



## European Parliament elections 2014

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Voting in the 2014 European Parliament elections takes place across the EU from 22 to 25 May. In the United Kingdom, voting will be on Thursday 22 May 2014.

This note gives an overview of the arrangements for the election, and looks briefly at the European political parties and political groups in the EP. The 2014 elections are the first to be held under Lisbon Treaty provisions, which gave the European Parliament greater influence over the choice of President of the European Commission.

The note also looks at the election campaign at the UK and EU-wide level and provides an outlook on the possible outcome, especially concerning voter turnout and the predicted success of anti-European and far-right parties. Finally, the note gives a summary of the post-election timeline, both in terms of the new European Parliament itself and the appointment of a new European Commission, which is set to take place in the second half of 2014.

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## **1 Introduction**

European Parliament (EP) elections take place every five years and will next take place on 22-25 May 2014. Seats are divided roughly proportionately to the population of each of the 28 European Union (EU) Member States, with allocations ranging from 96 for the largest State (Germany) and six for the smallest States (Estonia, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Malta). According to the Lisbon Treaty, which came into force during the 2009-2014 EP term, the number of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) cannot exceed 751. The number of United Kingdom MEPs at these elections will be 73, elected in 12 European electoral regions, each represented by between three and ten MEPs.

## **2 Electoral arrangements**

MEPs were initially appointed by national parliaments, but have been directly elected since 1979. The procedures for electing MEPs are governed both by EU legislation laying out rules common to all Member States and by specific national provisions which vary from one State to another.

### **2.1 EU-wide common rules**

The Maastricht Treaty in 1992 was the first to provide that EP elections must be held in accordance with uniform rules. Article 223 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states that the elections must be by direct universal suffrage. The Treaty also provides, in Article 22 of the TFEU, that every EU citizen residing in a Member State other than their country of origin is entitled to vote and stand in European elections in their country of residence. Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in the EP elections acquired the status of a fundamental right in Article 29 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Alongside these Treaty provisions, EU legislation also lays out a number of common rules, most notably that the EP elections must be based on proportional representation, using either the list system or the single transferable vote system.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, EU legislation lists several positions which are incompatible with being an MEP, including being a member of a national government or national parliament, or an active official of the European institutions. Some Member States lay out further incompatibilities in national legislation.

The dates of the election period are determined at EU level but the exact polling date and opening hours vary according to national electoral laws and traditions. The 2014 European elections will take place on 22-25 May. The UK and the Netherlands will vote first on 22 May, followed by Ireland on 23 May, Czech Republic on 23-24 May and Latvia, Malta and Slovakia on 24 May. The remaining 21 Member States will hold their election on 25 May.

### **2.2 National provisions**

Elections to the EP are still, to a large extent, organised according to national legislation and traditions. The electoral system used in Great Britain is a closed list system, with political parties establishing the order of candidates and voters therefore only casting their vote for a party. The seats are allocated in successive rounds using the d'Hondt quota system. In each round, votes cast for each party are divided by the number of seats the party has already been allocated in the region plus one. The party with the highest remaining total in the round wins the seat. In Northern Ireland a system of single transferable vote is used, which

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<sup>1</sup> Council Decision 2002/772/EC

reallocates the surplus votes of those elected and the votes of those eliminated to the remaining candidates.

Each Member State may establish constituencies for the EP elections, with the UK divided into 12 electoral regions: nine English regions, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The UK is one of only four Member States to use regional constituencies, the other three being France, Ireland and Italy. Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Poland organise the functioning of their elections in separate constituencies, but election results are still determined at national level.

Various rules determining the entitlement to vote and stand as a candidate are laid out at national level. The voting age in all Member States is 18, except Austria where it is 16. Apart from the requirement of citizenship of an EU Member State, which is common to all the Member States (with the exception of the UK, where certain Commonwealth citizens are also allowed to vote in and stand for election to the European Parliament), the rules governing eligibility to stand for election vary from one country to another. Voting is compulsory in Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg.

### 3 European political parties and groups

Article 10 (4) of the Treaty on European Union reads:

Political parties at European level contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of citizens of the Union.

A European political party is an organisation following a political programme, which is usually composed of ideologically like-minded national parties, rather than individuals. Most of the parties are represented in the EP through affiliated political groups. Most groups are based on a single European political party or can include more than one European party, as well as national parties and independents. The number of political groups has hardly changed since the first direct EP elections in 1979. There were seven then, increasing to 10 in 1989 and falling to seven again in 1999. During the 2009-14 term, the EP consisted of seven political groups and more than 150 national parties.

#### 3.1 Political groups in the 2009-14 European Parliament term

<b>EP political group</b>	<b>Affiliated European political parties</b>	<b>Number of MEPs</b>	<b>Affiliated UK political parties</b>
European People's Party (EPP)	European People's Party + 1 unaffiliated national party	273	
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)	Party of European Socialists (PES) + 3 unaffiliated national parties	196	Labour Party
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE)	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE) and the European Democratic Party (EDP) + 3 independents	83	Liberal Democrat Party

The Greens-European Free Alliance (Greens-EFA)	European Green Party (EGP) and the European Free Alliance (EFA) + 2 unaffiliated national parties and 2 independents	57	Green Party Plaid Cymru Scottish National Party (SNP)
European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists (AECR) and the European Christian Political Movement (ECPM) + 1 unaffiliated national party and 2 independents	57	Conservative Party Ulster Conservatives and Unionists
European United Left-Nordic Green Left (GUE-NGL)	Party of the European Left (PEL) and the Nordic Green Left Alliance (NGLA) + 10 unaffiliated national parties	35	Sinn Féin
Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD)	Movement for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy (MELD) + 2 unaffiliated national parties and 2 independents	31	UK Independence Party (UKIP)
Non-Inscrits (NI)	Alliance of European National Movements (AENM) +14 unaffiliated national parties and 3 independents	33	Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) British National Party (BNP) UK Independence Party (UKIP) <sup>2</sup> British Democratic Party <sup>3</sup> An Independence from Europe <sup>4</sup> We Demand a Referendum <sup>5</sup>

For a political group to be formally recognised in the EP, it must fulfil the conditions laid down in Rules 29, 30 and 31 of the EP's [Rules of Procedure](#). A group must comprise at least 25 MEPs, representing at least one-quarter of the Member States. Rule 29 also states that the group must be based on political affinity, but the EP "need not normally evaluate" this. Only when the MEPs concerned explicitly deny that they have political affinity can the EP evaluate whether the group has been constituted in accordance with the rules.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In March 2011, Trevor Colman left the EFD group but continued to represent UKIP as a Non-Inscrit.

<sup>3</sup> Former BNP member Andrew Brons resigned the BNP whip in October 2012 and became patron of the British Democratic Party in February 2013

<sup>4</sup> Mike Nattrass was elected as a UKIP MEP in 2004, but left the party in September 2013. In November 2013, he created a new party under the name An Independence from Europe, also known as An Independence Party

<sup>5</sup> Former UKIP MEP Nikki Sinclaire set up the We Demand a Referendum Party in 2012, after leaving UKIP in January 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Rule 29, European Parliament's Rules of Procedure

### **3.2 Political groups in the new European Parliament term**

Prior to the elections on 22-25 May, not all political parties have made their intentions known regarding which political groups they intend to affiliate themselves to following the elections. Any new group which may emerge will need to meet the criteria laid out in the EP's Rules of Procedure as detailed above. *VoteWatch Europe* predicts that eight political groups are likely to be formed, consisting of the seven groups from the 2009-14 term and a new political group:

Most significantly we expect a new group to form - the European Alliance for Freedom (EAF), from the transnational party with that name - probably comprising FN from France, PVV from the Netherlands, FPÖ from Austria, VB from Belgium, LN from Italy, SNS from Slovakia, and SD from Sweden. It takes at least 25 MEPs from 7 countries to form a new group - we think EAF will reach that threshold.<sup>7</sup>

## **4 The nomination of the President of the European Commission**

Since the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the nomination of the President of the European Commission has been aligned with the elections of the EP. The Commission President is elected for a renewable five-year term starting six months after the EP elections. One of the first major tasks of the EP at the start of its term is therefore to approve the candidate for Commission President put forward by the heads of state and government in the European Council.

Prior to the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the provisions on the nomination of the President of the Commission read:

The Council, meeting in the composition of Heads of State or Government and acting by a qualified majority, shall nominate the person it intends to appoint as President of the Commission; the nomination shall be approved by the European Parliament.<sup>8</sup>

The Lisbon Treaty considerably amended these provisions, which now read:

Taking into account the elections to the European Parliament and after having held the appropriate consultations, the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall propose to the European Parliament a candidate for President of the Commission. This candidate shall be elected by the European Parliament by a majority of its component members.<sup>9</sup>

### **4.1 Interpretation of Treaty provisions by the European political groups and parties**

The main political groups in the EP have interpreted the revised Treaty provisions as meaning that the candidate of the largest group in the EP following the elections should be nominated as the Commission President. The EP adopted a non-binding resolution in July 2013 which confirmed this interpretation. It calls on all the European political parties to nominate a candidate in advance of the elections so that he or she could mount a European-wide campaign. On the nomination process for the Commission President, the resolution states that the EP:

Expects that, in this process, the candidate for Commission President put forward by the European political party that wins the most seats in the Parliament will be the first

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<sup>7</sup> Simon Hix, Doru Frantescu, Joan Manuel Lanfranco Pari and Michiel van Hulten, 'VoteWatch Europe analysis: what groups will form in the new EP?', 14 May 2014 at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/news.html#3944>

<sup>8</sup> Article 214 (2), Treaty Establishing the European Community, as amended by the Nice Treaty, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Article 17 (7), Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

to be considered, with a view to ascertaining his or her ability to secure the support of the necessary absolute majority in Parliament.<sup>10</sup>

The resolution was drafted by Andrew Duff, UK Liberal Democrat MEP, who said that the innovation would foster a more open, democratic process for appointing the Commission President, asserting that it would give the chosen candidate a “dual endorsement” from both MEPs and from heads of state and government.<sup>11</sup>

By March 2014, the majority of the main European parties had selected a candidate for the post as follows:

European political party	Candidate	Candidate background
European People’s Party (EPP)	Jean-Claude Juncker	Prime Minister of Luxembourg 1995-2013
Party of European Socialists (PES)	Martin Schulz	German MEP 1994- present President of the European Parliament 2012- present
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE)	Guy Verhofstadt	Prime Minister of Belgium 1999-2008 Belgian MEP 2009- present
European Green Party	José Bové Ska Keller	French MEP 2009-present German MEP 2009- present
Party of the European Left	Alexis Tsipras	Greek Leader of the Opposition 2012- present

The European Conservative and Reformists (ECR) party– to which the British Conservative Party belongs – and the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) party – to which the UK Independence Party (UKIP) belongs – both chose not to nominate a candidate for Commission President.

#### 4.2 Interpretation of Treaty provisions by the Commission

The current Commission has broadly endorsed the interpretation of the Treaty provisions by the main political groups in the EP, with Vice-President of the Commission, Viviane Reding stating that it would:

Strengthen the people’s voice in European democracy and make next year’s European elections a real debate about the future of Europe.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Paragraph 15, European Parliament resolution of 4 July 2013 on improving the practical arrangements for the holding of the European elections in 2014 (2013/2102(INI))

<sup>11</sup> Euractiv, The EU top jobs: Who’s next? 3 February 2014

<sup>12</sup> European Commission press release, ‘2014 European Parliament elections: Commission recommends that political parties nominate candidate for Commission president, March 12 2013

In his annual 'State of the Union' address to the European Parliament given in September 2012, Commission President José Manuel Barroso said:

An important means to deepen the pan-European political debate would be the presentation by European political parties of their candidate for the post of Commission President at the European Parliament elections already in 2014. This can be done without Treaty change. This would be a decisive step to make the possibility of a European choice offered by these elections even clearer. I call on the political parties to commit to this step and thus to further Europeanise these European elections.<sup>13</sup>

In March 2013, the Commission adopted a non-binding recommendation which stated that the political groups should nominate a candidate for Commission President ahead of the elections.<sup>14</sup>

#### **4.3 Interpretation of Treaty provisions by Heads of State and Government**

The interpretation of the Treaty provisions by the political parties and groups has been met with scepticism by several heads of state and government in the European Council.<sup>15</sup> According to media reports, Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, was initially reluctant to support the initiative of the political parties to choose candidates for the post ahead of the elections, stating that she did not see "any automaticity" between the party candidates and the filling of the post.<sup>16</sup> In February 2014, however, Merkel and her national party, the CDU, gave support to Jean-Claude Juncker as the EPP's nomination for the post.<sup>17</sup> David Cameron was reported to be similarly uneasy with the possibility of linking the party candidates for the elections with the appointment of the Commission President.<sup>18</sup>

In an interview on 19 May 2014, the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, refused to confirm whether the heads of state and government would nominate one of the candidates put forward by the European political parties to the post of Commission President. According to the *European Voice*:

The national leaders would, he said, respect the results of the elections. He was asked if nominating someone other than one of the five presidential candidates of the political parties would create a clash between Parliament and Council.

Van Rompuy said that the first thing would be to see the relative strengths of the political parties after the elections, to see what the big differences and small differences were. He would consult the Parliament – first the president (who is Martin Schulz, the candidate of the centre-left for the Commission presidency) and then the group leaders. He would then try to reach a balanced solution in such a way as to reduce the chances of a clash between Council and Parliament. "So, one of the five?" he was asked.

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<sup>13</sup> State of the Union 2012 Address, José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, 12 September 2012

<sup>14</sup> Commission Recommendation of 12.3.2013 on enhancing the democratic and efficient conduct of the elections to the European Parliament, C(2013) 1303

<sup>15</sup> See, for example: 'The Spitzenkandidats: EU Parliament Elections Become Explosive', Spiegel Online International, 7 March 2014 at <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/britian-leads-opposition-to-politicization-of-eu-commission-a-956849.html>

<sup>16</sup> European Voice, 'Merkel speaks out on appointment of Commission president', 31 October 2013

<sup>17</sup> Financial Times, 'Juncker wins Merkel backing for EU Commission presidency', 3 February 2014

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/britian-leads-opposition-to-politicization-of-eu-commission-a-956849.html>



“No,” he answered. “That ‘so’ is too much. I understand that the five candidates defend themselves and say it must be one of us. But we are going to make a choice that has both a majority in the Parliament and a large majority in the European Council.”<sup>19</sup>

## 5 The election campaign

### 5.1 The EU campaign

The European Parliament launched an awareness and information campaign for the 2014 elections in September 2013 with two slogans: “This time it’s different” and “Act. React. Impact.”. The campaign has a budget of €16 million and is running in all 28 EU Member States and in all 24 official EU languages.<sup>20</sup> A third of the campaign’s budget (around €5 million) is devoted to social media, including a dedicated website at [www.elections2014.eu](http://www.elections2014.eu), as well as presence on a range of other sites, such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

The EP’s campaign is split into four phases:<sup>21</sup> phase one from September to October 2013 aimed to explain the EP’s new powers and their implications for people living in the EU. Phase two, from October 2013 to February 2014, aimed to highlight five key topics which the EP was likely to focus its work on during the next term – the economy, jobs, quality of life, money and the EU in the world. Phase three is the “election campaign proper”, which started in February 2014, and focuses on raising awareness of the election dates. After the elections, the final phase will focus on the newly-elected European Parliament, its role in the election of the next Commission President and the inauguration of the new Commission.

For the first time, the candidates nominated for Commission President from the European political parties faced each other in a series of ‘Presidential Debates’ broadcast by national and European media. The biggest television debate took place on 15 May 2014, hosted by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which took place in the Brussels plenary chamber of the EP. It was shown on 49 TV channels and in 24 languages.<sup>22</sup>

Following the debate, Gavin Hewitt noted in a BBC News article:<sup>23</sup>

What gives the whole campaign a touch of unreality is the fact that the actual choice to lead the Commission will be made by the heads of government - and they may choose the candidate of the strongest party, but they may not, and there may be months of arguing and horse-trading.

He went on to say:

Certainly the main contest seems to be between Mr Juncker and Mr Schulz, but deals may be done and other names could surface. Both men know that David Cameron eyes them suspiciously as “federalists” who are determined to deepen European integration. Both candidates are also aware that, post-election, the British prime minister might try to block their candidacy.

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<sup>19</sup> ‘European Voice, No commitment from Van Rompuy to choose one of five candidates for Commission presidency’, 19 May 2014

<sup>20</sup> European Foundation Centre, ‘European elections 2014: Parliament’s information campaign now launched’, 19 September 2013 at [http://www.efc.be/news\\_events/Pages/news\\_European-elections-2014-Parliament%E2%80%99s-information-campaign-now-launched-.aspx](http://www.efc.be/news_events/Pages/news_European-elections-2014-Parliament%E2%80%99s-information-campaign-now-launched-.aspx)

<sup>21</sup> EP press release, 10 September 2013, ‘European Parliament launches information campaign towards 2014 elections’ at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20130906IPR18827/html/European-Parliament-launches-information-campaign-towards-2014-elections>

<sup>22</sup> BBC News, ‘European elections: Rivals for EU Commission president’, 19 May 2014 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-27194913>

<sup>23</sup> BBC News, ‘Europe’s big TV debate’, 15 May 2014 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-27418134>

## 5.2 The national campaign

### Conservatives

David Cameron launched the Conservative Party's European election campaign on 10 April 2014 with a speech at Manchester Airport.<sup>24</sup> In his speech, Cameron said his party had a track record of delivering on the EU and criticised UKIP for its poor voting record in the EP.<sup>25</sup> The party's dedicated webpage for the European elections lists seven priorities:

1. To keep the cost of Europe down
2. To make Europe work for British business
3. To keep the Pound and Britain out of the Euro
4. Our country to keep control of its own borders
5. To keep Britain out of Eurozone bailouts
6. To take back control of criminal justice
7. An in-out referendum on whether to stay in the EU<sup>26</sup>

Conservative Party European Election manifesto 2014:

[www.conservatives.com/europe/~media/Files/Downloadable%20Files/MANIFESTO%202014/Euro%20Manifesto%20English.ashx](http://www.conservatives.com/europe/~media/Files/Downloadable%20Files/MANIFESTO%202014/Euro%20Manifesto%20English.ashx)

### Labour

The launch of the Labour Party's campaign for the local and European elections took place on 1 May 2014, with Ed Miliband committing to "campaign for change" within the European Union.<sup>27</sup> In the party's manifesto for the European elections, it states that Labour MEPs' priorities in the EP will be creating more and better jobs; helping British business succeed; protecting the national interest; and raising living standards for all.<sup>28</sup>

Labour Party European Manifesto 2014:

[www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/LABOUR\\_PARTY\\_euro\\_manifesto.pdf](http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/uploads/editor/files/LABOUR_PARTY_euro_manifesto.pdf)

### Liberal Democrats

Nick Clegg launched the Liberal Democrat Party European election campaign on 24 April 2014 with a speech in Colchester, Essex. He described his party as the "party of in" in the European elections, with a campaign slogan of "In Europe, In Work". The European manifesto sets out the Liberal Democrat priorities as follows:

1. Create more jobs from trade within Europe
2. Help fight crime across Europe
3. Protect the environment and create green jobs
4. Reform the EU to cut waste, protect the UK's influence in the Single Market and strengthen the role of the Westminster Parliament in scrutinising EU legislation<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> BBC News, 'European elections: PM launches Tory campaign with UKIP broadside' 10 April 2014 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26968252>

<sup>25</sup> For participation rates in EP votes by all national parties, see Votewatch Europe 'The activity records of MEPs analysed by EP group and national party', special policy brief 3/2014 at <http://www.votewatch.eu/blog/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/votewatch-europe-end-of-term-scorecard-part-2-groups-final.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.conservatives.com/europe>

<sup>27</sup> BBC News, 'Annual rent-increase cap is focus of Labour campaign launch', 1 May 2014 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-27225421>

<sup>28</sup> The Labour Party European Manifesto, 2014

<sup>29</sup> European Election Manifesto 2014, Liberal Democrat Party

Liberal Democrat Party European Election Manifesto 2014:  
[www.libdems.org.uk/european\\_election\\_manifesto\\_2014](http://www.libdems.org.uk/european_election_manifesto_2014)

### **United Kingdom Independence Party**

The UKIP manifesto, titled “Create an earthquake” was launched by Nigel Farage on 22 April 2014 in Sheffield.<sup>30</sup> Alongside its main policy of calling for the UK to leave the EU, the UKIP manifesto focuses on the need to tighten immigration and border control policies. At the launch, Farage said:

We are going to fight this campaign with a straightforward, simple manifesto, but a message to the British people which is this: These are the most important European elections that have ever been fought in this country.

We have got a chance, four-and-a-half weeks from now, of causing such a shock in the British political system that it will be nothing short of an earthquake. If UKIP win these elections, a referendum and an opportunity for us to get back control of our country will be one massive, massive step closer.<sup>31</sup>

UKIP European Manifesto 2014:

<http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/themes/5308a93901925b5b09000002/attachments/original/1398869254/EuroManifestoLaunch.pdf?1398869254>

### **Green Party**

At the launch of the Green Party campaign, party leader Natalie Bennett said that she hoped that the party would treble its current number of MEPs to six.<sup>32</sup> The party’s manifesto, entitled “Real Change”, lays out a range of policy priorities, including an EU financial transaction tax, opposition to the EU’s proposed trade deal with the US, and stricter targets on energy efficiency and carbon emissions.

Green Party Manifesto 2014:

<http://greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/European%20Manifesto%202014.pdf>

### **Scottish National Party**

Alex Salmond launched the SNP’s European election campaign on 30 April 2014 in Edinburgh. He criticised what he described as the “Westminster parties’ obsessive anti-European agenda” and emphasised that Scotland had benefited from European funding worth hundreds of millions since 2007.<sup>33</sup>

SNP European Election Manifesto 2014:

[www.snp.org/sites/default/files/election/files/05\\_12b\\_snp\\_euro\\_manifesto\\_188x245\\_single-pages\\_2b.pdf](http://www.snp.org/sites/default/files/election/files/05_12b_snp_euro_manifesto_188x245_single-pages_2b.pdf)

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<sup>30</sup> BBC News, ‘European elections: Party-by-party guide’, 8 May 2014 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-27218759>

<sup>31</sup> BBC News, ‘UKIP’s Nigel Farage promises political ‘earthquake’, 22 April 2014 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-27105374>

<sup>32</sup> BBC News, ‘European elections: Green Party launches campaign’, 28 April 2014 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-27187427>

<sup>33</sup> BBC News, ‘SNP launches European election campaign’, 30 April 2014 at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-27207661>

## Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru launched its European elections manifesto on 28 April 2014. Its policy commitments include a campaign for Welsh to be made an official EU language, as well as a migration policy for Wales which targets skilled migrants from other countries.<sup>34</sup>

Plaid Cymru 2014 European Election Manifesto:

[www.partyofwales.org/uploads/Ewrop\\_2014\\_/EU\\_Manifesto\\_English.pdf](http://www.partyofwales.org/uploads/Ewrop_2014_/EU_Manifesto_English.pdf)

## British National Party

The BNP wants the UK to withdraw from the EU and this is the central focus of its 2014 European elections campaign.<sup>35</sup> The other four policy priorities listed in its manifesto are a ban on the burqa, stopping immigration, “British jobs for British workers” and “scrapping the bedroom tax”.<sup>36</sup>

British National Party European Elections Manifesto 2014:

[http://www.bnp.org.uk/sites/default/files/bnp\\_eu-manifesto-2014\\_0.pdf](http://www.bnp.org.uk/sites/default/files/bnp_eu-manifesto-2014_0.pdf)

## 5.3 Election outlook

### UK polls

Five days ahead of the European elections on 17 May 2014, ICM’s European elections poll conducted for the *Sunday Telegraph* produced topline figures of 26% Conservative, 29% Labour, 8% Liberal Democrat and 25% UKIP.<sup>37</sup>

In the final *ComRes* poll for ITV News published on 19 May 2014, the figures were put at 20% Conservative, 27% Labour, 7% Liberal Democrat, 33% UKIP and 6% Green.<sup>38</sup>

*YouGov*’s voting intention poll published on the eve of the election for *The Sun* showed figures of 23% Conservative, 27% Labour, 10% Liberal Democrat, 27% UKIP and 8% Green.<sup>39</sup>

Commenting on the differences between the different polls, *YouGov*’s Associate Director of Political Research, Anthony Wells said:

A lot of the apparent difference between different European polls is down to different treatment of turnout. *ComRes* have a very stark turnout filter, taking only those people who say they are 10/10 certain to vote. *YouGov* have a very liberal approach, including everyone who gives a voting intention (though they often tighten it up for final call polls); *ICM* weight by turnout, the effect of which is sort of a mid-way between the two extremes.<sup>40</sup>

### EU polls

*PollWatch2014* provides regular predictions of the outcome of the 2014 EP elections across the EU as a whole.<sup>41</sup> Based on its results from 20 May 2014, *PollWatch2014* predicted that the EPP would remain the largest party in the EP. The final forecast put the EPP on 29.9%

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<sup>34</sup> BBC News, ‘Plaid in skilled migrants call at European manifesto launch’, 28 April 2014, at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-27188047>

<sup>35</sup> BBC News, ‘European elections: Party-by-party guide’, 8 May 2014

<sup>36</sup> British National Party European Elections Manifesto 2014

<sup>37</sup> *Sunday Telegraph*, ‘European elections: Tories leap ahead of Ukip’, , 17 May 2014

<sup>38</sup> *ComRes* press release ‘UKIP in front for European elections by lead narrowing’, 19 May 2014

<sup>39</sup> *YouGov* ‘Latest Euro election voting intention’ 21 May 2014

<sup>40</sup> Anthony Wells on UK Polling Report blog at <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/blog/archives/8817>

<sup>41</sup> <http://pollwatch2014.eu>

(217 seats), S&D 26.8% (201 seats), ALDE 7.9% (59 seats), GUE/NGL 7.1% (53 seats), Greens/EFA 5.9% (44 seats), ECR 5.6% (42 seats), EFD 5.3% (40 seats), and 'non-attached' parties/independents on 12.6% (95 seats).<sup>42</sup>

Simon Hix, Doru Frantescu, Joan Manuel Lanfranco Pari and Michiel van Hulten of *Votewatch Europe* predicted that the high forecast for the currently 'non-attached' parties could mean that the European Alliance for Freedom (EAF) political party will reach the threshold necessary to form a new political group in the EP. Based on predictions of which groups the different national parties may join following the elections, they said:

Compared to the outgoing Parliament, the new Parliament would be more polarised: with more MEPs on the radical left and on the right of the EPP. In this scenario the three potential groups to the right of EPP would have enough MEPs from a sufficient number of member states to form. EFD could emerge as the fourth largest group, GUE-NGL as fifth, ECR sixth, Greens/EFA seventh, and the new EAF group in eighth place. This is all speculation of course. A lot of tough bargaining between parties and their prospective groups will follow the European elections. We may not know the final composition of the groups until the last week of June.<sup>43</sup>

### **Anti-EU and Eurosceptic parties**

Open Europe estimated that anti-EU and Eurosceptic parties of various forms could win as much as 31% of the vote, up from 25% in 2009.<sup>44</sup> The think tank emphasises that this bloc is diffuse, ranging from mainstream governing parties to anti-establishment communist groups and far right neo-fascists. Adopting a more narrow definition of anti-European parties, the research organisation Absolute Strategy predicts an anti-EU vote of 18%.<sup>45</sup>

The Daily Telegraph reported that paradoxically, the consequence of the predicted success of Eurosceptic parties could be to make the new EP even more integrationist. It points out that the anti-EU parties will be by no means a cohesive bloc, and that the two main pro-integrationists groups – the EPP and the S&D – could respond by acting as a 'grand coalition' in favour of 'more Europe'.<sup>46</sup>

### **Far right parties**

In the run-up to the European elections, a significant amount of media attention has been focused on the possible growth in support for far-right parties. Commenting in *The Guardian* on the launch of the electoral alliance between the French National Front and the Dutch Freedom party, Ian Traynor said:

The rise of populists on the right and the left, from Sweden to Greece, has worried the mainstream EU elites and is already shaping policy ahead of the May elections. At the top level of EU institutions in Brussels, there is talk of "populists, xenophobes, extremists, fascists" gaining around 30% of seats in the next parliament and using that platform to try to paralyse EU policy-making.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> PollWatch2014 forecast for May 2014 European Parliament elections, 20 May 2014 at <http://blog.electio2014.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/PollWatch2014-tables-20-May-2014.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Simon Hix, Doru Frantescu, Joan Manuel Lanfranco Pari and Michiel van Hulten, 'VoteWatch Europe analysis: what groups will form in the new EP?', 14 May 2014 at <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/news.html#3944>

<sup>44</sup> Open Europe, 'None of the above: what impact will the rise of anti-EU parties have on the next European Parliament?', 28 April 2014

<sup>45</sup> The Guardian, 'Anti-EU vote could rise above 30% in European elections, says thinktank', 28 April 2014

<sup>46</sup> The Daily Telegraph, 'A big anti-EU vote could make things worse for Britain', 21 May 2014

<sup>47</sup> The Guardian, 'Le Pen and Wilders forge plan to 'wreck' EU from within', 13 November 2013

In January 2014, the *New Statesman* reported that although the far-right looked set to make gains in some EU Member States, its support was falling in others:

The far-right has prospered amidst crisis in countries like Austria, France and the Netherlands but has stalled or fallen back in places like Belgium, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain. The top of the German far-right is in disarray following the resignation of one of its leaders. Despite record youth unemployment, the far-right in Spain is insignificant outside of a few local areas, while the collapse of the British National Party amidst recession and austerity, and then the English Defence League, underscores the point that the far-right’s fortunes do not depend simply on the presence of a crisis.<sup>48</sup>

*EU Observer* reported on 20 May 2014 that the success of far-right parties could lead to a “radical shake up” in the workings of the EP, with the possibility that a far-right MEP could claim chairmanship of a parliamentary committee for the first time.<sup>49</sup>

**Turnout**

Despite the growth in the European Parliament’s legislative and executive oversight powers, there is a low level of public awareness of and interest in the European elections. Turnout has been low across the EU as a whole, and has decreased at each election since the first direct elections in 1979. Average EU turnout was 62% in 1979, and after a steady decline, it fell below 50% for the first time in 1999, with an average of 49.51%. The trend continued downwards with 45.4% in 2004 and 43% in 2009. In the UK, turnout peaked in 2004 at 38.4%, measured as valid votes cast as a share of the electorate, up from 24% in 1999. However, turnout in the UK fell in 2009 to 34.7%, with regional turnout ranging from 42.4% in Northern Ireland to 28.5% in Scotland.<sup>50</sup>

The following table shows average turnout across the EU since 1979:<sup>51</sup>

Member States	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009
Belgium	91.36	92.09	90.73	90.66	91.05	90.81	90.39
Denmark	47.82	52.38	46.17	52.92	50.46	47.89	59.54
Germany	65.73	56.76	62.28	60.02	45.19	43	43.3
Ireland	63.61	47.56	68.28	43.98	50.21	58.58	58.64
France	60.71	56.72	48.8	52.71	46.76	42.76	40.63
Italy	85.65	82.47	81.07	73.6	69.76	71.72	65.05
Luxembourg	88.91	88.79	87.39	88.55	87.27	91.35	90.75
Netherlands	58.12	50.88	47.48	35.69	30.02	39.26	36.75
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>32.35</b>	<b>32.57</b>	<b>36.37</b>	<b>36.43</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>38.52</b>	<b>34.7</b>
Greece		80.59	80.03	73.18	70.25	63.22	52.61
Spain			54.71	59.14	63.05	45.14	44.9
Portugal			51.1	35.54	39.93	38.6	36.78
Sweden					38.84	37.85	45.53
Austria					49.4	42.43	45.97
Finland					30.14	39.43	40.3
Czech Republic						28.3	28.2
Estonia						26.83	43.9
Cyprus						72.5	59.4
Lithuania						48.38	20.98
Latvia						41.34	53.7

<sup>48</sup> The New Statesman, ‘How Europe’s far-right will - and won’t - flourish in 2014’, 2 January 2014

<sup>49</sup> EU Observer, ‘Centre-right to win EU vote, by hair’s breadth’, 20 May 2014

<sup>50</sup> See Research Paper 09/53 ‘European Parliament Elections 2009’, 17 June 2009

<sup>51</sup> European Parliament [http://www.elections2009-results.eu/en/turnout\\_en.html](http://www.elections2009-results.eu/en/turnout_en.html)

Hungary						38.5	36.31
Malta						82.39	78.79
Poland						20.87	24.53
Slovenia						28.35	28.33
Slovakia						16.97	19.64
Bulgaria							38.99
Romania							27.67
<b>Average EU turnout</b>	<b>61.99</b>	<b>58.98</b>	<b>58.41</b>	<b>56.67</b>	<b>49.51</b>	<b>45.47</b>	<b>43</b>

A European Parliament report assessing the reasons for low turnout in the 2009 election found that a lack of confidence in politics in general, rather than anti-European sentiments was the most common reason cited by non-voters. The next most popular reason given was insufficient interest in politics and a general sense that voting would not lead to any change. The report concluded that the abstention rate in 2009 was “not a disaster” and expressed a “reasonable degree of optimism” for the elections in 2014.<sup>52</sup>

## 6 After the elections: what next?

### 6.1 The new European Parliament

Following the elections, the political groups will convene in Brussels from 2 June. During the month of June, the political groups will decide internally on the appointment of Group President and Vice-Presidents, and on the possible allocation of their members to parliamentary committees. Alongside these internal negotiations, the main political groups will negotiate “package deals” to share out important parliamentary posts, including Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs.<sup>53</sup> Tentative agreement is reached on these posts through this informal bargaining process during June, but the final official decision must be taken by the EP as a whole in its first plenary session.

The European Parliament will elect its President and Vice-Presidents by an absolute majority at its constitutive plenary session on 1-3 July. The number, responsibilities and size of parliamentary committees are also formally decided upon during the session. Once this has been determined, the Conference of Presidents<sup>54</sup> will decide upon the allocation of seats each group will hold in parliamentary committees. The composition of the committees should reflect as far as possible the composition of the Parliament as a whole.<sup>55</sup> Constitutive committee meetings will be held during the week of 7-11 July, with each committee electing its Chair and Vice-Chairs. These positions are shared out among the political groups on the basis of the number of members of each group. The allocation is determined by the d’Hondt system of proportional representation, whereby the groups choose posts in an order determined by their relative size. At the second plenary session of the EP’s term on 14-17 July, the EP is scheduled to vote on the European Council’s nomination for President of the European Commission.

### 6.2 The new European Commission

As the current term of office of the European Commission expires on 31 October 2014, a new President and the College of Commissioners as a whole must be appointed. The

<sup>52</sup> European Parliament, Post-election survey 2009, published November 2009 at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/28\\_07/EB71.3\\_post-electoral\\_final\\_report\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/28_07/EB71.3_post-electoral_final_report_EN.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Richard Corbett, Francis Jacobs and Michael Shackleton, ‘The European Parliament’ (8<sup>th</sup> edition, John Harper Publishing, London), 2011

<sup>54</sup> The Conference of Presidents consists of the EP President and the leaders of each of the political groups

<sup>55</sup> Rule 186, European Parliament’s Rules of Procedure

process begins with the nomination of the President of the Commission by the European Council, taking into account the results of the EP elections. That candidate must then be 'elected' (approved by an absolute majority) by the European Parliament.<sup>56</sup>

Once the Commission President has been appointed and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has been chosen by the European Council, each Member State puts forward their nomination for Commissioner. It is for the incoming President of the Commission to decide on the allocation of portfolios, although in practice, Member States are likely to have influence over this process. Each nominated Commissioner will then participate in hearings in the European Parliament, following which the EP votes to confirm the composition of the Commission as a whole.

### 6.3 Indicative timeline of key dates in 2014

An indicative timeline for the post-election period in 2014, including the appointment of the new European Commission, is provided below.

It is important to note that these dates are provisional and are likely to change in response to the pace of progress made in the negotiations between and within the European Parliament and the European Council.<sup>57</sup>

22-25 May	European Parliament elections; results announced after 11pm CET (10pm UK time) on Sunday 25 May
27 May	Morning: The EP President meets with political group leaders in order to discuss the elections Afternoon: European Council informal meeting; the EP President will inform European Council President Herman Van Rompuy of the outcome of the morning's discussions; national leaders are expected to hold only an initial debate on the outcome of the elections and the nomination of Commission President
2 June	EP political groups convene
26-27 June	European Council meeting: Heads of State and Government are expected to agree on the nominated candidate for Commission President
1-3 July	European Parliament constitutive plenary session: election of President and Vice-Presidents
7-11 July	European Parliament constitutive committee meetings: each Committee will elect the committee chair and vice-chairs
14-17 July	European Parliament plenary session: MEPs are expected to vote on the European Council's nomination for Commission President
August	Member States put forward nominations for European Commissioners

<sup>56</sup> Article 17, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

<sup>57</sup> Following the 2009 EP elections, the new Commission – which was supposed to take office on 1 November 2009 – was not approved by the EP until 9 February 2010 following opposition from MEPs to the initial candidate put forward by Bulgaria, Rumiana Jeleva. The appointments process was subsequently delayed by several months when MEPs insisted on holding a new set of hearings for the re-submitted candidate, Kristalina Georgieva.



September	Hearings of Commissioner nominees in the European Parliament
20-23 October	European Parliament plenary session: MEPs are expected to vote to approve the composition of the new College of the European Commission
1 November	The new Commission is expected to take office