

Voting age for European elections

Under current EU law, EU Member States are free to set their minimum national voting age for European elections. This age is set at 16 in Austria, Belgium, Germany and Malta, 17 in Greece, and 18 in the remaining Member States.

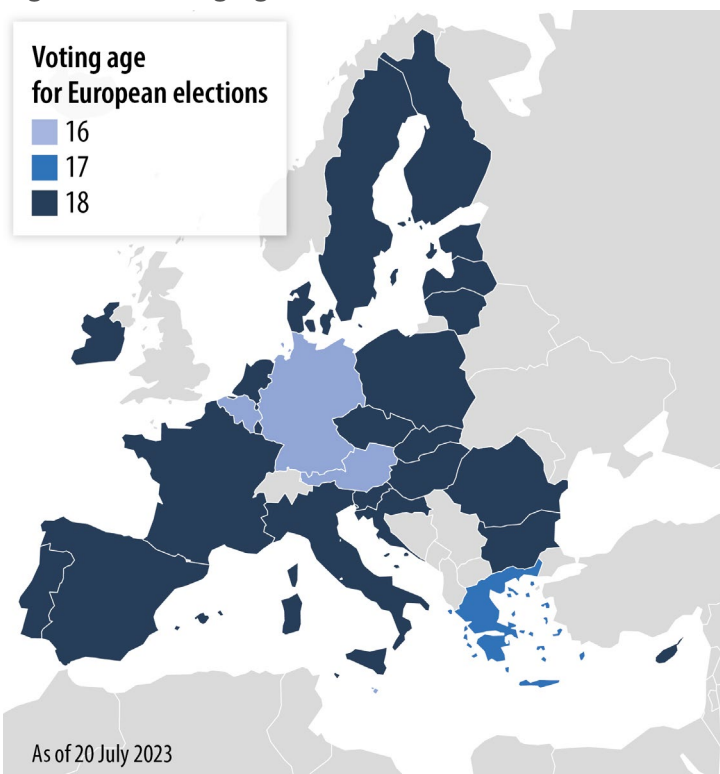
Current law

The rules applicable to European elections are based on a combination of the common principles established in the [European Electoral Act](#) of 1976, as amended by [Council Decision 2002/772](#), and the different national rules implementing those principles. In line with **Article 8 of the European Elections Act, Member States** can set the minimum voting age in their national legislation.

Proposal

In May 2022, Parliament tabled a [proposal for a Council regulation](#) on the election of the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) by direct universal suffrage, which would replace the existing European Electoral Act of 1976 ([2022/0902\(APP\)](#)). The aim of the proposal is to harmonise a number of rules applicable to European elections, **including the voting age**. According to recital 17 of the proposal, a 'single harmonised age for voting ... should be introduced across the Union **in order to ensure equality and to avoid discrimination**'. Article 4(1) of the proposal sets the age at **16** but allows for exceptions for 'existing constitutional orders establishing a minimum voting age of 18 or 17 years of age'. To enter into force, the regulation needs the unanimous approval of the Council and the approval of all Member States in accordance with their constitutional requirements.

Figure 1 – Voting age in the Member States



Source: Compiled by EPRS, May 2023, updated August 2023.

Voting by persons under 18 year of age

The [2024 European elections](#) will be governed by the European Electoral Act of 1976. In **Belgium**, a [law](#) adopted in 2022 lowered the voting age to 16. Initially, voters aged 16 and 17 could vote only after submitting a request to their municipality of residence. However, on 20 July 2023 the Belgian Constitutional Court [found](#) this additional requirement unconstitutional, therefore the voting age is now simply 16 [without](#) any additional requirements. In **Germany**, a [law](#) adopted in early 2023 lowered the voting age for European elections from 18 to 16. In 2018, **Malta's** [Constitution](#) sets the standard voting age, including for [European elections](#), at 16. In **Greece**, the voting age is [set](#) at 17. In [2007](#), **Austria** fixed its standard voting age at 16. In all other Member States, the voting age is 18.



Table 1 – Legal bases setting the voting age for European elections in the EU-27

Member State	Voting age	Legal basis
Belgium	16	Article 1 § 2 of the EP Elections Act 1989 as modified by Act of 1 June 2022 and Constitutional Court judgment No 116/2023 of 20 July 2023
Bulgaria	18	Article 350 of the Electoral Code
Czechia	18	Article 5 of the European Parliament Elections Act
Denmark	18	§ 6 of the Act Concerning the Election of the Danish MEPs in conjunction with § 1(1) of the Parliamentary Elections Act
Germany	16	§ 6 of the European Elections Act as modified by Act of 11.1.2023
Estonia	18	§ 4 (1) of the European Parliament Election Act
Ireland	18	Rule 72, Schedule 2 of the European Parliament Elections Act 1997
Greece	17	Article 1 of the European Elections Act 2014 in conjunction with Article 4(1) of the Parliamentary Elections Act
Spain	18	Article 2 of the Organic Law 5/1985 of 19 June 1985
France	18	Article 5 of the European Parliament Elections Act in conjunction with Article L.2 of the Electoral Code
Croatia	18	Article 45 of the Constitution
Italy	18	Article 3 of the Law on Election of Italian MEPs 1979
Cyprus	18	Article 4 of the European Parliament Elections Act
Latvia	18	§ 2 of the Act on Election to European Parliament
Lithuania	18	Article 8(4) of the Electoral Code
Luxembourg	18	Article 3 of the Electoral Act 2003
Hungary	18	Article XXIII of the Fundamental Law in conjunction with § 2:10 of the Civil Code (age of majority)
Malta	16	Article 11(c) of the European Parliament Elections Act 2004 in conjunction with Article 57(b) of the Constitution of Malta
Netherlands	18	Article Y3(a) and (b)(2) of the Electoral Act
Austria	16	§ 10 of the European Elections Ordinance
Poland	18	Article 10 § 1 of the Electoral Code
Portugal	18	Article 1 of the Electoral Law for the European Parliament in conjunction with Article 1 of the Law governing Elections to the Assembly of the Republic
Romania	18	Article 5(5) of the European Parliament Elections Law
Slovenia	18	Article 10 of the Election of MEPs from the Republic of Slovenia Act
Slovakia	18	§ 3 of the Act no. 180/2014 Coll. , on the conditions for the exercise of the right to vote
Finland	18	§ 14(II) of the Constitution
Sweden	18	Avdelning 5, 4 § of the Elections Act (2005:837) in conjunction with Proclamation (1974:152) on the adoption of a new form of government, kap., 4 §.

This 'At a glance' note is one in a series of publications examining various aspects of EU electoral law. It has been compiled on the basis of information provided through the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD). In addition, the data have been verified in May 2023 by country specialists from the EPRS Members' Research Service. The information concerning Belgium was updated in August 2023.