

The European elections explained: how are the seats divided?

It's time to vote! Between 6 and 9 June this year, millions of EU citizens will help shape the future of the European Union by voting in the European elections. The European Parliament is the only directly elected EU body and the European elections are one of the biggest democratic events in the world. In this podcast series, we break down everything you need to know about the upcoming European Parliament elections.

In this episode, we'll be discussing how the seats in parliament are divided.

The European Parliament, as the legislative body of the European Union, represents the interest of millions of EU citizens from 27 member states. Regardless of political affiliations and beliefs, the division of seats in the European Parliament stands as a testament to the EU's commitment to democracy and representation. This year, 720 member - or MEP's- will be elected. That means 15 more members compared to the previous elections, in 2019.

To have a better understanding of the democratic process within the EU, let's have a closer look at how exactly the seats in the European Parliament are allocated among the member states.

The allocation of seats follows a system - implemented under the Lisbon Treaty - called degressive proportionality. Here's how it works: each country is allocated a certain number of seats. Larger countries have more seats, and MEP's from those larger countries also represent more citizens, while smaller countries have less seats and MEP's represent less citizens.

For instance, Germany, being the most populous country in the EU, has the largest share of seats with 96, while smaller countries like Malta, Luxembourg or Cyprus only have 6 seats, which is also the minimum amount of seats a country can have. So, Germany has one seat for nearly 860000 inhabitants while Malta has one seat for around 90000 inhabitants. This ensures that every citizen's vote carries equal weight, regardless of the country they reside in. Once elected, MEPs will sit in political groups which are not organised by nationality but by political affiliation. During the ninth legislature, there were 7 political groups, but this is not a set number: in order to form a political group, 23 Members are needed and at least one-quarter of the Member States must be represented within the group.

The distribution of seats will reflect the diverse political landscape of Europe. The European Parliaments' role in legislating and shaping policies that impact the lives of millions of European citizens underscores the importance of your vote in the elections.

Your vote will decide which Members of the European Parliament will represent you in preparing new laws and will also influence the selection of the European

Commission. These decisions will shape your daily life and the lives of people across the EU. Democracy is not something to take for granted. It is a collective achievement and thus a collective responsibility, and each and every one of us has a role to play in it.

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