

The European elections explained: how does the voting system work?

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 the voting system for the European elections.

Every five years, European citizens elect the Members of the European Parliament – or MEPs – that will represent them. This year, 720 MEPs will be elected, which is 15 more than the 705 Members in the current Parliament. Each country elects a different number of MEPs based on the principle of degressive proportionality. This means that countries with larger populations elect a higher number of MEPs, but each MEP from a larger country represents more people than an MEP from a smaller country. The minimum number of MEPs a country can have representing its people is 6, and the maximum is 96.

The voting process for the European elections varies slightly between EU countries, but the fundamental principles remain the same. In many EU countries, voters can cast their vote for a political party, individual candidates or both. European elections use the proportional representation system, which means that the number of seats a party wins in the European Parliament is in direct proportion to the number of votes that party receives.

But who can vote? To participate in the European elections, you must be a citizen of an EU Member State and meet the voting age requirement in your country. In most EU countries, the voting age is 18, while in Austria, Belgium, Germany and Malta people can vote from the age of 16, and in Greece the voting age is set at 17.

In addition, EU citizens resident in another EU country have the right to vote either in their home country or in their country of residence, but each person may only use their vote in one place.

So how does voting in the European elections work? When you go to vote, you'll see a list of political parties, each with their own preselected candidates. You can choose the party you want to vote for by marking your ballot next to their name. It is important to note that, when you vote for a party, your vote indirectly contributes to the selection of the individual Members of the European Parliament from that party. The parties have preselected candidates in the order they will be elected, based on the number of votes the party receives. However, in some countries, you can either vote for the preselected list or give individual votes to candidates on that list.

Once voting has closed, the votes are counted, and each party's share of the seats in the European Parliament is determined based on the proportion of votes they

received. This ensures that all political parties are represented in proportion to the level of support they received from voters.

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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