

The role of the European Parliament President?

How much do you know about the European Parliament President? You probably know her name and clearly you can guess that she plays a very important role in the European Union. But let's find out more.

The first step for any European Parliament President are the elections. The European elections are held every five years, but Parliament elects its President every two and a half years.

This was not always the case. Until 1979, European Parliament Presidents were chosen either on an annual basis or once every two years. Since 1979, for each parliamentary term, a first election has usually taken place in July, during the first plenary session held after the European elections. A second election for the role of President is then held two and a half years later, halfway through the parliamentary term.

The most recent example took place on 16 July 2024, when Parliament re-elected Roberta Metsola for a new term, which is set to continue until January 2027.

This will remain the house of every person in Europe. Together we must stand up for the politics of hope. For the dream that is Europe. For the promise of our formers, mothers and fathers that is yet unfulfilled. Two and a half years later, I still want people to recapture a sense of belief and enthusiasm for our project, to belief, to make our shared space safer, fairer, more just and more equal. A belief that together we are stronger and we are better. A belief that ours is a Europe for all.

But how do you become President of the European Parliament?

Candidates are selected by one of Parliament's eight political groups, or by a group of at least 36 MEPs. The election takes place by secret ballot. To become President, a candidate must obtain an absolute majority of the votes.

Sometimes this can take several rounds. If, after three rounds, there is still no winner, then only the two MEPs who received the most votes in the third round compete in a final round of voting. The President is elected by an absolute majority of the votes cast and not by an absolute majority of the MEPs. This means that abstentions and spoilt or blank votes are not taken into account in the total number of votes. In the most recent case, Roberta Metsola was re-elected in the first round having received 562 votes out of 699, out of a total of 720 MEPs.

Once elected, one of the most important duties of the European Parliament President is to chair plenary sessions. That means that the President opens, suspends and closes the sittings. The President also rules on the admissibility of amendments, on the admissibility of questions addressed to the Council and the European Commission, and determines whether parliamentary reports are in line with Parliament's Rules of Procedure. The President maintains order, gives the floor to

speakers, closes debates, puts matters to the vote and announces the results of votes.

Another presidential responsibility is making sure that Parliament's Rules of Procedure are upheld. The President therefore directs all of Parliament's activities and represents Parliament in all legal affairs.

The European Parliament President also chairs the Conference of Presidents of the political groups and Parliament's Bureau, which includes the 14 Vice-Presidents. If you aren't familiar with these terms, feel free to check out other episodes of the Jargon Jungle podcast series which provide in-depth explanations of the topics.

Another key aspect of the President's work is their role as the European Parliament's representative in international relations, as well as in dealings with the other European institutions. As part of this, the President has to make official trips around the world on a regular basis.

But the President's duties do not end there. The President also addresses the European Council before the start of each of its meetings, sharing Parliament's point of view on the topics on the agenda and discussing them with the Heads of State or Government.

In addition, after Parliament has voted on the EU budget, the President adopts it by signing it. As part of the codecision procedure with the Council of Ministers, the President may chair the European Parliament/Council conciliation committee. In addition, together with the President-in-office of the Council, the European Parliament signs all legislative acts adopted by codecision.

Finally, it is also the European Parliament President who receives patronage requests. Patronage is a way for Parliament to help a cause by providing moral support. Patronage is granted to a limited number of events each year and only under certain conditions.

So, as you can see, the European Parliament President plays a key role in the European Union, that comes with a lot of different responsibilities.

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