bitdefender, Cryptolaemus, Sekoia, Shadowserver, Team Cymru, Prodaft, Proofpoint, NFIR, Computest, Northwave, Fox-IT, HaveIBeenPwned, Spamhaus, DIVD, abuse.ch and Zscaler.

The survey addressed to European and national **political parties** reveals that national political parties across Member States have taken different approaches to addressing cybersecurity risks during their campaigns in the 2024 European Parliament elections. These approaches vary in terms of efforts and precautions taken.

Among all national political parties surveyed, about half reported that they had taken cybersecurity measures of some sort. Of these, almost 30% had adopted more advanced practices such as risk assessments, training, and penetration testing.

Some parties took significant steps to secure their digital infrastructure. For example, one party implemented two-factor authentication (2FA), introduced a secure password manager, and conducted a post-election penetration test²⁶⁰. The party also received assistance from IT companies and GDPR advisors, encountering no cyber incidents. Another party maintained regular briefings with the national parliament's IT department and security services and regularly modernized its IT infrastructure. It also migrated their servers to a high-security location before the European Parliament election and optimized its firewall, utilizing external service providers to monitor IT security. It reported no significant cyber incidents either²⁶¹. Another surveyed party also implemented comparably extensive cybersecurity measures including vulnerability analysis, threat assessment, log file monitoring, patch management, regular backups, firewalls, VPNs, cybersecurity training, and prevention strategies such as antivirus software, spam filters, encryption, Cloudflare usage, secure passwords, and SSL/TLS certificates.²⁶² Another implemented cybersecurity protocols, risk assessments, and provided unspecified training, with no cyber incidents reported²⁶³. One surveyed party had proactively conducted a comprehensive risk assessment, provided cybersecurity training, implemented secure communication tools, and collaborated with experts for penetration testing²⁶⁴. Reportedly, it faced several unsuccessful hacking attempts. IT teams were assigned by one party to prevent cyberattacks and it introduced internal rules

²⁵⁹ Europol, [Largest ever operation against botnets hits dropper malware ecosystem](#), last updated 30 May 2024.

²⁶⁰ Austria.

²⁶¹ Austria.

²⁶² Italy.

²⁶³ Croatia.

²⁶⁴ Slovenia.

for online safety, with no incidents reported²⁶⁵. Another party participated in events organized by the national Security and Intelligence Service and maintained contact with the agency during the campaign, though no other specific cybersecurity steps were reported²⁶⁶.

In contrast, for some national parties, including smaller parties, cybersecurity efforts were expressly limited. One party did not report any specific cybersecurity measures but acknowledged general warnings from the national Federal Electoral Authority about hacking risks²⁶⁷. Another party expressed limited concern over cybersecurity threats, believing that its exposure to cyberattacks was limited to “state entities and social networks”²⁶⁸. Some national parties from different EU countries did not report on cyber measures at all in this questionnaire²⁶⁹.

Compared to national political parties, European political parties reported a higher level of cybersecurity preparedness. Among the European political parties surveyed, around 83% implemented advanced cybersecurity measures.

Observations

In the last report on the conduct of the 2019 elections to the European Parliament, it was reported that distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks against the websites of public authorities offering advice about the elections were observed in a number of Member States, but at the same time that detection and recovery were very prompt.

Such attacks continued during the 2024 elections in a few Member States. At the same time, mitigation and contingency measures were in place to prevent impact on the conduct of elections. In Bulgaria, two DDoS attacks against state private cloud infrastructures were neutralised during election days. Czechia experienced three cyber-attacks during elections, although not directed to election infrastructure. In Spain, DDoS against regional parliament webpages were detected. Also, airport websites were concerned. The Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service published a report indicating that Russian hacktivists had launched DDoS attacks against websites of political parties and public transport companies in the Netherlands, among other things, in an attempt to make it difficult for Dutch people to vote in the European elections²⁷⁰.

On 1 March 2024 a false dispatch was published twice on the Polish Press Agency’s website regarding a “partial mobilization” allegedly announced by Prime Minister Donald Tusk. It was quickly established that this was not true, and that the publication was the result of a cyberattack on the servers of the largest state news agency²⁷¹.

This illustrates how much of the malicious cyber activity had minimal impact and emphasized the need for clear and consistent public communications among EU entities and Member States, in order to avoid low impact incidents like DDOS being exploited for propaganda or disinformation purposes.

²⁶⁵ Slovenia.

²⁶⁶ Finland.

²⁶⁷ Austria.

²⁶⁸ Czechia.

²⁶⁹ Belgium, Czechia, Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Luxembourg, Austria, Slovenia and Sweden.

²⁷⁰ Dutch Military and Intelligence Service, Public Annual report 2024, 22 April 2025 ([‘Openbaar jaarverslag 2024 Militaire Inlichtingen-en VeiligheidsDienst’](#)).

²⁷¹ Wiadomości, [“Zaplanowany atak”, “duże nasilenie”. Wicepremier zabrał głos ws. fałszywej depeszy PAP](#), 03 June 2024.

4.6. Fair campaigning and funding of the election campaign

4.6.1. Fair campaigning

*The 2023 **Recommendation on elections** calls on political parties to promote election integrity and fair campaigning. While not legally binding, it encourages political parties and campaign organizations to develop and adhere to voluntary codes of conduct or campaign pledges that support free, fair, and resilient elections. These commitments should uphold high democratic standards, including rejecting financial contributions in exchange for political advantages and refraining from promoting stereotypes or discriminatory statements based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.*

Based on this recommendation, on 8 April 2024, all European political parties signed the Code of Conduct for the 2024 European Parliament elections at a ceremony hosted by the Commission.²⁷² The Code was also signed by a limited number of national political parties.

The Code of Conduct promotes core values such as transparency, fairness, and truthfulness in communication, while actively countering disinformation and AI-driven manipulation. For example, signatories commit to ensuring an ethical and transparent use of campaign tools and technologies, including AI, by avoiding misleading content, such as falsified data, while clearly labelling AI-generated content. The Code also sets ethical standards for both online and offline campaign activities, enhancing public trust by improving cybersecurity and providing better access to campaign information. Parties are encouraged to promote these commitments within their ranks, with the Code available online for public monitoring and accountability.

Measures reported by political parties

European and national political parties reportedly also adopted diverse approaches to integrity and fair campaigning, with varying levels of adherence to the Code of Conduct and other campaign-related pledges.

European political parties have implemented various measures to comply with the Code of Conduct and its campaign standards²⁷³. Notable good practices include: raising awareness through internal briefings and promoting the code to member and aspiring parties; translating commitments into internal rules, reviewing them with the general assembly, and publishing them in user-friendly formats; organizing post-election reviews and discussions between parties; and being open to mutual discussions and recommendations with other political groups²⁷⁴. Three European political parties reported publishing information on their websites about online political advertising, including details on usage, spending amounts, and funding sources²⁷⁵.

At the same time, as indicated in Section 4.3 on Artificial Intelligence above, there were some instances of using non-watermarked AI images going against the commitments made on the basis of the Code.

In a reply to the dedicated survey, one national party confirmed full adherence to the Code of Conduct and introduced additional pledges focused on transparency in financing, equal representation, responsible communication, protection of personal data, and youth engagement²⁷⁶. It also conducted

²⁷² International Idea, [CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE 2024 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS](#), 04 April 2024.

²⁷³ International IDEA, *Advisory note Implementation of the Code of conduct for the 2024 European Parliament elections – Takeaways from survey responses*, 2024.

²⁷⁴ European Democratic Party, European Conservatives and Reformists, European Free Alliance, Party of European Socialists, European Green Party, European People's Party.

²⁷⁵ European Democratic Party, Party of European Socialists, European People's Party.

²⁷⁶ Croatia.

post-election reviews, including internal assessments and feedback collection. Another party also explicitly confirmed their adherence to the Code but had not yet conducted a post-election review²⁷⁷. Moreover, it signed the Luxembourg Election Treaty, ensuring that the pledge was circulated internally among staff, politicians, and candidates. Certain parties took an even more active role in establishing their ethical guidelines. For instance, one created and monitored a "Commitment to Tolerance" and conducted a post-election review. Another carried out an internal post-election analysis but did not adopt formal pledges²⁷⁸. Finally, some parties gave unclear responses regarding their adherence to the Code. Although they did not appear to follow it, one party had their own ethics commission and candidate's charter, reflecting a proactive stance on integrity and fairness²⁷⁹. Moreover, another decided not to follow the Code²⁸⁰. Meanwhile, others adhered to its own code of conduct, focusing on "decency and national pride"²⁸¹.

Furthermore, out of almost 60 national parties surveyed, 16 confirmed that they had publicly provided information on their use of political advertising ahead of the 2024 elections to the European parliament (around 32%). This included details, oftentimes in form of a weblink, on the amounts spent on political advertising and the sources of funding used²⁸².

Political Capital, one of the main members of EDMO's Hungarian hub (HDMO), published new research²⁸³ analysing pre-election campaign spending on Meta and Google ads in Hungary. The study points to concerns about political pluralism on Meta and Google's services due to highly asymmetric spending on political ads in Hungary. The pro-government camp spent EUR 4.3 million on Meta and Google ads (EUR 2.0 million spent by Fidesz and its politicians and EUR 2.3 million spent by third party proxies), while all 14 opposition parties and their proxies spent less than a fifth of that, EUR 839,000.

Measures reported by Member States

For their part, Member States adopted a variety of approaches to support election integrity and fair campaigning in preparation for the elections.

In response to a Commission questionnaire, some Member States reported that they had robust legislative provisions to ensure election integrity and fair campaigning. For example, in Greece, national legislation codifies standards aligned with international guidelines, ensuring compliance by political parties and campaign organizations. Similarly, Italy reported to have several laws governing electoral propaganda, equal media access, and public administration and communication in place. Luxembourg stands out with a gentleman's agreement signed by several political parties to conduct fair campaigns. In another example, Croatia also highlights adherence to integrity pledges and data protection regulations for digital campaigning, reinforcing democratic principles. Voluntary ethical codes are also observed in some Member States. For instance, Slovakia reported that a voluntary ethical code for electoral campaigning is available online, offering guidance to participants despite its lack of association with official authorities.

²⁷⁷ Luxembourg.

²⁷⁸ Slovenia.

²⁷⁹ France.

²⁸⁰ Sweden.

²⁸¹ Czechia.

²⁸² Czechia, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

²⁸³ Political Capital, [*Fidesz & Co. flood social media with anti-Western hostile disinformation in Hungary's election campaign*](#), reaching EU spending records, 08 June 2024.

4.6.2. Funding of the election campaign

The integrity of elections is dependent on many factors, including transparency in party financing, which helps to maintain trust, prevent undue influence, and ensure accountability, particularly regarding donations from third countries or undisclosed sources.

Situation in Member States

*The **2023 Recommendation on elections** encourages Member States to identify possible gaps in their legislation related to donations and other funding from third countries to national political parties, political foundations, political candidates and campaign organisations; and to address such gaps by promoting transparency and by limiting donations up to a certain amount or prohibiting such donations when they come from third countries and entities based in third countries or from third-country nationals who are not entitled to vote in elections to the European Parliament or national elections.*

The rules and frameworks on political funding are rather diverse among the Member States. Several Member States have adopted or are considering measures to increase transparency and oversight for political party financing, also with a view to supporting democratic accountability and prevent foreign interference²⁸⁴. For instance, Germany has adopted new political party financing rules, regulating party sponsoring and hidden party campaign finance by other persons. In Denmark, a new law on public financing of political parties has entered into force, and a proposal for increased transparency for private financing of political parties is pending. In Slovenia, new rules should lead to more frequent audits of the largest political parties and of a larger proportion of state funding. In Czechia, a reform strengthened the office supervising political parties financing, with further reforms to close gaps on the funding of presidential candidates and eligible donors being contemplated.

Funding from third countries

Some Member States have reported that they allow donations from natural persons from third countries, with limits in certain cases. Others allow funding from third countries for both natural and legal persons, but under specific conditions. Several others such as the Netherlands, Romania and Poland have introduced or are considering funding's bans from third countries altogether.

For instance, Belgium, Germany and Luxembourg allow political parties and candidates to be funded by way of donations by individuals from third countries.

In Denmark, funding from third countries is allowed, except for funding from physical and legal persons that are on a public prohibition list.²⁸⁵

Austria bans donations from entities from third countries exceeding 500 EUR. Cyprus also prohibits donations to a party exceeding 5 000 EUR from third countries.

²⁸⁴ European Commission, [2024 Rule of Law report](#), 24 July 2024.

²⁸⁵ The Danish Minister of Integration (Udlændinge – og integrationsministeren) can decide to record physical and legal persons that counter work and undermine democracy and fundamental freedom and human rights on a public prohibition list if there is a certain probability that the person has the intention of donating to one of more recipients in Denmark. Physical and legal persons are included on the Prohibition list for a 4-year period with the possibility of extending the period 4 years at the time. See [public prohibition list](#).

Other Member States, such as Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy or Spain, have introduced specific exceptions related to the donors²⁸⁶ and the type of support²⁸⁷.

Political parties

The 2023 Recommendation on elections encourages political parties and their affiliated entities to assess risks stemming from donations from third countries and donations potentially linked to criminal activity including corruption, money laundering and organised crime.

The Code of Conduct referred to the need to for political parties to ensure transparency of received financial contributions, including benefits in kind such as gifts and hospitality received, loans, donations, campaign contributions and expenditure to be in line with the applicable European and national legislation. It also referred to the need to ensure transparency of political advertising and campaign messages, including by providing information on sponsors, sources of funding and amounts spent.

Rules applying to European political parties and their affiliated foundations are laid down in Regulation (EU) 1141/2014, which is currently under revision, in particular to clarify the funding provisions (see Section 5.2).

In the survey for national political parties, it can be observed that the issue of funding from third countries was approached with caution, with rather few parties conducting thorough risk assessments to prevent inappropriate or unwanted donations²⁸⁸.

Some parties reported strict compliance with national rules, including a ban on foreign donations above a certain threshold and the requirement to report all donations exceeding €150 to the national Court of Audit²⁸⁹. Several other parties also reported conducting risk assessments regarding third country donations but did not identify significant threats²⁹⁰. However, many other national parties reported that they had taken no action in this area at all²⁹¹.

4.7. Safety: protection of candidates and elected representatives

Introduction

Politicians and political candidates can face undue pressures and threats to their security, which has negative spill-over effect on inclusive democratic representation. Ensuring their safety emerged as a topic of discussion during the 2024 elections.

Findings

In their replies to the Commission survey, several European (about 67%) and national (about 36%) political parties²⁹² reported that they were aware of incidents of harassment and violence, both online

²⁸⁶ For instance, Finland bans donations from from third countries to political parties, but a party may receive contributions from individuals and from international associations and foundations that represent the party's ideology (the definition is not specified in the law)

²⁸⁷ For instance, in Spain, it is forbidden to receive electoral funding (for "electoral costs") from from third countries, but it is possible for political parties to receive funding "without a concrete purpose", only from individuals from third countries and up to EUR 50,000 per person per year. Loans from private persons or companies from third countries are also allowed.

²⁸⁸ Czechia, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

²⁸⁹ Austria.

²⁹⁰ Slovenia.

²⁹¹ Belgium, Czechia, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Sweden.

²⁹² This discrepancy could potentially be explained because of the fact that national political parties are smaller with less information available on this matter.

and offline, with women candidates and minorities being more frequently targeted, proportionately. Around 41% of the national parties surveyed had put in place measures to prevent or combat online violence or threats against candidates. Examples of some measures against violence include social media monitoring, content moderation, specific guidelines, police reporting, as well as education of candidates on preventative measures.

The European Green Party reported accounts of physical violence towards their politicians in Germany during the election period, as well as digital violence, such as smear campaigns or attempts to deplatform²⁹³. They also reported that violence, physical and digital, towards politicians is increasing, especially towards women candidates and ethnic minorities. The Party of European Socialists reported that one of their candidates for the European Parliament, was physically attacked while campaigning in Dresden, and just days later, a female Senator was also attacked. The European Free Alliance reported that their members and candidates frequently receive harassment, insults and occasionally violence, usually based on their belonging to a national minority and their advocacy of minority interests. They also reported harassing comments online including sexist or ageist comments directed towards one of their female candidates.

At national level, online violence against candidates was also reported²⁹⁴, including notably against women and ethnic minorities, as well as instances of physical threats and violence²⁹⁵. For instance, an Austrian party reported a smear campaign against a female leading candidate which spread across social media and e-mail channels. In Belgium, a leading female candidate's car was damaged by unknown perpetrators. A national Czech party reported that candidates were frequently targeted by online abuse via social media, with women being proportionately more affected. In Finland, a national party reported 3-4 instances of physical threats against female candidates; with frequent but underreported online violence as well. A Swedish party reported having a 'security action plan' in place. In Slovenia, a top candidate was physically attacked by a man after a local event, leaving the candidate slightly injured.

Reports by electoral observers²⁹⁶ also highlight alarming incidents of violence, harassment, and intimidation in several Member States, creating a hostile environment for those who seek public office. For example:

- On 12 May 2024, in Ireland, a Councillor and her husband were assaulted by an individual probing her immigration stance during their campaign activities in West Dublin.
- On 17 May 2024, a Fine Gael candidate faced harassment and racist abuse while posting election posters, forcing him to remove them.
- On 20 May 2024 in Lisbon, a confrontation involving the Ergue-te party was documented on video and corroborated by ODIHR SEAM interlocutors.
- On 8 June 2024, the Prime Minister of Denmark was victim of an attack.

Reports by electoral observers also note that political polarisation, mis- and disinformation, and specific incidents of harassment and violence contributed to an 'antagonistic environment' for politicians and candidates, media outlets, and journalists in Member States, most significantly targeting women, LGBTI, and immigrant communities²⁹⁷. Election-Watch.EU further notices that "acts of violence

²⁹³ Deplatforming, also called no-platforming, is a form of Internet censorship of an individual or group by preventing them from posting on the platforms they use to share their information/ideas.

²⁹⁴ Czechia, Greece, Austria, Finland and Sweden.

²⁹⁵ Slovenia and Finland.

²⁹⁶ OSCE/ODIHR, [Special Election Assessment Mission, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), 27 November 2024; and Election-Watch.EU, [Election Assessment Mission, Final Report, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), September 2024.

²⁹⁷ OSCE/ODIHR, [Special Election Assessment Mission, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), 27 November 2024.

against politicians in some Member States were a pronounced sign of a growing societal polarisation, compounded by fears of a wider political rift and concerns about foreign interference”²⁹⁸.

The Global Information Index also observed²⁹⁹ that female politicians in Europe face a disproportionate amount of gendered disinformation, next to harassment and hate, particularly during elections. These attacks often involve misogynistic, racist, and xenophobic narratives aimed at undermining women's credibility and discouraging their participation in politics. Prominent figures like Ursula von der Leyen are frequent targets, with narratives questioning their competence and legitimacy.

The OSCE/ODIHR election assessment also highlights the violence against women in the campaign to be an issue and recommended that “Violence against women in the campaign should be recognised by political parties and institutions as a barrier to women’s active political participation. Consideration should be given to introducing or strengthening existing proactive and preventive measures against such actions”³⁰⁰.

5. EUROPEAN DIMENSION AND THE EXERCISE OF EU ELECTORAL RIGHTS

5.1. The European dimension

The outcome of elections to the European Parliament has direct implications for citizens. It has an impact for instance on how policies are shaped and what laws are passed at European level and implemented across the EU. Citizens need to know what is at stake at European level if they are to make informed choices. However, the political debate and campaign for the 2024 elections in the Member States remained dominated by national and local issues, with the link to the European level being less well discussed and understood.

The European Parliament actively promoted the European dimension of the elections by organising an election night, providing the media with real-time updates on turnout and composition of the Parliament.

Promoting the European dimension of the elections strengthens the link between citizens and the European institutions and therefore the democratic legitimacy of European decision-making.

Regulation (EU) 1141/2014 establishes a specific legal, financial and regulatory system for European political parties and European political foundations. In 2021 the Commission proposed a recast of this Regulation with amendments to facilitate European political parties’ interactions with their national member parties and across borders, increase transparency, in particular in relation to political advertisement and donations, cut excessive administrative burden and increase the financial viability of European political parties and foundations. This proposal remains under negotiation.

The 2023 Recommendation on elections encourages Member States to take measures to enhance the European nature of the elections to the European Parliament, including to help European political parties and political groups of the European Parliament conduct their campaigns in the context of the elections to the European Parliament. It calls on Member States to enable the announcement of candidates and the start of campaigning in elections to the European Parliament at least 6 weeks prior to the election day. It encourages giving information to the public on the affiliation between national political parties and European political parties before and during the

²⁹⁸ Election-Watch.EU, [Election Assessment Mission, Final Report, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), September 2024.

²⁹⁹ Global Disinformation Index, [Gendered Disinformation in the European Parliamentary Elections](#), June 10 2024.

³⁰⁰ OSCE/ODIHR, [Special Election Assessment Mission, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), 27 November 2024.

elections to the European Parliament. This could be done for instance by indicating such an affiliation on the ballots and by supporting the distribution of such information by the relevant competent authorities.

The 2023 Recommendation on elections also encourages national political parties participating in elections to the European Parliament to make publicly known before the start of the electoral campaign, which European political party they are affiliated with or in the process of affiliating with and to promote measures aimed at increasing the knowledge of their members about the elections to the European Parliament.

Member States apply a range of timeframes for the announcement of candidates and campaigning timelines for the European Parliament elections. For example, in Germany, Portugal, and Sweden, campaigning can begin more than nine months before election day, offering extended periods for political engagement. In Finland, campaigning starts between six and nine months before the elections, while in countries such as Belgium, Czechia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovakia, campaigns typically begin three to six months ahead. In a majority of countries³⁰¹, the announcement of candidates and the start of campaigning was only permitted within three months of the elections.

Several **Member States** have taken steps to enhance transparency regarding affiliations between national and European political parties. For instance, Italy facilitates public access to this information through its Central Directorate for Electoral Services, publishing detailed instructions referencing EU rules and ensuring that affiliations are indicated on ballots. Similarly, Lithuania highlights these affiliations on ballots and encourages public awareness efforts. Affiliations were indicated on ballots in four Member States³⁰², while in seven Member States³⁰³ such information is disseminated by the relevant authorities on institutional websites.

No measures were taken by any Member States to facilitate the conduct of cross-border campaigns by actors at Union level (such as European political parties) or multi-national political parties in the context of the 2024 elections to the European Parliament. Four Member States³⁰⁴ underlined that such measures were not of competence of national authorities, who should maintain a neutral role and respect the principle of autonomy of political parties. In Slovenia and Estonia, during electoral campaigns, only national parties and candidates can participate to the campaign; support (including financial one) from foreign persons or entities, including European political parties, is not allowed.

In response to the Commission survey, many national **political parties** across all political spectrums reported that they had publicly declared their European political party affiliations before the start of the European electoral campaign.

One national political party not only proactively declared its affiliation with a European political party but also prominently displayed their logo on their website and materials, while keeping members informed through multiple channels about the EU elections³⁰⁵. In addition, another national political party boosted members' knowledge through numerous training sessions and launched a dedicated campaign to emphasize the European dimension of the elections³⁰⁶.

³⁰¹ Bulgaria, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Romania and Slovenia.

³⁰² Belgium, Ireland, Italy and Lithuania.

³⁰³ Czechia, Germany, Greece, France, Luxembourg, Austria and Finland.

³⁰⁴ Czechia, Germany, Luxembourg and Sweden.

³⁰⁵ Austria.

³⁰⁶ Austria.

Many surveyed parties publicly acknowledged their European political affiliation particularly through social media, email, brochures, and educational sessions to inform and engage members³⁰⁷. Meanwhile, another national political party published the European Political Party's Manifesto on its website, and parties conducted ongoing training and online sessions for members, and even showcased a Ukrainian artist and a foreign EU Minister in their campaign to increase visibility of the European dimension³⁰⁸. Another national party held election congresses to educate its members, and prioritized EU issues in its manifesto³⁰⁹.

However, not all the national parties surveyed chose to emphasize the European dimension. Several parties did not use European party logos on their materials, and it occurred that some parties did not disclose any European political party affiliation at all³¹⁰.

Campaign obstacles were reported across various Member States, primarily affecting smaller, less established parties. These challenges often impacted minority-focused or niche groups that struggle with media access and visibility compared to larger mainstream parties. Some smaller national parties reported media access issues or encountered "media incorrectness"³¹¹. Other parties reportedly faced delays in social network ad approvals, while others reported media blockades and allegedly falsified statistics by specific media outlets in the run-up to the elections³¹². One national party faced obstacles by not being given time to present on media broadcasting³¹³. Additionally, small parties noted that it was particularly difficult to campaign due to lack of media attention and exclusion from electoral debates³¹⁴. One national party noted that they had been prohibited from campaigning in a third language, namely Russian³¹⁵ and another reported that their candidates were even subjected to plainclothes police checks³¹⁶.

5.2. Monitoring and enforcement of EU electoral rights and electoral law

5.2.1. Introduction

The elections to the European Parliament are unique. The Member States, each with their national campaigns, national lists and distinctive rules and traditions, contribute to a collective result, with elected MEPs representing all EU citizens.

It is the competence and the responsibility of the Member States to lay down the specific conditions for the conduct of elections, subject to the respect of certain basic principles, such as those laid down in Articles 2 and 10 of the Treaty on European Union, and their international commitments. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the competent national administrative and judicial authorities to ensure compliance with applicable law and relevant international standards.

Certain common principles and procedures are set out in EU law, including the 1976 Electoral Act and the rules enabling mobile EU citizens to exercise their right to vote and stand in the elections to the European Parliament in their country of residence.

³⁰⁷ Czechia, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg and Slovenia.

³⁰⁸ Czechia, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Sweden.

³⁰⁹ Luxembourg.

³¹⁰ Czechia, Greece, France, Croatia and Sweden.

³¹¹ Czechia.

³¹² Slovenia.

³¹³ France.

³¹⁴ Czechia, France, Italy and Luxembourg.

³¹⁵ Latvia.

³¹⁶ Greece.

5.2.2. Electoral Act

As regards the elections to the European Parliament, national electoral procedures must comply with the principles set out in the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage (1976 Electoral Act)³¹⁷, annexed to Council Decision 76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom of 20 September 1976. Under Article 1(3) of the 1976 Electoral Act, elections must be by direct universal suffrage and shall be free and secret. Furthermore, pursuant to Article 8 of the 1976 Electoral Act, subject to the provisions of the 1976 Electoral Act, the electoral procedure is to be governed in each Member State by its national provisions. These national provisions, which may if appropriate take account of the specific situation in the Member States, must not affect the essentially proportional nature of the voting system.

Under the special legislative procedure envisaged by Article 223 of the TFEU, it is up to the European Parliament to draw up a proposal to lay down the provisions necessary for the election of its members by direct universal suffrage in accordance with a uniform procedure in all Member States or in accordance with principles common to all Member States. The Council, acting unanimously in accordance with a special legislative procedure and after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament, which would act based on a majority of its component Members, would lay down the necessary provisions. These provisions would enter into force following their approval by the Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements. The Commission does not have a formal role in this process.

In 2015, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the reform of the EU's electoral law, suggesting certain targeted amendments to enhance the democratic dimension of the European elections and the legitimacy of the EU's decision-making process. On 7 June 2018, the Council approved a draft decision amending the Electoral Act (Council Decision 2018/994). Ratification of this decision has advanced but is not yet concluded.

On 3 May 2022 the European Parliament adopted its proposal for a new Council Regulation on the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, aiming at repealing the existing Electoral Act³¹⁸. It proposes a comprehensive reform and extension of the electoral rules laid down at EU level for the organisation of the elections to the European Parliament, including a European constituency to allow for the election of an additional 28 MEPs from EU-wide lists (in addition to the national lists). The proposal also includes provisions on common campaigning rules, administrative deadlines, a single Election Day on 9 May, common voting and candidacy periods, compulsory access to postal voting and support for other methods, provisions to strengthen the participation of citizens with disabilities and to promote gender equality in the candidates standing for elections, and other measures. Discussions on this proposal did not progress in the Council.

5.2.3. Electoral rights

EU electoral rights include the rights provided to all citizens under the Treaties to participate in the democratic life of the Union, and to elect the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage in a free and secret ballot.

³¹⁷ [Act concerning the election of the representatives of the Assembly by direct universal suffrage](#), *OJ L 218*, 8.10.1976.

³¹⁸ European Parliament legislative resolution of 3 May 2022 on the proposal for a Council Regulation on the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision (76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom) and the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage annexed to that Decision ([2020/2220\(INL\)](#) – [2022/0902\(APP\)](#)) https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-05-03_EN.html

They also include the rights provided to EU citizens which exercise their right to move freely to another Member State, to vote and stand in the European elections in their Member State of residence. These rights are enshrined in the Treaties and the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, and are elaborated in the 1976 Electoral Act, Directive 93/109/EC and the relevant case law of the Court of Justice.

The 2021 package of measures to reinforce democracy and protect the integrity of elections, adopted by the Commission, included two legislative proposals to recast the Directives on the right to vote and stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament and municipal elections by EU citizens residing in a Member State other than their country of origin³¹⁹. These initiatives aim to update, clarify and strengthen the existing rules in order to address the difficulties faced by mobile EU citizens, and to ensure broad and inclusive participation in elections to the European Parliament, support mobile EU citizens in the exercise of their rights and protect the integrity of elections.

The European Parliament adopted its opinions on these proposals on 14 February 2023. The discussions in the Council have progressed significantly on both files³²⁰. An agreement in Council was found in April 2024 on the Directive on European Parliament elections and the text is currently with the European Parliament for a consultation process.

5.2.4. Prevention of multiple voting

Introduction

Article 9 of the 1976 Electoral Act prohibits voting more than once. It is also restated in Article 4(1) of Directive 93/109/EC, which states that no person may vote more than once at the same election.

Council Decision 2018/994³²¹ amending the 1976 Electoral Act provides that in accordance with their national electoral procedures, Member States are required to take measures necessary to ensure that double voting in elections to the European Parliament is subject to effective, proportionate, and dissuasive penalties. The foregoing Decision has not yet entered into force yet as approval has not been given by all Member States, but most Member States have sanctions in place.

In line with Directive 93/109/EC, Member States have to exchange information on EU citizens who plan to vote or be candidates in their Member State of residence to prevent multiple voting and double candidacies. Member States exchange voter roll data and check for duplicates. Given the sensitivity of the personal data exchanged it is crucial that this is done in a secure manner.

Measures taken to prevent multiple voting

The Commission supports this exchange of information by providing Member States with a crypto tool to encrypt the data exchanged³²², a secure platform to perform the exchange (Commission's

³¹⁹ [Proposal](#) for a Council Directive laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for Union citizens residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals (recast), COM/2021/732 final; [Proposal](#) for a Council Directive laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections by Union citizens residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals (recast), COM(2021)733 final.

³²⁰ The discussions on the Directive on municipal elections are still ongoing.

³²¹ [Council Decision](#) (EU, Euratom) 2018/994 of 13 July 2018 amending the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, *OJ L 178*, 16.7.2018, 13 July 2018.

³²² European Commission, [Crypto Tool for the European Parliament Elections and for the European Citizens' Initiative | Interoperable Europe Portal](#), last accessed 14 April 2025.

collaborative platform S-CIRCABC) and supports the process to achieve this efficiently³²³, which is coordinated with Member States' experts in the framework of the Expert Group on Electoral Matters³²⁴.

By means of technical updates, the Commission improved the crypto tool and the secure platform for data encryption of mobile EU citizen voters and candidates, supporting exchanges between Member States. In the context of the Expert Group on electoral matters, it also organised testing and provided updated guidelines on the crypto tools and secure platform to support Member States in the efficient use of these tools. This facilitated secure data exchange between Member States in order to prevent multiple voting and double candidacies, among mobile EU citizens.

Building on the best practices developed ahead of the 2019 elections, the Commission also continued to support the Member States by compiling an overview of the relevant procedural deadlines in the run-up to the elections with information on the date of opening and closing of the electoral register, period of the exchange, and on date of the closure of the polls in the different Member States. The Commission also encouraged the use of a multilingual form developed in 2019 to facilitate the prompt exchange of information on candidates, which was used by 10 Member States³²⁵. Member States' replies to the survey confirm that this support provided by the Commission in the framework of Expert Group on electoral matters was useful, well organised and efficient.

The process runs smoothly from the technical point of view, and it has improved both in terms of its security and efficiency.

On this basis, between January and June 2024, Member States encrypted more than 1 600 voters and candidates list files and exchanged data on around 1 million voters and 135 candidates. This exchange resulted in the identification of over 300 000 multiple registrations of citizens.

Challenges resulting from incompatible national laws and procedures remain and were signalled by Member States in their replies to the survey. Although the uniformity of the data was improved by some Member States, the diversity of the national electoral processes, including incompatible national deadlines to prepare and close the electoral roll remained. This diversity in the types of data exchanged and the timetables to which the data was being collected affected its quality and its usability. This is also acknowledged by electoral observers reports which recommend harmonising the deadline for voter registration across Member States with the view to strengthen the data exchange mechanism.

Reports by electoral observers such as OSCE/OIDHR highlight the substantial efforts by the Commission and Member States to curb multiple voting, stating that the practice of multiple voting does not appear to be widespread. At the same time, OSCE/ODHIR considers that there is no 'sufficient mechanism to prevent double voting'³²⁶.

³²³ Every country creates a file for each Member State whose nationals are registered to vote there as mobile EU citizens, encrypts them using the crypto-tool (which can also perform some basic validation) and uploads them onto the secure platform according to the specified process. Once the encrypted files are uploaded, every Member State downloads its relevant files, including data about its own-national voters registered in another country, so as to match them to its own electoral roll and take the necessary measures to remove them from the home country electoral roll, as well as taking other necessary steps including to inform citizens of this step, when possible. Member States need to set up a contact point, connect the administration in charge of the European Parliament elections electoral roll to the crypto tool, send, receive, process and match the data received through the information exchange, and provide for the necessary actions.

³²⁴ European Commission, [Expert group on electoral matters - Right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections for the EP and in municipal elections](#) (E00617).

³²⁵ Several Member States reported to not have the need to use the form because there were no mobile EU citizens candidates in their countries.

³²⁶ OSCE/ODIHR, [Special Election Assessment Mission, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), 27 November 2024, p.2.

The entry into application of the Council Decision 2018/994 amending the Electoral Law³²⁷ and the adoption of the recast of the Directive 93/109/EC³²⁸ would reinforce tools available to Member States to address double voting.

Table 3: Data exchange to help prevent multiple voting of mobile EU citizens

Member States	Used multilingual form	Records sent	Records received	Duplicate records identified	identification rate
Belgium	yes	76.337			
Bulgaria	yes				
Czechia		3.498	8.158	3.266	40.0%
Denmark	n/a				
Germany	no	202.301	119.427	1.249	1,04%
Estonia	n/a	1.753	2.995		
Ireland	yes	2.139	10.450		
Greece	yes	13.023	23.486		
Spain	yes	229.834	61.700	37.067	60,08%
France		269.126	111.498	89.591	80,35%
Croatia	n/a	0	11.738		
Italy	yes	83.438	173.619	116.556	67.1%
Cyprus	n/a	11.698	1909		
Latvia	yes	47	2.991	2442	81.6%
Lithuania	no	340	6.095	1780	29.2%
Luxembourg	no	81.869	4.232		
Hungary	yes	4.693	13.044	6.525	50.0%
Malta	n/a	15.102	540		
Netherlands	no	67.766	70.127	7.956	11.34%
Austria	yes	45.376	16.614	956	5.75%
Poland					
Portugal	n/a	11.255	139.253	51745	37.15%
Romania		121	139.845		
Slovenia	n/a	4.275	2.681	892	33.27%
Slovakia	n/a	235	10.075		
Finland		7730	14057	11296	80,35%
Sweden		43.101		4807	

Source: Replies from Member States to the Commission's questionnaire, 2024. Different Member States highlighted that the data is not complete.

Complementary measures

The 2023 Recommendation on elections encourages Member States to provide mobile EU citizens with information on the rules and sanctions related to multiple voting in due time ahead of the elections to the European Parliament. Where, in the context of the elections to the European

³²⁷ Council Decision (EU, Euratom) 2018/994 of 13 July 2018 amending the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, annexed to Council Decision 76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom of 20 September 1976, OJ L 178, 16.7.2018, p. 1–3.

³²⁸ Proposal for a Council Directive laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections by Union citizens residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals (recast), COM(2021) 733 final.

Parliament, a citizen was removed from the electoral roll of a Member State in order to vote in another Member State, the Recommendation encourages the former Member State to time consider taking measures to avoid that such a removal affects the registration of that citizen in electoral rolls for national elections.

For the 2024 elections, the Commission, together with other EU institutions, raised awareness about the prohibition of multiple voting as part of the joint interinstitutional campaign.

Most Member States that replied to the survey launched by the Commission reported having provided information on the prohibition of multiple voting, including potential sanctions, as integral part of their efforts in raising awareness of electoral procedures applying to mobile EU citizens: government websites, Electoral Commission channels, press releases, and social media to reach a broad audience. When the Member States used personalized letters or emails to inform mobile EU citizens, these included information on the legal implications of multiple voting.

In the meantime, Member States are gradually implementing several measures to ensure that the removal of a citizen from the electoral roll for European Parliament elections does not affect their registration for national elections. Many countries maintain separate electoral rolls for different types of elections. For instance, Czechia, Malta, Spain, Luxembourg, Sweden and Austria have distinct registers for elections to the European Parliament and national elections, ensuring that removal from one does not affect the other. Greece, Slovenia, France, Hungary and the Netherlands use centralized databases that distinguish between different voting rights. These systems allow election officials to manage individual voting rights without impacting other electoral registrations. For some Member States like Bulgaria, Denmark, Latvia, Portugal the electoral roll is produced before each election.

5.2.5. Oversight by the Commission and evolution of relevant EU case-law

National competent authorities and courts have the primary responsibility of ensuring compliance with national legislation, EU law and relevant international standards applicable to the conduct and organisation of elections.

As guardian of the Treaties, the Commission took various actions to ensure that EU law was being implemented and to eliminate potential obstacles to the exercise of EU citizens' electoral rights. The Commission is in regular dialogue with Member States and provides support to citizens.

On 13 November 2024, in a case brought by the Commission against Czechia and Poland regarding restrictions on joining domestic political parties for mobile EU citizens³²⁹, the Court of Justice of the EU ruled that if the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in local and European elections is to be exercised effectively, mobile EU citizens must be afforded equal access to the means available to nationals of that Member State for the purpose of exercising that right. Given that membership of a political party contributes significantly to the exercise of the electoral rights conferred by EU law, the Court of Justice found that the Czech Republic and Poland infringed EU law by denying mobile EU citizens the right to become members of a political party³³⁰.

Between the period of 2019 to 2024, no other infringement cases or EU Pilot procedures have been initiated concerning the exercise of EU citizens' electoral rights under Council Directive 93/109/EC.

³²⁹ European Commission – Press release, [*EU citizens' electoral rights: Commission decides to refer CZECHIA and POLAND to the Court of Justice*](#), 09 June 2021.

³³⁰ Cases C-808/21 and C-814/21.

The Commission received several letters from EU citizens raising specific issues in different Member States, including voting by dual nationals, deadlines for candidate registration, available remedies, electoral rights of specific groups or voting from a third country.

With regard to the right to be informed about the right to vote and stand as candidate in the elections to the European Parliament, Article 12 of Council Directive 93/109/EC states that the Member State of residence must inform EU voters in good time and in an appropriate manner of the conditions and detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections in that State. The responsibility of informing mobile EU citizens about their voting rights lies with the Member States, which are granted a certain autonomy to determine the most effective methods to fulfil this obligation. This includes deciding on the appropriate means of communication and strategies to ensure that mobile EU citizens are adequately informed. The obligation can be met through a wide variety of methods, including publishing relevant information on official websites, conducting awareness campaigns, and distributing informational materials.

Details on the implementation of Article 13 of Council Directive 93/109/EC are instead provided in Section 5.2.4 on the prevention of multiple voting.

Finally, as parts of its obligation under Article 14(3) of Council Directive 93/109/EC, on 7 November 2023, the Commission adopted a report³³¹ on granting a derogation under Article 22(2) of Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to Luxembourg, in accordance with Article 14(1) of Council Directive 93/109/EC³³². In its conclusions, the Commission welcomed the fact that Luxembourg has stopped making mobile EU citizens' right to vote or stand as candidates in the elections to the European Parliament conditional on a minimum period of residence in Luxembourg, it acknowledged that, based on the fact that the proportion of mobile EU citizens of voting age resident in Luxembourg remains significantly higher than the threshold of 20% referred to in Article 14(1), the granting of a derogation is still warranted and encouraged Luxembourg to continue taking measures fostering the integration of mobile EU citizens, including as regards the composition of lists of candidates.

There is not much information available regarding issues encountered by mobile EU citizens voters and candidates. It was however reported that some mobile EU citizens voters faced difficulties during the registration process in certain EU countries. For example, some voters were unaware that regional election registration also applied to EU elections³³³, while in other cases, voters and candidates missed the deadline to register³³⁴. One party noted that it had not collected data on these issues³³⁵.

The majority of Member States³³⁶ that replied to the survey were not aware of their citizens having difficulties with registration formalities when seeking to vote and stand in the 2024 elections to the European Parliament in other Member States. Those that reported to be aware of certain difficulties, they mainly concerned:

³³¹ [Report](#) From the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on granting a derogation under Article 22(2) on the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, presented under Article 14(3) of Directive 93/109/EC on the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament, COM/2023/688 final, 7 November 2023.

³³² Article 14(1) states that if, in a given Member State, the proportion of mobile EU citizens of voting age exceeds 20% of the total number of EU citizens of voting age resident there, that Member State may, by way of derogation from Articles 3, 9 and 10: (a) restrict the right to vote to mobile EU citizens who have resided in that Member State for a minimum period (which may not exceed five years);(b) restrict the right to stand as a candidate to mobile EU citizen who have resided in that Member State for a minimum period (which may not exceed 10 years). Luxembourg is the only Member State that applies a derogation under the Directive.

³³³ Austria.

³³⁴ Czechia.

³³⁵ Greece.

³³⁶ 18 Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Ireland, France, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Romania, Slovakia and Finland).

- Returning nationals (citizens who moved back to their country of origin from other Member States) who were not aware of having to take steps to be deleted from the electoral roll of the Member State of previous residence or not able to apply for removal from the electoral roll after a certain deadline:
- citizens who were not aware of their EU citizenship right to vote for candidates of the Member State of residence instead of the Member State of origin:
- citizens who were not aware of the formalities and deadlines for submitting applications to be registered in the electoral roll in the Member State of residence and for postal voting:
- citizens not being aware of their registration status (whether they are in the electoral roll in the Member State of origin or in the Member State of residence).

Electoral observers also reported several problems of mobile EU citizens when exercising their rights in their Member States of residence, including lack of interest, low level of awareness about the possibility to vote in the Member States of residence, cumbersome or unclear procedures, language barriers to register to vote³³⁷.

The early registration requirement for mobile EU citizens to be added on the electoral rolls in the Member State of residence is also considered not helpful to increase the participation of mobile EU citizens³³⁸. Finally, the fact that Member States like Denmark uses predominantly digital interfaces, could be a challenge for mobile EU citizens without computer skills to register³³⁹.

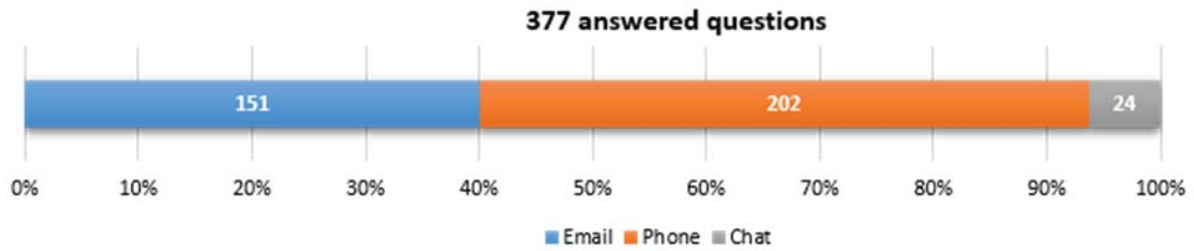
As indicated in Section 2.2, the Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) acted as citizens' helpline for the 2024 elections at EU level and answered 2 797 questions related to the elections between September 2023 and June 2024. The questions received by EDCC regarded multiples topics. These included registration procedures and electoral rights, including digital and remote voting from citizens living in the EU or abroad (around 65%); perceived missing information from Member States and administrative obstacles to voting (approx. 10%); candidates and national political parties, their positions and affiliations with the European political parties and groups (approx. 10%); expressions of opinions about the EU and its political leaders (approx. 10%); communication and promotional materials to inform and mobilise voters (approx. 5%) and alleged disinformation/FIMI, hybrid incidents, threats (very few). Individual incidents related to disinformation/FIMI, cyber-attacks, electoral fraud and potential security threats were immediately brought to the attention of the competent services.

³³⁷ EU-Election Watch reported especially in Austria, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland and Romania.

³³⁸ EU-Election Watch reported in particular Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Spain, Finland, Croatia.

³³⁹ Election-Watch.EU, [*Election Assessment Mission, Final Report, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024*](#), September 2024.

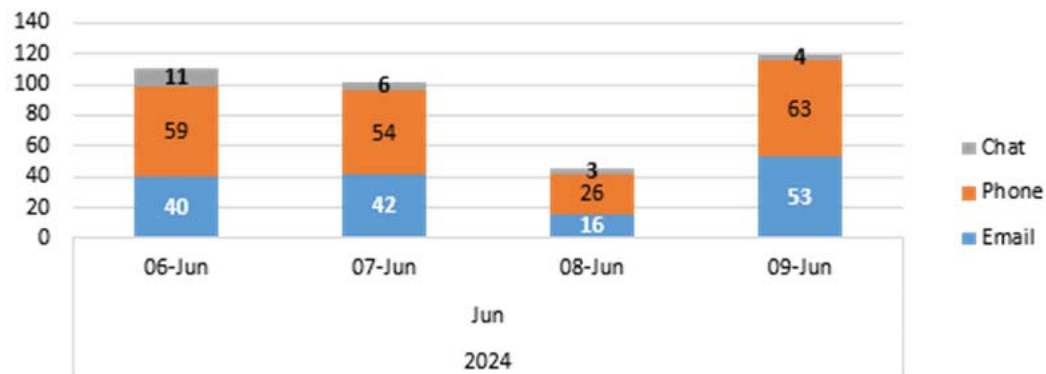
Figure 11: European elections related questions answered by the EDCC between 6-9 June 2024 per channel



Source: EDCC

The EDCC answered an average of 94 cases per day. The day on which the most cases were closed was Sunday 9 June 2024, with 120 cases, corresponding to 32% of the total cases of the election days.

Figure 12: European elections related questions answered by the EDCC between 6-9 June 2024

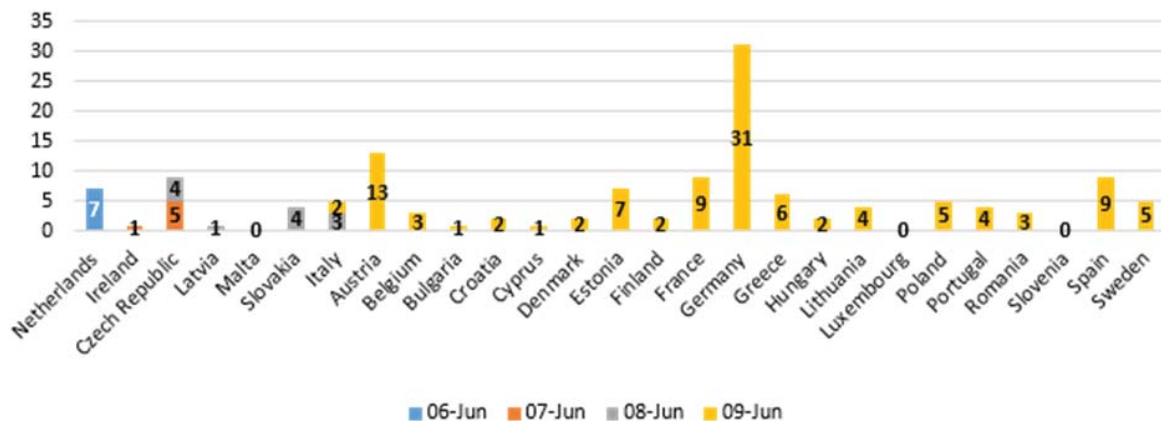


Source: EDCC

The EU countries with the highest share of questions were Germany with 19% (71 questions), followed by Spain with 10% (36 questions), Belgium with 7% (26 questions) and France with 7% (26 questions).

As the election days vary from country to country, the following figure shows the number of cases closed by country during the respective election day(s).

Figure 13: Number of cases closed by country during the respective election day(s)



Source: EDCC

Approximately 60% of cases related to electoral rights and formalities. Most citizens contacted the EDCC with questions about practicalities, such as the locations and opening times of polling stations and which documents they should bring. Some citizens asked for advice when they had misplaced the voting documents that had been sent to them. Throughout the voting period, EU citizens living in non-EU countries continued to ask about their voting rights or complain about their country of nationality not allowing them to vote from outside the EU. Over the course of the four voting days, these enquiries came from the United Kingdom (3), Switzerland (2), Norway (2), Australia (1), Singapore (1), and Russia (1). Next to enquiries from EU citizens, the EDCC received messages from UK citizens who expressed their disappointment at no longer being able to vote.

Approximately 20% of cases related to perceived missing information from Member States and perceived obstacles and incidents preventing citizens from voting during the election days. Several citizens reported obstacles or not receiving adequate information about registration deadlines and voting procedures from their home countries, leading to missed opportunities to vote. Most enquiries about administrative issues concerned citizens not receiving their voting documents or not being on the electoral roll. In some cases, this may not have been an administrative error, but due to the citizen not registering (on time) to vote (meaning that they were clearly unaware of the necessity).

The EDCC received a total of two reports of alleged electoral fraud. This included one citizen alleging irregularities in relation to Romanian voter rolls and one claiming that an Estonian MEP is engaged in fraud. These cases were handled in line with the established procedures involving the competent Commission services. The EDCC received two cases referring to security threats³⁴⁰. These cases were handled in line with the established procedures involving the competent Commission services.

Approximately 20% of cases related to other matters related to the elections³⁴¹.

³⁴⁰ One was a message in which the citizen alleged being attacked at a polling station, although no further information was given when asked. The second was a warning of a terror attack at Pride events in Paris and Vienna.

³⁴¹ This included citizens sharing their opinions on various candidates. Many citizens provided their feedback on the European Parliament's website on the elections, often stating that more information about candidates should be available, expressing their disapproval of the inclusive writing used in the French version, and addressing translation mistakes or signalling technical issues. Some citizens asked for information about the political group affiliations of national parties, whether they could vote for candidates from other member states, the number of potential voters, or specific issues about constituencies in their countries. There were also fewer citizens

5.3. Publication of results (officials and polls)

Article 10 (2) of the 1976 Act prohibits publication of definitive electoral results of an entire Member State, but also of any preliminary, partial or regional results by central or local authorities until all polling stations across the EU are closed. This prohibition is addressed exclusively to electoral authorities of the Member States, not to polling institutes which conduct exit polls or to media (whether public or private) which publish estimates based on such polls.

From February 2024 onwards, to ensure the coordination among Member States of the process of publication of the results, the Commission collected from electoral authorities and shared information in the European Cooperation Network on Elections of voting hours and opening and closing of polling stations for the elections to the European Parliament. The last polling stations closed in Italy at 23:00 CET on 9 June 2024, after which Member States could publish the results.

No incidents of early publication of results were reported to the Commission. Some Member States have called for the earlier publication of election results, referring to the need to mitigate the risk of disinformation, suggesting results should be released without waiting for all polling stations across the EU to close³⁴².

6. ELECTION OBSERVATION

Elections observation supports the integrity of electoral processes. The Commission actively engaged with electoral observers in the context of the follow-up to its Recommendation on elections and the invitation addressed to Member States to encourage and facilitate independent election observation.

The 2023 Recommendation on elections promotes election observation including by citizens as it is an efficient way to engage citizens with the electoral process and improve public trust in elections. It calls on Member States to encourage and facilitate impartial and independent election observation including by citizens as well as international organisations, at all the stages of the electoral process, taking into account their legal frameworks and international commitments. This should include, in particular, observation of voter registration, counting of ballots, participation of specific groups, the monitoring of political advertising and financing, and the application of electoral rules online. Member States are invited support the development of capacity and expertise in election observation, including by supporting training for election observers, drawing on the knowledge shared within the European Cooperation Network on Elections and international standards and best practices. Specific training could be provided to younger election observers. Supporting the participation of young citizens, including first time voters, may include actions such as encouraging students to become election observers.

Member States discussed measures to promote election observation in several meetings of the European Cooperation Network on Elections and in the High-Level Event on Elections that took place in October 2023. Both Election-Watch.EU and OSCE/ODIHR took part in various meetings of ECNE that facilitated observation activities and contacts between election observers and election authorities.

In response to the Commission survey, almost 70% of Member States confirmed that they had taken specific steps to facilitate observation of the 2024 elections by citizens and international organisations. Regarding the cooperation through national election networks or with election observers, responses varied as multiple answers were allowed. Ten Member States reportedly did not cooperate with election

expressing their personal opinions or requesting communication materials. Several citizens contacted the EDCC with questions about what would happen after the election days, including when the results would be published, when the new MEPs would take their seats, and when the new Commission would be voted on. Some who had been selected as poll workers asked for information on how they could avoid this duty.

³⁴² As reported for example by Latvia in the ECNE meeting of 11 October 2024.

observer organisations, while 12 selected "Other", stating that they had for example cooperated with the OCSE-ODHIR.

Some practices reported include:

- Training provided for e-voting observers and opportunities for observers to attend training for precinct committee members (Estonia);
- Observation opportunities for OSCE-ODIHR, political party representatives, and candidates during elections, with legal provisions to submit objections (Greece);
- Issuance of certificates for international observers to access electoral offices and observe operations (Italy);
- Training and promotion of election observation opportunities for NGOs and political parties (Latvia);
- facilitating election observation by accrediting 102 national NGOs as election observers (Romania);
- Robust citizen observation system involving all eligible voters as randomly selected polling station members (mandatory participation), ensuring diverse representation, including women and persons with disabilities (Spain).

Approximately 40% of almost 60 national **political parties** that replied to the Commission survey reported some form of collaboration with election observers. In this regard, multiple parties reported having cooperated with the OSCE/ODIHR observation work³⁴³. In addition, one party reportedly coordinated with their election observation association³⁴⁴ or another with local municipal authorities³⁴⁵. One national party also designated observers to monitor the vote-counting process³⁴⁶.

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deployed a special election assessment mission (SEAM) consisting of a core team of seven international experts based in Brussels and 10 regional analysts deployed across EU Member States. The final report issued by OSCE/ODIHR indicates that the elections were genuinely competitive, professionally organized and inclusive. Some areas identified for more attention concerned accessibility for persons with disabilities, inconsistencies in electoral regulations, and the need to address threats and intimidation including towards journalists³⁴⁷.

The civil society organisation Election-Watch.EU conducted its second election assessment mission to the European Parliament elections³⁴⁸ in all 27 EU Member States with 77 election experts and observers and 10 like-minded citizen election observer organisations. The mission covered a variety of topics from equality of participation and representation and inclusion of underrepresented groups to transparency and accountability and from integrity of electoral conduct to resilience to risks and threats growing societal polarisation.

The final report of Election-Watch.EU³⁴⁹ included 21 recommendations. The recommendations focused on harmonisation of rules and procedures at EU level, intensifying collaborative efforts to advance the pending electoral reforms and harmonising different aspects of elections, including voter registration, conditions for candidacy and electoral campaign regulations across all Member States. The lack of uniformity in national electoral regulations and the differing timelines for key electoral processes

³⁴³ France, Italy, Netherlands, Austria, Slovenia, Finland and Sweden.

³⁴⁴ Slovenia and Sweden.

³⁴⁵ Sweden.

³⁴⁶ Spain.

³⁴⁷ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, [European Parliament Elections, 6-9 June 2024: Final Report](#), 28 November 2024.

³⁴⁸ Election-Watch.eu, Election Assessment Mission to the 2024 European Parliament Elections, 10 June 2024.

³⁴⁹ Election-Watch.EU, [Election Assessment Mission, Final Report, European Parliament Elections 6-9 June 2024](#), September 2024.

impact adversely the equality of rights and opportunities. Advance and alternative voting methods should be uniformly available, and that could enable participation of persons with disabilities. Recommendations also highlight civic and voter education to young and first-time voters and increasing participation and representation of women.

Election-Watch.EU also addressed among others inclusivity, including of persons with disabilities, highlighting the importance of the following measures: ensure physical accessibility of polling stations, provide election information in multiple accessible formats, train election staff, deploy assistive tools and technologies, and engage with Disabled Persons Organisations.

For inclusion of disadvantaged communities, increased awareness raising for electoral participation of national minorities, including the Roma, and of other underprivileged groups, Election-Watch EU highlighted that further special measures for their participation, would be needed, as well as the use of minority languages for electoral materials and voter information.

Other recommendations of Election-Watch cover topics such as limitations to election observation and judicial redress, campaign finance oversight and oversight authorities and bodies, media pluralism and freedom, implementation of online rules freedom of expression and journalistic freedom including protection from false defamation accusations. In addition, detailed election results should be consistently published, including polling station data, the number of invalid votes, and data on voter demographics such as double citizens.

ANNEX

Respondents to European Commission Survey

Questionnaire on the conduct of the 2024 European Parliament Elections - For political parties

European Political Parties

- European Conservatives and Reformists
- European Democratic Party
- European Free Alliance
- European Green Party
- European People's Party
- Party of European Socialists

National Political Parties

Country	Party
Austria	Die Grünen - Die Grüne Alternative Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs NEOS – Das Neue Österreich und Liberales Forum Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ)
Belgium	Voor U
Croatia	Pokret za modernu Hrvatsku HRVATSKA SOCIJALNO-LIBERALNA STRANKA (HSLs) PRAVEDNA HRVATSKA Social Democratic Party of Croatia
Czechia	ALIANCE NÁRODNÍCH SIL ČSSD - Česká suverenita sociální demokracie Mimozemstani Starostové a nezávislí - STAN
Estonia	Social Democrats
Finland	Vasemmistoliitto Vihreä liitto r.p. Swedish People's Party of Finland
France	Pour Une Autre Europe Europe Démocratie Espéranto Patriots.eu
Greece	DIMOKRATES ANDREAS LOVERDOS PATRIOTES - PRODRAMOS EMFIETZOGLOU KINHMA EΘNIKHΣ ANEΞAPTHΣIAΣ Friendship Equality and Peace Party (Κόμμα Ισότητας και Φιλίας) PASOK - Kinima Allagis ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΚΟ ΠΑΤΡΙΩΤΙΚΟ ΚΙΝΗΜΑ "NIKI"
Italy	Rassemblement Valdôtain SINISTRA ITALIANA (AVS - ALLEAZA VERDI SINISTRA) Partito Democratico ALTERNATIVA POPOLARE
Luxembourg	Demokratesch Partei - DP CSV - Chrëschtlech-Sozial Vollekspartei Déi gréng Déi Lénk
Latvia	Sociāldemokrātiskā partija "Saskaņa"
Netherlands	European Christian Political Movement

Poland	Platforma Obywatelska Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej
Portugal	Nós, Cidadãos!
Slovenia	Gibanje Svoboda Levica NIČ OD TEGA Nova Slovenija - krščanski demokrati Dobra država SLOVENSKA LJUDSKA STRANKA Vesna - zelena stranka
Spain	CEUS-Coalición por una Europa solidaria / EAJ-PNV Volt España
Sweden	Kristna Värdepartiet Valsamverkanspartiet Moderata Samlingspartiet (Moderaterna) Värdigt Liv Willy Tiger Liberalerna Socialdemokraterna