

PRE- ELECTION ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT

Elections to the European
Parliament

6 – 9 June 2024

The views expressed in this report are solely the views of
Election-Watch.EU and the authors of this report

TABLE OF CONTENT

I.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
II.	INTRODUCTION	5
III.	BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT	5
IV.	LEGAL FRAMEWORK	7
	A. Overview	7
	B. European Electoral Reforms.....	7
	C. Follow-Up to Recommendations	9
	D. Right to Vote	9
	E. Right to Stand.....	10
V.	ELECTORAL SYSTEM	11
	A. Advance and Alternative Voting Methods	11
VI.	PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS	12
	A. Participation of Persons with Disabilities.....	12
	B. Participation of Women	13
	C. Participation of National Minorities.....	13
	D. Participation of Youth.....	14
	E. Participation of Mobile EU Citizens.....	15
VII.	ELECTION ADMINISTRATION	16
	A. Voter Registration	17
VIII.	PARTY AND CANDIDATE REGISTRATION	17
IX.	POLITICAL PARTY AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE	19
X.	MEDIA ENVIRONMENT	19
XI.	ONLINE CAMPAIGN AND SOCIAL MEDIA REGULATION	20
XII.	COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS	21
XIII.	CIVIC SPACE AND ELECTION OBSERVATION	22
	A. Civic Space.....	22
	B. Election Observation in the EU	23
XIV.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	24
	ANNEX I: REGULATION FOR ELECTION OBSERVATION IN EU MEMBER STATES	25
	ANNEX II: TABLE OF MEETINGS	26
	ANNEX III: LIST OF 2019 EP ELECTIONS EAM RECOMMENDATIONS	29

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACRE	Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe	EU	European Union
AEGEE	Association des États Généraux des Étudiants de l'Europe	EUPP	EU Political Parties
AFCO	Committee on Constitutional Affairs	FI	Finland
AI	Artificial Intelligence	FR	France
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party	FRA	EU Fundamental Rights Agency
APPF	Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations	GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
AT	Austria	GR	Greece
BE	Belgium	GRECO	Group of States against Corruption
BG	Bulgaria	HR	Croatia
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	HU	Hungary
CJEU	Court of Justice of the EU	ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
CoE	Council of Europe	IE	Ireland
CoFE	Conference on the Future of Europe	IT	Italy
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	LT	Lithuania
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	LU	Luxembourg
CY	Cyprus	LV	Latvia
CZ	Czech Republic	MENF	Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom Party
DE	Germany	MEP	Member of the European Parliament
DK	Denmark	MFRR	Media Freedom Rapid Response
DSA	Digital Services Act	MS	Member State (of the EU)
EAM	Election Assessment Mission	MT	Malta
EC	European Commission	NL	Netherlands
ECNE	European Cooperation Network on Elections	ODIHR	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
EDAP	European Democracy Action Plan	OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
EDP	European Democratic Party	PEAM	Pre-Election Assessment Mission
EE	Estonia	PES	Party of European Socialists
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee	PL	Poland
EGP	European Green Party	PT	Portugal
EMB	Election Management Body	PWD	Persons with Disabilities
ENF	Europe of Nations and Freedom Group	RO	Romania
EOM	Election Observation Mission	S&D	Socialists & Democrats Group
EP	European Parliament	SE	Sweden
EPP	European People's Party	SEEDS	Supporting Engagement in European Elections and Democratic Societies
EPRS	European Parliamentary Research Service	SI	Slovenia
ERGA	European Regulators Group for Audio-visual Media Services	SK	Slovakia
ES	Spain	SLAPP	Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation
		TEU	Treaty on European Union
		TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the EU
		TTPA	Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising (Regulation of the EU)
		UNCAC	UN Convention against Corruption
		VLOPs	Very Large Online Platforms
		VLOSEs	Very Large Online Search Engines

I. Executive Summary

The Pre-Election Assessment Mission evaluated the preparations for the European Parliament (EP) elections scheduled for 6-9 June 2024 and recommends the deployment of a comprehensive Election Assessment Mission (EAM) within the 27 EU Member States (MS). This is the second time that the non-partisan European civil society organisation (CSO) Election-Watch.EU will conduct an independent EAM through its network of international election observers. The main thematic focus of the planned EAM includes the implementation of EU-level regulations and recommendations, voter registration, the participation of mobile EU citizens, the regulation of online campaigning, political party and campaign finance, the media environment, the effectiveness of resilience measures against disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks and hate speech, as well as the inclusion of youth, women and persons with disabilities, among other areas.

Since the last EP elections in 2019, the European Union (EU) has been challenged by global and regional crises, in particular by Russia's war against Ukraine, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the growing cost of living. As part of its overall geopolitical orientation, and in response to the increasing global significance of cyber-security of electoral infrastructure, disinformation campaigns and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the EU made considerable efforts to safeguard electoral integrity and to enhance electoral resilience. It also undertook further steps to bolster the European character of EP elections and standardise procedures across MS. To promote citizen participation and safeguard European democracy, the EU organised the Conference on the Future of Europe 2021-2022 and the European Commission (EC) launched the European Democracy Action Plan 2020-2024.

The core EU-level legal framework for the 2024 elections remains the same as for the 2019 elections, although there have been some significant legislative initiatives including the adoption of the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the development of the Regulation on Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising (TTPA). While the EP's ambitious 2022 proposal to reform the European Electoral Act is not expected to find agreement in the Council of the EU, the 2018 Electoral Act amendment awaits approval from one MS to become effective. With the objective of protecting civic space and regulating the online space against mal-intended interference and disinformation, EU institutions have been further working on the Artificial Intelligence Act, the Media Freedom Act, and the 'Anti-strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP)' Directive.

Ahead of the 2024 EP elections, the EU increased the number of seats in the EP from 705 to 720, with additional 15 seats distributed among 12 slightly under-represented MS to improve compliance with the degressive proportionality principle. Members of the EP are elected for a five-year term by direct universal suffrage through a free and secret ballot. Comparative analysis shows differences among MS in terms of representation and practices. The general EU principles of universal suffrage and equal treatment between nationals and non-nationals of other MS remain the only common benchmarks for enfranchisement, and MS have varied approaches to limitations on the right to vote. The minimum national voting age continues to vary across the Union with Belgium and Germany having recently lowered the voting age to 16 years. Despite being signatories to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 13 MS have yet to

eliminate voting restrictions for individuals whose legal capacity is restricted or revoked. EU law also leaves it largely to MS to define candidate eligibility conditions, which impose various restrictions for candidacy, and only some MS are allowing individual candidacy.

Electoral processes for the EP elections are organised by election management bodies (EMBs) at the MS level, and no European election authority and centralised voter registration exists. A major improvement in terms of coordination is the European Cooperation Network on Elections (ECNE) which is gaining in prominence as a cooperation forum for regular exchange among EMBs and other national bodies, with efforts to improve the accessibility of electoral processes and enhance the resilience against security risks and cyber threats. Through ECNE's Crypto Tool, EMBs have begun to securely exchange information on mobile EU voters and candidates, to facilitate their suffrage rights and to prevent multiple registrations and candidacy. In the 2024 EP elections, around 366 million voters will be eligible to vote. An estimated 11 million mobile EU citizens can either vote in their country of citizenship or in their country of residence. A planned amendment of the Directive to enhance inclusion of mobile EU citizens has not yet passed and would not be applicable to the upcoming elections.

The funding of European political parties (EUPP) has become more proportional to their support in the EP elections over time. Since 2019, the Authority for EUPP and European Political Foundations (APPF) has grown in strength and capacity. It has registered ten EUPPs, and performs annual compliance controls of the parties' incomes and expenditures. An amendment to the rules on EUPP finance has been discussed since November 2021, but is unlikely to be passed and affect the 2024 elections. While the APPF looks into the EUPP's European campaigns, the rules and regulations at MS level do not always allow equal conditions for political parties to campaign for the European elections.

Media pluralism is declining in the majority of MS. The EC proposal for a European Media Freedom Act aims to strengthen transparency and editorial independence and counter concentration of media ownership. Online campaigning will be impacted by the newly applicable DSA that establishes a comprehensive framework for digital platforms, mandating the protection of user rights, combating disinformation and hate speech, and prompt removal of illegal content. The DSA prohibits targeted advertising for minors and restricts sensitive information use while expediting illicit content removal. As the current self-regulatory Code of Practice against Disinformation has limitations, the EC aimed with the TTPA, which is not yet applicable, at enhancing transparency in political advertising and particularly countering disinformation.

In line with international standards, several MS apply positive measures to advance the participation of women as candidates. Select EMBs, political parties and public broadcasters provide accessible information for persons with disabilities, but in many MS persons with disabilities still face legal and practical barriers to vote in secret and independently. More than half of the MS have recognised national minorities; the EU's largest ethnic minority, the Roma, with approximately six million, lack inclusion and participation in politics. Following the first-time increase of voter turnout in 2019, partly attributed to an increase in youth participation, the EP emphasised the importance of a comprehensive strategy on European civic education. The EC has recommended MS should establish enabling environments for independent election observation including by citizens, as only few MS have legislation and accreditation systems in place.

II. Introduction

Election-Watch.EU¹ is an independent and non-partisan European civil society organisation (CSO) operating through a network of international election observers across the 27 European Union (EU) Member States (MS). The organisational goals are to strengthen European electoral processes through active civil society engagement, to identify gaps, and to promote good practices in the implementation of electoral processes through comparative analysis for inclusive electoral reforms. The overall objective is to enhance the integrity of the European Parliament (EP) elections by focusing on five key dimensions: equality, transparency, accountability, inclusion, and resilience. In 2019, Election-Watch.EU conducted its first Election Assessment Mission (EAM)² focusing on the comparability of electoral calendars, suffrage rights, regulations of campaign finance and social media, as well as on the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The findings serve as a reference for this report.

Ahead of the 6-9 June 2024 EP elections, Election-Watch.EU conducted an in-person Pre-Election Assessment Mission (PEAM) in Brussels between 22 and 24 November 2023 and online during the two weeks thereafter. The PEAM team was composed of Armin Rabitsch, Michael Lidauer and Tatyana Hilscher-Bogussevich. The PEAM is grounded in EU and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) election observation methodology. This report has the objective of providing an assessment of the European electoral reforms' progress since 2019, pointing out areas of contention as well as threats and risks in the European electoral processes, while raising awareness about the upcoming 2024 EP elections. The PEAM findings also provide a baseline for the upcoming EAM and help to fine-tune its focus areas.

III. Background and Political Context

The EP is the only directly elected body of the EU. Elections to the EP take place every five years through direct universal suffrage and by secret ballot. Between 6 and 9 June 2024, during the 10th EP elections, around 366 million³ eligible voters in 27 MS will elect 720 Members of the EP (MEPs), making it the biggest democratic process worldwide in such a short time span.⁴

The European elections are held under 27 differing national legal frameworks and electoral traditions, which results in a variance of electoral procedures and contributes to their complexity.⁵ In the past campaigns for the European elections have been commonly dominated by national rather than European issues, with an increasing European dimension

¹ [Election-Watch.EU](#)

² [Final Report of the Election-Watch.EU EAM to the EP elections 23-26 May 2019](#); Election-Watch.EU presented its findings and recommendations to the [Constitutional Committee of the EP \(AFCO\)](#) and the [European Coordination Network of European \(ECNE\)](#). Election-Watch.EU adheres to the [Declaration of Global Principles for Non-Partisan Election Observation](#) and its Code of Conduct.

³ EPRS, [Youth participation in European elections](#), December 2023.

⁴ The Indian general elections with over 900 million eligible voters take place over several phases and some 5 weeks.

⁵ The EP European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) has already published substantial briefing papers and infographics to this effect (see a compilation [here](#)).

in recent elections. At the same time, the EU's geopolitical orientation and envisaged enlargement⁶ increases pressure to implement reforms.

Since the last EP elections in 2019, the EU has been challenged by global and regional crises, in particular by Russia's war against Ukraine, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the growing cost of living. Further, the EP was shaken by a prominent case of corruption of MEPs accused of bribery from abroad.⁷ In response to the growing global significance of cyber-security of electoral infrastructure, foreign disinformation campaigns and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the EU passed several pieces of legislation, which include measures to safeguard electoral integrity and enhance electoral resilience both at European level and in the MS. Many PEAM interlocutors expressed concerns that the influence of political actors in the EP who oppose European integration may increase.

To promote citizen participation, to safeguard European democracy and to protect European elections, the EU organised the Conference on the Future of Europe (CoFE) 2021-2022⁸ and the EC adopted the European Democracy Action Plan (EDAP). The EDAP – the first EU strategy solely focused on strengthening democracy – resulted among others in the Defence of Democracy package released on 12 December 2023 and looks into ways to further strengthen democratic resilience while also following up on the CoFE initiative.⁹ While welcoming the above reform efforts, several PEAM interlocutors expressed concerns regarding the wording and scope of the envisaged 'foreign interference' Directive of the Defence of Democracy package,¹⁰ which potentially hinders the work of CSOs across the EU.¹¹ The EC conducted an impact assessment and multiple consultations to consider human rights implications.¹²

Citizens' interest in the 2024 European elections appears higher than in the previous elections.¹³ Turnout for the first time increased in 2019 to an average of 50.6 per cent, however, with a wide margin among MS.¹⁴ Several PEAM interlocutors expect this trend to continue. The EP launched the "use your vote" campaign to encourage online and offline activities and information campaigns to enhance voter participation.¹⁵ The increase of voter turnout in the 2019 European elections was *inter alia* attributed to an increase in youth participation, albeit with significant variation among MS. PEAM interlocutors have agreed that further efforts are necessary to inform and motivate young and first-time voters to participate. The EP also emphasised the importance of developing curricula and national assessments in citizenship education, and called for a comprehensive strategy on European civic and citizenship education.¹⁶

⁶ The EC has recommended opening EU accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, and granting candidate status to Georgia, while the accession of the five Western Balkan states is pending; North Macedonia (since 2005), Montenegro (since 2010), Serbia (since 2012), Albania (since 2014), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (since 2022).

⁷ [Qatargate](#) 2022.

⁸ [Conference on the Future of Europe](#)

⁹ [European Democracy Action Plan, cf. Reviewing progress on the EDAP, EDP December 2023](#)

¹⁰ [EC Call for evidence - Ares\(2023\)1121991](#) as part of public consultation on the proposal.

¹¹ See, for instance, [Civil Society Europe/EPD/The Good Lobby/TI EU](#) 27 November 2023; [ECNL and The Good Lobby](#) October 2023. [EU Foreign Interference Law: Is Civil Society at Risk](#) and [Joint Civil Society and Democracy Organisations' Priorities for the Defense of Democracy Package](#) for CSO positions.

¹² [EC Impact Assessment Report](#) 12 December 2023.

¹³ [Eurobarometer Spring 2023 & Autumn 2023](#)

¹⁴ Ranging from 22.7 per cent in SK to 88.7 per cent in BE where voting is compulsory, [2019 European elections results](#).

¹⁵ [European elections 2024](#); – also "together.eu" campaign.

¹⁶ EPRS: [Youth participation in European elections](#). 2023, page 10.

IV. Legal Framework

A. Overview

The EU and its MS have reaffirmed their commitment to democracy, rule of law, equality, and human rights through ratification of international documents. All MS are parties to key treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), and have pledged to adhere to non-binding standards of the EU, Council of Europe, and OSCE.¹⁷

The election of MEPs follows European legislation, which establishes broad common rules for all MS, and national electoral legal frameworks in each MS. EU-level legal foundations for EP elections are found in the Treaty of European Union (TEU; Articles 10 and 14), the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU; Articles 20, 22, 223), and the Electoral Act of September 1976 (amended in 2002).¹⁸ More detailed provisions are contained in directives, regulations, and secondary legislation, such as Council Directive 93/109/EC on suffrage rights of EU citizens residing in MS of which they are not nationals.¹⁹ Regulations (EU, Euratom) 2019/493 and 673/2018 amend Regulation (EU, Euratom) 1141/2014, outline the framework for European political parties and foundations.

The upcoming EP elections will be the first held after the adoption of the Digital Services Act (DSA), effective since 16 November 2022, and directly applicable throughout the EU from February 2024.²⁰ Some uncertainties remained at the time of writing about the finalisation of several pending legislative initiatives. Election-Watch.EU PEAM interlocutors expected that except for the DSA and limited elements of regulations on online political advertising (see below), the core EU-level legal framework for the 2024 elections remains the same as for the 2019 elections.

B. European Electoral Reforms

EU bodies and institutions have made significant efforts in recent years to reform electoral processes, focusing on enhancing the European character and harmonising procedures across MS. Several reforms initiated before and after the 2019 EP elections were pending finalisation, adoption, and/or entry into force at the time of the Election-Watch.EU PEAM.

The last electoral reform adopted through the European Council Decision 2018/994 amending the 1976 Electoral Act²¹ has not yet entered into force due to pending approval by one MS (ES). The Decision envisages additional common rules for EP elections, including a threshold

¹⁷ Of relevance to elections are the OSCE's [1990 Copenhagen Document](#), [1996 Lisbon Document](#), [1999 Istanbul Document](#), and the [2002 Porto Document](#), and the Venice Commission's [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#).

¹⁸ The Electoral Act was amended by [Council Decision 2002/772/EC](#) of 25 June and 23 September 2002. This version of the Act remains presently in force.

¹⁹ [Council Directive 93/109/EC](#) of 6 December 1993, last amended by [Council Directive 2013/1/EU](#) of 20 December 2012.

²⁰ Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC ([Digital Services Act](#)).

²¹ The [Council Decision 2018/994](#)

between 2 and 5 per cent for MS with more than 35 seats, provisions on the possibility of different voting methods, obligation for MS to penalise double voting by national laws, and a three-week candidate submission deadline. PEAM interlocutors were certain the Decision would not impact and pass before the 2024 elections.²²

Three legislative reforms have been initiated by the EC as part of its December 2020 EDAP.²³ These included first, the Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising (TTPA),²⁴ second, the amendment of Regulation 1141/2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations,²⁵ and third, the amendment of Council Directive 93/109/EC on the electoral rights of mobile EU citizens during EP elections.²⁶ Political agreement on the TTPA between EP and Council was reached in November 2023.²⁷ Subject to the completion of relevant procedures, it is anticipated to enter into force in February 2024 but will become applicable 18 months after this date. Only limited elements might apply to the upcoming elections.²⁸ The other two proposals remain in inter-institutional negotiations; their adoption and application to the 2024 elections is unlikely.²⁹

Building on its past efforts of comprehensive reforms,³⁰ the EP has adopted on 3 May 2022 a new expansive proposal for a Regulation to further reform the 1976 Electoral Act.³¹ As of November 2023, there were wide divergences among MS on several parts of this proposal, including on the EU-wide constituency and transnational lists, the *Spitzenkandidaten* (lead candidate) process, the lowering of voting age to 16 years, affirmative gender equality measures, and the obligation for all MS to provide postal voting.³² Its adoption ahead of the EP elections was not expected and several PEAM interlocutors considered the electoral reform plans of the EP as too ambitious. In addition to the above, EU institutions have been also working on an 'Anti-SLAPP' (strategic lawsuits against public participation) Directive, Artificial Intelligence Act, and the Media Freedom Act.³³ While political agreement on the two former proposals was reached, these initiatives are not expected to be finalised and applicable for the 2024 elections.³⁴

²² In addition, international electoral good practice considerations of the Venice Commission's [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) recommends that fundamental elements of electoral systems should not be changed within one year of elections. A June 2021 [study](#) analyzing the extent of 'Europeanisation' of national electoral laws in line with Council Decision 2018/994 has assessed it as quite advanced, with harmonization levels particularly high on the envisaged compulsory measures (measures that 'shall' be implemented).

²³ EC Communication [On the European Democracy Plan](#), 3 December 2020.

²⁴ EC [Proposal for a Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising](#).

²⁵ EC [Proposal for a Recast of the Regulation](#). See also [Recasting the rules applicable to European political parties and foundations](#), EPRS, At a Glance, Plenary - September 2022.

²⁶ EC [Proposal for a Recast of the Council Directive](#) and the related 14 February 2023 [EP Resolution](#).

²⁷ [Press Release](#), Council of the EU, 7 November 2023 updated 20 December 2023.

²⁸ Including the definitions and the so-called non-discrimination clause. See [press release](#) by the European Council of 7 November 2023.

²⁹ [Reviewing progress on the European Democracy Action Plan](#), European Partnership for Democracy, December 2023.

³⁰ See, inter alia, the EP [Resolution on stocktaking of European elections](#) of 26 November 2020.

³¹ Compare [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 European Electoral Act](#).

³² See the [results of the Swedish presidency survey](#). See also [Towards new rules for European elections?](#) Briefing - EU Legislation in Progress, EPRS, September 2022.

³³ EC [Proposal for a Directive on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings](#) of 27 April 2022, [Proposal for a Regulation laying down harmonized rules on artificial intelligence](#) of 21 April 2021, and [Proposal for Regulation establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market](#) of 16 September 2022.

³⁴ [Press release](#), European Council, 9 December 2023 and [press release](#), European Commission, 30 November 2023.

C. Follow-Up to Recommendations

In its 2019 report, Election-Watch.EU EAM has made 16 recommendations³⁵ addressed both to EU and MS institutions and stakeholders. The implementation of these recommendations, in particular those pertaining to processes in MS related to the removal of barriers to persons with disabilities' participation (no. 6), mechanisms to prevent possible multiple registration and voting (7), civic education (8), review of campaign spending limits (11), strengthening the transparency of campaign spending (12), enhanced campaign finance oversight (13), and access and accreditation of election observers (16), will be reviewed comprehensively as part of the 2024 EAM. As a preliminary observation, several EU-level legislative reforms initiated and concluded, as described above, strive to tackle the issues at the core of several Election-Watch.EU recommendations. Concerted efforts undertaken by EU institutions to make further steps on electoral reforms initiated earlier, as per recommendation no. 1, underscore the commitment to continue to search for appropriate solutions for the *Spitzenkandidaten* principle (no. 3), adoption of an objective, durable and transparent method for the allocation of EP seats (4), harmonization of requirements for suffrage rights (5) and alternative and advance voting (9), further regulation of the financing of national European campaigns (10), and ensuring better oversight and transparency of social media and online platforms (14, 15).

Regarding recommendation no. 2 on inclusive and participatory electoral reforms, Election-Watch.EU notes the existence of multiple public consultation mechanisms as part of EU legislative processes.³⁶ It also values consultation opportunities that were granted since 2019, including the ongoing constructive engagement with the EC through Directorate General (DG) Justice and Consumers and the European Cooperation Network of Elections (ECNE) as well as with the EP with its respective committees, sub-committees, and political groups. Since the 2019 elections, the EU institutions have considerably strengthened public communication and access to information on European elections and legislative developments, contributing to more effective and informed public participation. At the same time, some PEAM CSO interlocutors highlighted the need for different EU institutions to use more streamlined public consultation tools and mechanisms and called for more systematic feedback on inputs.

D. Right to Vote

Pending the adoption of any further EU-wide regulations related to the right to vote, the EU general principles of universal suffrage and equal treatment between nationals and non-nationals of other MS remain the only common benchmark for enfranchisement. The minimum national voting age continues to vary across the EU. Positively, since the 2019 elections, BE and DE followed AT and MT in reducing the voting age in EP elections to 16.³⁷ The voting age in GR is set at 17, while other MS kept it at 18.³⁸

³⁵ See Election-Watch.EU's 2019 EAM recommendations in ANNEX III

³⁶ Compare EP Resolution on Parliamentarism, European citizenship and democracy ([P9_TA\(2023\)0330](#)).

³⁷ HU grants the right to vote at 16 to married individuals. The distinction based on marital status has been criticized by the OSCE/ODIHR as at odds with international standards. See [OSCE/ODIHR EOM Final Report on 2022 Parliamentary Elections and Referendum](#).

³⁸ [Voting age for European Elections](#), EPRS, At a Glance - European Elections 2024, August 2023.

Despite the EU and all its MS having ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the degree to which its provisions are implemented varies significantly within the EU. In the EP elections, 14 MS (AT, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, HR, IR, IT, LU, LV, NL, SE, SK) legally uphold the unrestricted right to vote for all individuals with disabilities. Encouragingly, several MS have initiated assessments to identify and address restrictions on the right to vote, with the goal of either eliminating or at least reducing these limitations. Conversely, the remaining 13 EU MS, despite being signatories to the CRPD, have yet to eliminate or decrease restrictions, as they continue to deny suffrage rights particularly evident for individuals with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities whose legal capacity is restricted or revoked.

The equality of opportunities for passive suffrage is further affected by varied approaches among MS to limitations on the right to vote. Several MS do not allow prisoners to vote (BG and EE) or apply restrictions linked to the length of the sentence and/or the type of offence committed (AT, BE, DE, ES, FR, GR, HU, IT, LU, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO); in LU and RO, voting rights are not automatically reinstated upon release from prison.³⁹ The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) have ruled that the disenfranchisement based on criminal conviction falls within the competence of States and may be justified when proportional to the gravity of the offense committed.⁴⁰ EE and LV do not grant the right to vote to persons with undetermined citizenship and non-citizens, respectively.⁴¹

E. Right to Stand

The EU law leaves it largely to MS to define candidate eligibility conditions. The only common European requirements for candidacy include citizenship of a Member State, standing as a candidate in one MS only, and compliance with listed incompatibilities.⁴² Candidacy age varies, with the right to stand granted at 18 years in many MS, including BE that lowered the minimum age in 2021. Further nine MS allow candidacy at 21 years (BG, CY, CZ, EE, IE, LT, LV, PL, SK), one (RO) at 23, and two (GR and IT) at 25.⁴³

MS impose various additional restrictions and conditions for candidacy. In most MS, EP elections are contested by political parties, with only some national legislations allowing individual candidacy. Party and candidate registration requires the submission in some MS of supporting signatures or of electoral deposits – requirements that are deemed permissible under international standards when they are kept reasonable and do not serve as a barrier to candidacy. LU is the only MS that applies a derogation under a Council Directive 93/109/EC stipulating that among the six candidates for MEPs only two could be non-Luxembourgish mobile EU citizens.⁴⁴

³⁹ [Prisoners' voting rights in European Parliament elections](#), EPRS, Briefing - European elections 2024, September 2023.

⁴⁰ [Prisoners' right to vote](#), ECtHR Factsheet, December 2022. See also the 2015 CJEU [Delvigne v Commune de Lesparre Médoc and Préfet de la Gironde](#) and the 2022 ECtHR [Kalda v. Estonia \(No. 2\)](#) rulings.

⁴¹ The OSCE/ODIHR questioned these restrictions in its 2009 [Report](#) on EP elections and suggested granting voting rights in EP elections to long-term EU residents without the citizenship of any EU MS.

⁴² As per Article 7 of the 1976 Electoral Act, the office of a MEP is incompatible with that of a member of national governments and parliaments, of the EC, and EU staff positions, among others. Many MS provide for further incompatibilities, including relating to positions in public service, military service and the judiciary, past convictions for electoral offences, or bankruptcy.

⁴³ [Minimum age to stand as a candidate in European elections](#), EPRS, At a Glance - European elections 2024, 2023.

⁴⁴ Council Directive 93/109/EC provides for derogations from equal suffrage rules for mobile EU citizens when the proportion of such citizens exceeds 20 per cent of a total number of EU citizens of voting age resident in that MS. The EC has confirmed in its 7 November 2023 [report](#) that the continued application of the derogation by LU is warranted.

Across the EU, only nine MS ensure unrestricted candidacy rights for all persons with disabilities in European elections. In contrast, 18 member states, (BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, FI, FR, GR, HU, IE, LV, LT, MT, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI) diverge from the CRPD by imposing eligibility criteria that limit candidacy based on psychosocial or intellectual disabilities and/or legal capacity.

V. Electoral System

MEPs are elected for a five-year term by direct universal suffrage through a free and secret ballot. Common European rules on how votes of the Union citizens in MS translate into mandates in the EP are limited to the requirement to use a proportional representation list-based or a single transferable vote system. As outlined in the Election-Watch.EU 2019 report, there is considerable variation in how this electoral system is implemented by MS, including whether single or multiple constituencies are established, closed or open lists with preferential or single-transferable vote options are used, and what method for the allocation of seats among parties is applied.⁴⁵ While the current EU law and pending legislative initiatives point to an emerging trend to apply some electoral threshold for EP elections, currently 13 MS do not use any threshold.⁴⁶

The number of seats in the EP to be filled during the 2024 elections and their distribution among MS were reassessed in line with the EU law principles and based on the most recent population data.⁴⁷ In September 2023, based on the EP proposal and with its approval, the European Council increased the total number of seats from post-Brexit 705⁴⁸ to 720, with additional 15 seats distributed among 12 slightly under-represented MS, including to improve compliance with the degressive proportionality principle.⁴⁹ Echoing past calls by the Council of the EU and the EP,⁵⁰ the Council called for the development of a permanent seat distribution system based on objective, fair, and transparent criteria by the end of 2026, a system that would not involve any elements of political negotiation present in the current approach.

A. Advance and Alternative Voting Methods

As illustrated in the Election-Watch.EU 2019 report, the option of voting in polling stations on election day(s) is supplemented in the majority of MS by a variety of advance and/or alternative voting opportunities. Special voting arrangements include accommodations for

⁴⁵ See Election-Watch.EU [2019 Election Assessment Mission Final Report](#), pp. 10-11.

⁴⁶ BE, BG, DK, EE, FI, DE, IE, LU, MT, NL, PT, SI, ES. See [Electoral thresholds in European Parliament elections](#), EPRS, Briefing - European elections 2024, June 2023 for thresholds applied by 14 MS.

⁴⁷ TEU, Article 14(2) provides for a maximum of 750 MEPs plus the President, not less than six and not more than 96 seats for any MS, and degressive proportionality principle for the representation of citizens.

⁴⁸ [European Council Decision 2018/937](#), 28 June 2018.

⁴⁹ [European Council Decision 2023/2061](#), 22 September 2023. Two additional seats were allocated to FR, ES and NL, while one additional seat was attributed to AT, BE, DK, FI, IE, LV, PL, SK, and SI. The remaining EP seats remain in reserve, including for possible EU enlargements and/or transnational lists in a possible future single European constituency.

⁵⁰ [European Council Decision 2013/312](#) of 28 June 2013, [AFCO Report on the composition of the European Parliament](#) of 26 January 2018, [EP Resolution on the composition of the European Parliament](#) of 7 February 2018.

voting at special institutions, including care homes, hospitals, detention centers, prisons, home-bound voting, and the option of early voting offered by several MS.

Most of the countries facilitate voting by their citizens abroad, including at diplomatic representations or consulates, by post, through proxy voting, and in one country (EE) through Internet voting.⁵¹ Various qualifying requirements, including related to residence and the duration of stay abroad, are applicable. Among the recent changes, ES and GR simplified the access for citizens abroad to voting by removing prior registration and residence and taxation-related requirements, respectively.⁵² In contrast, there remain no provisions for voting from abroad by citizens of four MS (CZ, IE (except military and diplomatic staff), MT and SK).⁵³

VI. Participation in Elections

A Participation of Persons with Disabilities

Article 29 of the CRPD outlines measures that state parties must take to ensure equal political rights, covering accessible voting procedures, protection of the right to a secret ballot, facilitation of assistance during voting, and support for persons with disabilities to stand for elections.⁵⁴ According to the European Economic and Social Committee⁵⁵ (EESC), around 400,000 persons with disabilities were deprived of their right to vote in the 2019 EP elections due to a failure to comply with the obligations outlined in the CRPD.⁵⁶ According to PEAM interlocutors, persons in institutions such as care homes for the elderly are particularly vulnerable in their independent exercise and secrecy of the vote.

To improve the inclusion and access of persons with disabilities to cast their vote independently, the EC published a guide⁵⁷ and some EU MS have undertaken special measures, like improving the ballot design; providing assistive tools, and making polling stations and voting booths more accessible.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement in the provision of accessible election-related information by EMBs, political parties and the public media. This could include election websites designed in a more accessibility friendly manner, phone service for individuals with hearing or speech impairments to communicate through text over phone calls and easy to read voting materials.

⁵¹ 19 MS facilitate in-person voting at embassies, consulates and other locations abroad (BE, BG, CY, EE, ES, FI, FR, GR, HR, HU, IT, LV, LT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SE), 15 MS allow postal voting (AT, BE, DE, DK (in practice, advance voting), HU, EE, ES, FI, LV (in practice - advance voting; postal voting is not available for voters in LV), LT, LU, NL, SI, SE), proxy voting is allowed in BE, FR, NL. Information based on [Voting from abroad in European Parliament elections](#), Briefing - European elections 2024, EPRS, September 2023.

⁵² See announcements related to amended registration requirements in [Greece](#) and [Spain](#).

⁵³ The Venice Commission's 2011 [Report](#) on out-of-country voting and the 2005 CoE Parliamentary Assembly [Resolution 1459 \(2005\)](#) on the abolition of restrictions on the right to vote encourage states to facilitate voting by citizens abroad.

⁵⁴ See: EPRS 2023: [Political participation of people with disabilities in the EU](#); European Disability Forum (EDF) 2022: '6th [Human Rights Report on Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities](#)'; Rabitsch, Moledo, Lidauer (2023), *South African Journal of International Affairs (SAJIA)* Vol. 30, [Inclusive elections? The case of persons with disabilities in the European Union](#); FRA, 2014: [The right to political participation for persons with disabilities: human rights indicators](#).

⁵⁵ According to [EESC's Vice President for Budget, Krzysztof Pater](#), 2023.

⁵⁶ EESC, 2019: [The real right of persons with disabilities to vote in European Parliament elections](#)

⁵⁷ [EC Guide of good electoral practices in MS addressing the participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process](#), 2023.

⁵⁸ [EDF 2022 6th HR report](#).

B. Participation of Women

Equality between women and men is enshrined as a fundamental principle in EU law.⁵⁹ Enhanced participation and representation of women in public and political life has increasingly been in focus of policy making and legislative efforts of EU institutions in recent years.⁶⁰ The pending proposed amendment of the Regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties and the latest EP legislative proposal both envisage measures to improve gender equality, including in European political party structures and in national candidate lists. In the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, the EC commits to promote the participation of women as voters and candidates, including through funding and promotion of best practices.⁶¹

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has been ratified by all MS. In line with international obligations and standards, positive measures to advance the participation of women as candidates in EP elections are applied by several MS, include binding and voluntary quotas, rank-order rules, and incentives linked to public funding. However, these efforts remain uneven, with considerable variance among MS and national political parties.⁶² Furthermore, women continue to face specific challenges, including online hate speech and cyber violence against women in politics which can discourage female candidates from running for office.⁶³ Most MS do not have measures in place to ensure gender-balanced compositions of EMBs and many do not provide gender-disaggregated data on electoral processes.⁶⁴ In the 2019 elections, women constituted some 37 per cent of candidates across the Union⁶⁵ and 41 per cent of elected MEPs.⁶⁶

C. Participation of National Minorities

The Council of Europe (CoE) Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM, 1995) commits the state parties⁶⁷ to ensure respect for the fundamental rights of every person belonging to a national minority, to create the conditions necessary for their effective participation, and to adopt adequate measures in order to promote full and effective

⁵⁹ Articles 2 and 3 of TEU, Article 8 of TFEU.

⁶⁰ See EC [2023 Report on Gender Equality in the EU](#).

⁶¹ [A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#), 5 March 2020.

⁶² Currently, 11 MS provide for binding gender quotas; See [Towards gender balance in the European elections; Electoral quotas – What can they achieve?](#), EPRS Briefing, September 2023 and [Promotion of gender balance in political decision-making](#), EC, 2023.

⁶³ See [EU Citizenship Report 2020: Empowering citizens and protecting their rights](#), European Commission.

⁶⁴ Since the 2019 EP elections, the OSCE/ODIHR has [recommended](#) the gathering and publication of gender-disaggregated data on electoral processes, including the composition of EMBs, in FR, HU, GR, IT, LV, MT, PL, PT, SK and SI. Gender-disaggregated data is not collected and published on polling station composition in BG. See also [Promotion of gender balance in political decision-making](#), European Commission, 2023.

⁶⁵ [European Elections: Where Women Are Leading The Way](#), May 2019. Candidate lists in CY, CZ, HU, MT and SK featured less than 30 per cent of women candidates. See also 2019 EP [country sheets](#).

⁶⁶ See [Towards gender balance in the European elections; Electoral quotas – What can they achieve?](#), EPRS Briefing, September 2023.

⁶⁷ Most EU MS are [state parties to FCNM](#); three are signatories (BE, HE, and LU), and FR does not participate.

equality in political life.⁶⁸ In this context, freedom of expression includes the freedom to receive and impart information in minority languages.⁶⁹

In discussing the European Citizens' Initiative 'Minority SafePack', the EP recalled that the protection of persons belonging to national minorities is an explicit founding value of the EU, together with democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, as set out in Article 2 TEU.⁷⁰ Furthermore, the EP expressed concern about the increase of hate speech, motivated by racism, xenophobia or intolerance, directed at persons belonging to national minorities in Europe, which is expected to influence the 2024 electoral campaigns.

Out of 27 EU MS, more than half have recognised national minorities. One issue of shared European significance is the inclusion of Roma and Sinti in public life. The Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority; out of an estimated ten to twelve million Roma living in Europe, approximately six million are citizens or residents of the EU.⁷¹ The EU Roma Strategic Framework includes the plan to encourage, in MS with significant population, their participation in political life at all levels, to ensure their registration as voters, and to facilitate the exercise of their right to vote, and to run as candidates.⁷² However, experts have shared the assessment that too little is done to support their political participation.

PEAM interlocutors have emphasised that the inclusion of national minorities in the European elections should contribute to European integration rather than provide grounds for identity politics and parliamentary fragmentation. It was underlined that measures for effective participation, such as the provision of necessary language materials in the administration of elections and in civic and voter education, should be encouraged, and good practices compared to enhance equality and inclusion in the EU and its MS.

D. Participation of Youth

About 16.3 per cent (73 million) of the overall population in Europe are young people, aged between 15 and 29 years.⁷³ In the context of European electoral reform debates, a majority of MEPs voted to lower the voting age to 16 and the age to stand as candidate to 18, which has been so far rejected in the Council of the EU by several MS. The average age of 53 years of MEPs during the current term raises questions of participation and representation of the younger generation in the EP.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ [Council of Europe – National Minorities \(FCNM\)](#)

⁶⁹ This is further spelled out in the [OSCE Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life & Explanatory Note](#) (1999) as well as in the [Commentary on the Effective Participation of Persons belonging to National Minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public Affairs](#) of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention (2008). Compare the [CoE Compilation of Venice Commission Opinions and Reports concerning Electoral Systems and National Minorities](#) (2019). Further guidance can be found in the [OSCE/ODIHR Handbook on Observing and Promoting the Participation of National Minorities in Electoral Processes](#) (2014).

⁷⁰ The [Minority Safepack European Citizens' Initiative](#), first proposed in 2013, called for the adoption of a set of legal acts to improve the protection of persons belonging to national and linguistic minorities. While the [European Commission](#) proposed no further legal acts, the [European Parliament](#) supported the initiative. Cf. [FUEN 2021](#).

⁷¹ [EU Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation in the EU](#), cf. summaries of relevant [EU legislation](#).

⁷² [EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030](#), 2020: p. 4. With regards to the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area, Chapter 6 on political participation, the [Third Status Report](#) 2018 discussed the issue of electoral processes in detail. See also [Fourth Status Report](#) (2023).

⁷³ Eurostat: [Young people in Europe. A Statistical Summary](#). 2022.

⁷⁴ [EPRS Briefing](#) May 2023.

The first-time increase of voter turnout in the 2019 European elections was *inter alia* attributed to an increase in youth participation, albeit with significant variation among MS. PEAM interlocutors have agreed that further efforts are necessary to inform and motivate young and first-time voters to participate. The EP also emphasised the importance of developing curricula and national assessments in citizenship education, and called for a comprehensive strategy on European civic and citizenship education.⁷⁵

E. Participation of Mobile EU Citizens

The number of EU mobile citizens (EU citizens living in another MS) is estimated at 13.7 million.⁷⁶ Some 11 million are considered to be of voting age. The proportion⁷⁷ as well as their registration⁷⁸ as voters varies significantly among MS. According to TFEU every person holding the nationality of a MS is a Union citizen, and with it comes the right to move and reside freely in other MS, to vote and to stand as candidates in municipal and European elections, and the right to start a Citizens' Initiative. The EU's mobile EU citizen Directive provides mobile EU citizens to either vote in their MS of residence or in their MS of citizenship. It further allows MS to impose a minimum period of prior residence in that country and to request additional documents.

Mobile EU citizens can also stand as candidates but in the 2019 elections only 168 decided to do so. CSOs reported⁷⁹ several problems of mobile EU citizens when exercising their political rights in their MS of residence. Besides the lack of awareness of their right to vote in their country of residence these included long and at times cumbersome procedures. In addition to language barriers to register to vote, MS often require mobile EU citizens to proactively request to be added on the voter lists in the country of residence months before the elections. The EU has been providing mobile EU citizens advice about their personal EU rights via the *Your Europe Advice* service.⁸⁰

On 25 November 2021, the EC submitted a proposal to modify the Directive on the right of mobile EU citizens, envisaging several improvements.⁸¹ As of the publication of this report this amendment to the Directive 93/109/EC was not passed and according to PEAM interlocutors it would not be applicable to the upcoming 2024 EP elections.

To ensure uniform application of EU laws in line with the Council Directive 93/109/EC, MS also collaborate to exchange information on mobile EU voters and candidates to facilitate their suffrage rights and to prevent multiple registrations and candidacy. This is done through the European Parliament-facilitated Crypto Tool already used in 2014 and 2019 elections, which enables sharing information in a secure manner.⁸² The PEAM interlocutors at responsible EU institutions noted that while the tool remains optional, MS have been effectively cooperating and increasingly relying on it for data exchange. The tool was upgraded and tested in 2023, with data exchanges expected to start in February 2024.

⁷⁵ EPRS: [Youth participation in European elections](#). 2023, page 10.

⁷⁶ As of 1 January 2022, source Eurostat, in: EC: [Citizenship Report 2023](#); EPRS: [Revision of Council Directive 93/109/EC Electoral rights of mobile EU citizens in elections to the European Parliament](#). 2023, page 3.

⁷⁷ Ranging from 0.1 per cent in PL and 40.4 per cent in LU.

⁷⁸ From 0.1 per cent in HR and 0.2 in LV to 17 in ES and 24 per cent in MT, EC: [EU Citizenship Report 2020](#), footnote 33.

⁷⁹ [EU Citizenship Report 2020](#), Results of the public consultation, page 32.

⁸⁰ [Your Europe Advice](#); Mobile EU citizens can also get help from [Solvit](#).

⁸¹ See: EPRS, [Revision of Council Directive 93/109/EC, Electoral rights of mobile EU citizens in elections to the EP](#), 2023.

⁸² See [EC Crypto Tool](#) released in March 2023.

VII. Election Administration

Electoral processes for the EP elections are organised at the MS level by the respective election management bodies (EMB). No European election authority exists.⁸³ Improved coordination among national election authorities has been in focus of several past recommendations,⁸⁴ and since January 2019 is facilitated through the European Cooperation Network on Elections (ECNE).⁸⁵ Supported by the EC, the ECNE brings together the representatives of national election authorities and other bodies represented⁸⁶ to coordinate and exchange good practices and lessons learnt, and facilitates a connection with relevant EU institutions and actors. MS are cooperating in the framework of a joint mechanism for electoral resilience, in close contact with the Network and Information Systems Cooperation Group and EU's Rapid Alert System. An ECNE sub-group worked on a guide to facilitate participation by citizens with disabilities.⁸⁷

PEAM interlocutors noted that since establishment the ECNE has gained in prominence as a cooperation forum. All MS have nominated representatives to it and the majority were reported to be using the network proactively. The ECNE convenes approximately quarterly, with agenda and minutes of meetings published online, contributing to public information and transparency about its work. Efforts to improve the accessibility of electoral processes, to enhance resilience against security risks and cyber threats, and to counter disinformation have increasingly been in focus of exchanges among ECNE members. On 21 November 2023, EU and national institutions held a cybersecurity exercise to evaluate and strengthen crisis plans and responses to potential cybersecurity incidents affecting the European elections.⁸⁸

As illustrated in the 2019 Election-Watch.EU report, MS have a variety of EMB set-ups in place, including specialised judicial or governmental bodies, independent electoral commissions, and mixed composition EMBs administering the elections.⁸⁹ According to ODIHR reports, election authorities across the EU generally enjoy high levels of public confidence. Recommendations for improvement predominantly address the issues of insufficient mandate, capacity and resources, transparency of meetings, their minutes and agenda, as well as training of poll workers.⁹⁰

The EP elections will be held on one or several days between Thursday, 6 and Sunday, 9 June, based on individual MS' legal provisions.⁹¹ They will be organised concurrently with other national and local elections in several MS. While this could result in higher voter turnout it could also complicate the administration of concurrent elections for national EMBs.⁹²

⁸³ The EP has been recommending the establishment of a European Electoral Authority, see [P9_TA\(2022\)0129](#)

⁸⁴ [EC Communication](#) and [Recommendation](#) of 12 September 2018 and [Recommendation](#) of 12 December 2023; see also: [European Commission: Electoral rights](#).

⁸⁵ See ECNE [website](#). DG JUST invited [Election-Watch.EU to the 20th ECNE meeting](#) on 6 December 2023 to present its plans and recommendations ahead of the 2024 EP elections.

⁸⁶ [ECNE Membership](#)

⁸⁷ [Joint mechanism for electoral resilience](#); ECNE [sub-group](#).

⁸⁸ [EU and national institutions cybersecurity exercise](#).

⁸⁹ Cf. Election-Watch.EU White Paper on [EMB Composition in European Comparison](#), 2022.

⁹⁰ See [OSCE/ODIHR recommendations](#) issues to EU MS since 2019 regarding election administration.

⁹¹ See the European Council [statement](#). Elections are held on Thursday (NL), on Friday (IE), on Saturday (MT, LV, SK), and in all other MS on Sunday, except for CZ (Friday and Saturday).

⁹² These include national and regional elections in BE, RO (tbc), local elections in CY (tbc), HU, IE, MT, and DE. In PL, local government elections are scheduled for 7 April and the second round on 21 April and are organised concurrently with EP elections. Similarly, the presidential election in LT on 12 May will overlap with the preparations for the EP elections.

A. Voter Registration

No centralised European-level population or voter register for EP elections exists and each MS maintains its own voter register. All MS maintain a population register, which comprises records of all citizens or residents, including foreign citizens, within the respective MS. The national voter register typically serves as a subset of the population register, both in terms of the data included in each record and the eligibility criteria for inclusion. With the exception of CY, where voters actively register at local administrative offices, other MS generally follow a passive registration approach whereby citizens' names are automatically included in the voter register once they become eligible to vote. Some MS (CZ, IE, IT) still maintain decentralised voter registers at the municipal level, lacking a central voter register,⁹³ this could potentially result in multiple entries for the same person. In 2019, concerns persisted in some MS, with public confidence remaining low or issues being raised regarding the inclusion of names of deceased individuals in the voter register (HU, ES). The EP and EC provide information to voters via a dedicated website.⁹⁴

In 2024, some 366 million eligible voters will be called to the EP elections.⁹⁵ In 2019, around 350 million were registered in the 27 MS, including 5.6 million non-resident nationals in their country of citizenship and 1.3 million mobile EU citizens resident in another EU MS.⁹⁶ In 2019, the closing date of the MS' voter register for the EP elections varied substantially, from IT and LU closing the register three months ahead of the polls to EE keeping the register open until election day. The EC has been supporting MS to exchange data through contact points using the Crypto Tool.⁹⁷ While according to PEAM interlocutors the process has improved both in terms of its security and efficiency, there are still difficulties to exchange information allowing accurate and timely identification of the EU citizens concerned due to the diversity of the national electoral processes, including incompatible national deadlines to prepare and close the national voter registers.

VIII. Party and Candidate Registration

Candidates for the EP are nominated on lists at national or at regional levels, according to the rules set out by the respective MS. However, most political parties from the MS have joined a EUPP, whereby membership in the political groups in the EP does not necessarily coincide with membership in EUPPs. It is also possible for national political parties which are not members of an EUPP to participate in the European elections. Demands for transnational European parties that can be directly elected have not yet prevailed.⁹⁸

⁹³ PL introduced a Central Voter Register in August 2023.

⁹⁴ [EU website #use your vote](#)

⁹⁵ EPRS, [Briefing](#) Youth participation in European elections, December 2023.

⁹⁶ EC [staff working document](#) 2019 EP elections, 2020, 10.

⁹⁷ Ahead of the 2019 elections, MS exchanged data on around 1.3 million voters and 114 parliamentary candidates, which resulted in the identification of over 213,000 multiple registration of citizens, see EC [staff working document](#), 29.

⁹⁸ Ahead of the 2024 European elections, the EP is organised in seven political groups as well as non-attached MEPs: The European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (EPP, 178 MEPs), The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D, 141 MEPs), Renew Europe (Renew, 101 MEPs), European Green Party/European Free Alliance (EGP/EFA, 70 MEPs), The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR, 67 MEPs), Identity and Democracy (ID, 60 MEPs), The Left group in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL, 37 MEPs), and Non-attached members (NI, 49 MEPs). A political group needs a minimum of 25 members, and at least one-quarter of the Member States must be represented within the group. Members may not belong to more than one political group. See [EP](#).

TEU Article 10(4) states that EUPP contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of citizens of the Union, and there is a widely held belief that EUPPs play an important role in the process of European integration. EUPPs have to be European in their composition and are required to have chapters in at least seven EU MS. They also must run for the European elections; if they do not fulfil these conditions they can be deregistered. While the political groups are prohibited from campaigning, and MEPs and their staff cannot use EP resources and time for this purpose, EUPPs do conduct electoral campaigns, and the recent EC Recommendation specifically encourages cross-border campaigns.⁹⁹ Although EUPPs can help to coordinate campaigns of their member parties and adopt common electoral programmes, they still play a limited role.¹⁰⁰

In the past, the campaign for European elections was predominantly determined by national issues. Since 2014, a growing number of EUPPs has embraced the *Spitzenkandidaten* or lead candidate process to establish a link between the election and composition of the EP and the nomination of the President of the EC. While the lead candidate process achieved its purpose in 2014, this was not the case in 2019. There remains some uncertainty over the future of this process and its role in the institutional set-up.¹⁰¹ In its resolution on “The European Elections 2024”, the EP calls among others for the establishment of an interinstitutional agreement between the Parliament and the European Council on the lead candidate system.¹⁰² Some PEAM interlocutors have voiced a clear commitment to the process as such, whereby the EUPPs take different approaches in nominating and presenting their lead candidates.

Following the 2014 elections, the regulation of EUPP was put on a new legal basis with the foundation of the Authority for Political Parties and Political Foundations (APPF or Authority).¹⁰³ The APPF was established for the purpose of registering, controlling and imposing sanctions¹⁰⁴ on EUPP and European political foundations pursuant to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014.¹⁰⁵ Since the last European elections in 2019, the Authority has grown in strength and capacity, and sees its mandate extending to the protection against external interference, including the use of deep fakes. The APPF has registered ten European political parties¹⁰⁶ and ten European political foundations,¹⁰⁷ performs annual compliance controls of the parties’ incomes and expenditures¹⁰⁸, and has also removed two political parties and one political foundation from the register.¹⁰⁹ Some EUPPs voiced criticism of the APPF concerning their stringency and broad interpretation of their oversight capacity.

⁹⁹ [C\(2023\) 8626 final](#): 15.

¹⁰⁰ EPRS: [Political parties, voter mobilisation and the 1979 European elections](#). 2023.

¹⁰¹ EPRS: [Spitzenkandidaten or the lead candidate process. Ways to Europeanise elections to the EP](#). 2023.

¹⁰² EP [P9_TA\(2023\)0455](#), 12 December 2023.

¹⁰³ [Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations](#)

¹⁰⁴ The APPF provides feedback to parties and foundations, uses preventive compliance measures, applies corrective measures before resorting to sanctions, and has sanctioned an EUPP for the first time in 2023.

¹⁰⁵ [Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) No 1141/2014](#).

¹⁰⁶ Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE), European People’s Party (EPP), Party of European Socialists (PES), European Democratic Party (PDE/EDP), European Free Alliance (EFA), European Green Party (EGP), the Party of the European Left (European Left), the European Christian Political Movement (ECPM), European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR), and the Identity and Democracy Party (ID).

¹⁰⁷ Political foundations are complementary organisations to political parties for activities of political education or training, and need to be affiliated with a political party; but only political parties can run for elections.

¹⁰⁸ The APPF cannot address donors directly.

¹⁰⁹ Europa Terra Nostra, Alliance for Peace and Freedom, and Alliance of European National Movements.

IX. Political Party and Campaign Finance

The EU and all its MS have ratified the UN Convention against Corruption which provides guidance to regulate political party and campaign finance. While the European rules for the campaigns of EUPPs lack some transparency measures, the variance of MS' regulations for campaign incomes, expenditures, oversight and sanctions creates different conditions for the candidates to campaign and also presents challenges for the EUPPs' campaigns. MS laws show a wide discrepancy in how they build risk prevention in political finance, how they define and permit donations, and in their sanctioning capacity.¹¹⁰ Regulation 1141/2014 prohibits EUPPs to receive anonymous donations or contributions. Donations to national political parties, however, can allow anonymous or foreign funding, which can potentially circumvent the rules of funding for EUPPs through contributions they receive from member parties.¹¹¹ Third party campaigns remain largely unregulated across the EU MS.

The budget of EUPPs has seen a steep increase over time, with €43.6 million allocated from the EP in 2023. The EPP receives some €12.4 million, the PES around €8.5 million, ALDE €5.2 million, and the EGP close to €4.5 million.¹¹² Registration by the APPF, together with the condition of having at least one MEP, is a pre-condition for a EUPP to apply for funding. Political parties in the EU MS have to display on their websites the logo and the programme of the European political parties to which they are affiliated as a requirement for the EUPP to receive EU funding.¹¹³ The funding of EUPPs has become more proportional to their support in European elections over time, as a total of 90 per cent (previously 85) of party funding is distributed in proportion to the parties' share of MEPs. An amendment to the rules on EUPP finance has been discussed since November 2021, but is unlikely to be passed and affect the 2024 elections.

X. Media Environment

The EC reiterates in its rule of law report¹¹⁴ that free and diverse media are an essential part of a robust and independent democracy and that state influence over media can undermine freedom of speech and expression, as well as receiving or imparting information. According to the Media Pluralism Monitor,¹¹⁵ media pluralism in Europe is declining and only seven MS are in a generally safe situation (BE, DE, DK, FR, LT, NL, SE).

In September 2022, the EC published a Proposal for establishing a common framework for the media, the European Media Freedom Act.¹¹⁶ The Regulation, which was agreed on 15 December 2023, aims to tackle the impact of concentrations and lack of transparency in relation to media ownership. It also stipulates safeguards to editorial independence and foster journalists' safety from disclosure of sources and surveillance through spywares. The proposal also envisages to establish a

¹¹⁰ Compare the CoE's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) Third Evaluation Round findings.

¹¹¹ Compare APPF: [Provisions of national law affecting European political parties and European political foundations](#). 2023, also EPDE: [Puzzling rules-equal game?](#) 2022.

¹¹² European Parliament – [List of Parties indicating their funding amounts](#) (2023).

¹¹³ [European Parliament News](#), 17 April 2018.

¹¹⁴ EC, [rule of law report 2022](#).

¹¹⁵ The [Media Pluralism Monitor](#) assesses the potential weaknesses in national media systems; See [2023 Report](#).

¹¹⁶ [European Media Freedom Act](#)

new European Board for Media Services, which would replace the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (ERGA).¹¹⁷ Additionally, the EC published the Recommendation on internal safeguards for editorial independence and ownership transparency in the media sector.¹¹⁸

The EU further initiated measures against strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) in 2022.¹¹⁹ Following the establishment of an “Expert group against SLAPPs”¹²⁰ in 2020 and funding civil society initiatives related to the safety of journalists and SLAPPs, such as the Media Freedom Rapid Response (MFRR)¹²¹ consortium and the Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe (CASE Coalition),¹²² the EC has also adopted legislative initiatives. In April 2022, the EC published a proposal for the Directive on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings.¹²³ Although CSOs have welcomed the proposal for the Directive, they criticised amendments proposed by the Council of the EU in March 2023 as weakening fundamental mechanisms protecting defendants, in particular those provisions related to cross-border cases, and raising the threshold for cases to fall within the directive’s scope.¹²⁴

XI. Online Campaign and Social Media Regulation

The DSA sets a robust framework for digital platforms, compelling them to ensure user rights, address misinformation, combat hate speech, and promptly remove illegal content.¹²⁵ The new European legislation applies to all providers that offer services in the EU regardless of their place of registration and singles out Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) as well as Very Large Online Search Engines (VLOSEs), which are platforms with more than 45 million average monthly active users in the EU.¹²⁶ The enhanced transparency rules provide for VLOPs and VLOSEs to disclose the number of removal orders issued by national authorities as well as all notices about the presence of illegal content highlighted by trusted flaggers. Assigned MS authorities will enforce the DSA in MS while for VLOPs and VLOSEs the EC will be the enforcement body.

The DSA prohibits targeted advertising only for minors (those aged 18 years or under) and forbids the use of sensitive information, such as sexual orientation, religion, or ethnicity, and aims to significantly expedite the removal of illicit content. The new European legislation requires all online platforms to publicly report on how they use automated content moderation tools, the tools’ error rates, and information about training and assistance they provide to their content moderators.¹²⁷ For the first time, unified criteria exist for what are known as notice-and-action procedures, which determine when and if online platforms should be held accountable for the dissemination of illegal content. VLOPs and VLOSEs must conduct risk assessments including on any actual or foreseeable negative effect on electoral processes and civic discourse and requires them to submit annual

¹¹⁷ [ERGA](#)

¹¹⁸ [Recommendation on internal safeguards for editorial independence and ownership transparency](#)

¹¹⁹ [EC proposal 2022](#).

¹²⁰ [Expert group against SLAPPs](#)

¹²¹ [Media Freedom Rapid Response](#)

¹²² [Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe, PATFox](#)

¹²³ [Proposal for the SLAPP Directive](#).

¹²⁴ On 8 November 2023, 74 CSOs have issued an [open letter](#) to reiterate their concerns regarding the anti-SLAPP Directive.

¹²⁵ See: EP: [EU Digital Markets Act and Digital Services Act explained](#), updated August 2023.

¹²⁶ [EC press release to DSA](#), 25 April 2023.

¹²⁷ AccessNow. [The Digital Services Act: your guide to the EU’s new content moderation rules](#), 17 March 2023.

independent third-party audits. PEAM interlocutors expressed doubts whether EU MS and the appointed MS authorities will have the capacity to fully oversee the implementation of the new law and ensure enforcement in case of breach of law during the upcoming EP elections.

The EU Regulation on the TTPA¹²⁸ was drafted with the aim to enhance transparency of political advertising and of AI-powered online campaigning,¹²⁹ and to counter disinformation, as online news platforms are becoming increasingly important as the first source of news among EU citizens. Political agreement on the TTPA was reached between the EP and Council.¹³⁰ As most of the TTPA will only become applicable after the 2024 EP elections, for the upcoming elections political advertising online will be regulated on the basis of the voluntary self-regulatory commitment of major platforms and the new DSA where applicable besides national legislation. The self-regulatory Code of Practice against Disinformation¹³¹ updated in 2022 has failed to solve many of the problems regarding political advertising, such as lack of independent third party oversight. X (formerly Twitter), an important platform for political debate, has withdrawn from the Code.¹³²

Various initiatives have been established to safeguard the EP elections against disinformation.¹³³ The EU's East Stratcom Task Force,¹³⁴ identifies analyses and assesses Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)¹³⁵ with the aim to facilitate a more targeted and effective response to FIMI to protect the EU's democratic processes, security and citizens.¹³⁶ The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)¹³⁷ brings together organisations and experts as a European fact checkers network. The CSO network European Digital Rights (EDRi) monitors digital human rights, while the CSO DisinfoLab focuses on fighting disinformation.¹³⁸

XII. Complaints and Appeals

The EU law does not outline any common election-related complaints and appeals procedures, which are left to MS to regulate. The effectiveness of legal redress for any irregularities related to EP elections thus remains dependent on the set-up and functioning of MS' electoral dispute resolution systems.

National regulations on electoral dispute resolution have been assessed by the Venice Commission as requiring improvement in several respects.¹³⁹ In a number of States, the Venice Commission has noted as problematic the absence of or insufficiently short deadlines for the

¹²⁸ [EC; Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising Regulation Initiative.](#)

¹²⁹ See also [OSCE RFoM Policy paper on AI and freedom of expression in political competition and elections](#), 15 April 2021.

¹³⁰ [Proposal for a Regulation of the EP and of the Council on the transparency and targeting of political advertising.](#)

¹³¹ [Code of Practice against Disinformation](#)

¹³² In December 2023 the [EC has opened formal proceedings](#) to assess whether X may have breached the DSA.

¹³³ [EP Resolution on the European Elections 2024](#), 12 December 2023.

¹³⁴ [EU East StratCom Task Force](#)

¹³⁵ [Speech by the High Representative/ Vice-President Josep Borrell](#), 23 January 2024.

¹³⁶ See also EP: [Foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union](#), 2022.

¹³⁷ [EDMO Task Force on 2024 EP Elections](#)

¹³⁸ [EDRi; EUDisinfoLab.](#)

¹³⁹ VC [Report on Election Dispute Resolution](#), 8 October 2020. While the VC, as well as ODHR reports cited below mostly pertain to national elections, electoral dispute resolution procedures applicable to EP elections are typically similar to those for other types of elections and could therefore be deemed indicative of the overall MS approach to electoral dispute resolution.

submission and adjudication of complaints and appeals,¹⁴⁰ the lack of involvement of any court in the dispute resolution process,¹⁴¹ and the (in)validation of election results by ad hoc or elected bodies.¹⁴² Similar concerns with elements of electoral dispute resolution systems have been expressed by the OSCE/ODIHR in its election assessment reports in several EU countries.¹⁴³ In its report on the 2009 EP elections, the OSCE/ODIHR has recommended that decisions on election results in MS should include the possibility of appeal to a court.

Some review mechanisms of relevance to EP elections exist also at the EU level. This includes the possibility to challenge undue implementation of EU laws by MS or the incompatibility of national laws and practice with EU laws before the European Commission and the CJEU.¹⁴⁴ Two MS, HU and PL, have been subject to CJEU rulings and are currently subject to infringement proceedings under TEU Article 7 for breaches of rule of law and failures to guarantee judicial independence.¹⁴⁵

XIII. Civic Space and Election Observation

A. Civic Space

In 2022–2023, all three major EU institutions acknowledged pressure against civic space in official documents.¹⁴⁶ The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has been pointing to hurdles for CSOs and human rights defenders since 2018.¹⁴⁷ Several MS have set up or improved structures and processes for ensuring meaningful civil society engagement. While European, regional and international institutions emphasise the important role of civil society in safeguarding and promoting human rights and democracy, CSOs in the EU face diverse challenges that hamper their ability to exercise this role, with a negative trend. Since the last European elections, concerns were raised about the legal, political and practical challenges in what regards the regulatory environment, the availability and accessibility of resources, difficulties in accessing decision-makers and providing input into policymaking, and regarding

¹⁴⁰ Timelines longer than good-practice 3-5 days are provided for complaints and/or appeals in AT, BE, BG, CZ, FR, FI, DE, IT, IE, NL, PL, SK, SE and for complaints on election results also in SI and DK.

¹⁴¹ AT, DK, FI, IE, LU, SE.

¹⁴² Parliament is vested with such authority in SI, partially LT, BE, DK, IT, LU, and NL, with the latter five countries not allowing judicial appeal on the parliament's decision to validate election results.

¹⁴³ See, inter alia, OSCE/ODIHR reports on [DK](#), [IT](#), [LV](#), [NL](#), [PL](#), and [SK](#).

¹⁴⁴ Based on TEU Art 4(3), MS have a duty to take all measures necessary to implement provisions of EU law, including by establishing effective remedies and effective sanctions. Based on TFEU Art 258, the EC may initiate an infringement procedure against a MS if it is suspected of breaching EU law. See the [2019 Election-Watch.EU EAM Final Report](#), pages 9-10, for more details on EU-level complaint and review instruments.

¹⁴⁵ [EC 2023 Rule of Law Report: The rule of law situation in the European Union](#), 5 July 2023.

¹⁴⁶ According to the UN, "civic space is the environment that enables people and groups – or 'civic space actors' – to participate meaningfully in the political, economic, social and cultural life of their societies". [UN Guidance Note on Protection and Promotion of Civic Space](#), September 2020; The [European Parliament resolution on the shrinking space for civil society in Europe](#) (February 2022), the [Annual Report on the Application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#), December 2022; and the [Council conclusions on the role of the civic space in protecting and promoting fundamental rights in the EU](#), February 2023.

¹⁴⁷ [Challenges facing civil society working on human rights in the EU](#) (2018) and annual updates.

the safety of CSOs.¹⁴⁸ The situation of citizen election observers – who have been recognised as human rights defenders by the UN Special Rapporteurs¹⁴⁹ – is a case in point.

B. Election Observation in the EU

The EC has recently recommended that MS should facilitate and establish enabling environments for independent election observation including by citizens.¹⁵⁰ Yet, MS' legislation and approaches – despite shared commitments in the OSCE¹⁵¹ – differ greatly. Only seven Member States (BG, HR, FI, LT, PL, RO, SI) have legislation and accreditation systems in place for both international and domestic observers. Five additional countries (AT, CZ, HU, LU, NL) have legislation¹⁵² and an accreditation system for international observers, but not for domestic observers; BE only permits international observers; EE and SK permit election observation without accreditation; and LV accredits international and national observers without a corresponding legal framework. In six MS (DE, DK, FR, ES, MT, SE), while legislation does not contain explicit provisions for election observation, voting and counting, processes are open to the public. The remaining five MS (CY, GR, IE, IT, PT) do not have any framework for election observation (ANNEX I).

In 2019, Election-Watch.EU conducted a comprehensive EAM of the EP elections covering the then 28 MS and was accredited in 12 MS. The EAM findings and recommendations were presented to the EP Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO) and ECNE, and the report was referenced by the EC¹⁵³ and in subsequent electoral reform debates. The European students' forum (AEGEE) deployed young observers in 18 MS in 2019.¹⁵⁴ ODIHR deployed an Elections Expert Team in 2004 and an Elections Expert Group in 2009, and has conducted a Needs Assessment Mission ahead of the 2024 elections.¹⁵⁵ While a European support framework for citizen-based election observation organisations is still missing, the EC, representatives of EU institutions and PEAM interlocutors expressed increasing support for citizen election observation of the 2024 EP elections.

¹⁴⁸ [FRA](#) has consulted CSOs every year about the experiences and challenges they face in their work and has recommended improvements in all these areas in its "[Protecting civil society – Update 2023](#)" report. Country studies are available for [all EU MS](#). Also respondents to the [2022 OECD Report](#) on "The Protection and Promotion of Civic Space" included 20 EU MS (AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, EL, IE, IT, LT, LV, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK, and SL). See also [civicspacewatch.eu](#).

¹⁴⁹ [The Situation of Election Observers as Human Rights Defenders](#), 27 October 2022.

¹⁵⁰ EC [Recommendation on inclusive and resilient electoral processes in the Union](#), 2023

¹⁵¹ All EU MS are OSCE participating States and have committed to the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) that provides for mutual election observation (paragraph 8).

¹⁵² Partly restricted: In AT, this is limited to election observers from the OSCE; in CZ, it applies only to presidential elections; and in SK election observation applies only to voting and counting on election day (without accreditation).

¹⁵³ EC staff working document 2019 EP elections, [COM\(2020\) 252 final](#).

¹⁵⁴ [Agora Election Observation](#)

¹⁵⁵ For an overview of OSCE/ODIHR mission reports see [ODIHR elections website](#).

XIV. Conclusions and Recommendations

All PEAM interlocutors expressed a high level of confidence in the various aspects of the electoral processes and highlighted mal-intended interference, the implementation of the new DSA regulation, and disinformation as key challenges of the upcoming June 2024 EP elections. While efforts appear to have been undertaken in response to several 2019 EAM recommendations, a far-reaching European electoral reform package agreed and passed by the EP has not succeeded to pass the Council of the EU and overcome the reservation by some MS.

Since the 2019 EP elections, which stand out as a robust demonstration of democratic engagement and increased voter turnout, there has been further growing concern among European citizens about their representation in the EP and the trajectory of the European project. Also in response to an anticipated strong showing of EU-critical, populist and in some MS anti-democratic parties, the ongoing need for vigilance, monitoring, and continuous development to safeguard electoral integrity remains crucial to uphold civil and political rights. European responses to these trends should prioritise increasing five dimensions, namely equality, inclusion, transparency, accountability, and resilience in electoral processes.

Involving citizens and organised civil society in the electoral process as observers fosters ownership, trust, and transparency, aligning with democratic decision-making ideals. Given the broad support received during the PEAM by EP election interlocutors, the PEAM recommends deploying a comprehensive EAM to the 2024 EP elections with a core team of experts in Brussels as well as focal points and teams or likeminded CSOs covering the 27 MS. The main thematic focus of the planned EAM includes the implementation of EU-level regulations and recommendations, including the DSA, voter registration, the participation of mobile EU citizens, the regulation of online campaigning, political party and campaign finance, the media environment, the effectiveness of resilience measures against disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks and hate speech, as well as the inclusion of youth, women and persons with disabilities, among other areas. It is also important to ensure meaningful civil society engagement before, during and after the elections, and to take measures to promote and safeguard civic space.

Election-Watch.EU stands ready to engage in a follow-up process after the election to address previous EAM recommendations, assist in European electoral reforms, and encourages the authorities to also consider issues raised by interlocutors during the course of the PEAM. The PEAM further refers to the electoral recommendations published in the Supporting Engagement in European Elections and Democratic Societies (SEEDS) project policy paper “Enhancing the integrity of the 2024 European Parliament elections”.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ [SEEDS Policy Paper](#), August 2023.

ANNEX I: Regulation for Election Observation in EU Member States

	Voting and counting open to the public	Law foresees international election observation	Accreditation for international observers	Law foresees national election observation	Accreditation for national observers	Election-Watch.EU accredited in 2019
Austria		X ¹⁵⁷	X			
Belgium	X	X				
Bulgaria		X	X	X	X	X
Croatia		X	X	X	X	X
Cyprus						X
Czech Republic		(X) ¹⁵⁸	(X) ¹⁵⁹			
Denmark	X					
Estonia	X	X		X		
Finland		X	X	X	X	X
France	X					
Germany	X					
Greece						
Hungary		X ¹⁶⁰	X			X
Ireland						
Italy						
Latvia	X		X		X	X
Lithuania		X	X	X	X	X
Luxembourg		X	X			
Malta	X					X
Netherlands	X	X	X			X
Poland		X	X	X	X	X
Portugal						
Romania	X	X	X	X	X	X
Slovakia	X	X ¹⁶¹		X ¹⁶²		
Slovenia		X	X	X	X	
Spain	X					
Sweden	X					

¹⁵⁷ Only by OSCE/ODIHR.

¹⁵⁸ For Presidential elections only.

¹⁵⁹ For Presidential elections only.

¹⁶⁰ Only by OSCE/ODIHR.

¹⁶¹ Limited to voting and counting on election day.

¹⁶² Limited to voting and counting on election day.

ANNEX II: Table of Meetings

European Parliament

Rainer Wieland, Vice-President of the European Parliament, European People's Party
Charles Goerens, Member of the European Parliament, Renew Europe Group
Domènec Ruiz Devesa, Member of the European Parliament, Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament

Philipp Schulmeister, Director for Campaigns
Albrecht John, Civil Society Outreach Unit
Gonzalo de Mendoza Asensi, Administrator, Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union, Directorate for Democracy Support, Election Observation and follow-up Unit (ELEC)
Micaela del Monte, Head of Unit, European Parliamentary Research Service
Silvia Kotanidis, Researcher, European Parliamentary Research Service
Kamil Baranik, Researcher, European Parliamentary Research Service
Rafal Manko, Researcher, European Parliamentary Research Service

Council of the European Union

Juan Hernandez Alfaro, General Affairs Counsellor, Spanish presidency of the Council of the EU
Sofia Torres Bizou, Policy Officer, Spanish presidency of the Council of the EU
Peter Booms, Delegate - Working Group on Enhancing Resilience & Countering Hybrid Threats, Permanent Representation of Belgium to the EU / Belgian presidency of the Council of the EU
Côme Van Autrye, Attaché – Interinstitutional affairs, Permanent Representation of Belgium to the EU / Belgian presidency of the Council of the EU

Maria Marotta, Director, General and Institutional Policy – GIP, Interinstitutional Relations
Delphine Galon, Political Administrator, General and Institutional Policy – GIP, Interinstitutional Relations
Emanuele Ricci, Political Administrator, General and Institutional Policy – GIP, Interinstitutional Relations

European External Action Service

Robert Huqi, Division Strategic Communication, Task Forces and Information Analysis/ Officers

European Commission

Marie-Helene Boulanger, Head of Unit, Democracy, Union Citizenship and Free Movement, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
Harry Panagopulos, Democracy, Union Citizenship and Free Movement, DG for Justice and Consumers
Cristian-Alexandru Leahu, Democracy, Union Citizenship and Free Movement, DG for Justice and Consumers

Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations (APPF)

Pascal Schonard, Director
Thomas Wiese, Team Leader Compliance Controls
Emanuela Gulino, Legal Advisor

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Robert-Jan Uhl, Stakeholder Relations Officer

Sanja Vovicic, Project Manager

OSCE / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

Meaghan Fitzgerald, Head of Election Department

Martina Barker-Ciganikova, Election Advisor

Kseniya Dashutina, Election Advisor

Cristi Mihalache, Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues

OSCE / High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM)

Elżbieta Kuzborska-Pach, Senior Legal Advisor

Council of Europe (CoE)

Prof. Petra Roter, President, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Sophie Meudal-Leenders, Administrative Officer, Group of States against Corruption (GRECO)

European Political Parties¹⁶³

Karine Milheiro, Research and Strategic Planning, European People's Party (EPP)

Didrik de Schaetzen, Secretary General, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

Gisela Ducaille Sinués, Compliance Officer, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

Ioana Pavel, Campaign Assistant, Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

Benedetta de Marte, Secretary General, European Green Party (EGP)

Carlotta Weber, Political Advisor, European Green Party (EGP)

Sybren Kooistra, Campaign Manager, European Green Party (EGP)

Civil Society

Noemi Arcidiacono, Director of Missions, Agora Election Observation

Gianni Dibiasse, Advisory Board, Agora Election Observation

Carlotta Besozzi, Director, Civil Society Europe

Maria Diaz Crego, constitutional lawyer and independent expert

Giovanni Zagni, Director, Pagella Politica / European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)

Tommaso Canetta, Deputy Director / European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)

Diego Naranjo, Head of Policy, European Digital Rights (EDRI)

Ken Godfrey, Executive Director, European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)

Álvaro González Pérez, Policy Officer, European Youth Forum

Eszter Hartay, Program Director, European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL)

Jonneke van de Kamp, Project and Comm Assistant, European Center for Not-for-Profit Law

David Levine, Senior Elections Integrity Fellow, German Marshall Fund

Michael Meyer-Resende, Executive Director, Democracy Reporting International (DRI)

Dennis Wenzl, Outreach Officer, Democracy Reporting International (DRI)

Alejandro Moledo, Deputy Director, European Disability Forum (EDF)

¹⁶³ Attempts to set up meetings with the European Conservative and Reformists (ECR) Party and Identity and Democracy (ID) Party were unsuccessful.

Sophie Pornschlegel, Director of Studies and Development, Europe Jacques Delors
Vitor Teixeira, Senior Policy Officer, Transparency International (TI)

The Election-Watch.EU PEAM attended further

International IDEA, The Global State of Democracy 2023: The New Checks and Balances, Mission of Norway to the European Union, 17 November 2023, Brussels;
Follow-up on Implementation to Recommendations Conference, 28-29 November, Brussels;
European Day of Persons with Disabilities, 30 November 2023, Brussels;

Preliminary results were discussed with 27 Election-Watch.EU focal points and partners at Supporting Engagement in European Elections and Democratic Societies (SEEEDS) Workshop, „Ensuring the integrity of the 2024 European Parliament elections: Citizens-to-citizens capacity building”, 6-8 December 2023, Brussels.

ANNEX III: List of 2019 EP Elections EAM recommendations

Electoral reform process

1. Further concerted efforts are required on the part of European institutions and EU Member States to **continue the initiated electoral reforms**. Past recommendations and long-standing issues and concerns, stemming inter alia from the insufficient consistency of national electoral rules and varying timeframes for key electoral processes, need to be addressed.
2. **Further electoral reforms** at the EU level and in individual Member States would be best developed and adopted as part of an **inclusive, consultative and participatory process**, with the involvement of all stakeholders, including the civil society and citizen observer organizations.
3. The **'Spitzenkandidaten principle'** should be reviewed to ensure greater cohesion among European institutions and Member States **regarding its purpose and expected impact, and to enhance clarity for the electorate**.

Electoral system

4. While recognizing the complex nature of seat distribution in a supra-national body, further efforts are required in order to **adopt an objective, fair, durable and transparent method for the allocation of seats in the European Parliament**. The method should facilitate and include clear procedures on periodic review to reflect shifts in population numbers.

Suffrage rights

5. In order to **ensure the equality of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate across the EU** and to narrow the disparity in national approaches to suffrage rights, additional common European minimum voter and candidate eligibility criteria should be considered. These should strive to harmonize the requirements related to the minimum voting age, residency requirements, independent candidacy, permissible restrictions on suffrage rights, and measures to support equal participation of women and men.

Persons with Disabilities

6. Remaining barriers to effective **electoral participation of persons with disabilities** should be removed, including those related to restrictions on suffrage rights based on mental/intellectual disability, to the lack of access to polling stations, and to barriers to accessible information. Measures aimed at supporting independent and informed voting and decision-making by persons with disabilities should be prioritized.

Voter registration

7. To effectively elicit and **prevent possible multiple registration and voting**, the coordination and voter data exchange mechanisms between EU Member States require considerable improvement. Further guidelines could be developed to ensure the uniformity of format and the scope of data to be exchanged. Solutions need to be identified for the issue of different voter registration cut-off dates to facilitate data exchange within common timeframes and in a timely manner.

Civic education

8. The EU, its Member States and the EP in particular should further **enhance civic education and encourage citizens to become active in democracy**, in their own society and at local level to promote democratic practices and electoral participation.

Alternative and advance voting methods

9. To fully ensure the equality of opportunities in the exercise of the right to vote in and across Member States, consideration could be given to **adopting common minimum requirements for the administration of alternative and advance voting methods**, in particular with regards to the uniformity of voter eligibility criteria.

Campaign finance

10. Consideration could be given to **further regulating the financing of national European campaigns** by European political parties in order to level the playing field across the EU. A distinction could be made between the ban on foreign funding that prevails in half of the EU Member States and the possibility of the financing of national European campaigns by European political parties.
11. Consideration could be given to **reviewing the spending limits within EU Member States** in order to create a more level playing field for the electoral contestants to campaign. Furthermore, the establishment of a spending limit at the European level that would apply to European political parties' campaigns could be envisaged.
12. To **strengthen the overall transparency of campaign spending** in the EU Member States, the rules for reporting and disclosure of campaign income and expenses could be reviewed and further enhanced.
13. Consideration could be given to further define the type and nature of cooperation between the APPF, the Authorising Officer of the European Parliament and the competent Member States' political finance oversight bodies with regard to campaign finance supervision in order to **enhance the effectiveness of the control carried out at the European and national levels**. Further consideration might be given to spelling out the respective tasks and jurisdictions of each of these bodies to **enhance the overall campaign spending accountability**.

Social media regulation

14. To effectively **promote a level playing field and transparency in campaigns, to protect the privacy of European citizens and to safeguard electoral processes against manipulation and disinformation**, the EU and its Member States should provide clear regulations, coherent implementation and independent oversight of political campaigns in social media and online platforms.
15. To enhance effective electoral campaign oversight and better detection and analysis of disinformation campaigns, **social media platforms should give meaningful access to data to election observers and researchers** in line with personal data protection rules.

Election observation

16. All EU Member States should include in their legislation provisions to **explicitly allow for access and accreditation of international and national election observation** according to international principles throughout the electoral process.