

Municipal elections: right to vote and to stand as candidate of the Union citizens

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The Commission presents a report on the application of Directive 94/80 / EC on the application of Directive 94/80/EC on the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections

In this third report, the Commission takes stock of the extent to which, since 2012, citizens of the Union have exercised their right to vote in municipal elections in their Member State of residence.

This report is a follow-up to the [2017 EU citizenship report](#), in which the Commission called on Member States to promote participation in democratic life by better informing citizens of their electoral rights and removing obstacles to their participation. .

Awareness of the right to vote or stand as candidate in municipal elections: recent Eurobarometer surveys indicate that 87 % of EU citizens are familiar with the term "Citizen of the European Union". On average, **54 % of Union citizens know about their right to vote** and stand as a candidate in municipal elections in their Member State of residence. This is a **significant decrease** compared to 2012 and can be observed in all Member States). While awareness of this right is substantially higher now than in 2007, when it was at its lowest level, it has declined in over half of Member States since 2010.

Of the more than 16 million mobile EU citizens in 2016, **almost 14 million were of voting age and eligible to vote**. They accounted for 3.25 % of the voting population.

The number of mobile EU citizens of voting age has increased significantly in many Member States since the 2012 report.

However, **voter registration levels of EU mobile citizens on electoral lists for municipal elections remain low**. In Member States where registration on the electoral roll is not automatic, the data provided showed that only 18.5 % of mobile EU citizens who were residents requested to be entered on the electoral rolls. The percentage of mobile EU citizens on the electoral rolls more than doubles to 51.2 % in Member States using automatic enrolment.

The report notes that the low number of Member States that could provide data makes it difficult to draw further conclusions. In addition, very little data is available on the number of EU citizens who stand as candidates for elections in a Member State of which they are not nationals.

Accordingly, the Commission considers that **better data collection appears necessary**. More quantitative and qualitative data on mobile EU citizens' awareness and exercise of political rights and any difficulties they experience in participating in their local communities would help to address the low turn-out of mobile EU citizens. Furthermore, data on the number of mobile citizens is often only collected at national level, **not at regional or local level**. Yet such regional and local data are needed to assist targeted EU policymaking and raise the visibility of mobile EU citizens among local stakeholders.

Derogations: the Directive allows Member States to restrict a number of offices in the local administration to its own nationals, namely head, deputy or member of the governing college of the executive of a basic local government unit. In addition, a Member State where the proportion of mobile EU citizens of voting age exceeds 20 % of the total electorate can require both voters and candidates to have a minimum period of residence. Luxembourg is the only Member State that uses this derogation.

Restrictions on mobile EU citizens holding executive posts in their local administrations are **slowly diminishing** in the Member States.

The Commission feels that **Luxembourg**'s request to continue its derogation under the

Directive remains warranted. It will also take the necessary steps to amend the Annex to the Directive, updating the list of national definitions of a basic local government unit in the light of recent changes in some Member States.

Lastly, although many issues have been resolved, the Commission continues to monitor the implementation of the Directive and is continuing discussions with a few Member States.

Next steps: the Commission intends to take the following measures:

- **better knowledge:** the Commission will run a special Eurobarometer survey on democratic participation of mobile EU citizens in 2018 and will seek to improve the collection of regional-level demographic data for mobile EU citizens;
- **inform and raise awareness** by incorporating information on EU citizenship rights, including electoral rights, in its information campaigns. The Commission will actively promote the 'Your Europe' portal, where EU citizens will find easily accessible information on the electoral formalities in their resident Member State;
- **making the voting process easier:** automatic registration of voters will be promoted. A study on remote voting (including postal and e-voting) will be completed in 2018. A high-level event on democratic participation will be organised in 2018;
- **engaging stakeholders:** the Commission intends to cooperate with the Committee of the Regions and its network of regional and local authorities to promote activities that increase participation in political life. It will address the issue of political participation of mobile EU citizens, including those with disabilities or belonging to minorities, as part of its high-level event on democratic matters in 2018. Lastly, it will continue to use [the rights, equality and citizenship programme](#) to fund projects promoting the successful inclusion and participation of mobile EU citizens in their host countries.