Engaging Young People and Women in European Parliament Elections

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

ACRE	Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe
AEGEE	European Students' Forum
ALDA	European Association for Local Democracy
ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czechia
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EAF	European Alliance for Freedom
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
EDP	European Democratic Party
EE	Estonia
EES	European Election Studies
EFA	European Free Alliance

EFAy   European Free Alliance Youth

EFDD   Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy

EGP   European Green Party

EIGE   European Institute for Gender Equality

EL   Greece

ENF   Europe of Nations and Freedom

EPP   European People's Party

ES   Spain

ESU   European Student's Union

EU   European Union

EYC   European Young Conservatives

EYF   European Youth Forum

FI   Finland

FR   France

FYEG   Federation of Young European Greens

Greens/EFA The Greens/European Free Alliance

GUE/NGL   European United Left/Nordic Green Left

HR   Croatia

HU   Hungary

IE   Ireland

IT   Italy

IYDU   International Young Democrat Union

LT   Lithuania

LU   Luxembourg

LV   Latvia

LYMEC	European Liberal Youth
MENF	Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom
MEPs	Members of the European Parliament
MT	Malta
NGOs	non-governmental organizations
NL	Netherlands
PEL	Party of the European Left
PES	Party of European Socialists
PL	Poland
PPS	Percentage points
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
S&D	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
SE	Sweden
SK	Slovakia
SL	Slovenia
YEPP	Youth of the European People's Party
YES	Young European Socialists
YFJ	European Youth Forum

Executive summary

This paper is focused on two pitfalls of electoral democracy in the European Union: voter absenteeism by young people, and the under-representation of women in the European Parliament. In the 2014 elections, the average rate of voter absenteeism was 72.2 per cent for the younger age group (16–24 years). Moreover, in 14 member states, the voter turnout by young people was less than 25 per cent. The gap of electoral participation between the older (55 years and over) and the younger age groups exceeded 20 percentage points in 16 out of the 28 member states, with the average EU age gap being 23.5 percentage points. In Ireland, it was 54.5 percentage points. Only in Sweden and Belgium (voting is compulsory in the latter country) were the younger citizens more participative than the older ones.

The percentage of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who are women has improved over time. In 1979, the figure was only 16.5 per cent, while the eighth legislature (2014–2019) has reached levels of 37 per cent. However, not only has this positive trend slowed (the increase in the number of female MEPs between 2009 and 2014 was just 2 percentage points) but in 2014 it was lower than in the previous European Parliament elections (in 2009) in 15 out of the 28 member states, including countries such as Belgium, Denmark and Finland.

It is also worth noting that the gender imbalance within the European Parliament varies from group to group. Indeed, it no longer exists in the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (50/50) and is also practically non-existent in the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (54.45/45.55), while in European Conservatives and Reformists, women MEPs represent just 21.43 per cent of the total composition. Europe of Nations and Freedom and the European People's Party are also below the average (36.89 per cent).

With the purpose of enriching and making EU electoral democracy stronger, this paper presents as food for thought some evidence on key elements to foster participation in European Parliament elections, as well as to reach a more balanced composition of the European Parliament in terms of age and gender.

From the point of view of the author, there are three main lines of improvement: (a) national electoral rules may need to be modified to both facilitate the process of voting and provide for a more diverse composition of the European Parliament; (b) as the main actors in the European Parliament elections, national parties should make an effort to Europeanize these elections, emphasizing those issues that are particularly important to young people and women, and promoting them as candidates; (c) European-wide political parties (known as Europarties), which continue to have a marginal role in the elections to the European Parliament, could act as game-changers under the *Spitzenkandidaten* system, and promote awareness and civic training on matters related to the EU.

Finally, the following key recommendations, which are complementary to further institutional reforms, are proposed in order to move gradually towards a more inclusive EU electoral democracy. Three recommendations deal with the provision of data, four deal with education and gender-equality training, and three are related to empowerment.

Data

1. Maintain the platform launched by the European Parliament ahead of the 2019 European Parliament elections named 'What Europe Does For Me'. This offers information on EU outputs and is organized by territory and according to the main interests of citizens. In addition, disseminate this evidential information using a less technical language.

2. Establish a think tank to give advice on more inclusive participation and citizen control over EU policy-making processes. This innovative actor in charge of citizen involvement in EU affairs could be called 'EU Citizens Plus'.

3. Provide permanent funding for certain research projects focused on the online behaviour of young people, for the purpose of monitoring their preferred networks and style of communication. Hire teams of young people not only to implement but also to design the digital campaigns of both institutions and political parties.

Education

4. Inform children and young people of the past struggles to extend political rights, including the right to vote and to be elected, and of related current challenges.

5. Explain to children and young people how they can promote and organize political events at the local level, and where to obtain information to follow the activities of their representatives at both national and EU institutions.

6. Educate children from an early age, in a relaxed and recreational manner, not necessarily only at school, on the rationale for European integration and how political decisions are made at the supranational level.

Gender-equality training

7. Provide women with the skills that allow them to defend their interests, and to seek out political positions. Educate men on accepting that women are entitled to share power.

Empowerment

8. As a government, after the next European Parliament elections, propose a woman candidate as the national member of the European Commission. As a civic organization or individual citizen, press your government to do so.

9. As a party, give more power to your youth wing (also to elect a fixed number of candidates) and provide them with a greater say in the elaboration of the party manifesto. In addition, deliver a differentiated electoral policy document addressed to young voters.

10. Create a Council on Youth at the EU level, with a non-binding but compulsory say on policies that, far beyond education and unemployment, are also important to them, such as climate change, migration and asylum, security and defence, or the future of Europe.

1. Introduction

This Discussion Paper puts together relevant data on the inclusion of young people and women in European Parliament elections. It is focused on two pitfalls of EU electoral democracy: voter absenteeism on the part of young people, and the under-representation of women in the European Parliament.

The paper combines data from the European Election Studies (EES), the European Parliament, the Gender Statistics Database of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), face-to-face and telephone interviews conducted in Brussels during November and December 2018, and semi-structured questionnaires exchanged by email during the same period. Additionally, it considers policy papers and other relevant texts authored by organizations dedicated to young people, women and think tanks, as well as Europarties and groups in the European Parliament. The scope of the paper is European, although data at a national level from France, Poland and Spain (a founding EU country, an Eastern European country and a Southern European country) are introduced in different sections to shed light on national differences. The objective is to highlight aspects of these challenges that were previously overlooked.

The ninth elections to the European Parliament are scheduled for 23–26 May 2019. These will select 705 MEPs in 27 member states. As of 2018, nine Europarties are represented in this EU institution. These are the European People's Party (EPP), Party of European Socialists (PES), Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), European Democratic Party (EDP), Party of the European Left (PEL), European Green Party (EGP), European Free Alliance (EFA) and the Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom (MENF).

The 2014 European Parliament elections were held in 28 EU member states between 22 and 25 May. In total, 751 MEPs were elected, belonging to 203 different national parties. Annex B of this paper details how these national parties are organized into political groups in the European Parliament. The political groups are as follows, with their acronyms and associated Europarties in brackets: European People's Party (EPP group, including EPP), Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the EP (S&D group, including PES), European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR group, including ACRE), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE group, including ALDE and EDP), European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL group, including PEL), Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA group, including EGP and EFA), Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD group), and Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF group, including MENF). There is currently no recognized Europarty linked to the political group Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy.

2. Voter absenteeism by young people and women

Young people

Sometimes little concern is shown about voter absenteeism by young people in the elections to the European Parliament because of two underlying problems. First, young people tend to vote less than members of older age groups. Second, regarding European Parliament elections, the real problem is a low turnout overall.

Low turnout in the European Parliament elections is certainly something to be worried about. There is a decreasing trend in political mobilization, which does not seem to be caused by EU affairs themselves, because the 20 per cent gap between turnout in European Parliament elections and national general elections is consistent over time (Schmitt and Popa 2016). However, with turnouts of less than 50 per cent in European Parliament elections in many member states after 1999 and raising Euroscepticism, it is difficult to exclude a lack of interest, albeit in combination with a low support for supranational institutions.

Figure 2.1. Turnout in the European Parliament elections over time
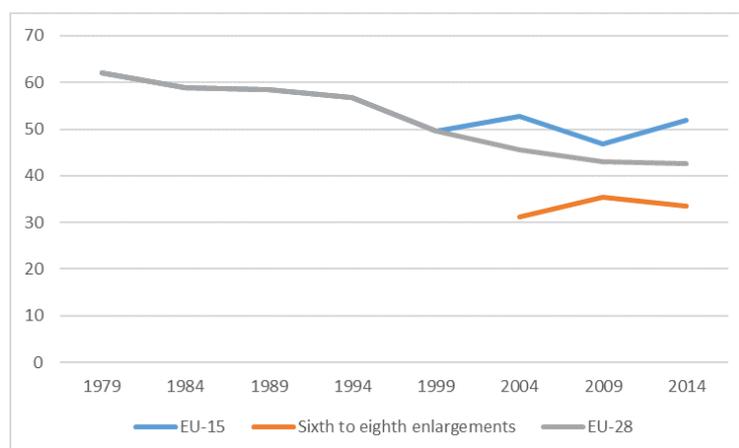
Source: European Parliament, Election results, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>, accessed 28 March 2019.

Regarding the analysis of voter turnout in this study, it is important to point out that the set of EU member states considered is not the same over the full examination period, due to EU enlargement processes. This is crucial because voter turnout is extremely low in almost all member states that acceded to the EU in the sixth to eighth enlargements, particularly in Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.[1] Therefore, there is a consistent gap of 11.5–21.59 per cent in voter turnout between the EU-15 and the member states of the last three expansions.[2]

Figure 2.2. Turnout in the European Parliament elections in France, Poland and Spain
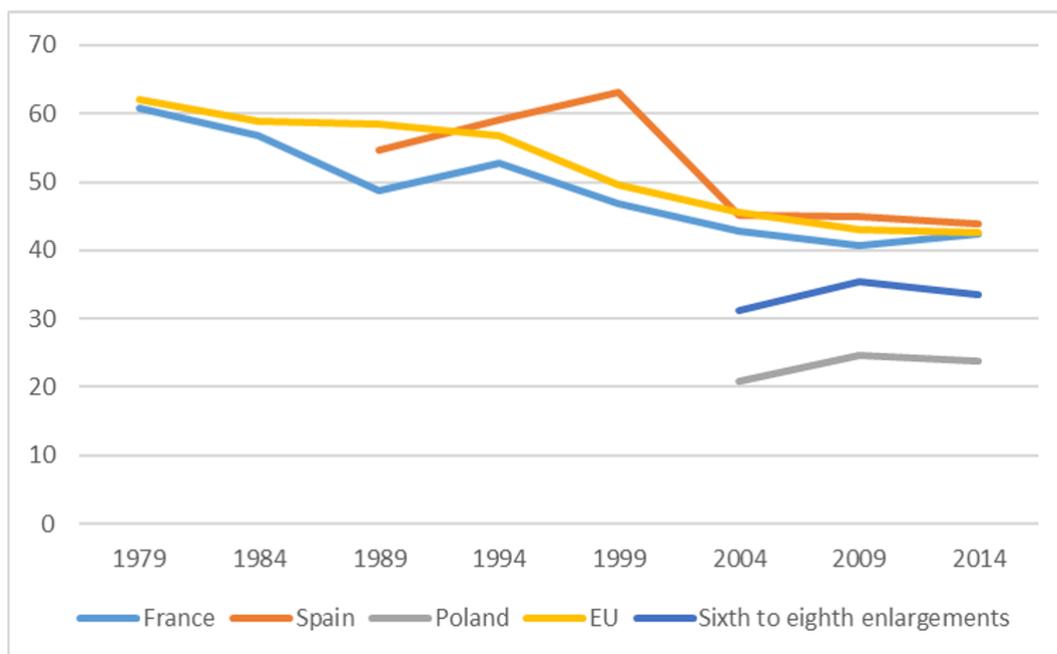
Source: European Parliament, Election results, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>, accessed 28 March 2019.

In Western Europe, only the Netherlands and the United Kingdom present lower turnouts than the European average (see Table 2.1). Participation in France is very similar to that of the EU as a whole (see Figure 2.2). Meanwhile, in Spain, it started to drop in 2004 compared with the previous European Parliament elections. Voter behaviour in Poland, the largest Eastern European country, is serious, in that it shows a 10 per cent greater gap in voter participation, compared with the average for member states of the sixth to eighth enlargements.

Table 2.1. Voter turnout in the European Parliament elections (percentage)

Countries	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014
Austria					49.40	42.43	45.97	45.39
Belgium	91.36	92.09	90.73	90.66	91.05	90.81	90.39	89.64
Bulgaria							38.99	35.84
Croatia								25.24
Cyprus						72.50	59.40	43.97
Czechia						28.30	28.22	18.20
Denmark	47.82	52.38	46.17	52.92	50.46	47.89	59.54	56.32
Estonia						26.83	43.90	36.52
Finland					30.14	39.43	38.60	39.10
France	60.71	56.72	48.80	52.71	46.76	42.76	40.63	42.43
Germany	65.73	56.76	62.28	60.02	45.19	43.00	43.27	48.10
Greece		80.59	80.03	73.18	70.25	63.22	52.61	59.97
Hungary						38.50	36.31	28.97
Ireland	63.61	47.56	68.28	43.98	50.21	58.58	58.64	52.44
Italy	85.65	82.47	81.07	73.60	69.76	71.72	65.05	57.22
Latvia						41.34	53.70	30.24
Lithuania						48.38	20.98	47.35
Luxembourg	88.91	88.79	87.39	88.55	87.27	91.35	90.76	85.55
Malta						82.39	78.79	74.80
Netherlands	58.12	50.88	47.48	35.69	30.02	39.26	36.75	37.32
Poland						20.87	24.53	23.83
Portugal			51.10	35.54	39.93	38.60	36.77	33.67
Romania							27.67	32.44
Slovakia						16.97	19.64	13.05
Slovenia						28.35	28.37	24.55
Spain			54.71	59.14	63.05	45.14	44.87	43.81
Sweden					38.84	37.85	45.53	51.07
United Kingdom	32.35	32.57	36.37	36.43	24.00	38.52	34.70	35.60
EU-15	61.99	58.98	58.41	56.67	49.51	52.70	46.92	51.84
6th–8th enlargements						31.11	35.42	33.45
Difference between EU-15 and 6th–8th enlargements						21.59	11.50	18.39
EU	61.99	58.98	58.41	56.67	49.51	45.47	42.97	42.61

Voter absenteeism by young people is certainly a challenge. In the younger age group (16–24 years), the average figure of absenteeism is 72.2 per cent (see Figure 2.3). This includes countries where voting is compulsory (Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg). Moreover, in 15 member states the voter turnout of young people was below 25 per cent.[3] In Slovakia, fewer than 6 out of 100 young people went to the polls in the 2014 European Parliament elections; in Finland, only 10 out of 100 young people voted.

Figure 2.3. Voter turnout in the 2014 European Parliament elections by persons aged 16–24
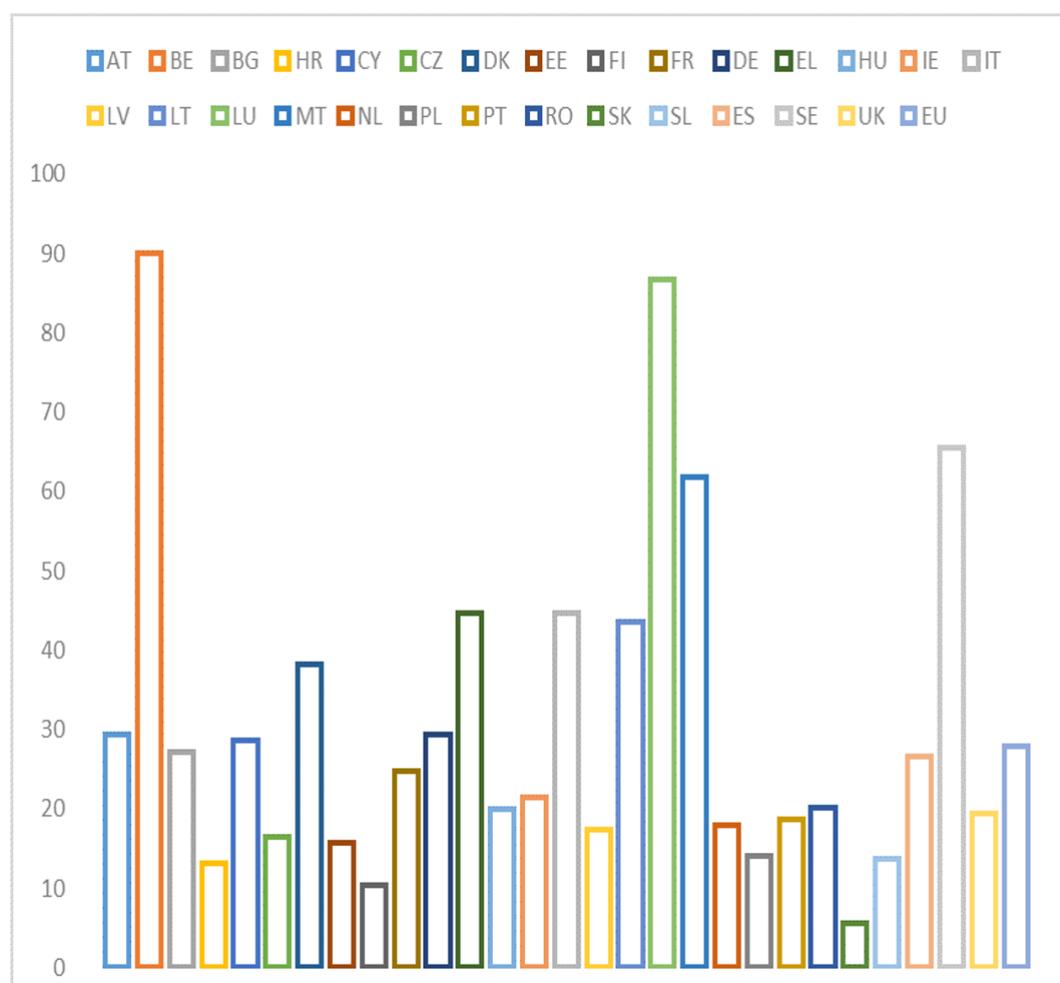
The gap in electoral participation between the older (55 years and above) and the younger age groups exceeded 20 percentage points in 16 out of the 28 member states (EU average age gap: 23.5 percentage points). In Ireland, it was 54.5 percentage points. Only in Sweden and Belgium (the latter country has compulsory voting rules) was the younger group more participative than the older group.

Figure 2.4. Age gap in voter turnout (comparison between the younger and the older age groups) in the 2014 European Parliament elections
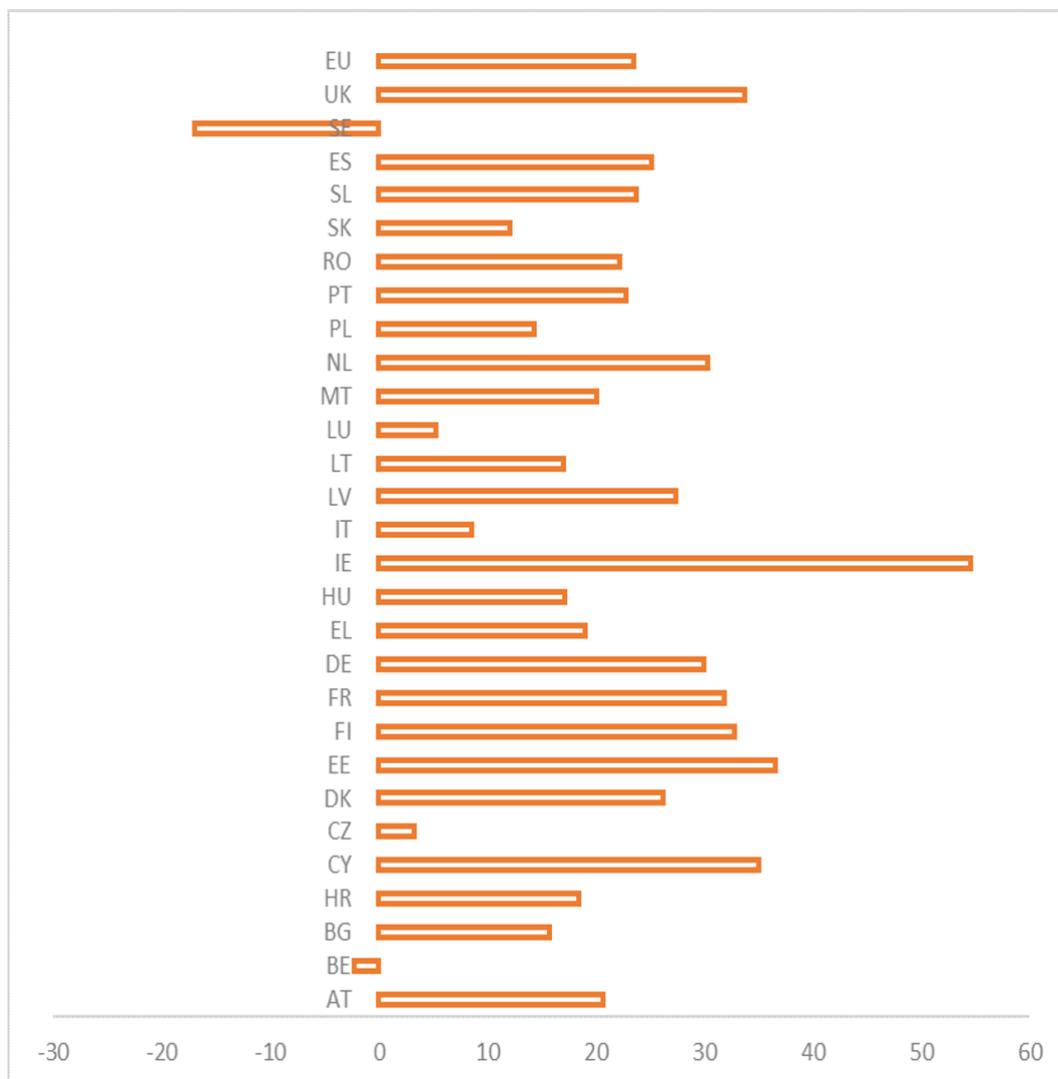
Source: European Parliament, *European and National Elections Figured Out*, Review, Special Edition – November 2014, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/elections_results/review.pdf>, accessed 12 November 2018.

It is obvious that involving young people in European Parliament elections should be a priority. Data indicate that the young people who are less likely to vote in European Parliament elections are the youngest section in this population subgroup, especially those who perceive themselves as being socially excluded or disadvantaged (students, manual workers, the unemployed), and live in medium-sized towns as opposed to either cities or smaller communities (Bouza 2014).

Voter absenteeism by women

Gender differences in voter turnout are less significant at an EU level. The turnout by women in the 2014 European Parliament elections was just 4.3 percentage points lower than by men (see Figure 2.5).

However, in the 2014 elections (see Figure 2.6), women were less likely to vote than men in France (-11.6 pps), Portugal (-11.3 pps), Poland (-7.4 pps), Germany (-6.6 pps), Italy (-5.7 pps), Czechia (-5.4 pps), Finland (-5.4 pps), Croatia (-4.9 pps), Bulgaria (-4.3 pps), Romania (-3.2 pps), Slovakia (-2.8 pps), Luxembourg (-2.7 pps), Austria (-2.3 pps), Hungary (-1.4 pps), Spain (-1.3 pps), Belgium (-0.5 pps), Greece (-0.5 pps), Ireland (-0.2 pps) and the UK (-0.1 pps). On the contrary, female voters participated at higher levels in Sweden (16.9 pps), Malta (8.7 pps), Lithuania (7 pps), Latvia (5.8 pps), Denmark (1.5 pps), Slovenia (1.3 pps), the Netherlands (1 pps), Cyprus (0.9 pps) and Estonia (0.6 pps).

Therefore, although not at an EU level, the gender gap in voter turnout was relevant in several member states, and based on these data, a special effort should be made in the 2019 election to mobilize female voters in countries such as Czechia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Portugal.

Figure 2.5. Women turnout in the 2014 European Parliament elections
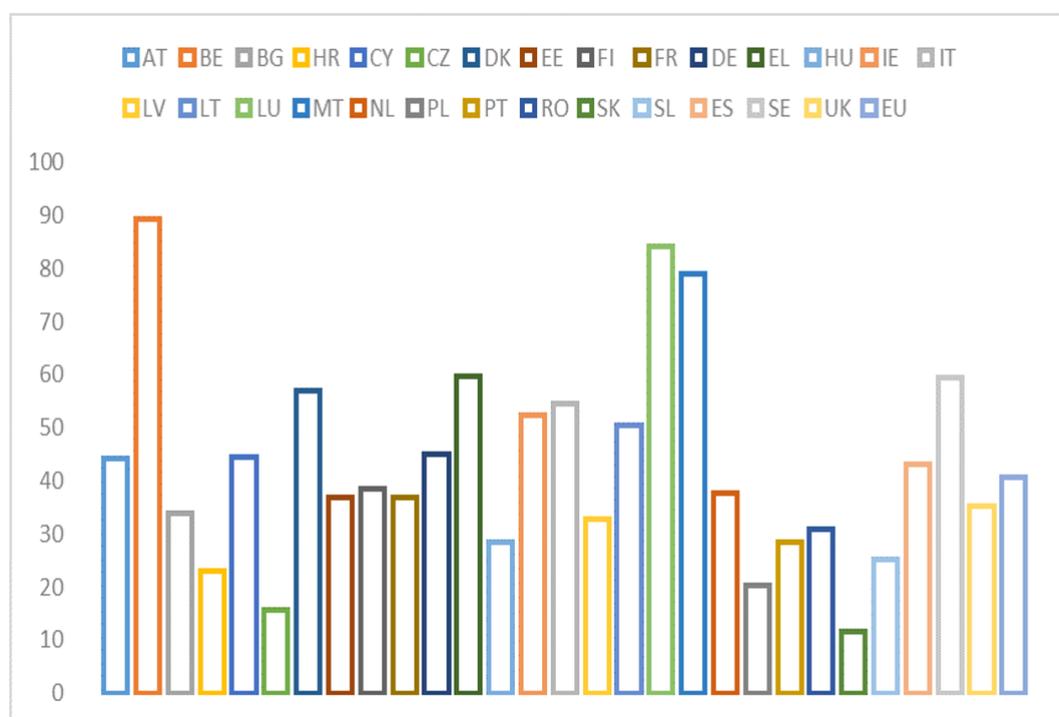

Source: European Parliament, *European and National Elections Figured Out*, Review, Special Edition – November 2014, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/elections_results/review.pdf>, accessed 12 November 2018.

Figure 2.6. Gender gap in voter turnout in the 2014 European Parliament elections
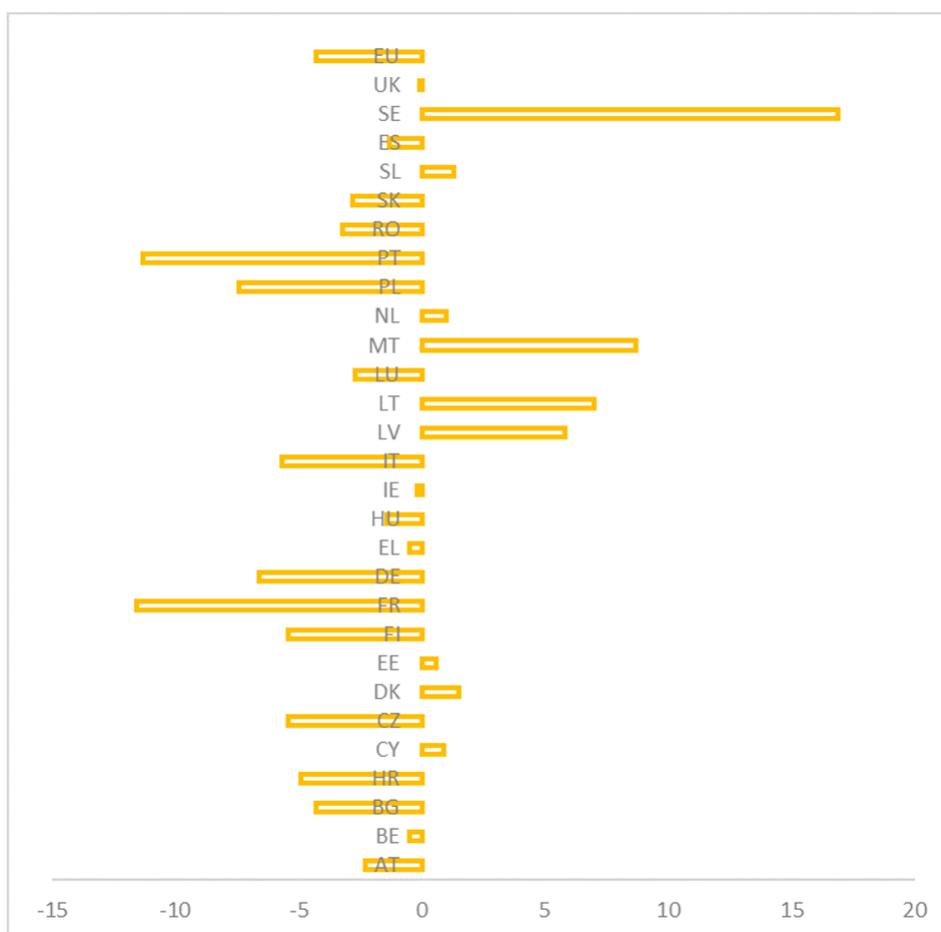
Endnotes

1. The sixth enlargement (2004): Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. The seventh enlargement (2007): Bulgaria and Romania. The eighth enlargement (2013): Croatia.

2. EU-15 refers to the following member states (with the date of accession in parentheses): Belgium, France, Germany (West), Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands (original countries, 1952); Denmark, Ireland and the UK (1973, first enlargement); Greece (1981, second enlargement); Portugal and Spain (1986, third enlargement); Austria, Finland and Sweden (1996, fifth enlargement). The fourth enlargement was the re-unification of Germany in 1990.

3. These countries are Croatia (13.1 per cent), Czechia (16.4 per cent), Estonia (15.8 per cent), Finland (10.4 per cent), France (24.7 per cent), Hungary (20 per cent), Ireland (21 per cent), Latvia (17.4 per cent), the Netherlands (18 per cent), Poland (14.1 per cent), Portugal (18.6 per cent), Romania (20.2 per cent), Slovakia (5.6 per cent), Slovenia (13.7 per cent) and the UK (19.4 per cent).

3. Under-representation of young people and women in the European Parliament

Young people

The average age of MEPs at the constituent session in July 2014 was 53 years. The oldest parliamentarian was a Greek aged 91 years, and the youngest a Dane aged 26. On 1 April 2018, the average age of MEPs was 55. MEPs from the following 10 member states are above this average: Denmark (56); Cyprus, Finland, Greece and Slovenia (57); France and Slovakia (58); Lithuania (59); and Luxembourg and Poland (60).

After the 2014 elections, 14 member states had no MEP younger than age 35 (see Figure 3.1). These were: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. There were only 8 countries where the number of MEPs who were born in 1980 or later represented more than 10 per cent of the national delegation. These were Bulgaria (23.53 per cent), Denmark (23.08 per cent), Luxembourg (16.67 per cent), Italy (15.07 per cent), Belgium (14.29 per cent), Spain (12.96 per cent), Romania (12.5 per cent) and the Netherlands (11.54 per cent).

Additionally, young MEPs were unequally present within the political groups (see Figure 3.2). In 2014, in absolute numbers, the S&D group had the most MEPs under age 35 (14 MEPs), but on average, only the EFDD group (19.05 per cent), along with the Greens/EFA (13.73 per cent) and GUE/NGL (11.54 per cent), had at least 10 per cent of young MEPs. The lowest percentages of young MEPs were found in the ENF (2.86 per cent), ALDE (4.41 per cent) and EPP (4.57 per cent) groups.

Figure 3.1. Percentage of MEPs below the age of 35 in 2014
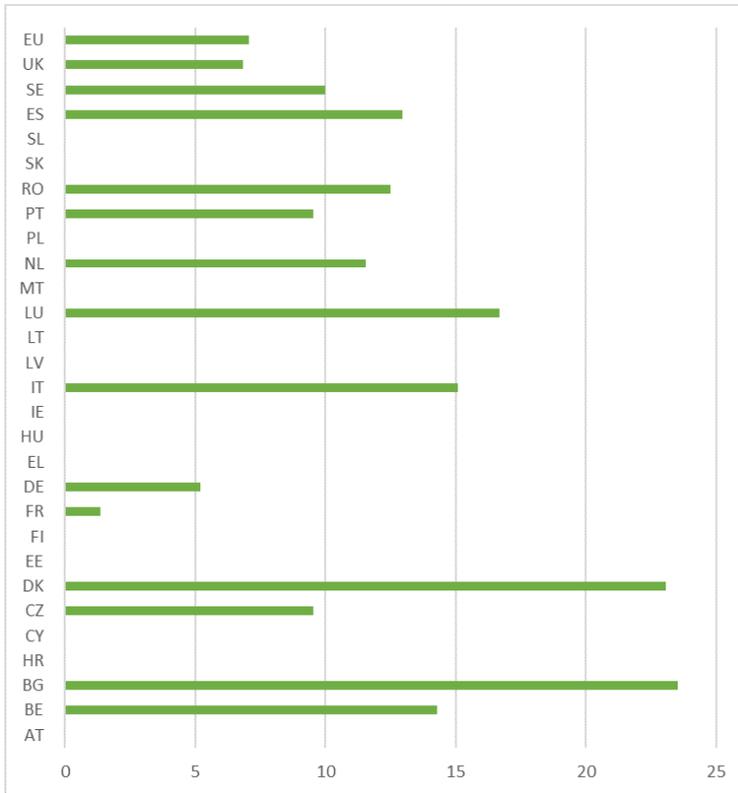
Source: European Parliament, 'MEPs, Full list', 2014, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/full-list/a>, accessed 28 March 2019.

Figure 3.2. Percentage of MEPs below the age of 35 in 2014 in each group in the European Parliament
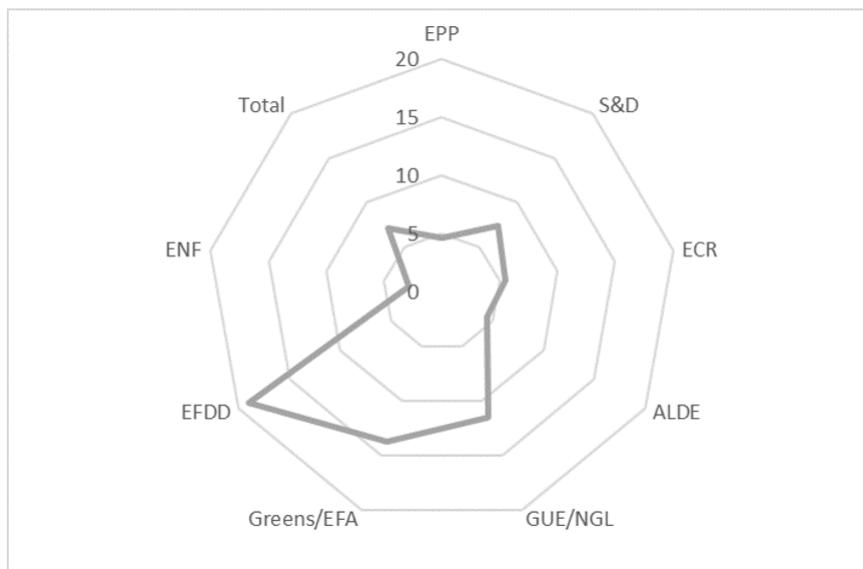
Source: European Parliament, 'MEPs, Full list', 2014, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/full-list/a>, accessed 28 March 2019.

Women are not always in the room

After examining the figures of the gap in voter turnout between the younger and the older age groups of EU citizens, the challenge of the under-representation of women in political positions in Brussels is also a key issue to be addressed in order to strengthen EU electoral democracy. Gradually, the percentage of women among civil servants in the European Parliament and within the European Commission has increased. Indeed, as part of the strategy called 'Diversity and Inclusion', adopted on 19 July 2017, the European Commission commits to 'secure equal opportunities at every step of the career . . . to achieve the goal of at least 40% female representation in senior and middle management within the present mandate' (European Commission 2017: 7). Women are qualified, and they tend to do well. Why do competent women feel both unrepresented and held back from power? Does it make sense for EU politics to continue to underutilize their talents?

Data appear more optimistic over time (see Figure 3.3). The scant 16.6 per cent of MEPs who were women in the first European Parliament elections in 1979 increased to 36.1 per cent in the eighth legislative term (2014–2019). Among other initiatives, voluntary and mandatory electoral gender quotas in a number of EU member states spurred the increase. However, not only has this positive trend slowed (the increase in the number of women in the European Parliament between 2009 and 2014 was just 2 percentage points) in 2014 the percentage of MEPs who were women was lower than in the previous European Parliament elections (in 2009) in 15 out of the 28 member states, including countries such as Belgium, Denmark and Finland (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.3. Percentage of MEPs who are women over time
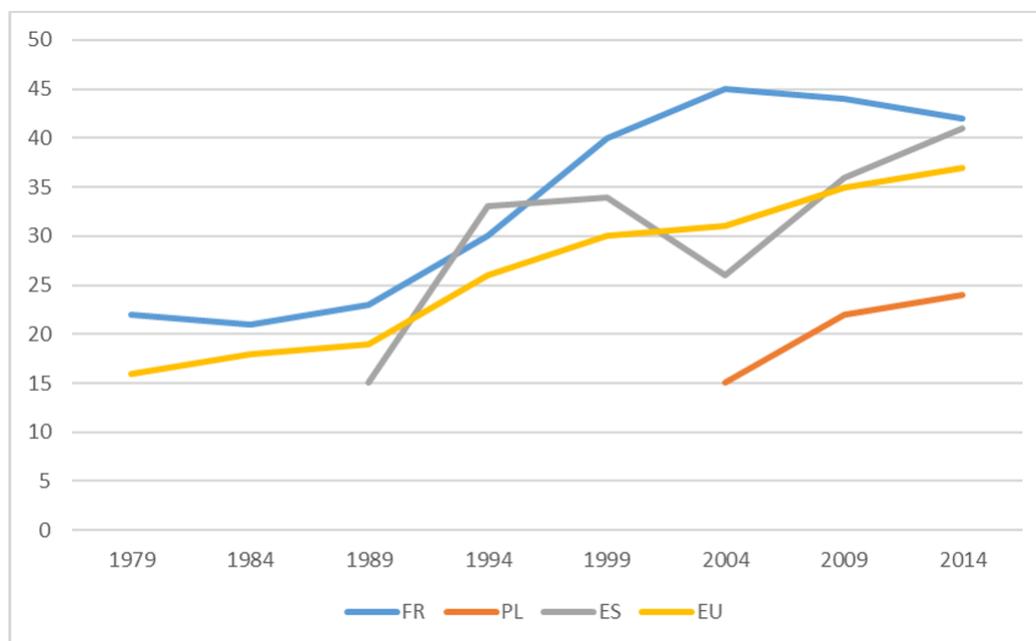
Figure 3.4. Percentage of MEPs who are women in the eighth and seventh legislative terms
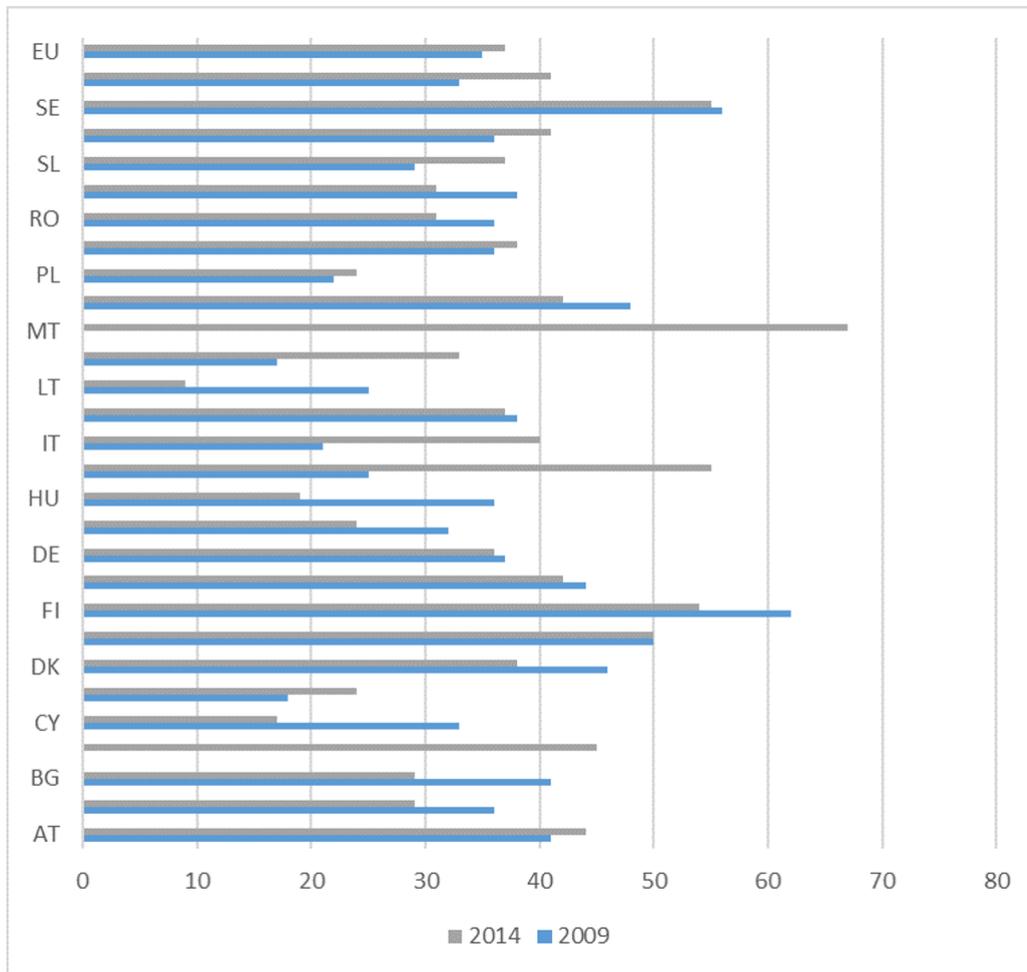
Source for Figures 3.3 & 3.4: European Parliament, MEPs gender balance, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>, accessed 28 March 2019.

It is also worth noting that the gender imbalance within the European Parliament varies from group to group (see Figure 3.5). Indeed, it no longer exists in the GUE/NGL (50/50) and has almost disappeared in the S&D (54.45/45.55), while in the ECR, female MEPs represent just 21.43 per cent of the total composition. Figures for the ENF and the EPP are also below average.

Figure 3.5. Percentage of women in each group in the European Parliament
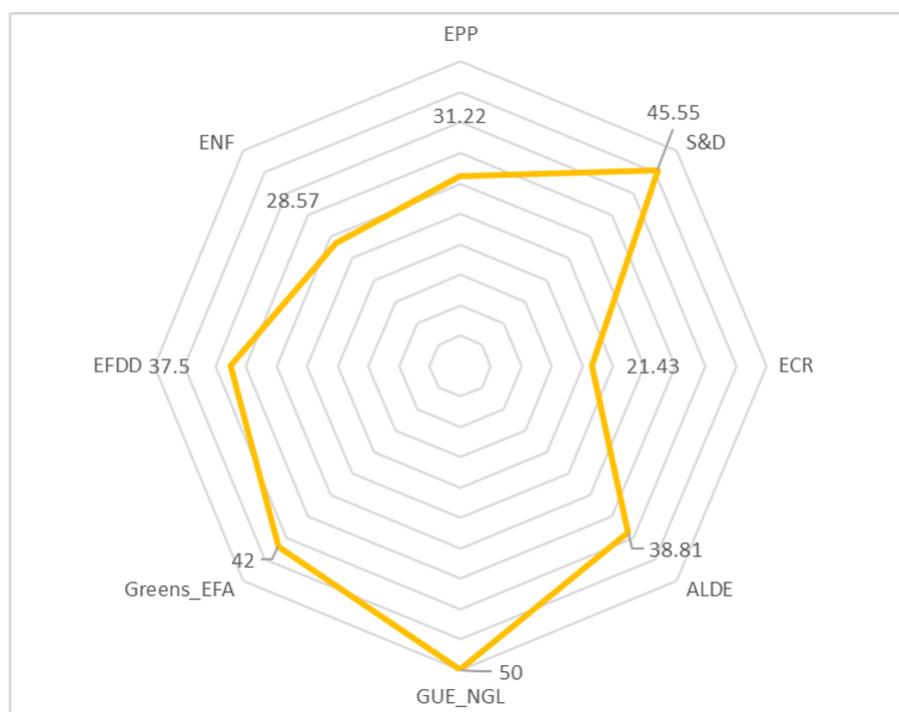
Source: European Parliament, *European and National Elections Figured Out*, Review, Special Edition – November 2014, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/elections_results/review.pdf>, accessed 12 November 2018.

Apart from this, national governments continue to be reluctant to propose women for the mandate of European Commissioners, and to support them for nomination to other key political positions, such as President of the European Council. Additionally, in the *Spitzenkandidaten* system put in place in 2014, and in accordance with this party's gender regulations, only the European Green Party (EGP) nominated a woman as its leading candidate. The European Greens apply a 50+ quota to all structures. The 50+ quota implies that not only are most of their leading positions doubled to guarantee an equal gender distribution (one man/one woman), there might also be more women than men (García 2018). Ana Miranda, EFA's MEP interviewed for this paper, highlighted the commitment of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament to 'lead by example' on gender equality. The president of this group is a woman and they have appointed more female than male MPs as committee chairs.

4. Are parties aware of the interests of young people and women?

2014 European Parliament elections

It is intuitive that one main cause of disengagement by young people and women from EU politics might be the lack of connection between their priorities and policy positions, and those sustained by the political parties.

The analyses of the manifestos issued for the 2014 elections to the European Parliament by Europarties and national parties in France, Poland and Spain confirm this expectation only partially. Some parties integrated various concerns of women and, to a lesser extent, young people.

It is true that, in general, except for the EPP, the concerns of young people were barely included in the Europarties' programmatic documents for 2014. These concerns were not included in the tables of contents and chapter headings, and young people were mentioned only regarding low and precarious employment.

However, the picture was different at a national level in the examined countries. In France, both the Socialist Party and Europe Ecology included an entire section on young people's employment and different statements directly addressed to young voters throughout their programmatic texts. The Radical Party of the Left, to a lesser extent, also paid attention to this age group, particularly concerning education. In Poland, both the Civic Platform, and Law and Justice—which, along with the Polish People's Party, were the only Polish parties that issued a proper national manifesto for the 2014 European Parliament election—introduced references to young voters. Spain was different from France in the sense that not only did leftist parties focus on young people, the People's Party also introduced references in its programmatic document, including a specific subheading on young people as a social group. The coalition parties, The Left for the Right to Decide, and European Spring, emphasized younger voters in their texts and included specific sections on youth.

As far as women are concerned, at the European level in 2014, there were large differences among the parties, with four Europarties leading on gender equality: EPP, PEL, EGP and, to a lesser extent, PES. A fifth party, ACRE, competed openly against this idea. The two liberal parties (ALDE and EDP) failed to pay any attention to equality. All references to women in EU manifestos for the 2014 election are included in Annex C.

Table 4.1. References to young people in Europarty manifestos for the 2014 elections

EU parties	References to young people
EPP	(1) Young people should look to their future with confidence. (2) The creation of incentives for enterprises and companies to recruit young people. (3) EPP supports EU programmes especially in the field of research and innovation, which aim to provide young people with access to high quality jobs, training or apprenticeships after their graduation. (4) We also need to develop services in rural areas in order to avoid a rural exodus, especially of young people. (5) It is necessary to ensure that young people are given the opportunity to find jobs in fishing and farming in order to promote a dynamic, innovative and competitive European agriculture and fishery sector. (6) Providing a future to young people. (7) We are the political force that invited young people to participate in the decision making process, therefore we welcome the proposals of young Europeans from all over Europe: • To have a complete internal higher education market by achieving: Full recognition of qualifications across Europe; a European framework for education standards; greater cooperation in research and increased mobility of students and lecturers beyond the existing mobility programmes; automatic recognition of degrees in all EU member states; a universal graduate diploma in the EU, which would allow full freedom of movement of students across the EU. • To introduce EU education in schools across Europe in order to prepare the next generation for future challenges and to nurture a European approach towards sustainable development. • To launch an annual EU Job Fair week in higher education institutions across the EU. • To launch an EU-sponsored network for young entrepreneurs in order to facilitate an exchange of experience, ideas and to foster transborder joint projects and investment. • To focus R&D and innovation investment on boosting the economy and job creation. • To harmonise the procedures of establishing a company in all the EU member states. • To launch an official EU network for collaboration between SMEs, large companies and educational institutions. • To support the full implementation of the Points of Single Contact for start-ups, introduced by the European Commission and to further develop the EURES jobs site. (8) United, we can make sure that young people look at the future with optimism, hope and confidence.
PES	(1) Nearly 27 million Europeans who want to work cannot find a job, including nearly a quarter of our young people. (2) Creating jobs for young people is a challenge which will define us.
ACRE	(1) The ECR is deeply concerned with high (and progressing) levels of unemployment in the EU. With young people facing record rates of unemployment. (2) The harmful practice of female genital mutilation is increasing in Europe; again the Commission must assist member states in eradicating this abuse of girls and young women.
ALDE	(1) Opportunities for young entrepreneurs. (2) The greatest social and economic crisis now facing Europe is unemployment, especially among young people.
EDP	(1) We want the spirit that blew on the Fathers of the democratic Europe of the twentieth century to be refounded by and for the young generations of the twenty-first century.
PEL	(1) Relaunch economic activity to meet social needs while respecting the environment and fight against precariousness and unemployment, especially among young people and women. [This appears twice.] (2) Compulsory schooling with the same duration in the whole European Union, which is necessary to raise the level of knowledge, culture, diplomas and qualifications for all young people.
EGP	(1) 27 million are unemployed, including almost one in five young Europeans! (2) Social balance across Europe must address the threat of a brain-drain—especially of young people—away from crisis-stricken regions.
EFA	(1) As a priority the low employment rates for groups at risk such as young people, the elderly and the population with a migrant background should be tackled. (2) EFA strongly supports the Youth Guarantee Scheme with the aim to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of 4 months.
MENF (*Manifesto of the EAF, dissolved in 2016)	(1) The setting up of effective solutions towards lower unemployment rates, especially among young people.

Source: Compiled by the author based on the original files.

It is worth mentioning that ALDE has recently enhanced its focus on women's issues. In 2016, it established the European Women's Academy to develop—both in Brussels and with the national organizations in different EU countries—activities to empower female members. The objective is to make women self-sufficient and able to promote themselves without the support of men (Abrahamsson 2018).

At the national level, a similar rationale was found in the French manifestos, where the Socialist Party, Europe Ecology and the Left Front campaigned for women's rights. In Poland, gender equality was absent from the national manifestos issued. On the contrary, in Spain this was a rather prominent topic for the different national parties, from the European Spring and Plural Left coalitions and We Can, to the People's Party. However, Citizens and the Peoples Decide coalition paid almost no attention to gender challenges.

2019 European Parliament elections

Finally, it is worth sharing what is new in December 2018 regarding proposals to foster the participation of young people and women in EU electoral democracy.

The EPP offered three main programmatic documents on its website. First, the Manifesto approved at the Statutory Congress in Bucharest (17–18 October 2012), which is a nine-page document containing the definition and values of the party and some ideas on Europe's challenges and futures. Second, the priorities of Manfred Weber, who was elected as the EPP's candidate for President of the European Commission at its last Congress held on 7–8 November 2018 in Helsinki. Third, the EPP Platform, which was agreed in Bucharest during 2012. It is worth noting that the programmatic offer drafted for the 2014 European Parliament elections seems to have been replaced by previous policy documents on European policy from the 2012 Statutory Congress, and not a new party manifesto for the 2019 elections.

In the EPP's 2012 Platform, young people were directly mentioned seven times, three regarding education and training, and four in terms of employment. There were also eight references to women, five regarding equality between men and women, two pertaining to employment, and a 'Reservation' added by the French Union pour un mouvement populaire, stating that this party 'reiterates its commitment to individual rights and the preservation of French legislation . . . This legislation ensures women to have access to contraception and abortion, within the limits defined by law. The Union pour un Mouvement Populaire recognizes these freedoms as fundamental' (EPP 2012: 51). Therefore, the 2012 EPP Platform programmatic document is more restrictive for both young people and women than the 'Action Programme' issued for the 2014 European Parliament elections (EPP 2014).

Among the six main ideas that appear on the EPP's website as priorities of Manfred Weber, one deals with young people. It refers to, 'A better Europe inspires young people: Europe's future must be driven by the enthusiasm and the creativity of its youth. This is why the next European Commission has to propose a massively stepped-up Erasmus+ programme and a long-lasting #DiscoverEU, giving Interrail passes to every 18-year old' (EPP 2019).

At the Lisbon Congress that took place on 7–8 November 2018, the PES confirmed Frans Timmermans as its Spitzenkandidat for the 2019 European Parliament elections, and approved eight resolutions on different key topics that constitute the basis of the party manifesto for the next elections. It is worth noting that one resolution is on women ('For a Europe of gender equality and empowered women'), and another focuses on young people ('Empowering youth').

The resolution on women—with three headings, 'Stop Violence Against Women'; 'My Body, My Rights'; and 'Close the Gender Gaps'—is a three-page document containing proposals on female empowerment in both the EU and beyond (PES 2018b). The PES

supports an EU Gender Equality Strategy, as requested by the Council and announced by the European Commission, and the implementation of gender budgeting at the EU level.

'Empowering youth' is devoted to a European Youth Plan to give opportunities to young people (PES 2018a). 'It starts in early childhood, with the fight for the basic rights of every child in Europe to be protected and goes on to include measures to guarantee smooth school to work and work to work transitions, and access to quality jobs, education, training, sports and culture for young people.' It is said that 'these measures aim not only to reduce inequalities between our youth, but they also address the generation gap that resulted from the financial crisis'. The first three pages of this resolution speak about education, employment and culture. The fourth page is focused on participation, including voting and the need to incorporate more young candidates on electoral lists. It also contains ideas such as improving a structured dialogue with young people, ensuring that children and young people are involved when forming policies that concern them, and developing civic education and other programmes to promote active citizenship in the formal education system.

ACRE did not nominate a candidate for the Presidency of the European Commission in 2014, but it will participate in the 2019 European Parliament elections with the president of the Europarty, MEP Jan Zahradil from Czechia, as the Spitzenkandidat. This Europarty has also issued a manifesto for the 2019 elections, which is the personal platform of the lead candidate, entitled 'Retune the EU. Jan Zahradil'. It does not contain any direct reference to women or young people.

ALDE approved its 2019 manifesto, 'Freedom, opportunity, prosperity: the Liberal vision for the future of Europe', at its Madrid Conference on 8–10 November 2018 (ALDE 2018). Regarding young people, it only includes one reference: 'greater opportunities for young entrepreneurs'. In addition, the word 'women' appears in the text six times and 'gender' four. The content on gender equality is not very elaborate, but nevertheless it is progressive. For instance, it states: 'As liberals, we are committed to promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls, and to work for the same rights and opportunities across all sectors of society, including economic participation and decision-making, regardless of gender' (ALDE 2018: 2).

At its Berlin Council on 23–25 November 2018, the EGP nominated Bas Eickhout and Ska Keller as the two lead candidates; in the latter case, repeating its 2014 nomination. It also approved a 2019 manifesto (EGP 2019). It contains one section on young people and another on feminism and gender equality. The youth section covers proposals such as a minimum income, a ban on discriminatory youth wages and proper pay for internships, or enough funding for the volunteer segment of the European Solidarity Corps. The section dealing with gender equality states that 'gender equality is at the heart of Green policies and that gender quotas on the boards of big companies and parity on the executive committees of EU institutions would help to better represent women in decision-making'.

Regarding the second Europarty that belongs to the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament, the EFA's 2019 Manifesto, 'Building a Europe of ALL peoples', also includes long headings on promoting gender equality and youth.

At the time of writing, no access to the new manifestos of the PEL, which is traditionally an accommodating party for women and young people, and the MENF could be obtained.

To conclude with, as a way to encourage more and systematized uptake of the interests of young people and women in parties' manifestos going forward, it might be of interest for each Europarty to develop or strengthen an internal, comprehensive strategic plan on youth political participation and empowerment.

5. What do we know about how to foster electoral participation?

With the purpose of enriching and making EU electoral democracy stronger, this section presents, as food for thought, some evidence on key elements to foster participation in European Parliament elections, and to reach a more balanced composition of the European Parliament.

Electoral rules matter, and they vary across member states

First, it is worth noting that the elections to the European Parliament continue to take the form of 28 elections held nationally, instead of one single European election. All electoral systems are proportional, but the degree of proportionality varies from country to country. There are member states in which the electoral district is the entire country, while in others (Belgium, France, Ireland, Italy and the UK) districts are smaller subnational units. In the latter case, this means that they may have significant 'effective thresholds'. Besides, there are electoral thresholds in the following countries: Cyprus (1.8 per cent); Greece (3 per cent); Austria, Italy and Sweden (4 per cent); and Croatia, Czechia, France, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia (5 per cent). Furthermore, the minimum age to become a candidate also varies. In most cases, it is 18 years of age, but it can be 21 (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia), 23 (Romania) or 25 (Greece and Italy). Finally, to examine the profiles of the elected MEPs, it is also important to know that lists are not closed in all member states. When the list is not closed, voters can select the candidates in order of preference, remove or add candidates to a list or combine people from different lists. Therefore, they have more influence on the decision to vote for a woman or a young person.[1]

In addition to electoral rules, future research could focus on how political finance systems —although they are beyond the scope of this study—have an impact on the participation of youth and women in European Parliament elections and national elections in the EU. This would be particularly relevant for women because, as is often pointed out, female candidates have more difficulty raising funds to compete in elections or winning party nominations. Reforming political finance rules could address these gender imbalances.

Participation in European Parliament elections is not consistently low everywhere

Voter turnout in European Parliament elections is generally low, but not all EU citizens are equally reluctant to vote, as already presented in this paper. To start with, voting is compulsory in four member states (Belgium, Cyprus, Greece and Luxembourg). Additionally, a relevant question is why turnout is much lower in post-communist countries than in Western European ones. Lower turnout in European Parliament elections in post-communist countries, as well as youth voter absenteeism, were attributed to the lack of attachment to national parties. 'For new voters it takes decades for loyalties to build and, in post-communist countries in 1990, to a certain degree, it could be said that all voters were new' (Franklin 2014: 8). Furthermore, party polarization in the EU is much lower in the East than in the West. The degree of politicization of the EU in national political debates has an electoral impact. 'Increasing politicisation of European integration makes voters more likely to make choices on the basis of party positions on EU issues, but no more likely to simply cast a protest vote "against Europe"' (Hobolt and Spoon 2012: 719).

European Parliament elections as 'second-order elections', benefiting Eurosceptics

The European Parliament elections are considered 'second-order elections' (Reif and Schmitt 1980; van der Eijk and Franklin 1996). This means that voters tend to behave differently because they perceive these elections as unimportant, compared with national general elections. In particular, levels of turnout are lower and strategic voting is less frequent. Some voters use second-order elections, not only the elections to the European Parliament, but sometimes also local elections, to punish governing parties on the national level without removing them from office.

The former implies that the campaign and the voting in the European Parliament elections are more focused on national than EU issues. The fact that there is no single European Parliament election, but rather separate elections in each member state, regulated differently from country to country, helps to explain the difficulties in making them more European. Moreover, these campaigns are basically organized by national parties. In a nutshell, there is a 'lack of "Europeanness" of European elections' (Hertner 2011: 321), which is explained not only by the lack of citizens' awareness of the powers of the European Parliament, but also by country variables at the macro level (electoral rules), and party factors at the meso level (national parties' control over these processes).

Furthermore, at least until recently, Eurosceptic parties have been more successful in European Parliament elections than in national elections (Brack and Startin 2015; de Vries et al. 2011; Hix and Marsh 2011; Hobolt and Spoon 2012). This is due not only to the second-order nature of the European Parliament elections, but also to institutional factors of both a national and supranational nature. Two factors could be highlighted. First, the change from a majoritarian system for the general election (or in certain cases, a less proportional one because of smaller districts or higher thresholds) to a proportional arrangement for the European Parliament election in countries such as France and the UK. Second, the lack of visibility of the right–left debate on the supranational level caused by the consensual decision-making, and the power strategies of most national governments. Although nowadays there is plenty of information on the bargaining preferences of national delegations and Parliament's political groups, it remains unclear where on the left–right spectrum the ruling majority in the EU Council and the European Parliament is positioned at any point in

time. Moreover, national governments have tried not to speak about EU policy options at home, but to maintain these issues as depoliticized (Ares and Bouza 2019).

However, since the beginning of the global financial crisis in 2007, voters may be starting to perceive the importance of the European Parliament elections, due to four main reasons: (a) the gradual increased availability of information at a national level on EU issues; (b) the new legislative and budgetary powers of the European Parliament after the Lisbon Treaty, which came into force in December 2009; (c) the European Parliament's greater role on the appointment of the next Commission President, and more awareness of the connection between this decision and the results of the European Parliament elections; and (d) better understanding of the political face of the European Commission after the Juncker College and its successful bargaining for Brexit.[2]

Europarties as game-changers

National parties are in charge of most traditional party duties, such as candidate selection and campaign responsibilities, but Europarties play an increasingly important role in EU electoral democracy. A Europarty is 'an institutionalized form of party organization at the EU level that has seen a partial transfer of sovereignty from national member parties' (Hertner 2011: 322). The Treaty of the EU says that 'political parties at European level contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of citizens of the Union' (Article 10.4). Europarties differ in terms of the level of institutionalization and cohesion, but they are always responsible for coordinating national politicians within different EU institutions, particularly the Parliament. Moreover, they have been regulated at the EU level since 2003, and have received EU funding from 2004 onwards.

The continuous empowerment of the European Parliament since the mid-1980s (Hix and Høyland 2013; Rittberger 2012), along with the politicization of EU issues, started to force some Europarties to act as regular parties by offering programmatic positions on EU policies. Programmatic differentiation among Europarties is broad enough to capture voter preferences and allow them to choose between alternative projects, as shown for the 2014 elections (Ares 2014).

Some Europarties coordinate positions ahead of European Council or European Commission meetings, and in other political negotiation frameworks. They are also gradually more present during European Parliament election campaigns, by supporting the promotion of their Spitzenkandidat or party manifesto.

The *Spitzenkandidaten* system

'This time it's different' was the motto of the European Parliament for the 2014 elections. It asked citizens to 'Act. React. Impact.', considering that the Lisbon Treaty, in force since December 2009, had greatly empowered the Parliament both as a co-legislator with the Council of Ministers, and in the election of the Commission's President. Regarding the latter, the Treaty states that the result of the elections must be taken into account by the European Council when proposing to the Parliament the person to be elected as the Commission's President. To strengthen this connection, the main Europarties nominated their leading candidates (*Spitzenkandidaten*) before the elections.

The 2014 European Parliament elections continued to fit the second-order model (Schmitt and Toygür 2016). It was argued that the *Spitzenkandidaten*, with few exceptions, did not play a major role in the campaign, and because of that, their contribution to the level of participation and the orientation of the votes was unimportant (Hobolt 2014). One reason given was because the Europarties that nominated lead candidates did not focus on

the *Spitzenkandidaten* system in their manifestos (Braun and Popa 2018) or their online campaigns via Facebook (Braun and Schwarzbözl 2019).

This notwithstanding, data from the EES 2014 Study, an EU-wide post-election survey, show that campaign efforts by the leading candidates and their recognition by voters had a positive impact on their probability of turnout (Schmitt, Hobolt and Popa 2015; Schmitt and Popa 2016). Additionally, Maier, Rittberger and Faas (2016) and Maier et al. (2018), using a mix of research techniques that included a quasi-experiment, found that the followers of the main televised debate between the 2014 *Spitzenkandidaten*, the so-called 'Eurovision debate', experienced attitudinal changes and increased their support for the EU. Based on this evidence, Maier and colleagues recommended not only that the format should be maintained, but also that it should be made more appealing, to attract the attention of a greater number of voters.

Moreover, from 2014 onwards, and especially in the turbulent times of the economic and the refugee crises along with the Brexit bargaining, the Juncker Commission showed a political strength that might be linked to the legitimacy given by the *Spitzenkandidaten* system.

Additionally, despite an ongoing debate regarding the desirability of this process, most Europarties are again nominating leading candidates for the 2019 European Parliament elections. As anticipated in 2014, it is noticeable how the Parliament managed to 'impose its interpretation of the new modified procedure for electing the Commission President' (Hobolt 2014: 1528).

The most immediate challenge is to give more visibility to the lead candidates as soon as possible. The European and national parties that have already made their choices for 2019 may be losing momentum (Pronckutė 2018). If the data on the 2014 European Parliament elections suggest that the *Spitzenkandidaten's* impact was low because only a small percentage of voters got to know about them, as the Europarties and national parties did not try to enhance their media presence across the EU, it is important to be different this time, and familiarize more citizens with the lead candidates' policy positions from an earlier stage.

Endnotes

1. Lists are closed in Estonia, Germany, Greece, France, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the UK. Ireland, Northern Ireland and Malta have single transferable vote (voters can list the candidates in order of preference). In Sweden, citizens have the option of removing or adding candidates to a list, and in Luxembourg of combining people from different lists.

2. The Lisbon Treaty put the European Parliament on an equal footing with the Council of Ministers of the EU as regards legislative and budgetary powers. The ordinary legislative procedure (co-decision) applies now in 85 policy areas covering most of the EU's domains of competence, including agriculture and fisheries, commercial policy, cooperation with countries outside the EU, implementing acts, security and justice, and support for backward regions. Previous areas of co-decision were, among others, consumer protection, environment, internal market, jobs and social policy, public health and transport. After the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament, along with the Council, also decides on the full annual budget and the multiannual financial framework.

6. What else can be done to obtain a more inclusive EU electoral democracy?

The author of this paper is convinced that the two primary responses to addressing the challenges of voter absenteeism by young people should be, first, to empower parties' youth wings, and second, to ask young people under what conditions they would feel more comfortable participating.

Taking youth political organizations and candidates seriously is crucial (Koppel 2018; García 2018; Bianchetti 2018). Therefore, this section starts by introducing the most important youth political organizations at EU level, and highlighting the frameworks and priorities of a selection of other relevant organizations from among those that are most active in Brussels. Afterwards, some valuable recommendations provided in the past by different informed sources are revisited. Lastly, some further suggestions are presented.

Europarties' youth wings

The Youth of the European People's Party (YEPP) is the EPP's youth organization. Its own website (http://youthepp.eu) states that it is composed of 58 political organizations from 39 European countries, and one of its principal objectives is to 'prepare the younger generation to lead tomorrow's Europe'. It offers a blog by the YEPP board, and a short two-page document on the future of Europe, adopted by the Council of Presidents in Milan, during February 2018.

The PES youth wing is the Young European Socialists (YES). Its website (www.youngsocialists.eu) states that it strives 'to be an integrated and progressive organisation at the heart of the socialist and social democratic movement and to contribute to and shape the European debate and policy'. YES publishes posts, and writes and shares programmatic texts, including their own manifesto for the 2019 European Parliament elections entitled, 'Our EU Works for You. European Elections 2019 Manifesto' (Young European Socialists 2018). This is an eight-page document structured according to the following six points: 'Defend and protect our planet'; 'Work and education: the right to choose'; 'An economy that's ours'; 'Equality and inclusion for you. And for all'; 'Different backgrounds, same rights—refugees welcome'; and 'The future of Europe is your future'.

ACRE's youth wing is called the European Young Conservatives (EYC). They have no available website at the moment. Along with YEPP, it is part of the International Young Democrat Union (IYDU).

ALDE's youth organization is the European Liberal Youth (LYMEC). Its website (https://www.lymec.eu) mentions that it was the first pan-European political organization to institute

individual membership in 1997, which means that individuals do not need to be affiliated with one of its youth national organizations to be part of the European network. As it also did in 2014, LYMEC published its own manifesto for the 2019 European Parliament elections, this time entitled 'The Future is Europe' (European Liberal Youth 2019). The 2019 version is more comprehensive (11 pages instead of 3) than the 2014 version. The 2014 version mainly focused on traditional liberal values and priorities, such as reduced bureaucracy and procedures, liberalization of the labour market, and cuts in EU funding for agriculture.

LYMEC's six main priorities for the 2019 European Parliament elections are: 'a working framework on legal migration and asylum, and tackling the refugee crisis—a call for a liberal Europe'; 'security and defence—stronger Europe through stronger capabilities'; 'climate change, environment and energy'; 'digitalization, innovation and markets'; 'education, labour market, youth unemployment'; and the 'future of the EU, institutional reform, ensuring the respect of human rights and equality'. The document states that LYMEC 'believes that the future of Europe depends on the youth, which is why we want to see more young candidates in the upcoming European Parliament elections, as well as an electoral approach targeting young people, specifically explaining what the EU is and what it has done for each and every one of us' (European Liberal Youth 2019: 9).

The Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG; https://fyeg.org) is the umbrella structure for young green organizations across Europe, not just within the EU. EFA has a youth wing, called the European Free Alliance Youth (EFAy; https://efay.eu). It also issued its own manifesto for the 2014 European Parliament elections.

In the PEL, there is a network on youth, where common actions and campaigns for an alternative Europe are designed.

The level of institutionalization of the youth organizations of the Europarties is not particularly important to the focus and recommendations of this paper, which apply to all national young structures.

What are the frameworks and priorities of young people's and women's organizations for the next legislature?

This question has also been answered by other organizations of young people and women. To cite two of the most prominent examples for youth:

1. The European Youth Forum (EYF or YFJ), which is a platform representing over 100 youth organizations in Europe, including national youth councils and international organizations such as the Europarties' youth wings, is working on a campaign to inform young people across Europe about the importance of participating in the 2019 European Parliament elections, and to promote youth political priorities. Some of their scheduled activities are: an online comparison tool for the political programmes of the different Europarties and leading candidates; specific days devoted to young people during the *Spitzenkandidaten* campaigns in early 2019; campaign trail thematic videos with the leading candidates covering topics of specific interest to them, such as sustainable development or quality of jobs; and a televised debate between the leading candidates in April 2019 in Maastricht.

2. The European Students' Forum (AEGEE-Europe), which is a YFJ member, is implementing the YVote project 'to inform people in Europe, especially the youth, in order to equip them with the needed knowledge and to encourage them to be engaged in the democratic process in the future' (https://yvote.eu). They 'want to increase the understanding of the EU, tackle mistrust and apathy amongst the citizens through peer-to-peer education'. As Viola Bianchetti, Projects Director for AEGEE, indicated

for this paper (Bianchetti 2018), the project launched a voting guide for young people, and they are hosting youth conventions in seven different cities all over the EU, with the aim of drafting a youth manifesto for Europe. Moreover, AEGEE-Europe assists young people to 'get in touch with their mayors, engage in local level advocacy and organize local level activities related to the EP elections and youth participation'.

Additionally, in 2016, a European Youth Event was organized in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, in which 7,500 young people were involved. They promoted a range of ideas, such as: accepting more migrants, and providing more instruments for the integration of refugees; a stronger commitment to mitigate climate change; measures to reduce youth unemployment, and more regulation on labour conditions at the EU level; a universal citizen's income; education on EU issues in schools, and more student exchanges; training for young leaders, and more young people in political offices; and e-voting, and more contacts with MEPs through Twitter or specific apps (Youngs 2018: 117–118).

Finally, Table 6.1 summarizes different initiatives launched in recent years to promote political participation by young people.

Table 6.1. Initiatives to foster participation by young people

Initiative	Promoter	Purpose	Instrument
DECIDE project ('DEmocratic Compact: Improving Democracy in Europe')	The European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)	To promote citizen participation on EU affairs at the local level	A network of towns with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and youth councils
'Bridging Europe' project	The European Students' Forum (AEGEE-Europe)	To involve young people in politics	A range of training activities, such as courses, debates and advocacy
FutureLab Europe	105 members aged 20–30 who are activists, engaged in their local communities in 30 countries	To use new technology and social media to get young people involved in EU politics	Activities focused on three topics: democratic values in Europe, equal opportunities and European identity
Project for a Democratic Union	Students and young academics in various member states	To support a full political union of the Eurozone	A small think tank that publishes data and analyses, and organizes events
Yourvotematters.eu platform for the European Elections 2019	European Citizen Action Service	To inform on EU policy issues. To see which politicians match citizen views based on Members of the European Parliament's vote on 25 real decisions made in the last five years. To show what civil society organizations are fighting for	The Yourvotematters.eu platform

Source: Youngs (2018: 114–20), Bianchetti (2018) and the respective websites of each of the projects, included in the references.

The demands of youth organizations are focused on facilitating voting, providing political training and maintaining the political engagement of young people over time with a grassroots-level and bottom-up perspective.

It was argued that using social media gives visibility to face-to-face activities, but personal interaction is key (Bianchetti 2018). Furthermore, it is necessary to compensate for the oversimplification of some of the content on EU affairs that is seen on social media (Miranda 2018).

Concerning women's organizations, there are also a number of new initiatives and fresh ideas being discussed, notably:

1. The European Women's Lobby, which will be issuing a manifesto and campaigning in the European Parliament elections, supports the concept of parity democracy in the European Parliament. They propose the following five 'Cs' to facilitate women's further involvement in politics:

   - *Confidence:* Invest in women. Set up ambitious training and mentoring programs.

   - *Candidate selection:* Establish quotas or zipping systems in order to ensure gender-balanced lists. Head-hunt women candidates.

   - *Culture:* Establish zero tolerance for sexism, with clear channels for reporting sexual harassment.

   - *Cash:* Provide earmarked funding for women candidates until equal representation is reached.

   - *Childcare:* Change the 'long hours' culture in politics. Provide childcare facilities.[1]

2. The Gender Five Plus (G5 +) think tank also promotes the concept of 'parity democracy'. This is considered a radical new approach to gender equality policies, which 'needs to be understood as a structural prerequisite of the democratic state' (Irigoien 2018: 6). As defined by Alazne Irigoien, an expert interviewed for this paper: 'Parity democracy does not aim to treat women as a minority group within the dominant framework, but to create a more inclusive framework. It aims at transforming democracy by including all women in their diversity, and not only a group of selected women that have managed to adapt to the male constructed parameters of politics. Moving towards parity democracy in the EU means greater diversity, and thus, it means a better reflection and representation of the real Europe' (Irigoien 2018: 7).

Some organizations highlight how difficult it is to make further progress in women's representation, and they identify cultural and political barriers to placing more women in top institutional positions, such as becoming members of the European Commission, not to mention its President, or the European Council's President. It is a challenge, not because women are expected to lead differently (their political styles are varied), but because it introduces other perspectives on public challenges (Itkonen 2018; Nevado Bueno 2018). It seems necessary not only to nominate female candidates, but also to promote women generally and provide them with access to 'big budgets' (Itkonen 2018).

Because the causes of gender-related political imbalances are extremely deep-rooted, it is essential to invest further in equal education about gender equality from an early age. These preventive actions are particularly needed at the moment, due to the increasing political use of social media, which tends to be a more hostile environment for female candidates and MEPs than for their male counterparts (Pronckutė 2018).

Recommendations

Before adding further recommendations, Tables 6.2 and 6.3 restate some ideas already suggested by authors for fostering young people and women's participation in EU electoral democracy. These recommendations focus on changes in electoral rules and political finance

regulations, commitments adopted by parties related to elections, education and empowerment programmes, and involvement in policy-making between elections.

Table 6.2. Previous recommendations to foster women's participation in EU electoral democracy

Entry point	Recommendation
Selection of candidates	'Political parties can adopt self-imposed quotas and establish measures to assure the presence of women in electoral lists and their positions high up in the lists, search for women candidates outside traditional political structures' (Irigoien 2018: 38). 'Gender quotas and specially zipper-system quotas for elections. Quotas should also provide emplacement rules and strong non-compliance sanctions to assure their effectiveness. Also include intersectionality to improve the current underrepresentation of minority women' (Irigoien 2018: 37). 'Prioritise measures in the 10 member states that have a level lower than 33% of women MEPs: currently, Lithuania, Cyprus, Hungary, Poland, Czechia, Greece, Belgium, Bulgaria, Slovakia and Romania' (Irigoien 2018: 37). 'Urge member states to nominate one woman and one man Commission candidate in 2019 (following the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men's suggestion)' (Irigoien 2018: 37).
Beyond elections	'Measures to encourage women to stand for the EP elections include empowering, sponsoring, mentoring, and helping the creation of robust networking which promotes women candidates' (Irigoien 2018: 38). 'Spread the strategic benefits of increasing the number of women in political decision-making so that other actors engage in promoting a system of parity democracy' (Irigoien 2018: 38). 'Implement a holistic and robust EU gender policy, which addresses gender stereotypes, education, violence against women, horizontal and vertical segregation in the labor market, the valuing and sharing of caring activities and other issues, in addition to parity democracy' (Irigoien 2018: 38).

Source: Irigoien, A., *European Parliament's Elections 2019: Towards parity democracy in Europe* (Gender Five Plus (G5+), 2018), <https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/530efa_c98b8ef6326d4be19d83d72732f3a774.pdf>, accessed 24 November 2018.

Table 6.3. Previous recommendations to foster young people's participation in EU electoral democracy

Entry point	Recommendation
Voting	Lowering the voting age to 16 for European elections (Bouza 2014; Deželan 2015). 'Establish internships for young people and other volunteer initiatives around elections management' (International IDEA 2015a: 26).
Selection of candidates	'Facilitating interparty dialogue to foster broader agreements on the need for the advancement of youth as electoral contestants' (International IDEA 2015b: 4). 'Securing funding to support the participation of young people' (International IDEA 2015a: 15). 'Member States should establish a quota on party MEP candidates: 25% should be aged under 35' (Bouza 2014: 29).
Manifestos	'Include youth issues clearly without "ghettoising"' (Bouza 2014: 30). 'Having a youth manifesto that incorporates the priorities of young people' (International IDEA 2015a: 17).
Campaign	'Target key groups of young people: students, the socially excluded and first-time voters' (Bouza 2014: 4). 'Use social media to engage and network with the audience, instead of repeating slogans' (Bouza 2014: 31). 'Employ in-house social media experts and sustain this for ongoing communication' (International IDEA 2015a: 21). 'Develop competitions for the design, dissemination and ownership of youth participation messages' (International IDEA 2015a: 32). 'Broadcast a high-profile youth-focused debate among top candidates of the European elections, such as between the candidates nominated by the European political parties for the position of President of the European Commission' (Bouza 2014: 31).
Beyond elections	'Use youth events and entertainment to communicate with young people and to shift their thinking away from treating elections as a zero-sum game' (International IDEA 2015a: 29). Promote 'planning and longer-term engagement' (International IDEA 2015a: 10). 'Get young people to participate early so that they appreciate the importance of engaging in a responsible and ethical manner' (International IDEA 2015a: 10). 'Establish strategic alliances with youth organizations to build a wider democracy and electoral culture' (International IDEA 2015a: 10). 'Facilitate engagement with youth by organizing periodic round tables, conferences and consultations on democracy, governance, elections and youth participation' (International IDEA 2015a: 33). 'Space to share experiences and explore new and innovative ways of engaging younger cohorts' (International IDEA 2015b: 4). 'Foster an on-going and Europe-wide dialogue on a common definition of citizenship education amongst all actors, including political institutions from the local to the European level, both formal and non-formal education providers, and youth organisations, aimed at finding and defining a holistic approach to citizenship education that provides young people with the skills and competences they need to be confident and efficacious in democratic processes. These would include political skills, embracing new and different forms of political activism, and financial, digital, and media literacy. Such discussions should also lead to concrete implementation measures' (Deželan 2015: 6). 'Support more research on youth political participation' (Deželan 2015: 8). 'Promote mechanisms of participatory policy-making and co-decision by young people in key decisions and across policy fields' (Deželan 2015: 8). 'Political parties should improve young people's inclusion and representation in their own structures and prepare action plan in this regard' (Deželan 2015: 12).

Sources: Bouza (2014), Deželan (2015) and International IDEA (2015a, 2015b).

Concerning the implementation of these recommendations, some progress was made in addressing young people's priorities, using social media to engage with young people, and establishing alliances with youth organizations. The 2016 European Youth Event, where salient issues were discussed with MEPs and leading figures from civil society and the business world, was clearly a step forward. It symbolized the willingness to face the challenge of young people's disconnection from EU electoral democracy. It delivered a compendium of ideas for relaunching integration that were published in the paper *Shaping Europe: 50 ideas for a better future* (European Youth Press 2016). Coinciding with this event, the European Parliamentary Research Service also issued a Special Eurobarometer on European Youth (European Parliament 2016), which measured young people's opinions on questions related to unemployment, knowledge of the EU and civic participation, the digital revolution and sustainable development.

In terms of women's participation, as has been stated, some parties have already established internal rules on diversity in the selection of candidates and/or programmes for the empowerment of women. Moreover, they have introduced sections on women and young people in their electoral manifestos. Nevertheless, with regard to electoral procedures, it could be useful to harmonize national electoral rules on the age of candidates and thresholds, and to introduce incentives so that national parties include a high percentage of young and female candidates on their lists.

Further recommendations

In moving forward, according to the different inputs gathered for this paper, one can endorse International IDEA's stand, advocating a proactive long-term approach to engaging with women and young people.

Securing resources for youth activities (International IDEA 2015b) continues to be key, along with more research on participation by young people and further mechanisms to involve them in EU policy mechanisms on a more permanent basis (Deželan 2015).

There is a need to highlight the obligation to educate voters from an early age and to address them in environments with which they are familiar, particularly regarding those who are socially excluded, who tend to be more difficult to reach.

It is also essential to carry out specific actions at national levels in those member states where age and gender gaps in turnout are higher.

Additionally, more attention to leading candidates and, in general, to EU issues in the campaign for the next European Parliament elections would help to activate young people and women in EU electoral democracy. Incentives could also be incorporated to encourage national parties to Europeanize their manifestos and campaigns.

Moreover, further advancements in terms of the access by young people and women to public resources and their influence depend on the capacity of society as a whole to moderate persistent age and gender stereotypes. In line with the inputs from the interviews conducted for this paper, for which the author is solely responsible, 10 points are raised as central or additional recommendations, complementary to further institutional reforms, in order to give greater consideration to young people and women. Three recommendations deal with the provision of data, four deal with education and gender-equality training, and three are related to empowerment.

Data

1. Maintain the platform launched by the European Parliament ahead of the 2019 European Parliament elections named 'What Europe Does For Me'. This offers

information on EU outputs and is organized by territory and according to the main interests of citizens. In addition, disseminate this evidential information using a less technical language.

2. Establish a think tank to give advice on more inclusive participation and citizen control over EU policy-making processes. This innovative actor in charge of citizen involvement in EU affairs could be called 'EU Citizens Plus'.

3. Provide permanent funding for certain research projects focused on the online behaviour of young people, for the purpose of monitoring their preferred networks and style of communication. Hire teams of young people not only to implement but also to design the digital campaigns of both institutions and political parties.

Education

4. Inform children and young people of the struggle to extend political rights, including the right to vote and to be elected, and of related current challenges.

5. Explain to children and young people how they can promote and organize political events at the local level, and where to obtain information to follow the activities of their representatives at both national and EU institutions.

6. Educate children from an early age, in a relaxed and recreational manner, not necessarily only at school, on the rationale for European integration and how political decisions are made at the supranational level.

Gender-equality training

7. Provide women with the skills that allow them to defend their interests, and to seek out political positions. Educate men on accepting that women are entitled to share power.

Empowerment

8. As a government, after the next European Parliament elections, propose a woman candidate as the national member of the European Commission. As a civic organization or individual citizen, press your government to do so.

9. As a party, give more power to your youth wing (also to elect a fixed number of candidates) and provide them with a greater say in the elaboration of the party manifesto. In addition, deliver a differentiated electoral policy document addressed to young voters.

10. Create a Council on Youth at the EU level, with a non-binding but compulsory say on policies that, far beyond education and unemployment, are also important to them, such as climate change, migration and asylum, security and defence, or the future of Europe.

Endnotes

1. In addition to the inputs from the European Women's Lobby, the Brussels Binder, the WE CAN movement and Polin are also worthy of consideration.

7. Conclusion

The under-representation of both young people and women remain two serious pitfalls of EU electoral democracy. In the 2014 European Parliament elections, the average rate of voter absenteeism was 72.2 per cent for the younger age group (16–24 years). The gap in electoral participation between the older (55 years and over) and younger age groups exceeded 20 percentage points in 16 out of the 28 member states (average EU age gap: 23.5 percentage points). The percentage of MEPs in the eighth legislature who are women has reached 37 per cent, but the increase in the levels of women in the European Parliament between 2009 and 2014 was just 2 percentage points. In 2014, the level of female MEPs was lower than in 2009 in 15 out of the 28 member states. Cultural and political barriers to placing more women in top positions, such as members of the European Commission, not to mention its President or that of the European Council, persist. From the author's point of view, there are three main issues to look at: (a) national electoral rules may need to be modified; (b) national parties should make an effort to Europeanize these elections, emphasizing the vast array of issues (climate change, security and inclusion) that are particularly important to young people and women, and promoting them as candidates; and (c) Europarties could act as game-changers to revert the treatment of the European Parliament elections as second-order elections, and also more enduringly promote awareness and political training in the EU.

Moving forward, this paper highlights the need to change the top-down approach to voter absenteeism by young people and women. These challenges require a long-term strategy that combines institutional reforms with fresh bottom-up inputs, and that adds a more frontal opposition to gender and age stereotypes. The youth and women's organizations consulted for this paper share a common framework of empowerment by these actors, increasing the number of active female and young EU politicians as role models, and sharing public budgets and real power. The point is that it may not be enough—or even feasible—to strengthen civic organizations composed of people who are already active and interested in EU themes. The first thing to do might be to get to the root of the challenges and try to convince society that an EU electoral democracy with greater young people and women involved is a stronger democracy.

The paper sheds light on the crucial need to allocate more resources to the creation and analysis of data on youth political attitudes and initiatives, as well as to implement long-term programmes of education and empowerment, along with ongoing channels of citizen involvement in EU policymaking. It suggests the creation of an advisory Council on Youth at the EU level. This Council would work not only on education and youth unemployment, which are problems frequently mentioned by political parties when they address youth, but also on other issues that young people consider to be key, such as migration, defence or the future of Europe. It also recommends the establishment of an EU Citizens Plus think tank in

Brussels that would conduct prospective analysis on enriching electoral democracy based on EU public opinion studies. It might also concentrate information on EU initiatives launched both by European and national institutions, and by youth and women's organizations, to foster public debate on EU affairs and participation in EU policymaking in different areas, with a bottom-up and inclusive perspective. In a nutshell, the idea is primarily to enrich the ballot boxes and the European Parliament with more youth and women's inputs. Then, complementarily, to increase the participation of profiles of EU citizens that are as diverse as possible in policy-making processes during each legislative period, going far beyond conventional multi-level governance settings.

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2019 Manifesto 'Building a Europe of ALL peoples'

EAF
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Annex A. General topics covered in the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires

1. In the 2014 elections, overall turnout (42.61 per cent) was slightly lower than in 2009 (42.97 per cent). EU and national institutions, from a top-down perspective, and some citizen's groups, from a bottom-up perspective, had previously taken actions to increase participation. In your view, which were the most effective measures implemented so far to counteract the fall in turnout in the elections to the European Parliament and what measures are currently being undertaken for the 2019 elections?

2. How do you assess the Citizen's Dialogues about the future of Europe and the European Parliament's campaigns to generate EU-focused debates, such as 'Act. React. Impact.'? What impact do these and other initiatives have on enhancing participation and representation of young people and women?

3. Are you familiar with any initiatives by civil society organizations to mobilize voters in European elections? If so, why did they or did they not work as expected?

4. What lessons can be learned from the #EP2014/#EU14 digital campaigns, and more generally, the increased use of social media in the 2014 and 2019 European elections?

5. Do you have any suggestions on how voter absenteeism by young people could be tackled more effectively?

6. How could the communication strategies of the EU political parties be enhanced to address the challenge of greater participation and representation of young people and women?

7. Which measures could improve the involvement by young people in day-to-day EU politics?

8. What must be changed to increase the participation and representation of women in European party structures and parliamentary political groups?

9. Finally, from your point of view, is there any way to demasculinize power?

Annex B. National parties and political groups in the European Parliament (2014–2019)

Table B.1. National political parties belonging to the EPP group in the European Parliament (25 November 2014)

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Austria	Österreichische Volkspartei	Austrian People's Party	ÖVP	Christian democrats	5
Belgium	Centre Democrate Humaniste	Humanist Democratic Centre	cdH	Christian democrats	1
	Christen-Demokratisch & Vlaams	Christian Democratic & Flemish Party	CD&V	Christian democrats	2
	Christlich Soziale Partei	Christian Social Party	CSP	Christian democrats	1
Bulgaria	Demokrati za silna Bălgarija	Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria	DSB	conservatives	1
	Grazhdani za Evropejsko Razvitie na Bulgaria	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria	GERB	conservatives	6
Croatia	Hrvatska demokratska zajednica	Croatian Democratic Union	HDZ	Christian democrats	4
	Hrvatska seljačka stranka	Croatian Peasant Party	HSS	agrarian parties	1
Cyprus	Dimokratikos Synagermos	Democratic Rally	DISY	Christian democrats	2
Czechia	Křesťanská a demokratická unie – Československá strana lidová	Czechoslovak People's Party	KDU-ČSL	Christian democrats	3
	Coalition TOP 09 + Starostové a nezávislí	Coalition Top 9 + Mayors and Independents	Coal. (TOP 09 + STAN)	regional parties	4
Denmark	Det Konservative Folkeparti	Conservative People's Party	KF	conservatives	1
Estonia	Erakond Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit	Union of Pro Patria and Res Publica	IRL	nationalists	1

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Finland	Kansallinen Kokoomus	National Coalition Party	KOK	conservatives	3
France	Union pour un mouvement populaire	Union for a Popular Movement	UMP	nationalists	20
Germany	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/Christlich Soziale Union Deutschlands	Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union	CDU/CSU	Christian democrats	34 (29 + 5)
Greece	Nea Dimokratia	New Democracy	ND	Christian democrats	5
Hungary	Fidesz Magyar Polgári Szövetség + Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt	Fidesz Hungarian Civic Union + Christian Democratic People's Party (alliance)	Fidesz-KDNP	liberals	12 (11+1)
Ireland	Fine Gael	Family of the Irish	FG	Christian democrats	4
Italy	Forza Italia	Italy Ahead	FI	nationalists	13
	Nuovo centro destra	New Centre-Right	NCD	Christian democrats	3
	Südtiroler Volkspartei	South Tyrol People's Party	SV	regional parties	1
Latvia	Partija 'Vienotība'	party 'Unity'	V	liberals	4
Lithuania	Tėvynės sąjunga – Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai	Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats	TS-LKD	conservatives	2
Luxembourg	Chreschtlich Sozial Vollekspartei	Christian Social People's Party	CSV	Christian democrats	3
Malta	Partit Nazzjonalista	National Party	PN	conservatives	3
Netherlands	Christen-Democratisch Appèl – Europese Volkspartij	Christian Democratic Appeal – European People's Party	CDA	Christian democrats	5
Poland	Platforma Obywatelska	Civic Platform	PO	liberals	18
	Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe	Polish People's Party	PSL	agrarian parties	4
				independent	1
Portugal	Partido Social Democrata	Social Democratic Party	PSD	social democrats	6
	Centro Democrático Social – Partido Popular	Democratic and Social Centre – People's Party	CDS-PP	social democrats	1
Romania	Partidul Naţional Liberal	National Liberal Party	PNL	liberals	4
	Partidul Democrat Liberal	Democratic Liberal Party	PDL	liberals	5
	Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România	Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania	UDMR	regional parties	2
	Partidul Mişcarea Populară	People's Movement Party	PMP	liberals	2

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Slovakia	Kresťansko-demokratické hnutie	Christian Democratic Movement	KDH	Christian democrats	2
	Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia – demokratická strana	Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party	SDKÚ-DS	Christian democrats	2
	Strana maďarskej komunity – Magyar Közösség Pártja	Party of Hungarian Community	SMK-MKP	regional parties	1
	Most-Híd	Bridge	Most-Híd	liberals	1
Slovenia	Slovenska demokratska stranka	Slovenian Democratic Party	SDS	social democrats	3
	SLS Slovenska Ljudska Stranka	SLS Slovenian People's Party	SLS	Christian democrats	1
	Nova Slovenija Kršèanski Ljudska Stranka	New Slovenia – Christian People's Party	Nsi	Christian democrats	1
Spain	Partido Popular	People's Party	PP	conservatives	16
	Unió Democràtica de Catalunya	Democratic Union of Catalonia	UDC	regional parties	1
Sweden	Moderata Samlingspartiet	Moderate Party	M	conservatives	3
	Kristdemokraterna	Christian Democrats	KD	Christian democrats	1
Total number of MEPs					219

Sources: European Parliament (2014), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>; and Schmitt et al., *European Parliament Election Study 1979-2014: Euromanifesto Study* (Cologne: GESIS Data Archive, 2018), ZA5102 Data file Version 2.0.0, <http://doi.org/10.4232/1.12830>.

Table B.2. National political parties belonging to the S&D group in the European Parliament (25 November 2014)

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Austria	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	Social Democratic Party of Austria	SPÖ	social democrats	5
Belgium	Parti Socialiste	Socialist Party	PS	social democrats	3
	Socialistische Partij Anders	Socialist Party Different	SpA	social democrats	1
Bulgaria	Balgarska Socialisticheska Partija	Bulgarian Socialist Party	BSP	social democrats	4
Croatia	Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske	Social Democratic Party of Croatia	SDP	social democrats	2
Cyprus	Kinima Sosialdimokraton	Movement for Social Democracy	EDEK	social democrats	1
	Dimokratikó Kómma	Democratic Party	DIKO	liberals	1
Czechia	Česká strana sociálně demokratická	Czech Social Democratic Party	ČSSD	social democrats	4
Denmark	Socialdemokraterne	Social Democrats	SD	social democrats	3
Estonia	Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond	Social Democratic Party	SDE	liberals	1
Finland	Suomen Sosiaalidemokraattinen Puolue	Social Democratic Party of Finland	SDP	social democrats	2
France	Parti Socialiste	Socialist Party	PS	(post-)communists	12
	Parti radical de gauche	Radical Party of the Left	PRG	(post-)communists	1
Germany	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland	Social Democratic Party	SPD	social democrats	27
Greece	To Potami	The River	To Potami	liberals	2
	Panellinio Socialistico Kinima	Panhellenic Socialist Movement	PASOK	social democrats	2
Hungary	Magyar Szocialista Párt	Hungarian Socialist Party	MSZP	(post-)communists	2
	Demokratikus Koalíció	Democratic Coalition	DK	social democrats	2
Ireland				independent	1
Italy	Partito democratico	Democratic Party	PD	social democrats	31
Latvia	'Saskaņa' sociāldemokrātiskā partija (Saskanas Centrs)	'Harmony' the social democratic party	Saskaņa	(post-)communists	1
Lithuania	Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija	Lithuanian Social Democratic Party	LSDP	social democrats	2
Luxembourg	Letzebuergesch Sozialistesch Arbechterpartei	Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party	LSAP	social democrats	1

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Malta	Partit Laburista	Labour Party	PL	social democrats	3
Netherlands	Partij van de Arbeid/Europese Sociaaldemocraten	Labour Party/Party of the European Social Democrats	PvdA/PES	social democrats	3
Poland	Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej – Unia Pracy	Democratic Left Alliance – Labour Union	SLD-UP	(post-)communists	4 (3+1)
				independent	1
Portugal	Partido Socialista Portuguêsa	Socialist Party	PS	social democrats	8
Romania	Alianța Electorală Partidul Social Democrat + Uniunea Națională pentru Progresul României + Partidul Conservator	Social Democratic Party + National Union for the Progress of Romania + Conservative Party (alliance)	PSD-UNPR-PC	social democrats and conservatives	16 (12+2+2)
Slovakia	Smer-sociálna demokracia	Direction-Social Democracy	Smer-SD	social democrats	4
Slovenia	Socialnih demokratov	Social Democrats	SD	social democrats	1
Spain	Partido Socialista Obrero Español + Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya	Spanish Socialist Workers' Party/ Socialist Party of Catalonia	PSOE/PSC	social democrats	14 (13 + 1)
Sweden	Sverige Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti	Swedish Social Democratic Party	S	social democrats	5
	Feministiskt initiativ	Feminist Initiative	FI	special interest parties	1
United Kingdom	Labour Party	Labour Party	Lab	social democrats	20
Total number of MEPs					191

Sources: European Parliament (2014), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>; and Schmitt et al., *European Parliament Election Study 1979-2014: Euromanifesto Study* (Cologne: GESIS Data Archive, 2018), ZA5102 Data file Version 2.0.0, <http://doi.org/10.4232/1.12830>.

Table B.3. National political parties belonging to the ECR group in the European Parliament (25 November 2014)

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Austria					0
Belgium	Nieuw-Vlaamse-Alliantie	New Flemish Alliance	NVA	regional parties	4
Bulgaria	Nazionalno Dwizhenie za Stabilnost i Prosperitet	Coalition Bulgaria without Censorship et al.	BWC, VMRO	conservatives/ nationalists	2
Croatia				independent	1
Czechia	Občanská demokratická strana	Civic Democratic Party	ODS	liberals	2
Denmark	Dansk Folkeparti	Danish People's Party	DF	nationalists	4
Estonia					0
Finland	Perussuomalaiset	True Finns	PS	nationalists	2
France					0
Germany	Alternative für Deutschland	Alternative for Germany	AfD	liberals, Eurosceptics	7
	Familienpartei Deutschlands	Family Party	Familie	special interest parties	1
Greece	Anexartitoi Ellines – Panos Kammenos	Independent Greeks	Anel	nationalists	1
Ireland	Fianna Fail	The Republican Party	FF	conservatives	1
Latvia	Nacionālā apvienība 'Visu Latvijai!'-'Tēvzemei un Brīvībai'/ LNNK	National alliance 'All for Latvia' – 'Fatherland and Freedom'/LNNK	VL-TB/ LNNK	nationalists	1
Lithuania	Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija	Electoral Action of Lithuanian Poles	LLRA	special interest parties	1
Netherlands	ChristenUnie – Staatskundig Gereformeerde Partij	Christian Union – Reformed Political Party	CU-SGP	conservatives	2
Poland	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość	Law and Justice	PiS	liberals	19
Slovakia	Sloboda a solidarita	Freedom and Democracy	SaS	liberals	1
	NOVA, Kresťanskodemokratická strana, Občianska konzervatívna strana (election coalition)	NOVA, Christian Democratic Party, Citizens' Conservative Party	NOVA, KDS, OKS	conservatives	1
	Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti	Ordinary people and independent personalities	OĽaNO	conservatives	1
United Kingdom	Conservative Party	Conservative	CON	conservatives	19
	Ulster Unionist Party	Ulster Unionist Party	UUP	regional parties	1

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Total number of MEPs					71

Sources: European Parliament (2014), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>; and Schmitt et al., *European Parliament Election Study 1979-2014: Euromanifesto Study* (Cologne: GESIS Data Archive, 2018), ZA5102 Data file Version 2.0.0, <http://doi.org/10.4232/1.12830>.

Table B.4. National political parties belonging to the ALDE group in the European Parliament (25 November 2014)

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Austria	NEOS Das Neue Österreich und Liberales Forum	NEOS The New Austria and Liberal Forum	NEOS	liberals	1
Belgium	Mouvement reformateur	Reformist Movement	MR	liberals	3
	Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten	Flemish Liberals and Democrats	Open VLD	liberals	3
Bulgaria	Dvizhenie za Prava i Swobodi	Movement for Rights and Freedoms	DPS	liberals	4
Croatia	Hrvatska narodna stranka – liberalni demokrati	Croatian People's Party – Liberal Democrats	HNS	liberals	1
	Istarski demokratski sabor	Istrian Democratic Assembly	IDS	regional parties	1
Czechia	ANO 2011	Yes 2011	ANO 2011	conservatives, nationalists	4
Denmark	Det Radikale Venstre	Danish Social Liberal Party	RV	liberals	1
	Venstre	Liberals	V	liberals	2
Estonia	Eesti Reformierakond	Estonian Reform Party	ER	liberals	2
	Eesti Keskerakond	Estonian Centre Party	KE	liberals	1
Finland	Suomen Keskusta	Centre Party of Finland	KESK	agrarian parties	3
	Ruotsalainen Kansanpuolue/Svenska Folkpartiet I Finland	Swedish People's Party in Finland	RKP/SFP	regional parties	1
France	Mouvement Démocrate + Union des Démocrates et Indépendants	Democratic Movement and Union for Democrats and Independents	MoDem-UDI	social democrats	7
Germany	Freie Demokratische Partei	Free Democratic Party – The Liberals	FDP	liberals	3
	Freie Wähler	Free Voters	Freie Wähler	regional parties	1
Ireland				independent	1
Lithuania	Lietuvos Respublikos liberalų sąjūdis	Liberal Movement of Lithuanian Republic	LRLS	liberals	2
	Darbo partija	Labour Party	DP	liberals	1
Luxembourg	Demokratesch Partei	Democratic Party	DP	liberal	1
Netherlands	Democraten 66 – ALDE	Democrats 66	D66	liberals	4
	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	VVD	liberals	3
Portugal	Partido da Terra	The Earth Party	MPT	green parties	1
				independent	1
Romania	Partidul Naţional Liberal	National Liberal Party	PNL	liberals	2

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
				independent	1
Slovenia	Demokratična stranka upokojencev Slovenije	Democratic Party of Retired Persons of Slovenia	DeSUS	special interest parties	1
Spain	Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya, Partido Nacionalista Vasco	Coalition for Europe (Catalonian Democratic Convergence (ALDE) + Nationalist Basque Party (ALDE) + Democratic Union of Catalonia (EPP) + Canarias Coalition + Commitment for Galicia)	CDC, PNV	regional parties	2
	Unión Progreso y Democracia	Progress and Democracy Union	UPyD	liberals	4
	Ciudadanos – Partido de la Ciudadanía	Citizenships – Citizenship Party	C'S	regional parties	2
Sweden	Centerpartiet	Centre Party	C	agrarian parties	1
	Folkpartiet Liberalerna	Liberal People's Party	FP	liberals	2
United Kingdom	Liberal Democratic Party	Liberal Democratic Party	LDP	liberals	1
Total number of MEPs					68

Sources: European Parliament (2014), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>; and Schmitt et al., *European Parliament Election Study 1979-2014: Euromanifesto Study* (Cologne: GESIS Data Archive, 2018), ZA5102 Data file Version 2.0.0, <http://doi.org/10.4232/1.12830>.

Table B.5. National political parties belonging to the GUE/NGL group in the European Parliament (25 November 2014)

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Cyprus	Anorthotiko Komma Ergazomenou Laou	Progressive Party of Working People	AKEL	(post-)communists	2
Czechia	Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy	Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia	KSČM	(post-)communists	3
Denmark	Folkebevægelsen Mod EU	People's Movement against the EU	FB	regional parties	1
Finland	Vasemmistoliitto	Left Alliance	VAS	(post-)communists	1
France	Front de gauche = parti communiste + parti de gauche	Left Front = communist party + left wing party	FG	(post-)communists	3
	L'Union pour les Outre mer	Union for France's overseas departments and territories	UOM	(post-)communists	1
Germany	Die Linke	The Left	Die Linke	social democrats/ (post-)communists	7
	Partei Mensch Umwelt Tierschutz	Party – People Environment Animal Protection	Tierschutzpartei	special interest parties	1
Greece	Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás	Coalition of the Radical Left	SYRIZA	(post-)communists	6
Ireland	Sinn Féin	We Ourselves	SF	regional parties	3
				independent	1
Italy	Lista Tsipras	Tsipras List	TSP	(post-)communists	3
Netherlands	Socialistische Party	Socialist Party	SP	(post-)communists	2
	Partij voor de Dieren	Party for the Animals	PvdD	special interest parties	1
Portugal	Bloco do Esquerda	Left Bloc	BE	(post-)communists	1
	Coligaçao Democratica Unitaria	Democratic Union Coalition	CDU	social democrats	3
Spain	Coalición Izquierda Plural (Izquierda Unida (GUE/NGL) + Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds (GREENS/EFA) + Anova Nationalist Brotherhood (GUE/NGL) + et al.)	Pluralistic Left Coalition (United Left (GUE/NGL) + Initiative for Catalonian Greens (GREENS/EFA) + Anova Nationalist Brotherhood (GUE/NGL) + et al.)	IP (IU+ICV+Anova+et al.)	green parties	5 (4 IU + 1 AGE)
	Por la Democracia Social	For Social Democracy Party	Podemos	(post-)communist	5
	Coalición Los Pueblos Deciden (El Bloque Nacionalista Galego + Euskal Herria Bildu + et al.)	Coalition People Decide (Nationalist Block Galician + Euskal Herria Bildu)	LPD (BNG+EH Bildu)	green parties	1

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Sweden	Vänsterpartiet	Left Party	V	(post-)communist	1
United Kingdom	Sinn Féin	We Ourselves	SF	special interest parties	1
Total number of MEPs					52

Sources: European Parliament (2014), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>; and Schmitt et al., *European Parliament Election Study 1979-2014: Euromanifesto Study* (Cologne: GESIS Data Archive, 2018), ZA5102 Data file Version 2.0.0, <http://doi.org/10.4232/1.12830>.

Table B.6. National political parties belonging to the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament (25 November 2014)

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Austria	Die Grünen	The Greens	GRÜNE	green parties	3
Belgium	Ecologistes Conféderés	Green Party	Ecolo	green parties	1
	GROEN!	Green!	GROEN!	green parties	1
Croatia	Održivi razvoj Hrvatske	Croatian Sustainable Development	ORAH	green parties	1
Denmark	Socialistisk Folkeparti	Socialist People's Party	SF	(post-)communists	1
Estonia				independent	1
Finland	Vihreä Liitto	Green League	VIHR	green parties	1
France	Europe Ecologie	Europe Ecology	EE	green parties	6
Germany	Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	Alliance 90/Greens	GRÜNE	green parties	11
	Piratenpartei Deutschland	Pirate Party	Piratenpartei	special interest parties	1
	Ökologisch-Demokratische Partei	Ecologist Democratic Party	ÖDP	green parties	1
Hungary	Együtt – a Korszakváltók Pártja + Párbeszéd Magyarországért	Together – Party for a New Era + Dialogue for Hungary (alliance)	Együtt-PM	green parties	1
	Lehet Más a Politika	Politics Can Be Different	LMP	green parties	1
Latvia	'Latvijas Krievu savienība'	'Union of Russians in Latvia'	LKS	(post-) communist	1
Lithuania	Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga	Lithuanian Peasant and Greens Union	LVZS	agrarian	1
Luxembourg	Déi Gréng	The Greens	DG	green parties	1
Netherlands	GroenLinks	GreenLeft	GL	green parties	2
Slovenia	Verjamem	Believe!	Verjamem	social democrats	1
Spain	Coalición Izquierda Plural (Izquierda Unida (GUE/NGL) + Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds (GREENS/EFA) + Anova Nationalist Brotherhood (GUE/NGL) + et al.)	Pluralistic Left Coalition (United Left (GUE/NGL) + Initiative for Catalonian Greens (GREENS/EFA) + Anova Nationalist Brotherhood (GUE/NGL)	IP (IU+ICV+Anova+et al.)	green parties	1 ICV
	Coalición La Izquierda por el derecho a Decidir (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya + Nova Esquerra Catalana + Independientes + et al.)	Coalition The Left for the right to decide (Republican Left of Catalonia + New Catalonian Left + Independents)	EPDD (ERC+NECat+Ind. +et al.)	green parties	2 (1 ERC + 1 NECat)

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
	Coalition Primavera Europea (Compromís (OTHERS) + Equo (GREENS/EFA) + Cha (GREENS/EFA) + et al.)	Coalition European Spring (Commitment (OTHERS) + Equo (GREENS/EFA) + Cha (GREENS/EFA) et al.)	Primavera Europea	green parties	1
Sweden	Miljöpartiet de Gröna	Green Party	MP	green parties	4
United Kingdom	Green Party	Green Party	Greens	green parties	3
	Plaid Cymru	Party of Wales	PC	regional parties	1
	Scottish National Party	Scottish National Party	SNP	regional parties	2
Total number of MEPs					50

Sources: European Parliament (2014), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>; and Schmitt et al., *European Parliament Election Study 1979-2014: Euromanifesto Study* (Cologne: GESIS Data Archive, 2018), ZA5102 Data file Version 2.0.0, <http://doi.org/10.4232/1.12830>.

Table B.7. National political parties belonging to the EFDD group in the European Parliament (25 November 2014)

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Czechia	Strana svobodných občanů	Party of Free Citizens	Svobodní	liberals	1
France				independent	1
Italy	Movimento 5 Stelle	Five Star Movement	M5S	nationalists (Eurosceptics)	17
Lithuania	Partija Tvarka ir teisingumas	Party 'Order and Justice'	PTT	liberals	2
Poland	Nowa Prawica – Janusza Korwin-Mikke	The Congress of the New Right	KNP	liberals and nationalists	1
Sweden	Sverigedemokraterna	Sweden Democrats	SD	nationalists	2
United Kingdom	United Kingdom Independence Party	United Kingdom Independence Party	UKIP	special interest parties	24
Total number of MEPs					48

Sources: European Parliament (2014), <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/previous-elections>; and Schmitt et al., *European Parliament Election Study 1979-2014: Euromanifesto Study* (Cologne: GESIS Data Archive, 2018), ZA5102 Data file Version 2.0.0, <http://doi.org/10.4232/1.12830>.

Table B.8. National political parties belonging to the ENF group (launched on 15 June 2015) in the European Parliament (29 November 2018)

Country	Party name (country)	Party name (English)	Acronym	Party family	Number of MEPs
Austria	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	Freedom Party of Austria	FPÖ	liberals	2
Belgium	Vlaams Belang	Flemish Interest	VB	regional parties	1
France	Rassemblement National	National Rally	RN	nationalists	15
Germany	Die blaue Partei	The Blue Party	BP	liberals, Eurosceptics	1
Italy	Lega Nord	Northern League	LN	regional parties	6
				independent	1
Netherlands	Partij voor de Vrijheid	Party for Freedom	PVV	nationalists	4
Poland	Kongres Nowej Prawicy	Congress of the New Right	KNP	liberals and nationalists	2
United Kingdom				independent	1

Annex C. Programmatic statements by the Europarties on women and gender equality

Table C.1. References to women and gender equality in Europarty manifestos for the 2014 elections

EU parties	Statements on women and gender equality
EPP	'We stand for equality between women and men, family, the separation of powers, democracy and the rule of law.' 'Over the last 50 years, the men and women of the European People's Party have been at the forefront of improving and successively expanding the Union, as well as introducing the Euro.' 'We aim to increase the employment of women, not only to give practical expression to the value we place on promoting equality between women and men, but also to contribute to general economic and social development.' 'We encourage the implementation of proactive measures that specifically target the full inclusion of young women into the labour market. This type of measures needs to be backed by a strong political will to reconcile work with family life, promote the diversification of careers in order to tackle labour market segregation and to foster female entrepreneurship in particular.' 'Another important question that needs to be asked is how best to increase the number of women participating in the labour force and in decision-making positions.' 'Figures show that women and girls are the main victims of trafficking. Working towards the elimination of trafficking in human beings cannot be achieved without strong cooperation across the EU and beyond. At EU level, the focus must be on criminal law provisions, the prosecution of offenders, victims' support, victims' rights in criminal proceedings and establishing partnerships, in particular with civil society.' 'The EU must promote, defend and protect women's and children's rights, especially in conflict or post conflict zones and countries. The EU must fight violence against women and girls and tackle high maternal mortality. The EU needs to transmit its expertise by sharing best practices and by empowering women. Collaboration with NGOs that promote the autonomy of women in the poorest countries needs to be reinforced, for the sake of the development of these countries.'
PES	'Europeans, women and men, must have a decent job that allows a good quality of life.'; 'The principle of equality must be at the heart of what it means to be a European citizen. We all benefit from living in a more equal society. Ensuring, promoting and enhancing women's rights and gender equality remains one of our highest priorities. We need a binding commitment to end the gender pay and pension gap. Violence against women must be ended. Reconciling professional and family life must mean promoting balance not sacrifice, and promoting women's free choice and access to sexual and reproductive rights must be urgently and vigorously protected in the face of a conservative backlash. We stand for the values of equality and of non-discrimination and promote that women and men must equally share work, share power, share time and share roles, both in the public and in the private realms.'

EU parties	Statements on women and gender equality
ACRE	'We are strongly supportive towards the principle of gender equality and the importance of promoting equal rights for men and women and female and male children. Here the European Union must lead by example, and should not continue to impose difficult and complex targets on Member States when its own institutions cannot reach those targets. The Commission, the European Central Bank, Parliament and the European agencies have a huge shortfall of women in senior positions. This problem must be dealt with before the Commission imposes targets on Member States. In keeping with this, it is deeply concerning that the Commission did not heed the concerns of Member States regarding the proposed directive on targets and quotas for women as nonexecutive directors on company boards. A further cause for concern lies in the fact that incidences of domestic violence are increasing in Europe year on year. The Commission must therefore continue its work in tackling this problem through the adoption of its planned non-legislative strategy. In addition, the harmful practice of female genital mutilation is increasing in Europe; again the Commission must assist Member States in eradicating this abuse of girls and young women. The Commission should take note of the ongoing concerns of Member States with regard to the directive on the health and safety at work of pregnant workers. This proposed directive does not have the support or approval of the Council and should be rejected. The ECR believes that the Commission should suspend all proposals for a directive on equal pay for men and women and instead work with Member States to investigate effective, nonlegislative ways of tackling unequal pay. These means should then be addressed at Member State level. Finally we hope that the Commission will be supportive of a proposal to rename Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality the 'Equalities Committee', therefore focusing on a broader spectrum of disadvantaged or minority groups.'
ALDE	–
EDP	'It is essential to fight against all forms of discrimination. Major differences between men and women, for example in salary or access to positions of responsibility, must become a thing of the past. Thus, the European Union must support toward equal remuneration and responsibility in businesses. EU must combat discriminations as well as violence related to sexual orientation and sexual violence of every kind.'
PEL	'Relaunch economic activity to meet social needs while respecting the environment and fight against precariousness and unemployment, especially among young people and women.'; 'Demand all social, economic and labour rights, as well as sexual and reproductive rights. Equal pay for women and men. Elimination of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, sexual exploitation and forced prostitution. Endorsement of supporting social structures. Provide directives and policy measures aiming at real actual sharing of domestic and family responsibilities. Provide consultative status with the European institutions for women's and feminist organizations. Right to abortion and free contraception – not penalized and free, included in public health care. A secular Europe, where equality between women and men is not related to religion. Work towards gender parity in the institutions of the European Union.' 'Defence of the rights of migrant women, who are in a situation of extreme vulnerability. Struggle for legislation and educational measures to create awareness against the business of trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls.' 'Equal access for men and women to available time for cultural activities and leisure, which supposes equal gender distribution of housework and care work. Promotion of cultural products that challenge gender stereotypes. Defence of women against the commercialization of the female body.' 'Support of participation in international organs of defence of peace, such as the WPC (World Peace Council) and women's organizations and grass roots women's movements. Take preventive measures (including lessons and instructions to soldiers and officers) on violence against women, rape and trafficking in military conflicts. Judicial punishment for those who commit such crimes, according to international law.'

EU parties	Statements on women and gender equality
EGP	'Greens support a dual approach for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment: gender main-streaming and clear and binding targets in order to achieve gender equality at all levels. We promote the emancipation of women in society and in the economy. 'Equal payment for equal work' must be a standard all over the EU, as well as equal representation of women in company boards. Having a family or sharing care should not be obstacles to a successful career for either men or women. The EU has not done enough to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which highlight the fight against poverty, hunger, environmental destruction and exclusion of women. Gender democracy means that women are part of the public life of our societies and take decisions in institutions and companies on an equal footing with men. The Greens believe that the EU's response must be to mainstream gender issues at all policy levels. We support the Commission in its work on legally binding quotas for women in corporate boardrooms. However, at the present pace it would take more than 50 years until 40% of all boardroom members of European companies are women. Therefore, we demand a quota to achieve this objective by 2020. To reach equality, we believe that the EU should adopt a more comprehensive policy approach against gender-based violence, including EU legislation in the form of a directive proposing measures to address violence against women based on policy, prevention, protection, prosecution, provision and partnership. The EU Convention on Human Rights requires all EU member states to define rape and sexual violence against women within marriage and intimate informal relationships as a crime. Pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men must prevail. There is a great lack of women in EU institutions and in many member states too many people are being discriminated against under all kinds of excuses. Greens will push for effective anti-discrimination policies to overcome such injustice and are long-standing advocates of the extension of the anti-discrimination directives to become a fully-fledged Equalities Directive.'
EFA	'The onshore industry must be given adequate protection with both men and women being supported in their vital roles. EFA shares the democratic values that underpin membership in the European Union: human rights, respect for democracy and its foundations, gender equality, rejection of racism and xenophobia.'
MENF (* Manifesto of the EAF, dissolved in 2016)	–

Source: the original files.

About the author

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About International IDEA

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This Discussion Paper puts together relevant data on the inclusion of young people and women in European Parliament elections. It is focused on two pitfalls of EU electoral democracy: voter absenteeism on the part of young people, and the under-representation of women in the European Parliament.

Data have been combined from the European Election Studies (EES), the European Parliament, the Gender Statistics Database of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), face-to-face and telephone interviews, and semi-structured questionnaires. Additionally, policy papers and other relevant texts (authored by organizations dedicated to young people, women and think tanks, as well as Europarties and groups in the European Parliament) have been considered. The scope of the paper is European, although data at a national level from France, Poland and Spain (a founding EU country, an Eastern European country and a Southern European country) are introduced in different sections to shed light on national differences.

With the purpose of enriching and making EU electoral democracy stronger, the author presents, as food for thought, some evidence on key elements to foster participation in European Parliament elections, as well as to reach a more balanced composition of the European Parliament in terms of age and gender.