Proposal for a Council Regulation on the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision (76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom) and the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage annexed to that decision

2020/2220(INL) - 03/05/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 331 votes to 257, with 52 abstentions, a legislative resolution on the proposal for a Council Regulation on the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision (76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom) and the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage annexed to that Decision.

Reform of the electoral procedure

Parliament suggested reforming its electoral procedure by proposing **common minimum standards and legislative changes** for the 2024 European elections. It proposed to strengthen the European dimension of the elections, in particular by transforming the European elections into a **single European election**, including the creation of a Union-wide constituency, as opposed to the collection of 27 separate national elections, which is the way European elections are organised today.

Union constituency

Under the new electoral system, each voter would have **two votes**: one to elect Members of the European Parliament in a national constituency, the other to elect Members of the European Parliament in the Union-wide list constituency.

Members believe that the creation of a Union-wide constituency, in which **28 Members** would be elected to the European Parliament without prejudice to the Members elected in each Member State and in which the lists would be headed by the candidate of each political family for the post of President of the Commission, would provide an opportunity to strengthen the democratic and transnational dimension of European elections.

In order to ensure a **geographical balance** between large and small Member States, Parliament suggested introducing a binding geographical representation in the lists for the Union constituency and encouraged European political parties, European voters' associations and other European electoral bodies to present candidates from all Member States on transnational lists.

Gender equality

While welcoming the overall improvement in gender equality in the last elections, Members pointed out that there are significant differences between Member States, with some not having elected a single woman to Parliament. They called for measures to ensure equal opportunities for women and men to be elected without infringing the rights of non-binary people, through the use of **zipped lists or quotas**.

Other proposals include:

- the right for European voters to **vote for their preferred candidate for President of the Commission**, and the right for leading candidates to stand in all Member States on Union-wide lists, submitted by a European political party, or a European association of voters, and proposing a common electoral programme;

- setting the date for the adoption of the electoral lists for the European elections at 14 weeks before polling day at the latest;

- **information to citizens**, 12 weeks before the elections, on the candidates standing for European elections and on the affiliation of national political parties or electoral associations to a European political party or electoral association;

- a mandatory minimum electoral threshold of 3.5% for constituencies of 60 seats or more;

- the adoption by both European and national political parties and electoral associations of **democratic and transparent procedures** for the selection of candidates for the European Parliament, including the lead candidate;

- the enhancement of the **visibility** of European political parties, European voters' associations and other European electoral entities through media campaigns as well as on ballot papers and all electoral material;

- the inclusion of common provisions governing European election campaign **expenditure** for each entity entitled to submit a list of candidates for the seats of Members of the European Parliament in the Union's constituency;

- the introduction of a **single, harmonised age** for passive and active voting rights respectively in all Member States; Member recommended setting the minimum voting age at 16, without prejudice to existing constitutional orders setting the minimum voting age at 18 or 17;

- the establishment of measures and safeguards to avoid foreign interference in the electoral process;

- the creation of a **European Electoral Authority** to coordinate information on the European elections, to supervise the process and to ensure compliance with the new rules;

- **equal access to the elections for all citizens**, including people with disabilities; everyone with the right to vote, including EU citizens living outside their country of origin and those without permanent residence, should be able to exercise this right;

- the introduction of **postal voting** and the improvement of the system through tools such as early voting in person and proxy voting, as well as electronic and online voting.

Lastly, Members believe that setting a common election day would make these elections more harmonised across Europe. They therefore suggest that European election day be set on **9 May**, regardless of the day of the week on which it falls, and possibly as a public holiday.