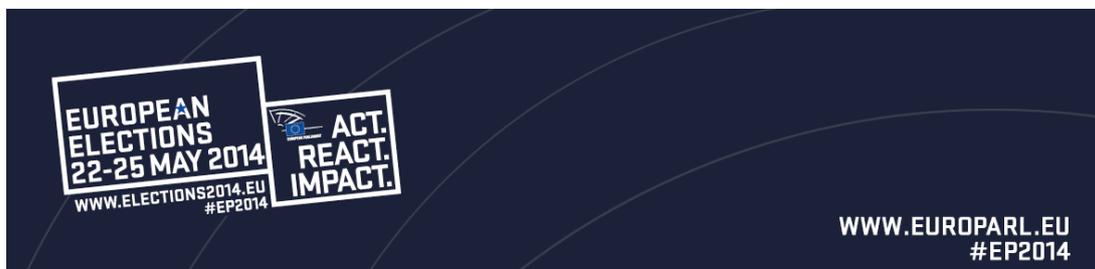




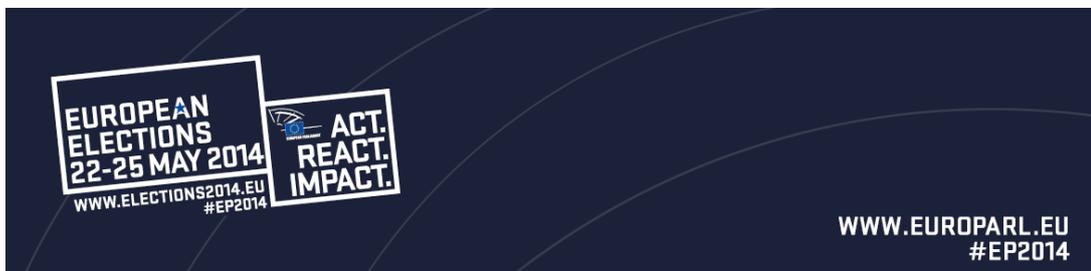
2014 European elections: this time it's different





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Introduction to the 2014 European elections

The 2014 European elections: this time it's different

The European elections of May 2014 give voters the chance to influence the future political course of the European Union when they elect the 751 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to represent their interests for the next five years.

When is election day?

The electoral period will be 22 to 25 May.

Each member state has its own electoral laws and each one decides on what day its citizens will go to the polls during the four-day election period from 22 to 25 May 2014. Most countries vote on Sunday, while the Netherlands and the UK always vote on Thursday. Ireland will vote on Friday; Latvia, Malta and Slovakia on Saturday. The Czech Republic will vote on Friday and Saturday.

The results from all 28 states will be announced on the evening of Sunday 25 May.

How many MEPs will be elected? 751 from 28 Member States

Every five years EU citizens choose who will represent them in the European Parliament. There have been 766 Members of the European Parliament since Croatia joined the EU in July 2013 but this number is being scaled down at the 2014 elections to 751 and will stay at that level in future.

These MEPs will represent over 500 million citizens in 28 member states. The number of voters is estimated around 400 million.

The seats are allocated among the various states on the basis of 'degressive proportionality' as said by the EU Treaties, meaning countries with larger populations have more seats than smaller ones but the latter have more seats than strict proportionality would imply, ranging from 96 for Germany to 6 each for Malta, Luxembourg, Cyprus and Estonia.

European Parliament

The only directly-elected EU body. Represents the EU's 500 million inhabitants.
Plays a key role in electing the president of the European Commission.
Shares power over EU budget and legislation with Council of the European Union.

751 MEPs

Following the accession of Croatia, the EP currently has 766 MEPs. In line with the Lisbon Treaty, 751 MEPs will be elected in May 2014.

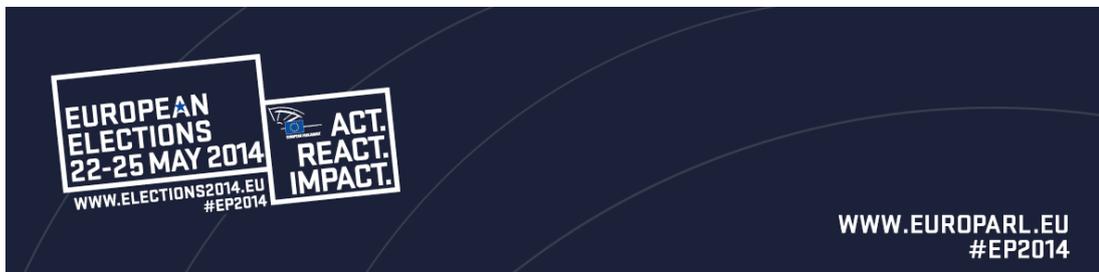
Seats per country in 2014

21	17	21	13	96	6	11	21	54	74	11	73	6	8	11	6	21	6	26	18	51	21	32	8	13	13	20	73
BELGIUM	BULGARIA	CZECH REPUBLIC	DENMARK	GERMANY	ESTONIA	IRELAND	GREECE	SPAIN	FRANCE	CROATIA	ITALY	CYPRUS	LATVIA	LITHUANIA	LUXEMBOURG	HUNGARY	MALTA	NETHERLANDS	AUSTRIA	POLAND	PORTUGAL	ROMANIA	SLOVENIA	SLOVAKIA	FINLAND	SWEDEN	UNITED KINGDOM

Why are these elections different?

As the European Union seeks to pull through the economic crisis and EU leaders reflect on what direction to take in future, these are the most important European elections to date.

They not only allow voters to pass judgment on EU leaders' efforts to tackle the debt crisis in the eurozone and to express their views on plans for closer economic and political integration; they are



also the first elections since the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 gave the European Parliament a number of important new powers.

One major new development introduced by the Treaty is that, when the EU member states propose a candidate for president of the European Commission, to succeed José Manuel Barroso in autumn 2014, they must - for the first time - take into account the European election results. The new Parliament must endorse this candidate: under the Lisbon Treaty, it *elects* the Commission president. The European elections thus give voters a clear say as to who takes over at the helm of the EU governmental system.

The new political majority that emerges from the elections will also shape European legislation over the next five years in areas from the single market to civil liberties. The Parliament - the only directly elected EU institution - is now a linchpin of the European decision-making system and has an equal say with national governments on nearly all EU laws.

Electoral law

The elections to the European Parliament are still, to a large extent, organised according to national legislations and traditions. There are common EU rules which lay down that the elections must be by direct universal suffrage as well as free and confidential. Members of the European Parliament must be elected in the member states on the basis of proportional representation. But it is up to each member state whether it uses an open or closed list system or a specific threshold (the latter cannot be higher than 5%).

There are also some EU rules for positions incompatible with being a Member of the European Parliament, such as being a member of a national government or national parliament, or an active official of the European institutions. Each state can also impose its own national incompatibilities.

Voting is compulsory in Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg.

Election date and times

The election period is determined at EU level (previously the elections were held in June; this time they have been brought forward to 22-25 May).

The exact polling date and opening hours for polling stations vary according to national electoral laws.

Official results will only be announced from 11pm Brussels time, after voting ends in the member state that closes its polls last. It used to be at 10pm Brussels time, but following a recent change in Italian law, Italy will be the latest to close: at 11pm on Sunday 25.

Voting systems: closed or open lists

Where voting is based on an open list system, voters can indicate a preference for one or more candidates on the list. This is done in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden.

When voting with a closed list system, the political parties establish the order of candidates and the voters only cast their vote for a party. This is the case in France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the UK (except Northern Ireland).



Meanwhile in Ireland and Malta, as well as in Northern Ireland, the Single Transferable Vote system is used.

Constituencies: single or multiple

Each member state may establish constituencies for elections to the European Parliament or subdivide its electoral area in a different manner.

Most member states have one constituency: the whole country

Belgium, France, Ireland and the UK have several constituencies or electoral areas.

In Germany, Italy and Poland votes are cast in separate constituencies too, but the election results are determined at national level.

Who can vote?

Minimum voting age: in most member states the voting age is 18 but in Austria it is 16.

EU citizens living in an EU state other than their country of origin are entitled to vote in European elections in their country of residence but the national electoral law may lay down specific procedures on how to do this.

Voters can usually choose to vote in their country of origin instead (for example, by post or at their embassy) but this also depends on the national electoral law. In Ireland, Malta and Slovakia it is not possible to vote from abroad. Electronic voting is possible in Estonia.

In some countries, such as France and the UK, pre-registration on an electoral roll is required. In many other countries this is done automatically.

Voting is compulsory in Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg.

Who can be a candidate?

The minimum age to be a candidate varies considerably. In many member states the minimum age to stand for election is 18. In many others the age is 21.

In Romania candidates for election must be at least 23, while in Italy and Greece the age is 25. This was also the case in Cyprus until recently but the age has now changed to 18.

EU citizens living in an EU state other than their country of origin are entitled to stand in European elections in their country of residence but the national electoral law may lay down specific procedures on how to do this.

Incompatibilities

According to EU regulations, there are several positions incompatible with being a Member of the European Parliament. An MEP cannot be a member of a national government or national parliament nor an active official of the European institutions. Some countries lay down further incompatibilities.

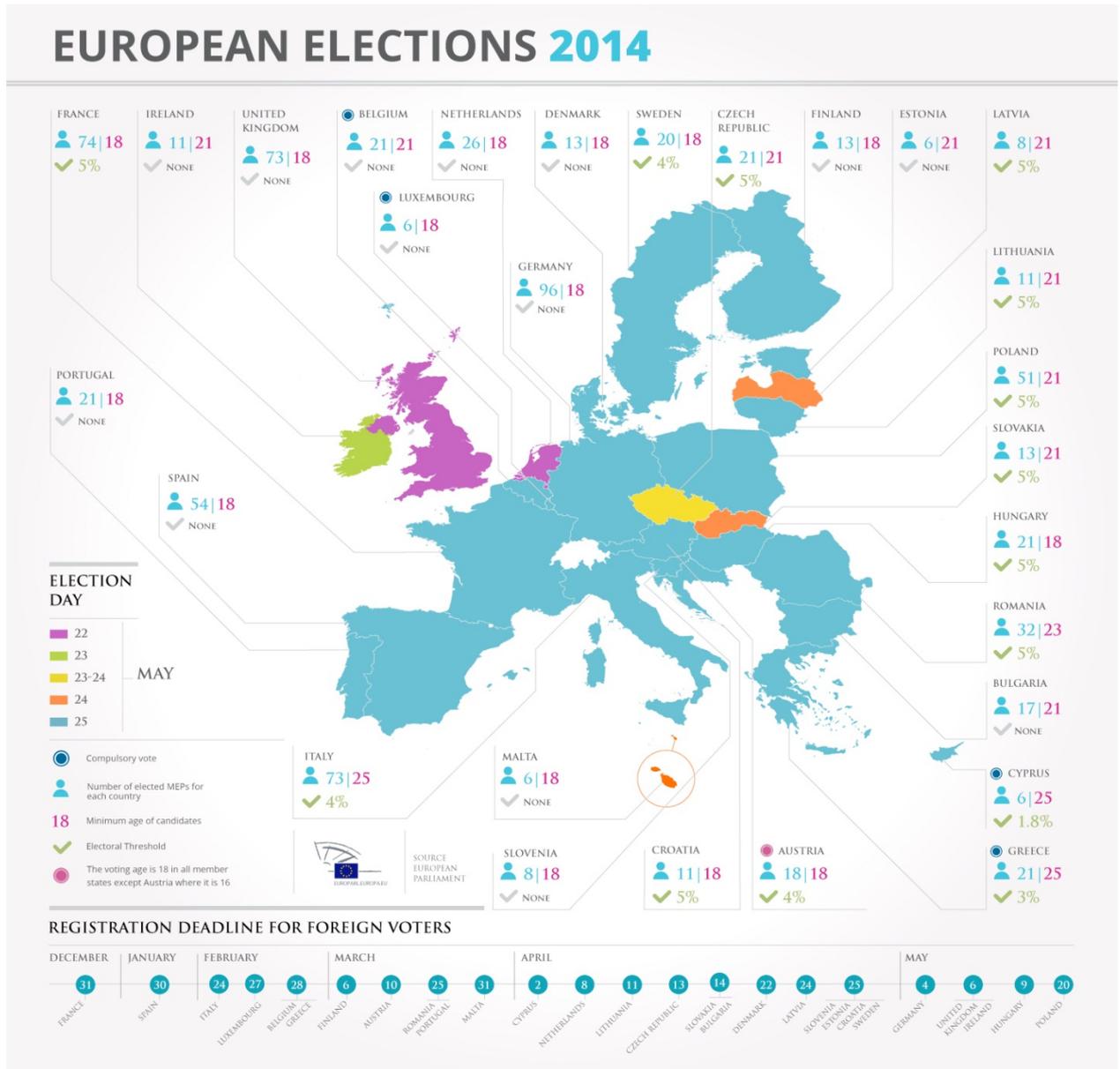
Thresholds

EU law allows MS to establish thresholds of up to 5% for the allocation of seats. Some MS have established them varying from 1.8% to 5%. In many there is no formal threshold, though in practice it can be even higher than 5% owing to the small number of MEPs compared to the population.

The Electoral Systems for the European Parliament

Country	No. MEPs (2013)	No. MEPs (2014)	No. of districts	Preferential vote?	Independent candidates possible?	Electoral formula	Formal threshold, %	Min. voting age	Min. standing age	Polling day	Closing CET (BXL time)
Austria	19	18	1	Optional-single	Yes	d'Hondt	4	16	18	25/05/2014	17:00
Belgium	22	21	3	Optional-multiple	No	d'Hondt	0	18	21	25/05/2014	14:00 (trad) 16:00 (elect)
Bulgaria	18	17	1	Optional-single	Yes	Hare	0	18	21	25/05/2014	18:00
Croatia	12	11	1	Optional-single	No	Hare	5	18	18	25/05/2014	19:00
Cyprus	6	6	1	Optional-multiple	Yes	Hare	1.8	18	21	25/05/2014	17:00
Czech Rep.	22	21	1	Optional-multiple (up to 2)	No	d'Hondt	5	18	21	23/05/2014 - 24/05/2014	Fri 22:00 Sat 14:00
Denmark	13	13	1	Optional-single	No	d'Hondt	0	18	18	25/05/2014	20:00
Estonia	6	6	1	Mandatory-single	Yes	d'Hondt	0	18	21	25/05/2014	19:00
Finland	13	13	1	Mandatory-single	Yes	d'Hondt	0	18	18	25/05/2014	19:00
France	74	74	8	No, closed list	No	d'Hondt	5 in district	18	18	25/05/2014	18:00 or 20:00
Germany	99	96	16 (counted together)	No, closed list	No	St. Laguë	0	18	18	25/05/2014	18:00
Greece	22	21	1	Optional-multiple (up to 4)	No	Droop	3	18	25	25/05/2014	19:00
Hungary	22	21	1	No, closed list	No	d'Hondt	5	18	18	25/05/2014	19:00
Ireland	12	11	3	Mandatory-multiple (STV)	Yes	STV-Droop	0	18	21	23/05/2014	23:30
Italy	73	73	5 (counted together)	Optional-single or multiple (up to 3), depending on district	No	Hare	4	18	25	25/05/2014	23:00
Latvia	9	8	1	Optional-multiple	No	St. Laguë	5	18	21	24/05/2014	19:00
Lithuania	12	11	1	Optional-multiple (up to 5). Party can ask for closed list	No	Hagenbach-Bischoff	5	18	21	25/05/2014	19:00
Luxembourg	6	6	1	Optional-multiple (up to 6). panachage allowed	Yes	Hagenbach-Bischoff	0	18	18	25/05/2014	14:00
Malta	6	6	1	Mandatory-multiple (STV)	Yes	STV-Droop	0	18	18	24/05/2014	22:00
Netherlands	26	26	1	Optional-single	Yes	Hare	0	18	18	22/05/2014	21:00
Poland	51	51	13 (counted together)	Mandatory-single	No	d'Hondt	5	18	21	25/05/2014	21:00
Portugal	22	21	1	No, closed list		d'Hondt	0	18	18	25/05/2014	20:00 Acores 21:00
Romania	33	32	1	No, closed list	Yes	d'Hondt	5	18	23	25/05/2014	20:00
Slovakia	13	13	1	Optional-single	No	Droop	5	18	21	24/05/2014	22:00
Slovenia	8	8	1	Optional-single	No	d'Hondt	0	18	18	25/05/2014	19:00
Spain	54	54	1	No, closed list	No	d'Hondt	0	18	18	25/05/2014	20:00
Sweden	20	20	1	Optional-single	No	Modified St. Laguë	4	18	18	25/05/2014	21:00
UK	73	73	12	No, closed list (N. Ireland: mandatory-STV)	Yes	d'Hondt (N. Ireland: Droop)	0	18	18	22/05/2014	23:00

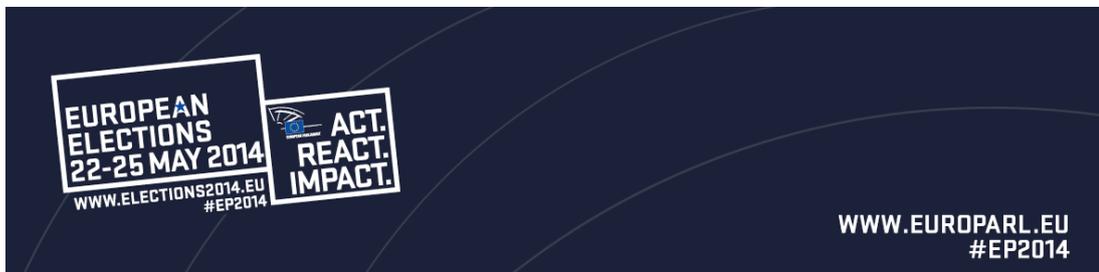
Electoral systems - overview



What happens after the elections?

- 22-25 May: election days
- June: verification of credentials; formation of political groups
- 1-3 July: EP constitutive session - MEPs officially take up their seats in Parliament.
- 7-10 July: official political group meetings
- 14-17 July: plenary session of Parliament - election of Commission President
- September: hearings of Commissioners-designate
- October (tbc): Parliament votes on the full Commission

1. Gathering the results, verification of credentials



Once the official results are in, the national authorities inform the European Parliament of the names of the members elected. After verification of their credentials by Parliament's administration, the 751 newly-elected MEPs can take up their seats at the opening of the first plenary session, on 1 July 2014.

2. Formation of political groups (June)

MEPs from different EU countries will join together to form groups based on 'political affinities', a process that should be completed by the end of June. To gain official status, a political group must consist of at least 25 MEPs coming from at least one-quarter of the Member States (i.e. at least 7 different states).

3. Constitutive session (Strasbourg, 1-3 July)

The first plenary session following the elections is devoted to the formal constitution of the incoming Parliament, at which the new MEPs elect their President, 14 Vice-Presidents and six Quaestors. The opening of the session will be chaired by the outgoing President, if he/she is re-elected as an MEP, or otherwise by one of the outgoing Vice-Presidents.

4. Plenary session (Strasbourg, 14-17 July): election of new Commission President

Under the Lisbon Treaty, Parliament elects the Commission President. The European Council, composed of the EU's heads of state and government, must take into account the results of the European Parliament elections when making its proposal for President. This will be made easier for the governments, as the new political groups' relative strengths should be known by mid-June.

After the European Council has made its proposal for President, a period of negotiation with Parliament on the candidate's political priorities and programme may take place.

The second plenary session of July will offer the European Parliament the first opportunity to vote on a candidate. The successful nominee will need the support of a majority of Members, i.e. over half of the 751 MEPs to be elected (376).

The vote is taken by secret ballot. Should the candidate be rejected, the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, has one month to propose a new candidate (Article 17(7) of Lisbon Treaty; Rule 105 of EP Rules of Procedure).

Once the Commission President has been elected, the Council, in agreement with the President-elect, will draw up a list of candidates for the remaining posts of Commissioner.

5. September/October 2014 (tbc) - Brussels/Strasbourg: hearings of Commissioners-designate and vote

The candidates - or Commissioners-designate - appear before the parliamentary committee(s) relevant to their prospective fields of responsibility. The hearings are held in public. Afterwards, each committee then meets in camera to draft its evaluation of the candidate's expertise and performance, which is sent to the President of the Parliament. In the past, these hearings have sometimes led to candidates withdrawing or having their portfolio changed.

After this vetting process, the Commission President presents the full College of Commissioners and its programme at a session of Parliament. The Commission President, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the other Commissioners need to be approved by a vote of



consent by Parliament. If Parliament approves the President and Commissioners, they can be appointed by the Council, acting by qualified majority.

Should there later be a substantial shuffle within the Commission or vacancies arise, the Commissioners concerned or the candidates need to (re-)appear before the relevant committees.

The new Commission is due to take office in November 2014.

The work of an MEP

Once the votes have been counted and MEPs are elected, what will their daily routine be and what influence can they have on politics in Brussels and Strasbourg?

To advance their voters' interests, the majority of MEPs will join a 'political group' to make common cause with MEPs from other EU states with a similar political outlook.

MEPs will also sit on a parliamentary committee, devoting their time and energy to scrutinising legislation. There are 20 standing committees in Parliament, each specialising in its own policy area. These bodies are the legislative powerhouses of the EP, where key negotiations are handled, the fiercest political arguments played out and the necessary deals often cut, although final decisions are taken by the full Parliament of 751 Members.

In addition, MEPs can be members of interparliamentary delegations, whose role is to nurture contacts with the parliaments of non-EU countries.

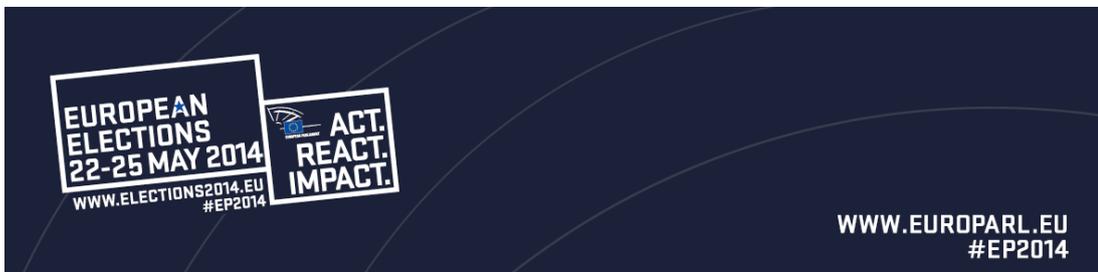
Office holders of the Parliament

The **President of Parliament**, elected from among the 751 Members for a two and a half year stint, represents it to the outside world, chairs plenary sessions and oversees all of Parliament's work. Fourteen **Vice-Presidents** share this workload.

A **committee or delegation chair** guides the proceedings of that body. A **coordinator** is the leading representative of his or her political group in a committee, while a **rapporteur** is an MEP chosen to pilot a specific resolution or piece of legislation through Parliament.

Parliament's governing bodies

Responsibility for Parliament's internal management lies with different bodies: political decisions are taken by the **Conference of Presidents**, made up of Parliament's President and the political group leaders; financial, organisational and administrative matters are dealt with by the **Bureau**, composed of the President and the Vice-Presidents; administrative and financial concerns of Members are the responsibility of the **College of Quaestors** (a body of five MEPs elected by the House).



Political groups: the driving force of the EP

Debate, controversy and conflict are the lifeblood of any democratically elected body. The European Parliament - made up of politicians with sometimes sharply differing views - is no exception.

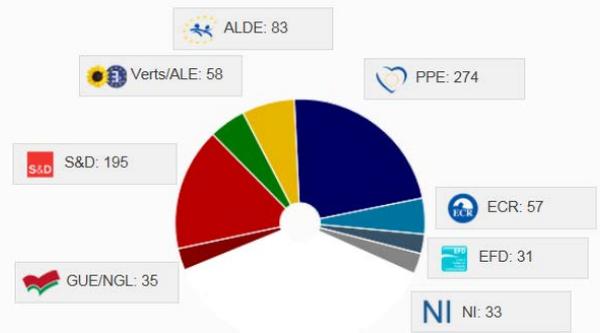
To harness this wide range of opinion and nationalities into a workable system, MEPs have always operated through transnational 'political groups', each made up of members from different countries but with similar political convictions. Cooperating closely with Members from other countries who broadly share their political views is the most effective way for MEPs to achieve their goals at European level.

There are currently seven groups in the EP, ranging across the political spectrum and representing over 160 national parties.

The groups are of central importance in the work of Parliament. They are the key players in building voting majorities on legislation, the budget and other issues. They set the parliamentary agenda and play the decisive role in choosing Parliament's President and other leading office-holders.

Under Parliament's rules, members of a group must share a 'political affinity' and must include a minimum of 25 Members from at least one quarter of member states (i.e. currently at least seven). Non-aligned MEPs - those who do not wish or are unable to join a group - sit separately.

Seats



Seats by political group

Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	274
Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	195
Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	83
Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	58
European Conservatives and Reformists Group	57
Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left	35
Europe of freedom and democracy Group	31
NI Non-attached Members	33
Total	766

As at 23.04.2014

A culture of compromise ... and a balance of power

Never in Parliament's history has a single group held an overall majority of Members. So, in order to pass EU legislation and approve the budget, the groups must forge a workable majority through negotiation and compromise. Give-and-take among the groups is thus essential, although the larger the group, the more clout it has.

Group discipline in the EP is less strict than in some national parliaments: members of the same group sometimes vote on different (often national or regional) lines. However, as in national parliaments, the commonest political divides are left-right in nature. It is on European election day that voters will decide the balance of power between the groups.

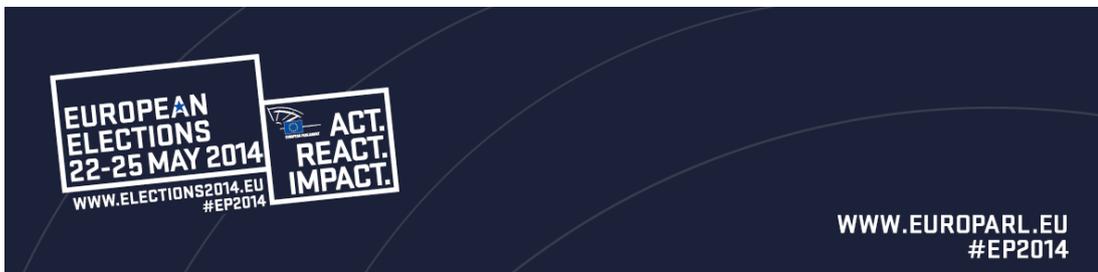
Most of the parties in the current groups in the EP are affiliated to a pan-European political party and these *Europarties* are expected to put forward candidates for the post of Commission President.

MEPs by Member State and political group

7th parliamentary term

									TOTAL
	5	5	5	4	1		1	1	22
	7	4	5				1	1	18
	2	7			9	4			22
	1	5	3	1	1	1	1		13
	42	23	12	14		8			99
	1	1	3	1					6
	4	2	4			1		1	12
	7	8	1	1		3	2		22
	25	23	2	2		1		1	54
	30	13	6	16		5	1	3	74
	5	5			1	1			12
	34	23	4		2		8	2	73
	2	2				2			6
	4	1	1	1	1	1			9
	4	3	2		1		2		12
	3	1	1	1					6
	14	4			1			3	22
	2	4							6
	5	3	6	3	1	2	1	5	26
	6	5		2				6	19
	28	7			12		4		51
	10	7		1		4			22
	14	11	5					3	33
	4	2	2						8
	6	5	1				1		13
	4	2	4	2			1		13
	5	6	4	4		1			20
		13	12	5	27	1	8	7	73
TOTAL									TOTAL
	274	195	83	58	57	35	31	33	766

As at 23.04.2014



Parliamentary committees: doing the groundwork

MEPs also sit on parliamentary committees, where the bulk of their work is done. Parliament's final decisions, for example on legislation, are the outcome of a vote in Plenary but before that stage is reached a great deal of in-depth preparatory work is carried out by specialised committees, each drafting and adopting reports in its own policy area.

It is mainly in these committees that Members defend their political positions, by tabling amendments and negotiating texts to be tabled to the Plenary. This process varies in length, depending on the complexity of the report, but is an essential part of the overall legislative procedure and the most efficient way of arriving at a majority vote in Plenary.

The number of Members per committee, where they represent their political groups, is decided by the Plenary and will take place in the constitutive plenary session in July. Members will choose the committees on which they wish to sit according to their interests and expertise, the needs of their political group and the availability of seats in the committee.

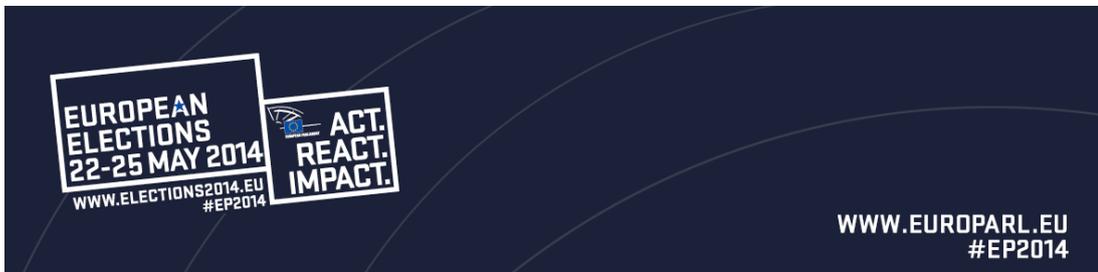
MEPs from each political group within a committee elect coordinators to represent the interests of their group in that committee, for example when deciding on the distribution of reports.

How is legislation processed in the parliamentary committees once the European Commission has submitted a draft law?

- The President of the European Parliament refers the European Commission's draft law to a committee, which is then responsible for its passage through Parliament: for example, the Railway Package will be allocated to the Transport and Tourism Committee.
- The coordinators in that committee decide which political group will be responsible for drafting the parliamentary report. The larger the political group in the committee, the more chance it has of getting major reports.
- The political group responsible then decides which of its Members will be the "rapporteur" of the Parliament for this report, usually a Member with expertise in the subject matter;
- Each of the other political groups appoints a "shadow rapporteur" to work with the rapporteur and represent the interests of their group;
- The rapporteur holds extensive consultations with the shadow rapporteurs and other MEPs, the European Commission, Member States and interest groups, before submitting the "draft report" to the whole committee for consideration and debate;
- Members of the committee are then able to propose amendments to the draft report;
- The rapporteur then tries to build a majority in the committee. To win support between the different political groups, and to simplify the sometimes long lists of amendments from MEPs, the rapporteur can propose "compromise amendments";
- After this procedure, the amendments, including the compromise amendments, are submitted to a vote in committee;
- The result of this vote makes up the report submitted to Plenary for adoption;
- Political groups can table additional amendments to be put to the vote in Plenary.

In the 2009-2014 parliamentary term, there were 22 committees:

Foreign Affairs / Human Rights / Security and Defence / Development / International Trade / Budgets / Budgetary Control / Economic and Monetary Affairs / Employment and Social Affairs / Environment, Public Health and Food Safety / Industry, Research and Energy / Internal Market and Consumer Protection / Transport and Tourism / Regional Development / Agriculture and Rural Development / Fisheries / Culture and Education / Legal Affairs / Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs / Constitutional Affairs / Women's Rights and Gender Equality / Petitions



What is the Parliament's role? What powers does it have?

The outcome of the 2014 elections to the European Parliament will for the first time in the EU's history determine who leads the European Commission, the EU's executive body. Candidates for the remaining Commission portfolios will also have to pass a tough parliamentary vetting process before they can take office.

Once the composition of the Commission is settled, MEPs will turn to their main parliamentary duties: the framing of laws affecting the everyday lives of Europe's citizens plus the setting of the annual EU budget, powers which it shares with the Council of Ministers (the 28 EU national governments) in something like a bi-cameral system. The Parliament also has powers of scrutiny or oversight over the other EU institutions: it monitors how they work and how they spend the taxpayer's money. Last but not least, Parliament acts as a sounding board for the public's concerns and can thrust fresh issues onto the European political agenda.

Here is an overview of Parliament's responsibilities and powers.

1. Procedure for appointment of the European Commission

This will be the first time the EU member states are required to consult the European Parliament and take account of the European election results before choosing a nominee for President of the Commission¹. Furthermore, the new Treaty provides that the President shall be "elected" by the European Parliament, whereas the previous treaty² stated that Parliament would approve (in practice simply endorse) the European Council's proposal. The legal basis has therefore changed.

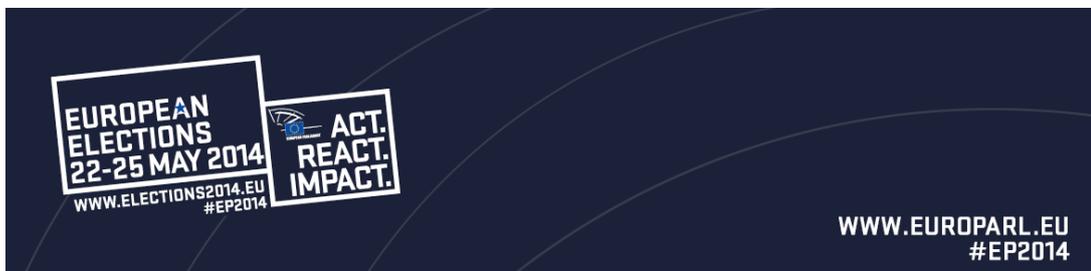
The new procedure will be as follows:

- taking into account the European elections, the heads of state or government of the member states put forward a candidate for Commission President;
- the candidate presents his/her political guidelines (in effect a manifesto) to the Parliament;
- the candidate must be approved by an absolute majority of MEPs (376 out of 751); if approved, he/she is deemed 'elected' by the Parliament; if he/she is not approved, the member states must put forward a new candidate;
- the President-elect and EU national governments together agree a list of candidates for the other Commission portfolios (one from each country);
- the candidates undergo confirmation hearings at Parliament (these hearings are not formalities: Parliament has in the past rejected nominees it considered unsuitable);
- the President and the other Commissioners, as a body, are then subject to a single vote of approval by Parliament, requiring a simple majority (a majority of votes cast);
- if approved by Parliament, the new Commission is formally appointed by the EU heads of state/government.

¹ Article 17(7) of the Treaty on European Union: *Taking into account the elections to the European Parliament and after having held the appropriate consultations, the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall propose to the European Parliament a candidate for President of the Commission. This candidate shall be elected by the European Parliament by a majority of its component members. If he does not obtain the required majority, the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall within one month propose a new candidate who shall be elected by the European Parliament following the same procedure.*

² *Nice Treaty, Article 214: The Council, meeting in the composition of Heads of State or Government and acting by a qualified majority, shall nominate the person it intends to appoint as President of the Commission; the nomination shall be approved by the European Parliament. The Council, acting by a qualified majority and by common accord with the nominee for President, shall adopt the list of the other persons whom it intends to appoint as Members of the Commission, drawn up in accordance with the proposals made by each Member State. The President and the other Members of the Commission thus nominated shall be subject as a body to a vote of approval by the European Parliament. After approval by the European Parliament, the President and the other Members of the Commission shall be appointed by the Council, acting by a qualified majority.*

<p>THE ELECTION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AT A GLANCE</p> <p>THIS TIME IT'S DIFFERENT</p> <p>SOURCES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Parliament • Consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union, Art. 177 • Declaration 1) annexed to the Treaty of Lisbon  <p>WWW.EUROPARL.EU</p>	<p>#1</p> <p>The European political parties select their candidates for the presidency of the European Commission</p> <p>Electoral campaign</p>  <p>FEBRUARY - MARCH</p>	<p>#2</p> <p>Europeans elect the new European Parliament</p>  <p>22-25 MAY 2014</p>	<p>#3</p> <p>The president of the European Council consults with the European Parliament on a possible candidate for the presidency of the Commission, taking into account the result of the European elections</p> <p>Following the consultations, the president of the European Council proposes a candidate to the European Council</p> <p>The European Council decides on its proposal for a candidate (by qualified majority)</p>  <p>JUNE</p>	<p>#4</p> <p>Election of the Commission President by the European Parliament by a majority of its component members (at least 376)</p>  <p>JULY</p>	<p>#5</p> <p>The member states propose the commissioners-designate in close cooperation with the new president of the Commission</p> <p>Hearings of the commissioners-designate by the EP committees</p>  <p>AUGUST-SEPTEMBER</p>	<p>#6</p> <p>Vote by the European Parliament on the new Commission (by a majority of the vote cast)</p>  <p>OCTOBER-NOVEMBER</p>	<p>#7</p> <p>Inauguration of the new European Commission in front of the EP</p> 
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2. Legislative powers

MEPs are the EU's lawmakers: without their input and approval, most EU laws cannot come into being. With the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, Parliament gained real power over the final important policy areas - notably agriculture, fisheries, immigration and civil liberties - in which it had previously only had a consultative role.

The main types of legislative power are as follows.

Ordinary legislative procedure: Also known as 'co-decision', this is the main EU legislative procedure, used to draft and adopt nearly all European laws (in around 70 to 80 policy areas). It gives Parliament the power to accept, reject or amend draft legislation on the single market, environment, consumer protection, civil liberties, agriculture, transport, research and other areas. During this term, for example, MEPs have used their legislative muscle to insist on stronger data protection rules, caps on bankers' bonuses and greater democratic scrutiny of the EU's fledgling economic governance system.

Consultation: On some types of legislation (e.g. tax, competition, new eurozone members) Parliament gives only an advisory opinion. However, the number of policy areas governed by this procedure has shrunk considerably, with most legislation now coming under co-decision.

Consent: If the EU is planning to take in new member states or conclude agreements with non-EU countries, Parliament's seal of approval is needed, although the EP cannot amend individual details of such accords. In the current term, MEPs have rejected the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) and refused to allow bank data transfers to the USA via the SWIFT network.

Right of initiative: Parliament can ask the Commission to propose new legislation and often does so after examining the Commission's annual work programme.

3. Budgetary powers

European policies such as agriculture, regional development, energy, transport, the environment, development aid and scientific research all receive EU funding. For this purpose, the European Union's long-term spending budget has to be approved by national governments and MEPs. Then, each year, the two sides decide together how the annual budget will be spent.

Parliament is also responsible for checking subsequently if the taxpayer's money has been used as intended and for signing off the accounts if it is satisfied. On numerous occasions it has demanded more stringent controls; in 1999 it forced the entire Commission out of office for budgetary mismanagement.

4. Democratic control and supervisory powers

A basic function of any parliament is the scrutiny or oversight of other branches of power, to ensure democratic accountability. The European Parliament performs this task in a number of ways.

Nomination powers

In addition to its key role in the election of the Commission, Parliament holds hearings of the President and members of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank and of nominees for the Court of Auditors.



Parliamentary scrutiny of the ECB

To ensure the accountability of European monetary policy, the President of the European Central Bank reports to the EP Economics Committee every three months and also presents the bank's annual report to Parliament.

In its new capacity as the EU bank supervisor, the ECB will be subject to strong parliamentary oversight by MEPs, who will also be empowered to approve the top echelons of the supervisory body.

Parliamentary inquiries

Parliament has the power to set up a temporary committee, either to investigate an issue of public interest (a recent case was the committee on organised crime, corruption and money-laundering) or to look into alleged breaches or maladministration of Community law.

Parliamentary questions

To hold the other EU institutions to account, MEPs can ask oral and written questions. By this means the Commission and Council are regularly forced to answer queries, supply detailed information or take part in a debate in Parliament on specific policy issues.

5. Foreign policy and human rights

The High Representative for the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP) is accountable to Parliament, which has a right to be informed and consulted about the policy and can also use its budgetary powers to shape its scale and scope.

Parliament's consent is needed for any enlargement of the EU and for the conclusion of trade and other international agreements with non-EU states. MEPs also devote considerable energy to human rights issues and the promotion of democratic values around the world, the award of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought being the annual highlight of Parliament's work in this area.

6. Petitions

The EP takes the lead in promoting transparency, openness and public access in the sometimes labyrinthine Brussels world. Every European citizen has the right to petition MEPs about environmental problems, disputes with customs authorities, transfers of pension rights and other matters, provided they fall within the European Union's remit. The public can also turn to the European Ombudsman - an independent figure appointed by Parliament - who has the power to investigate accusations of maladministration or abuse of power by an EU institution.



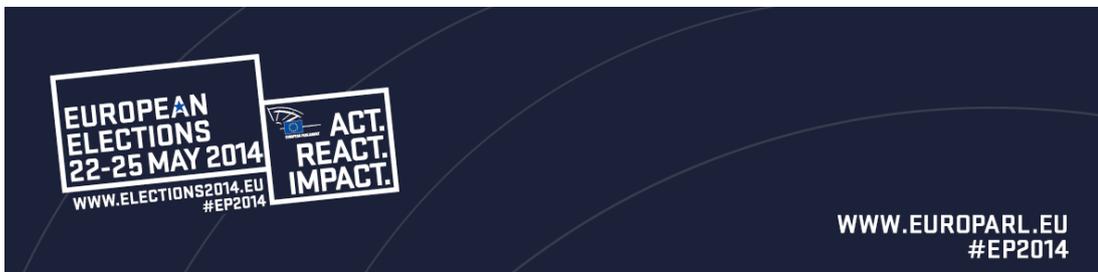
Examples of Parliament's power: legislation adopted in 2009-2014

Economy: Financial stability

- Banking union: a European approach to preventing crisis and dealing with banks in trouble
 - New role for the ECB to supervise banks. Banks of significant size or posing risks to the system or receiving public aid will be supervised directly by the ECB, which will also be responsible for signalling which banks are in bad shape and need intervention.
 - New resolution fund financed by banks, to avoid using taxpayers' money to prop up failing banks, with common criteria for deciding who pays first. The fund will be set up over 8 years.
 - Deposits of up to €100,000 in a single bank will be guaranteed.
- More powers to the Commission to oversee fiscal policies of Member States (2 and 6 pack).
- Revised binding criteria for reduction of deficit and debt of Member States (debt reduction of 5% per year when debt is above 60% of PNB), otherwise face semi-automatic sanctions (2 and 6 pack).
- Preventive approach to macroeconomic imbalances (to look also at imbalances in good times, for example housing bubbles) (2 and 6 pack).
- Stricter capital requirements for banks, to improve solvency and avoid insolvencies.
- Limits to bankers' bonuses, to end incentives for excessive risk taking: bonus not to exceed fixed pay. Bonus not to be paid to directors of bailed out banks and upfront cash bonuses limited to 30% of total.
- Creation of four new supervisory bodies to detect risks at an early stage in the financial sector.
- Strengthening of legislation on financial services:
 - EU passport for hedge fund managers, simplifying marketing procedures while introducing strict authorisation and supervision criteria.
 - Short selling restrictions; ban of most cases of naked CDS.
 - Derivatives: rules on reporting and record of positions to limit market risks.
- First time EU legislation on mortgages: banks to inform customers of risks and assess their real possibilities of paying back before giving them a loan.
- Access to banking services and payment cards for all EU residents, including those without fixed address. Easier terms to switch accounts.
- Credit rating agencies: sovereign debt ratings to be issued at pre-defined dates (max 3 times per year); limits to buying shares of companies they rate, to avoid conflict of interest.
- Combating late payments: 30 day standard deadline for payment of bills; public sector can extend it to 60 days in justified cases; penalties (+8% over interest rate) plus at least €40 compensation.

Employment and social affairs

- Asylum: new policy to be in place by mid- 2015 covering basic rights for asylum seekers including access to services such as health and education and access to job market (not later than 9 months after filing an application, instead of current 12 months). New criteria for detention of asylum seekers, limiting discretion of Member States. Minors should be detained only as last resort and for the minimum time possible.
- Seasonal workers from third countries will have the same rights as nationals regarding minimum working age, pay, working hours, holidays, health and safety requirements, etc. Maximum stay periods of 5 to 9 months within 12 months. Concerns mainly workers in agriculture and construction.



- Clearer rights for posted workers, those that are sent to work abroad by their company for a temporary period.
- Recognition of diplomas for professional qualifications: a new professional card and one-stop shop to make it easier to work abroad. The recognition of diplomas concerns about 800 regulated professions in the EU (notably doctors, architects, nurses).
- Someone that moves to another country will be able to transfer acquired supplementary pensions rights, those financed partly by the company and not by the State, under some criteria. The minimum period of active membership of a pension scheme requested to allow the transfer must not exceed 3 years.

Justice and civil liberties

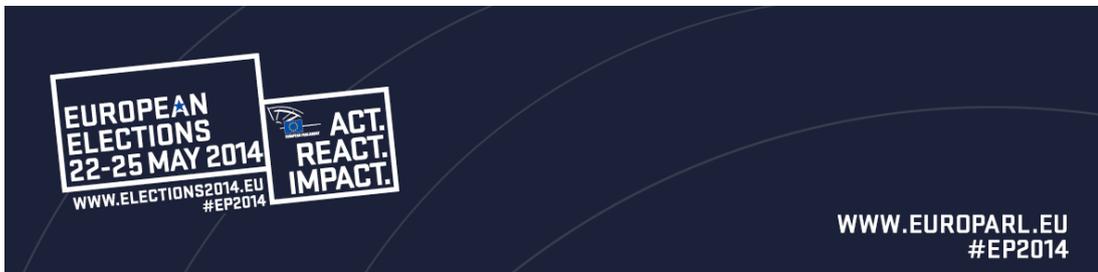
- Human traffickers to face harsher penalties; to receive assistance in all Member States.
- Child sex abuse legislation revised to include web offences, with sites to be removed at source or deleted; child sex tourism becomes a crime, and offenders abroad will be prosecuted.
- Privacy safeguards included in a number of international agreements (Swift, PNR).

Protecting the consumer

- Online buyers will have 14 days to change their minds; goods to be delivered within 30 days; trader responsible for damage or loss during delivery.
- Food labelling to indicate content of fat, sugar, salt, as a way to fight obesity and heart problems.
- Food labels to inform about allergenic substances.
- Textile labels to indicate if they contain real fur, leather or any animal-derived products.
- Internet users must be asked prior authorisation for cookies.
- Telecom operators to facilitate transfer of mobile number to other operators (within one day).
- Limits to charges for roaming: data services (20 cents per megabyte from 1 July 2014); roaming calls with mobile phones at 19 cents from 1 July 2014; text message charges to be capped at 6 cents per message from July 2014 (others caps already apply).
- Common battery charger for all mobile phones

Health

- Tobacco: health warnings to cover 65% of package (current 30/40%); ban (with transition periods) on flavours; e-cigarettes to be regulated (either as tobacco or medicines).
- Common safety rules for organs used for transplants.
- Pharmacovigilance: websites easily accessible with information on side effects of medicines; black symbol on packages of medicines under monitoring for possible side effects.
- Fighting fake medicines: new authorisation procedure for internet pharmacies; security features in medicines to make counterfeiting more difficult; common logo for authorised pharmacies, also in internet.
- Access to healthcare in other Member States and reimbursement according to rules of country of origin; for some treatments, prior authorisation of country of residence may be requested but refusal needs to be justified.



- Medical prescriptions to be more easily recognised in other EU countries.
- Industrial emissions: limits for health damaging pollutants (nitrogen oxides, sulphur, dust such as PM 10 and PM 2.5); limits to become stricter from 2016 but with flexibility for power plants of some Member States.

Transport and travel

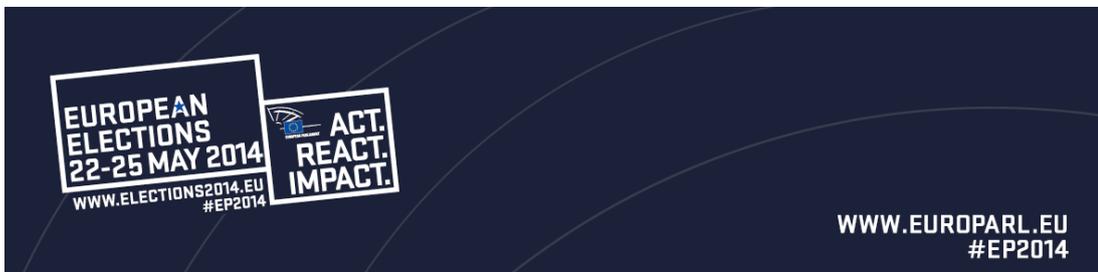
- Boat passengers to be compensated in case of cancellation. Operators will have to pay hotel expenses of up to €80 per night if there are delays, and provide snacks and meals.
- Bus passengers to get ticket reimbursed plus compensation in case of cancellation; in delays of more than 90 minutes, passengers to get snacks.
- Assistance to disabled passengers on ports; rules for wheelchair access to buses and boats.
- Rules to make motorbikes safer and greener include anti-blocking brakes (ABS) to be fitted on all bigger motorbikes and stringent emission standards for all types of motorbikes - including quads.
- Drivers to face fines for offences committed in other MS under same conditions as residents (MS to provide details of driver to authorities of country where offence takes place).
- Airlines to provide lists of those on board within 2 hours of accident.

Environment, energy

- Gas supply: guarantee of support to countries that face cuts from external supplier, with safeguard clause for EU intervention in cases of special difficulties.
- Energy efficiency rules in different areas: Member States to set up national targets with binding targets for saving energy in specific areas (e.g. renovation of public buildings, smart metering systems, audits); specific rules for energy efficiency of new buildings (from 2020); energy label to apply to vending machines and construction products.
- Eurovignette: Member States to be able to tax trucks for the environmental damage they cause (noise, pollution).
- Bans on marketing of illegally harvested timber products.
- CO2 emissions of new cars and vans to be reduced. For cars, from current 130 gr/km at present to 95g/km by 2020 (for 95% of average fleet of manufacturers).
- Limits to content of phosphorous in washing powders and dishwasher detergents, to protect fish.
- Member States to face higher targets for collecting and recycling electric waste (WEEE). Producers to contribute to finance part of the effort.
- ETS: green light to intervention on CO2 emission trading system to avoid prices falling down further.
- New obligations for offshore oil and gas operators, which will be fully liable for environmental damage.

Single market, industry

- EU patent: inventors will be able to get a unitary patent that will be valid in all Member States except Italy and Spain.
- Telecom package: besides roaming, regulation also improved management of radio spectrum, increased competition among telecom firms and reinforced rights of internet users.



- Public procurement: new objective criteria for granting public contracts in the EU, including environmental, social or innovation criteria, not just the lowest price; no privatisation of public services is required; water excluded.
- Research: the new Horizon 2020 programme will promote research on emerging technologies and those that have growth potential; simplified procedures for access and specific attention to SMEs.

Financial framework: budget and actions financed by EU money

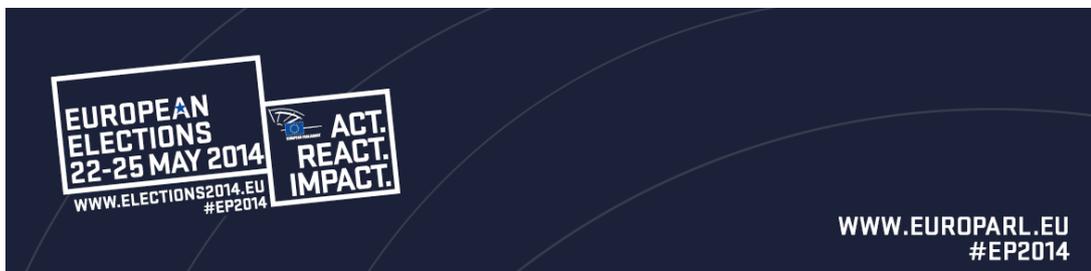
- EP adopted a ceiling of €960 billion in financial commitments for 7 years (2014-20) , about 1% of EU GNI, to finance agriculture, cohesion, education, research and international actions among others.
- Agriculture to receive about 38% of funds, with new environmental criteria to be met by farmers in order to receive CAP funding.
- 34% of funds to be dedicated to cohesion and regional actions, with emphasis on projects with growth and jobs potential. An additional 3% for trans-European networks that connect different areas of Europe.
- Studying abroad: €14.7bn for seven years to help youngsters (13 to 30 years old) to study abroad. One third of budget for the traditional university programme (Erasmus). About 5 million people to benefit, of which 2 million will be university students.
- Research activities to receive 7.2% of EU funds in the period 2014-20.

Agriculture and fisheries

- New criteria to receive financial support: fund recipients will have to comply with greening criteria; funds to go only to active farmers and payments for large farms to be gradually reduced.
- Sugar quotas to expire in September 2017; existing vine planting system to stay until 2030.
- Update of legislation on geographical indication of origin and place of farming.
- Reform of fisheries policy to limit overfishing and ban discards of fish at sea. Fishermen have to respect the "maximum sustainable yield" per particular fish stock.

Foreign affairs and international agreements

- Swift agreement concerning bank data transfers to the US in the context of antiterrorism measures: following EP rejection of first proposal, the new one included safeguards on data protection.
- PNR agreement: EP approved it once data protection elements on access to the data and its use were included.
- ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting agreement) rejected by EP. MEPs considered it was open to misinterpretation and could jeopardise citizens' rights.
- Establishment of a European diplomatic service: EP gave the green light to a new European External Action Service under the responsibility of Catherine Ashton. The budget of the EEAS requires a discharge from the EP.
- New fisheries agreement with Morocco.



Legislation on the agenda of the next European Parliament

What issues will the European Parliament deal with next term? It will depend largely on what laws the new Commission proposes and what the new Parliament pushes for, but some issues can already be indicated based on the current rolling work programme.

2030 energy and climate targets: A proposal aiming to reduce greenhouse emissions by 40% below 1990 levels and setting an EU-wide binding target for renewable energies of at least 27% by 2030.

Data protection and privacy: New rules to improve privacy, adapting existing patchy rules to the new internet realities, allowing citizens better control of their own data. Issues such as erasing personal data, profiling, transfer of data to third countries and penalties for privacy breaches were amended by the European Parliament at first reading. Use of data by police authorities is also on the agenda.

Data retention: Following a ruling by the Court of Justice, existing anti-terrorism legislation requiring telecom operators to keep a record of some user data will have to be revised.

EU passenger name records (PNR): This proposal would oblige air carriers to provide Member States' authorities with passenger data. The aim is to fight serious crime and terrorism, as was the case with the PNR agreement with the US.

EU-US Trade and Investment agreement: Currently under negotiation, this agreement will be put to a binding vote of the European Parliament next term. MEPs have expressed concern about data protection, cultural diversity and other issues.

Telecoms: To complete the internal market in the industry, the proposals aim to put an end to roaming charges in the internal market and to regulate net neutrality and internet access.

Quality of air: New targets for maximum levels of Member States' emissions of certain pollutants, such as small unhealthy particles, and in particular setting caps for combustion plants.

ETS revision: To improve the working of the CO2 trading system, a proposal to establish a stability reserve at the beginning of the next ETS trading period in 2021 to make the market more stable.

Fees for paying with cards: Proposal establishing caps on fees when paying by debit and credit card for domestic and cross-border purchases.

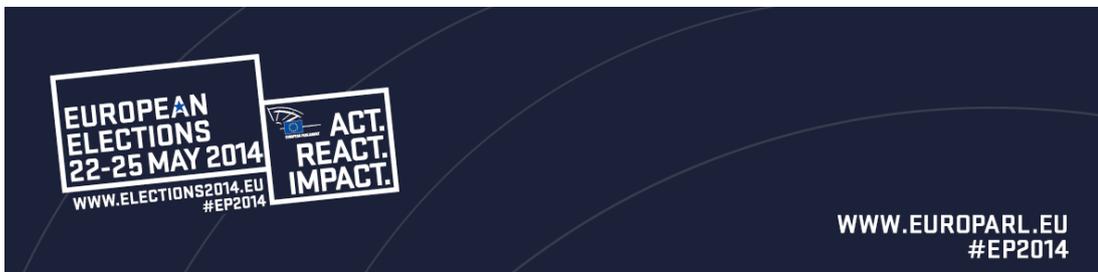
Product safety: The proposed legislation covers traceability of components as well as EU-wide coordination of product controls and enforcement of safety rules. At first reading, Parliament called for the country of origin to be indicated.

Women in boardrooms: A target of 40% women among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges, to be achieved by 2020.

Maternity leave and parental leave: Parliament voted this term to extend minimum paid maternity leave in the EU from 14 to 20 weeks, and for at least two weeks paternity leave. No agreement with Council on this, the issue will be up to the new Parliament.

Railways: To improve the performance of the railway sector, the Commission proposed to open up domestic passenger railway services to new entrants from December 2019.

Single European Sky: Proposals to improve the single sky operations and air navigation services, making air traffic control less fragmented and improving coordination of operations.



Air passenger rights: MEPs called at first reading for passengers to have better rights to assistance and compensation when flights are delayed or cancelled.

Travel package: An adaptation of legislation to make sure that consumers who buy a travel package via the internet are well protected. Issues such as price surcharges, cancellations, compensation and repatriation are dealt with.

Plastic bags: A package of measures aiming to reduce consumption of the commonest and most polluting plastic bags by 80% by 2019 and replace them by recycled or biodegradable bags.

Cloning, novel foods: Following EP rejection of previous proposals, new ones are on the table for dealing with market authorisation and food labelling.

Reform of the banking sector: New rules to limit the risky activities of large, complex banks. The Commission proposes that supervisors be able to request that banks separate certain risky trading activities from their deposit business.

Shareholders' say on directors pay: A new draft law would strengthen the powers of shareholders of companies listed on EU stock markets over remuneration decisions. Shareholders would have the right to vote every three years on plans on maximum pay of board members.

Port services: Measures to improve transparency in public funding of ports, ensuring fair competition and reviewing restrictions on the provision of services at European ports, while guaranteeing safety standards.

Food safety: Measures to tackle the introduction of pests and outbreaks of animal diseases. The proposals aim to strengthen controls along the food chain to fight food fraud. MEPs have called for tougher penalties.

Money laundering: Measures to tackle money laundering and the funding of terrorism, covering casinos and the role of notaries.

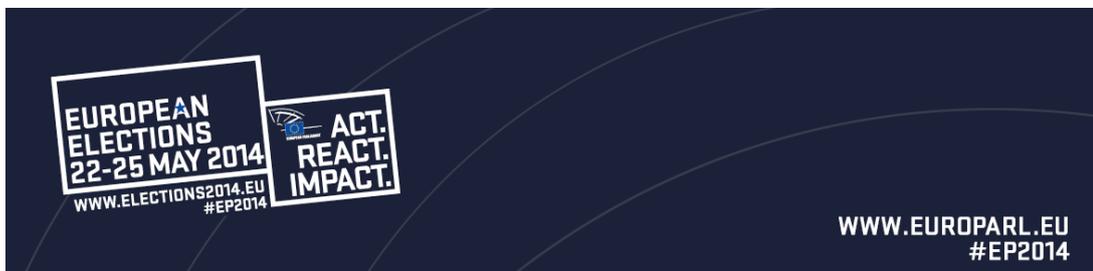
Public procurement and third countries: An instrument dealing with access by companies of third countries to public contracts in EU Member States. The issue of reciprocity (access conditional upon the country giving access to European companies) is a key element of the proposal.

The European Parliament setting the agenda: proposals for legislation

This Parliament has also requested new measures on a number of areas, following the possibility to initiate legislation given by the Treaty of Lisbon (Art. 225 TFEU). Among the requests included in a number of resolutions adopted this term¹ are:

- A more integrated digital single market, ending geographical restrictions on internet sales
- A European strategy for cloud computing
- Stronger economic governance, with introduction of automatic stabilisers of a temporary nature and a social pillar of the EMU
- Further development of the banking union: cross-border deposit guarantee system, fiscal compact under Community method, gradual establishment of a redemption fund for bad debts, common issuance of Eurobonds.
- Additional measures to fight tax evasion
- Effective equal pay for equal work
- A European defence industry strategy
- An EU instrument to combat and prevent violence against women

¹ source: Mapping the cost of Non-Europe, European Parliament Research Service



- A legal act for information and consultation of workers in the context of strategic restructuring of companies, ensuring dismissal only as last resort
- Consolidation of passenger rights in all modes of transport
- Updating water framework directive to take into account technological advances for recycling water
- EU policy on water shortages and droughts

Some facts on previous European elections

The first direct elections to the European Parliament were held in 1979. Previously, from 1958 to 1974, MEPs were appointed by the national parliaments of the member states, with all Members holding a dual mandate.

The Decision and Act on European elections by direct universal suffrage were signed in Brussels on 20 September 1976. After ratification by all the member states, the first elections took place on 7 and 10 June 1979 and 410 Members were elected. Since then another six elections have taken place.

Elections are always held in new member states when they join the EU, to allow them to elect their own representatives to the European Parliament even in mid-term. This happened with Greece in 1981, Portugal and Spain in 1987, Sweden in 1995, Austria and Finland in 1996, and Bulgaria and Romania in 2007. Elections were held in Croatia in April 2013 to enable that country's MEPs to take their seats when it joined the EU on 1 July 2013.

The turnout in European elections since 1979 has varied significantly from one member state to another. While low in many cases, the figures are not dissimilar to those for local elections in many European countries. There has been a downward trend over the years in average turnout, the highest being in the first edition of the European elections in 1970, when turnout was 62%, the lowest in 2009 when turnout was a bit more than 43%. But this is in line with a general decline in voting figures throughout the western democracies in recent decades. For instance, in mid-term elections for the American Congress, turnout was below 40%.

General turnout trends also hide significant differences among Member States. In a number of countries, turnout in 2009 was particularly low. In the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Romania it was below 30%. In Slovakia it was below 20%. But in 2009 turnout actually increased regarding 2004 in several countries: Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Austria, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia and Poland. Turnout was higher than the EU average in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Greece, Spain, Sweden, Austria, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Malta.