Reform of the electoral law of the European Union

2015/2035(INL) - 11/11/2015

The European Parliament adopted by 315 votes to 234 with 55 abstentions, a resolution 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.

In view of the steadily decreasing turnout in European elections, in particular among the youngest voters, and voters' lack of interest in European issues, Members felt there was a need for ideas that would help to revive European democracy.

Accordingly, Parliament **proposed 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.

Parliament recommended 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; national parties should hold a democratic vote to select their candidates for European 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 and for the nomination of candidates for the post of President of the commission by European political parties so as to enable their electoral programmes to be presented, political debates between the candidates to be organised and EU-wide electoral campaigns to be mounted.
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. a **common deadline of eight weeks** for finalisation of the electoral roll and **six weeks** for information concerning Union citizens with dual nationality and Union citizens living in another Member State to be exchanged with the national single authority in charge of the electoral roll;
8. introduction of the **right to vote** in the European elections for all Union citizens living outside the EU;
9. introduction of **electronic and internet voting possibilities** as well as voting by post mail;
10. the office of Member of the European Parliament to be deemed **incompatible** with that of member of a regional parliament or assembly vested with legislative powers.

Parliament 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.
- they adopt adequate legal frameworks that ensure the **highest standards of informative**, **fair and objective media coverage** during the election campaigns, particularly from public service broadcasters;
- they take measures to promote adequate representation of ethnic, linguistic and other minorities in European elections.

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