Reform of the electoral law of the European Union

2015/2035(INL) - 02/10/2015 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Constitutional Affairs adopted a report presented by co-rapporteurs Danuta Maria HÜBNER (EPP, PL) and Jo LEINEN (S&D, DE) on the reform of the electoral law of the European Union.

Article 223 of the TFEU gives the European Parliament the right to initiate a reform of European electoral law by formulating proposals, which the Council decides upon by unanimity.

With this report, the Committee on Constitutional Affairs **proposed that the European Parliament should decide to reform its electoral procedure** in good time before the 2019 elections, with the aim of :

- enhancing the democratic and transnational dimension of the European elections and the democratic legitimacy of the EU decision-making process,
- reinforcing the concept of citizenship of the Union and electoral equality,
- promoting the principle of representative democracy and the direct representation of Union citizens in the European Parliament;
- improving the functioning of the European Parliament and the governance of the Union;
- making the work of the European Parliament more legitimate and efficient;
- enhancing the effectiveness of the system for conducting European elections;
- fostering common ownership among citizens from all Member States;
- enhancing the balanced composition of the European Parliament, and providing for the greatest possible degree of electoral equality and participation for citizens of the Union.

The Rapporteurs decided to propose the following changes to the **Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage** ("the Electoral Act") annexed to the Council decision of 20 September 1976:

1. obligation of political parties participating in elections to the European Parliament to observe democratic procedures and transparency in selecting their candidates for those elections;
2. the list of candidates for election to the European Parliament shall ensure **gender equality**;
3. enhancement of the **visibility of European political parties** by placing their names and logos on the ballot papers, and where possible on posters used in European elections campaigns;
4. introduction of a **common deadline of twelve weeks** before election day for the establishment of lists at national level;
5. introduction of an obligatory threshold for the allocation of seats in single-constituency Member States and constituencies which comprise more than 26 seats ranging between **3% and 5%** for Member States using the list system;
6. close of polling in all Member States by **21:00 hours CET** on the Sunday of elections;
7. introduction of a **common deadline of 12 weeks for the nomination of lead candidates** by the European political parties;
8. introduction of a deadline for the establishment and finalisation of the electoral roll shall be eight weeks before the first election day;
9. introduction of the right to vote in the European elections for all Union citizens living outside the EU;
10. introduction of electronic and internet voting possibilities as well as voting by post mail.

As a future step, it is recommended to Member States that they should consider ways to harmonise the minimum age of voters at **16**, in order to further enhance electoral equality among Union citizens.

Lastly, Parliament should have the right to fix the electoral period for elections to the European Parliament after consulting the Council.