



Report on the Conference on the Future of Europe – making EU citizenship more tangible to citizens

JUST/2021/OP/0002

Written by VVA
July 2023

VVA
Valdani Vicari & Associati
ECONOMICS & POLICY

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
Directorate C — Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy
Unit C.4 — Democracy, Union Citizenship and Free Movement

E-mail: JUST-CITIZENSHIP@ec.europa.eu

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

Report on the Conference on the Future of Europe – making EU citizenship more tangible to citizens

JUST/2021/OP/0002

Manuscript completed in July 2023

Authors:

VVA: Daniel Stoyanov, Dr Lukáš Hamřík, Dr Jan Kotýnek Krotký, Mgr. Pablo Martínez-Ramil, Petr Kaniok, Ph.D.

LEGAL NOTICE

This document has been prepared for the European Commission however it reflects the views only of the authors, and the European Commission is not liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse of this publication.

© European Union, 2023



The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Unless otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective rightholders.

European Commission

Directorate-General Justice and Consumers (JUST),
Directorate C: Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and
Democracy



JUST/2021/OP/0002

Report on the Conference on the Future of Europe - making EU citizenship more tangible to citizens



Final Type A Report

31/05/2023

This document has been prepared for the European Commission. However, it reflects only the views of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

1 Table of Contents

1	Executive summary	3
2	Methodology	4
3	EU citizenship: Overview of the existing rights and making them more tangible 5	
3.1	Context of EU citizenship.....	5
3.2	EU citizenship and the Conference on the Future of Europe	7
3.3	How to make EU citizenship more tangible to citizens?	9
3.4	Summary	11
4	Potential structure of an onboarding package of EU citizenship rights and benefits from EU policies	13
5	EU Citizens´ Rights and Benefits Onboarding Package	15
5.1	Rights deriving from EU citizenship	15
5.2	Benefits from EU policies.....	23
6	Possible target groups benefiting from the onboarding package	34
6.1	Citizens who reach the voting age	34
6.2	Citizens who acquired the citizenship of an EU Member State	37
6.3	Target groups derived from the free movement of citizens.....	39
6.3.1	EU Mobile citizens	39
7	Facilitating the citizens´ exercise of their electoral rights	42
7.1	The importance of the election observation	43
7.2	The practice of election observation in the EU.....	44
7.2.1	Legislative support for observation in the Member States.....	45
7.2.2	Approaches to citizen election observation.....	46
7.3	Non-partisan observation and its support	51
7.4	Making the observation more accessible	54
7.5	Summary	55
8	Inclusive composition of the electoral lists for the EP elections	56
8.1	The right to stand as a candidate: an EU fundamental right and an indispensable aspect of the EU citizenship	56
8.2	Underrepresented groups in the European Parliament	58
8.2.1	Representation of women.....	58
8.2.2	Representation of sexual and gender minorities	62
8.2.3	Representation of national and ethnic minorities	63
8.2.4	EU Mobile Citizens	64
8.2.5	Representation of persons with disabilities	65
8.2.6	Representation of youth	66

8.2.7	Intersectionality and the political (under)representation	67
8.3	Making the EP elections more inclusive	68
8.4	Summary	73
Annex 1: How to better inform first-time EU voters?		74
Annex 2: Additional target groups that might benefit from the onboarding package		77

List of Tables

Table 1: Proposal for the structure of EU citizens' rights description	14
Table 2: Proportion of young population	34
Table 3: Are you familiar with the term "citizen of the European Union"?	35
Table 4: Understanding of how EU citizenship is obtained*	36
Table 5: Knowledge of EU citizens rights*	36
Table 6: Knowledge of electoral rights of EU citizens living in a EU Member State*	36
Table 7: Distribution of EU mobile citizens among Member States	41
Table 8: Regulation for Election Observation in the EU Member States	45
Table 9: Approaches to civic election observation	47
Table 10: Proportion of female MEPs per country (in %)	61
Table 11: Minimum age of MEPs elected in EU Member States (beginning of each parliamentary term)	66
Table 12: % of intra-EU movers that are actively working in the country of residence	77
Table 13: Equality and female occupation across the MSs	79
Table 14: Equality and female occupation across the MSs, in descending order	80
Table 15: Gap in employment for persons with disabilities	82
Table 16: Perceptions on age as a disadvantage in the labour market	84
Table 17: LGBTIQ perceived discrimination across the MSs	85
Table 18: Perceptions on religion as a disadvantage in the labour market	87
Table 19: Perceptions on being Roma and ethnicity as disadvantages in the labour market	88

List of Figures

Figure 1: Population pyramid	35
Figure 2: Acquisitions of citizenship	38
Figure 3: Number of persons having acquired the EU citizenship	39
Figure 4: Membership of the EU civic organisations in observation networks	52
Figure 5: Proportion of Women in the European Parliament (1979-2019)	61
Figure 6: Proportion of MEPs in the EP based on age (in %; beginning of each parliamentary term)	67

This document has been prepared for the European Commission. However, it reflects only the views of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym/ Abbreviation	The text for the abbreviation used
AEGEE	European Students' Forum
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEC	Central Election Commission
Charter	Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
COFEU	Conference on the future of Europe
Commission	European Commission
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSCE	Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
DA	Data Act
DGA	Data Governance Act
DMA	Digital Market Act
DSA	Digital Service Act
DoP	Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation
EAA	Electoral Administration Act
EAM	Election Assessment Mission
EC	European Commission
EMBs	Electoral Management Bodies
ENAR	European Network Against Racism
ENEMO	European Network of Election Monitoring Organizations
EOM	Election Observation Mission
EP	European Parliament
EPDE	European Platform for Democratic Elections
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GNDEM	Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors
IEOM	International Election Observation missions
Maastricht Treaty	Treaty on the European Union of 1992
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
NAM reports	ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Reports
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSCE/ODIHR	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
PEA	Permanent Electoral Authority
PTE	Part Time Employment

TFEU

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

1 Executive summary

The first part of the present report provides an analysis of EU citizenship rights in order to make them more visible and accessible to their holders within the European Union. Drawing on the outcome of the discussions that took place during the COFEU, the report sets the scene by summarizing existing rights associated with EU citizenship by illustrating the legal (finding expression in rights and duties), civic (finding expression in participation), and affiliative (understood as a sense of belonging) dimensions of EU citizenship. This introductory section lays the foundation for the preparation of an onboarding package of EU rights. It then proceeds with a proposal for the description of EU citizens' rights and elaborates on possible text for the onboarding package, designed to help EU citizens to understand the rich tapestry of rights and benefits they are entitled to. The package includes a description of the rights deriving from EU citizenship and uses simple and straightforward language giving the recipients clear information illustrating it with real life stories. Consequently, the study identifies the possible target groups that might benefit from the information contained, such as first-time voters and citizens that acquired citizenship of an EU Member State. Apart from them, various other groups as for example EU mobile citizens, EU mobile workers belong among the possible target groups of an onboarding package.

In the second part, the report takes a deeper look at the election observation in the Member States to analyse obstacles of civic engagement, especially in the European Parliament (EP) elections. The analysis is based on responses of nineteen Member States to questions circulated by the European Cooperation Network on Elections, validated and triangulated through the ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Reports. The analysis of civic observation in the Member States that did not respond to the survey (Austria, Denmark, Cyprus, Lithuania, Greece, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Malta) is based on the literature review and the NAM reports. This part argues that election observation is essential to increasing political and civic participation. Nevertheless, several obstacles make the observation difficult, especially in the Member States with a closed system or strict accreditation or nomination systems. To improve civic and political participation in this activity, the experts proposed six suggestions of how to make the election observation more accessible, accompanied by the argumentation points stressing the importance of election observation.

The aim of the third part of the report is to propose non-legislative measures and actions, eventually contributing to a more inclusive candidates list for the elections to the EP. The section begins with a brief presentation of a legal framework of the right to stand as a candidate in the EP elections as well as the design of these elections. It also addresses the relationship between electoral rights and EU citizenship rights. Next, the report introduces the groups which can be considered underrepresented in the EP. The third part provides an overview of good practices employed by political parties in order to increase inclusiveness of their candidate lists. The experts have identified 3 stages in which the political parties' roles are obvious. First, the political parties can clearly demonstrate that EU citizens belonging to an underrepresented group are important to them. Second, political parties have an opportunity to create special (and to a certain extent independent) sections/wings for the members of underrepresented groups within a party structure. Lastly, once a political party decides to contribute to a more inclusive politics within the EU, and to increase chances of underrepresented EU citizens to get elected, the party can adopt additional measures improving the chances of being successful in EP elections for particular EU citizens.

2 Methodology

The first part of the present study encompasses an analysis of the current status of EU citizenship rights and the formulation of proposals to better inform citizens who reach the voting age or acquire the citizenship of an EU Member State about ways to actively participate in the democratic life of the EU.

To this end, the experts conducted thorough reviews of relevant literature and engaged in intensive discussions to develop a concept for an onboarding package of EU rights - covering EU citizenship, electoral rights, freedom of movement, consular protection and benefits deriving from EU policies. The legal, civic and affiliative dimensions of EU citizenship were explored, together with the COFEU's thematic contributions to the definition.

The descriptions of EU rights and benefits presented in the onboarding package draw on a systematic screening of academic literature, combined with legal sources and case law analysis with the aim of providing an exhaustive overview of the evolution of EU rights and the pre-conditions underlying their full exercise (all sources consulted are listed in Annex 1).

After that, the experts focused on the identification of the social groups that could profit from such an onboarding package. First-time voters and citizens that acquired citizenship of an EU Member State were identified as some of the most important ones. Apart from them, various other groups as for example EU mobile citizens, belong among the possible target groups of an onboarding package.

Next, the experts carried out some targeted research aimed at formulating specific non-legislative proposals and practical tools to facilitate the citizens' exercise of their electoral rights, focusing on the support for election observation involving citizens and the inclusive composition of electoral lists. The suggested proposals outlined in the study are not meant to be duplicating those that have already been proposed for legislation (e.g. as part of the EP's REPORT on the proposal for a Council Regulation on the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision (76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom) and the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage annexed to that decision¹) and include instruments to concretely support electoral participation and lift obstacles EU citizens encounter in the exercise of their rights.

The proposals advanced by the experts are not only geared toward reinforcing EU rights, but at providing reliable and easily accessible information about EU citizenship. They cover innovative outreach strategies to effectively communicate Union rights to citizens, including promoting democratic values, increasing the EU's democratic legitimacy, encouraging widespread engagement of EU citizens in the democratic life of the EU, protecting citizens' freedom to participate in the democratic debate without manipulations and harnessing both the opportunities and challenges of the digital age to support turnout and broad democratic participation in the perspective of the European elections.

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2022-0083_EN.html

3 EU citizenship: Overview of the existing rights and making them more tangible

The purpose of this section is to outline the current status of EU citizenship – including the discussions during the Conference on the Future of Europe (COFEU) – as background for a proposal for an onboarding package summarizing the most important rights and benefits enjoyed by EU citizens. Starting with a very short contextual part, explaining and summarizing existing rights and context of EU citizenship, the section summarizes and evaluates the contributions of the COFEU. Lastly, this section covers the problem of communication on EU citizenship in the light of the previous analysis in order to make citizenship more tangible for EU citizens.

3.1 Context of EU citizenship

EU citizenship must be understood in light of definitions of what citizenship is and what it means. In this regard, as for example Lobeira² argues, citizenship confers rights and duties derived from membership, opens a door for political participation and provides a sense of belonging in a political community. Following this understanding, citizenship should be understood as having three dimensions: legal (rights and duties), civic (participation), and affiliative (understood as a sense of belonging). All together, these components constitute the building blocks of modern citizenship.

As far as the legal dimension – the first component – is concerned, it denotes the citizen's legal entitlements or rights. Those rights may be political, economic, social, and so forth. The citizen is *'the legal person free to act according to the law and having the right to claim the law's protection.'*³ With the rise of modern states, the 'lack of ascribed status led individuals to being treated as equals possessing certain rights simply by virtue of their humanity.'⁴ They looked to the state for social, economic and political rights to secure equal access and recognition.

The second part of citizenship is its civic dimension. According to the literature,⁵ this means the demand on—or at least the invitation for—the citizen to participate in building the polity. The most visible expression of participation in the polity's construction is voting. Rights imply duties. With the advent of modern citizenship⁶ the right to vote has become tied *'to the payment of taxes, military service, and the undertaking of such public duties as sitting on juries.'* In a similar fashion, 'social and economic rights' have been 'linked to the duty and ability to work and to contribute to national schemes of social insurance.'

² Lobeira, Pablo Cristóbal Jiménez. 2012. 'EU Citizenship and Political Identity: The Demos and Telos Problems'. *European Law Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 504–517.

³ Dominique Leydet, 'Citizenship', in Edvard N. Zalta (ed), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford University, 2009), at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/citizenship/>.

⁴ Richard Bellamy, Dario Castiglione and Emilio Santoro (Ed.). *Lineages of European Citizenship: Rights, Belonging, and Participation in Eleven Nation-states* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

⁵ Lobeira, Pablo Cristóbal Jiménez. 2012. 'EU Citizenship and Political Identity: The Demos and Telos Problems'. *European Law Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 504–517.

⁶ According to the broad literature on the history of citizenship, modern citizenship refers to the legal and social status of an individual as a member of a particular country or state, entitling them to certain rights, privileges, and responsibilities. While the concept of citizenship has evolved over time, modern citizenship typically includes a range of attributes and characteristics that define the relationship between an individual and their nation-state.

Lastly, there is an affiliative dimension of citizenship, which is associated with the previous two components. As argued in the literature, by the fact that the citizens possess a legal status, which entitles them to certain rights and encourages them to civic participation, citizens become members too.⁷ Being a member arguably is more than having a legal status and responsibilities of participation; belonging brings a sense of identity: that of forming part of a political community, of being affiliated to a polity. The kind of identity provided by citizenship is, therefore, political. It can coexist in an individual with other identities (for instance, membership in a religious group, which can be transnational), even with other political identities (as in the cases of double or triple citizenship).

The essence of EU citizenship should be understood in this context.

Any person who holds the nationality of an EU Member State is automatically also an EU citizen. EU citizenship was formally created with the adoption of the 1992 Treaty on the EU (so called Maastricht Treaty)⁸. Article 9 of the Treaty on European Union explicitly states that EU citizenship is additional to, and does not replace, national citizenship. It affords EU citizens with rights, freedoms and legal protections available under EU law.

The exact scope of the rights associated with EU citizenship can be found particularly in two legal instruments – the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Charter) and in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Additionally, the exact scope and normative contents of the EU citizenship rights are further detailed in secondary legislation, such as, regarding the right of free movement and residence, in the Free Movement Directive 2004/38/EC.

The Charter enshrines specific political, social, and economic rights for EU citizens and residents. Title Five of the Charter focuses specifically on the rights of EU citizens. Protected rights of EU citizens include the following rights: the right to vote and to stand as a candidate at elections to the European Parliament (EP), the right to vote and to stand as a candidate at municipal elections, the right to good administration, the right of access to documents, the right to petition, freedom of movement, right to refer to the EU Ombudsman cases of maladministration, and of residence and diplomatic and consular protection.

The TFEU refers to the same rights providing more details on them. In addition, it provides the legal basis for the EU to legislate in the different areas. Specifically, the EU citizenship affords the following rights based upon particular article of the treaties. Firstly, the right of access to documents of the EU government, whatever their medium, is provided by **Article 15**. Then, freedom from any discrimination on nationality is embodied in a right not to be discriminated against on grounds of nationality within the scope of application of the Treaty by prohibition of discrimination based on nationality (**Article 18**). Subsequent **Article 19** defines the role of the EU institutions concerning the right to not be discriminated on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. The **Article 21** sets the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. After that, **Article 22** focuses on the electoral rights – more specifically, a right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the EP, in the Member State in which you reside, and a right to vote and stand in local elections in the Member State in which you reside, under the same conditions as the nationals of that state. **Article 23** refers to the right to consular protection containing a right to be protected by the diplomatic/consular

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ On the other hand, various scholars (e. g. Lashyn, Serhii. 2021. 'The Aporia of EU Citizenship'. *Liverpool Law Review*, Vol. 42, pp. 361–377; Olsen, Espen D.H. 2008. 'The origins of European citizenship in the first two decades of European integration'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 40–57) argue that the first notion of the European supranational citizenship can be found decades prior the Maastricht Treaty.

authorities of other Member States when in a non-EU Member State, if there are no diplomatic or consular authorities from the citizen's own country. Lastly, **Article 24** deals with the citizens' communication and contact with particular EU authorities. Firstly, it sets the right to petition the EP and the right to apply to the European Ombudsman to bring to his attention any cases of poor administration by the EU institutions and bodies⁹. Second, as the communication is concerned, there is also the right to write to the EU institutions in one of the official languages and to receive a reply in that same language.

Put into the context of the three-dimensional conceptualization of the citizenship, EU citizenship is very strong in the first and in the second dimension of the citizenship. However, there are challenges in the third – affiliative – part. Additionally, in its current stage, EU citizenship contains only rights and entitlements. Contrary to the classic national citizenship and citizens expectations,¹⁰ it does not include any clear and comprehensible duties.

At the end of the past century, EU citizenship was not a topic for substantial direct political reform. The Lisbon Treaty made only a minor contribution.¹¹ As a result it was the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) which in its rulings gradually expanded the rights associated with the EU citizenship, namely in the area of social rights.¹² Still, in the second decade of the 21st century, scholars still perceived the EU citizenship as '*an experimental institution that changes traditional conceptions of "who we are" and "how we should live with others" in freedom and non-discrimination*'.¹³

3.2 EU citizenship and the Conference on the Future of Europe

So far, the latest attempt at discussing a possible review of the current status of EU citizenship was provided by COFEU¹⁴, even though EU citizenship was not at the heart of the conference. That is clearly visible from the main COFOE document, the Final Report as of May 2022. The citizenship agenda is spread across the whole document and mostly arises in the other policies/problems issues. Such an approach could be interpreted in various ways. First, it could mean that the EU citizens themselves do not perceive EU

⁹ There is an exception of the EU legal bodies.

¹⁰ For example, Sherrod, Lonnie R. 2003. 'Promoting the Development of Citizenship in Diverse Youth'. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 287–292.

¹¹ Schrauwen, Annette. 2008. 'European Union citizenship in the Treaty of Lisbon: any change at all?' *Maastricht Journal of European and Comparative Law*, Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 55–64.

¹² Mather, James D. 2005. 'The Court of Justice and the Union Citizen'. *European Law Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 6, pp. 722–743; Besson, Samantha and André Utzinger. 2008. 'Towards European Citizenship'. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 39, No. 2, pp. 185–208; Kostakopoulou, Dora. 2007. 'European Union Citizenship: Writing the Future'. *European Law Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 5, pp. 623–646; Conant, Lisa. 2021. 'Failing backward? EU citizenship, the Court of Justice, and Brexit'. *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 28, No. 10, pp. 1592–1610.

¹³ Kostakopoulou, Dora, Elspeth Guild and Cristina Gortázar-Rotaecche. 2014. 'Introduction. Symposium on the Reconceptualisation of European Union Citizenship'. *European Law Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 444–446.

¹⁴ The COFEU was a major initiative launched by the EU to engage citizens, civil society organizations, and institutions in a debate on the future of the EU. The conference was intended to provide a platform for Europeans to discuss their aspirations for the future of the EU and contribute to the development of its policies and priorities. The conference was expected to cover a wide range of topics, including the EU's role in addressing global challenges, the future of the single market, the digital transformation, and the future of the euro currency. The conference also addressed social and environmental issues, as well as the future of democracy, rule of law, and human rights in the EU. The COFEU was held in different formats, including online and offline events. It involved a wide range of participants, including citizens, civil society organizations, and experts from across the EU. Lastly, the COFEU was seen as an important opportunity to deepen the democratic dialogue between the EU and its citizens and to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among Europeans for the future of the EU.

citizenship as an issue *per se* (as an isolated policy problem) but as a part of various other challenges. Second, EU citizenship and its current status does not need to be – even by the highly engaged COFEU participants – understood as a target for a substantial change or reform. Third, the participants could consider particular policy problems – that were associated with citizenship – as the tools through which citizenship can be meaningfully amended.

Moving to the specific comments on the citizenship agenda, there were several direct references to the EU citizenship, both in terms of its relevance and as the specific proposals for its improvement are concerned. First, the Report suggests that *'the European citizenship should be strengthened for instance through a European citizenship statute providing citizen-specific rights and freedoms, as well as a statute for European cross-border associations and non-profit organisations'*.¹⁵ Additionally, the Report requests *'guaranteeing a minimum level of education on the EU and especially its democratic processes, including the history of European integration and European citizenship. People of all ages should be able to benefit from such programmes, which should be designed in an engaging and age-appropriate manner'*.¹⁶ Citizenship is also mentioned in the EP elections context – here it is recommended to lower the age for voting in the elections to 16 years *'in parallel to an enhancement of citizenship education and education about the EU'*.¹⁷

Two suggestions saw the key in a broader participation of the EU citizens in the policy-making process. Proposal 29 recommends *'1) to increase the frequency of online and offline interactions between the EU and its citizens (i.e. by asking citizens directly about EU matters and by creating an user-friendly platform to ensure that every citizen can interact with EU institutions and EU officials), and 2) in order to ensure that citizens can participate in the EU policy-making process, to voice their opinions and to get feedbacks, we recommend to create a charter or a code of conduct or guidelines for EU officials. Different means of interactions should exist so that every citizen can participate. We recommend this because several means to reach EU institutions exist (online platforms, representatives' bodies), but they are not known, not effective and not transparent. There are huge differences in accessibility between countries. More frequent and better-quality interactions will lead to a sense of ownership of EU citizenship.'* In a similar vein, Proposal 38 provides *'that the EU creates and implements programmes for schools about what is being done in the EU in terms of the existing mechanisms of participation. These programmes should be included in the school curricula about European citizenship and ethics with content adequate for the age. There should also be programmes for adults. There should be lifelong learning programmes available to citizens to further their knowledge about the possibilities of EU citizen participation. We recommend this, because it is important for the future of our children. The citizens want to know how to express their voice. It is important that they know the exact mechanisms and how they can be used, so that their voice is heard by the EU. It is important for the equal inclusion of all European citizens. As European citizens, we need to know how to use our rights. By virtue of being European citizens, we are entitled to this knowledge.'*

From the perspective of other COFEU's inputs, EU citizenship was discussed in the same manner also in three Interim Reports preceding the Final Report. Citizenship was again spread as a topic across various policy sections as Education, youth and sport, Technology

¹⁵ Proposal 25.

¹⁶ Proposal 37.

¹⁷ Proposal 47.

for People, European Parliament elections or Facilitating and supporting the acquisition of EU citizenship. Under those sections, some ideas not included or mentioned in the Final report had been voiced by EU citizens. In the framework of Education and Sport, ideas relating to education, culture and sport were discussed mostly as a means of fostering the development of a European identity and European citizenship; this includes various proposals for promoting exchange and interactions, such as through the Erasmus Programme and inter-European sport events. In the context of Technology for People strain, suggestions contained a range of specific ideas proposing technological and digital tools for European citizens. A large pool of ideas discussed creating 'digital citizenship' and the digital unification of the EU, for example by creating a framework which helps all EU countries to work together on IT projects. This idea was developed further with several suggestions for all encompassing digital portals for citizen participation, daily life identification needs, a European Social Network dedicated to the expression of public opinion, and Europewide identification via a digital ID. This group of ideas was later on – included in the Interim Report 2 – enriched about a proposal to create a European Single Sign-on Identity Provider for providing access to public services. Regarding the EP and EU election context, a group of ideas was related to institutional reforms calls for changes to the way EP elections are held as means of creating more citizenship engagement in the EU democratic processes. Then, some proposals targeted the conceptualization of EU citizenship. One more widely supported and discussed idea suggests having EU citizenship which is not linked to citizenship of an EU Member State. Contributors also raised the question of allowing non-EU citizens living long-term in a Member State to vote in their country of residence for EU elections. Some participants lamented the lack of rights of third country national/permanent residents in the EU. They observed that the Union does not grant the right to vote to its permanent residents who had been living in the EU for a long time, or other advantages which could make it more attractive for them to apply for EU citizenship.

3.3 How to make EU citizenship more tangible to citizens?

There are two important dimensions of any attempt at communicating about EU citizenship and thus making it more tangible to citizens. Firstly, citizenship is used as a vehicle for the general EU affairs communication. As Naujoks¹⁸ argues, European institutions use the concept of citizenship in their direct communication and attempt to rally people around a common label. For instance, as already mentioned, the Commission regularly drafts reports on EU citizenship and the year 2013 has been declared the European Year of Citizens with opportunities to learn about the rights and opportunities open to them thanks to EU citizenship. Secondly, EU citizenship can also be perceived as a product of the European integration that is being communicated. It is necessary to point out that it much depends on how citizenship is defined and how it is understood. This step is a crucial one as the exact conceptualization creates expectations and it also outlines possible ways to achieve them. This is also relevant for the desired goal '*to make the EU citizenship more tangible and accessible/attractive for the EU citizens*'. In this regard, the EU (and likely, the Commission as one of the key actors responsible for EU communication) has to make a strategic choice on how it conceptualizes EU citizenship. This is not only an academic

¹⁸ Naujoks, Daniel. 2020. 'Atypical citizenship regimes: comparing legal and political conceptualizations'. *Comparative Migration Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 1–20.

problem, because the use of a particular terminology affects how the substance – citizenship – can be communicated. Apart from the classic approach that was used in the first chapter, there are also other possible categories as an example of what Naujoks calls as an ‘atypical citizenship’¹⁹ – that is a citizenship which is not bound to a nation state. Apart from this, various scholars²⁰ also discuss the possibility to conceptualize EU citizenship as a post-national multi-layered institution. Anyway, no matter how intellectually attractive such approaches can be, their use in the daily classic political communication of citizenship is minimal and almost excluded as for the EU citizens they hardly represent comprehensive categories.

Even in the case the EU adopts as a point of departure the classic conceptualization of its citizenship, the ability of the EU to communicate on EU citizenship and the rights flowing from it can hardly be separated from general EU political communication. Here, various problems pop up. For example, it is necessary to clarify which actor – or which institution – should be in the EU responsible for the communicating on EU citizenship. Given its role, it makes sense to assume that **it is the Commission that should be one of the actors responsible for the EU citizenship communication**. On the other hand, the Member States cannot be left aside as they still play an important role in various policies and domains – for example in education – which are important for any citizenship communication.

The second recommendation would be **to change the style of communication on EU citizenship**, embracing a clear, more emotional, and less ambiguous style. Quite logically, if EU citizenship is conceptualized in as comprehensive way as possible, such communication would be much easier and more trustworthy: as a result, such communication could foster a sense of belonging among EU citizens.

The third recommendation would be to **create a short and simple document** – something that could be called an ‘Onboarding Package of EU Citizenship’ – summarizing and explaining all existing rights that are associated with EU citizenship and similar benefits derived from EU policies. As the relevance of the rights connected with EU citizenship may vary – depending on the particular person living in the EU territory and his/her situation – such statute should clearly specify which right is designed for which holder. It should be noted that a draft for the EU Citizenship Statute was prepared by Renew Europe in March 2022.²¹ However, its content is difficult to implement as the proposal mixes already existing rights with rights that could be created in the future. Thus, it does not serve as a comprehensive and simple overview of existing rights and access to them. This report thus proposes a draft of the possible structure and content of such onboarding package in section 4.

The other issue – as the fourth point – is definitely the **role of education**²², particularly at the level of elementary schools or high schools. Existing research in this regard suggests

¹⁹ Naujoks, *supra* n. 18.

²⁰ See e.g. Kostakopoulou, Dora. 2018. ‘Scala Civium: Citizenship Templates Post-Brexit and the European Union’s Duty to Protect EU Citizens’. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 4, pp. 854–869.

²¹ Renew Europe. *European Citizenship Statute*. Renew Europe Policy Paper, March 2022, <https://www.reneweuropengroup.eu/policies/2022-03-25/european-citizenship-statute>.

²² Teaching about the EU can be done through a variety of methods and approaches. Firstly, there is the historical context discussing the events that led to the creation of the EU and its evolution over time. Secondly, the institutional framework offers a possibility to explain the structure and functions of the main EU institutions, such as the Commission, the Council, and the EP. Third important point of view are the EU policies and its decision-making process. This enables to discuss the EU’s policymaking process, including the role of the institutions and the decision-making process for specific policies such as trade, agriculture, and environmental policy. Fourthly, there are the benefits and challenges associated with the EU –

that EU Member States treat the EU dimension of civic education very differently.²³ Even if EU power in the educational policy is limited – the EU has just supportive competences in this area – some scholars²⁴ argue that the EU can do more to promote more effective learning about the European integration in the Member States. It should be mentioned that the role of education in the EU citizenship context was repeatedly emphasized by COFEU participants.

There are also other possibilities which could increase the communicativeness of EU citizenship. Firstly, it could be more attractive for communication if put into the context of the most important current political problems. Among such prominent issues belong the protection of nature – here, possible conceptualization of EU citizenship as a **'green citizenship'**²⁵ could be useful. Secondly, the EU could benefit from experiences in the EU Member States and the ways they communicate their own citizenship. In this regard, a **set of best practices** could be created as a source of inspiration for the EU institutions, particularly for the institutions that take care of the EU communication activities (including those relevant for the EU citizenship).

3.4 Summary

EU citizenship is a legal status that is enjoyed by individuals who are nationals of an EU Member State. EU citizenship confers certain rights that are separate from national citizenship. Currently, it faces certain challenges associated with its limited normative conceptualization and perception. An EU citizen has a lot of rights and benefits. However, understanding them can be a challenge. These rights are spread across various documents and policies, making it difficult to grasp the full extent of what's available for her/him. For instance, an EU citizen has the right to live, work, and study anywhere in the EU, but the specifics of these rights are detailed in different legal texts. Similarly, consumer rights, healthcare access, and social security benefits are all outlined in separate documents. This fragmentation can lead to confusion and may prevent EU citizens from fully utilizing their rights and benefits.

The COFEU has recognized this complexity and argued for a more straightforward approach. They believe that EU citizens' rights and benefits should be enhanced and simplified. This means making them more robust and easier to understand. The idea is to consolidate these rights and benefits into a single, comprehensive document that is accessible to all EU citizens. By doing this, COFEU hopes to empower EU citizens, ensuring they can fully exercise their rights and take advantage of their benefits. In essence, the goal is to make life easier for EU citizens by making their rights and benefits

particularly this perspective is important from the EU citizenship point of view as it explains the benefits as the single market, freedom of movement, and the euro currency, as well as the challenges, such as the debt crisis and immigration. Additionally, there are various ways of delivery as the interactive activities that creates a possibility to engage students in interactive activities such as debates, simulations, and group projects to help them understand the EU's policies and decision-making processes. Or, multimedia can be utilized through sources as such as videos, infographics, and interactive maps to help students visualize the EU's policies and institutions.

²³ Ortloff Hinderliter, Deborah. 2005. 'Becoming European: A Framing Analysis of Three Countries' Civics Education Curricula'. *European Education*, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp. 35–49; Keating, Avril, Debora Hinderliter Ortloff and Stavroula Philippou. 2009. 'Citizenship education curricula: the changes and challenges presented by global and European integration'. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 145–158.

²⁴ See e.g. Grimonprez, Kris. 2014. 'The European Dimension in Citizenship Education: Unused Potential of Article 165 TFEU'. *European Law Review*, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 3–26.

²⁵ Amanda Machin, Amanda and Evrim Tan. 2022. 'Green European citizenship? Rights, duties, virtues, practices and the European Green Deal'. *European Politics and Society*, Online First, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23745118.2022.2118984>.

more transparent and accessible. It's about ensuring that everyone can understand and use their rights, not just those with a deep understanding of EU law and policy.

4 Potential structure of an onboarding package of EU citizenship rights and benefits from EU policies

As the proposal for an onboarding package of EU citizenship rights is concerned, a 'citizenship onboarding package' would intend to be a comprehensive collection of information and resources related to, in this case, EU citizenship, including EU values, the rights and opportunities of citizens, the benefits of EU policies they can enjoy and other relevant information. The purpose of the existence of such onboarding package is to provide information for individuals who are seeking to understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, including those who are seeking to acquire citizenship or who are already citizens. Thus, it could be an illustrative document for various groups living in the EU territory – for example young people who reach voting age, or 'new' EU citizens.

Based upon various definition of citizenship – in such context, existing literature refers e. g. to national, transnational, global, cultural, but even to sexual or transgender conceptualization of citizenship and to a different historical context (e. g. Isin – Turner 2007) – a citizenship onboarding package can include a lot of information. Not all are important and not all of them are of the same relevance. Among the most important ones, that should be included into the onboarding package, belong especially the exact definition of citizenship and related terms and list of the rights of citizens deriving from EU citizenship and benefits from EU policies.

If the abstract principles of citizenship onboarding package are applied to the EU reality, any discussion on proposal of such document in the EU context have to depart from a basic legal framework of the EU citizenship that is granted to all citizens of EU Member States and provides certain rights and benefits. Thus, the compendium/statute should include provisions particularly relevant to:

- Information on EU citizenship as a unique example in the world of supranational citizenship and the main historical milestones in its development and deepening of associated rights;
- EU values, their importance and the need to protect them;
- EU citizenship rights (freedom of movement, electoral rights, consular protection, etc);
- Rights and opportunities related to participation in the democratic process (including those mentioned in Better Regulation Tools and measures on inclusive democratic participation)
- An illustrative sample of other benefits a citizen derives from other EU policies beyond citizenship rights (for example data protection, consumer rights, social pillar etc.). This would remain however a non-exhaustive, illustrative sample of policies.
- The Union of values approach highlighting fundamental rights, democracy, rule of law as a bedrock and prerequisite of realisation of all pillars can be highlighted throughout the onboarding package.

The information contained in a citizenship compendium should be accurate, up-to-date, and easy to understand. It should also use as simple and straightforward language as possible giving the recipients clear information. For this purpose, the onboarding package could adopt a simple and comprehensible structure as it follows in the case of EU citizens' rights description in the below table.

Table 1: Proposal for the structure of EU citizens' rights description

Section	Description
Title of the right	Exact title of the right.
Explanation	Brief and clear explanation what does a particular right means for the EU citizens. What does it offer, how it can be used.
Example of exercise	Short story from the real life illustrating use of the right.
Legal basis	Reference(s) to the relevant provisions of the EU primary law.

5 EU Citizens' Rights and Benefits Onboarding Package

This onboarding package is designed to help the EU citizens to understand the rich tapestry of rights and benefits they are entitled to. Being part of the EU is not just about living in one of its Member States, it's about being part of a shared vision, a shared community, where every citizen enjoys the liberties, protections, and opportunities that define the European way of life.

Each one of the EU citizens, all 450 million, contributes to shaping the diverse, vibrant, and democratic space that is the European Union. And in turn, the EU bestows upon us a set of fundamental rights and privileges. These range from the freedom to live, work, and study anywhere in the EU, to enjoying a high standard of consumer protection and data privacy. The benefits of EU citizenship also encompass the right to vote and run in European and municipal elections, wherever they reside within the EU.

The EU has always stood firm on the principles of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. It is these values that underpin the non-discrimination laws that ensure every EU citizen is treated equally, irrespective of their nationality, race, religion, gender, age, disability, or sexual orientation.

The EU is the citizens' Union. It is their Union. It opens up a world of possibilities, safeguards citizens' rights, and fosters a sense of unity in diversity.

5.1 Rights deriving from EU citizenship

Section	Description
Title of the right	Free Movement
What does it mean?	As a citizen of the EU, you have the right to live, work, study, and travel freely within EU Member States. This means you do not need a visa or work permit. Your family members have the right to accompany or join you, regardless of their nationality. However, some restrictions may apply in specific circumstances, such as public safety or health concerns or necessity to have visa. You can access education, healthcare or social benefits on equal terms with locals. However, some restrictions may apply in specific circumstances, such as to protect the public finances of the host Member State.
How may it work?	Imagine that you are a Spanish software developer who receives a job offer in Germany. Thanks to the EU's free movement rights, you can move to Germany without needing a visa or work permit, find a place to live, and start working immediately. You and your family can access the local healthcare system, enrol your children in German schools, and enjoy the same social benefits as German citizens, while maintaining your Spanish citizenship.

Where is it defined?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States is based on Article 21(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. ○ Article 45 provides for the free movement of workers within the EU. Article 49 provides for the freedom of establishment (including self-employment) in any Member State. Articles 56-62 provide for the freedom to provide services within the EU. • Directive 2004/38/EC on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States: Often referred to as the ‘Free Movement Directive’, this is the key piece of legislation covering the right of EU citizens and their family members to move and reside freely within the EU. It sets out the respective limitations and conditions on this right. • Regulation (EU) No 492/2011 on freedom of movement for workers within the Union: This regulation sets out the rights of workers moving within the EU, including equal treatment with nationals of the host Member State in access to employment, working conditions and all other social and tax advantages. • Schengen Agreement: The Schengen agreement underpins the right to free movement by enabling citizens to move around the Schengen area without being subject to border checks. • The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 45 provides for the right of every citizen of the Union to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States.
----------------------	--

Section	Description
Title of the right	Non-discrimination
What does it mean?	As an EU citizen, you are protected, for example, against discrimination based on various grounds such as nationality, race, or disability when living, working, or accessing services in any EU Member State. This means that you have the right to be treated equally in areas such as employment, education, and to social benefits. However, some restrictions may apply in specific circumstances. The non-discrimination principle

	<p>ensures fair treatment and equal opportunities for all EU citizens, regardless of the EU country in which they are in.</p>
<p>How may it work?</p>	<p>Alex, a software engineer from an unspecified EU Member State, identifies as gay and has been offered a job in a company in another EU Member State, where the local community is known to be less open to sexual minorities. After moving, Alex finds out about a company event for employees and their partners. He decides to bring his partner to the event but was not permitted to join.</p> <p>Thanks to the EU's non-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation, Alex's employer is required to treat them with the same respect and dignity as any other employee. This means that Alex and his partner should be welcomed at the event and should not be subjected to any negative treatment, exclusion, or harassment due to their relationship. If Alex experiences discrimination or harassment in the workplace based on his sexual orientation, the EU law guarantees that sanctions against such a company should be effective, proportionate, and dissuasive.</p>
<p>Legal basis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 2 establishes that the Union is founded on values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. • TFEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Articles 45 and 56 to 62 prohibit any discrimination on grounds of nationality for workers and recipient of services. ○ Article 18 prohibits any discrimination on grounds of nationality within the scope of application of the treaties. • The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU: Article 21 prohibits discrimination based on any grounds such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age, or sexual orientation. • On the basis of Articles 19 and 45 TFEU, the following legal instruments have been adopted: • Directive 2000/43/EC: Also known as the Racial Equality Directive, it implements the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directive 2000/78/EC: This directive establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation. • Directive 2006/54/EC: This directive is on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunity and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation. • Directive 2010/41/EU: It aims to implement the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity or contributing to the pursuit of such an activity.
--	---

Section	Description
Title of the right	Voting and Standing in Elections
What does it mean?	As an EU citizen, you can vote and run for office in local and European Parliament (EP) elections in the Member State country you live in, even if it is not your home country. You will be treated equally as local nationals and cannot be discriminated against based on your nationality. This right ensures that your voice is heard in the political decisions that affect you, promoting democracy within the EU.
How may it work?	<p>Anna, is a Portuguese citizen who has lived in Belgium for several years. With local elections approaching in Belgium, Anna decides she wants to get more involved in the community by voting and even running for a position on the city council.</p> <p>Thanks to the EU's Voting and Standing in the Elections right, Anna can register to vote in the Belgian local elections, just like any Belgian citizen. In addition, she can also run for the city council.</p>
Legal Basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 20(2)(b) grants EU citizens the right to vote and stand as candidates in EP elections and municipal elections in their Member State of residence, under the same conditions as nationals of that state. ○ Article 22 further details the right to vote and stand as a candidate in EP elections and municipal elections in the Member State of residence, specifying that this should be without prejudice to the host country's nationality rules.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directive 93/109/EC: Also known as the 'Electoral Rights Directive', this legislation outlines the procedures for EU citizens to exercise their right to vote and stand as candidates in EP elections in their Member State of residence. • Directive 94/80/EC: This directive focusses on the right to vote and stand as a candidate in municipal elections for EU citizens residing in a Member State other than their home country, providing the necessary arrangements to facilitate the exercise of this right.
--	--

Section	Description
Title of the right	Consular protection
What does it mean?	As an EU citizen, you have the right to seek help from any EU country's embassy or consulate when you are outside the EU and your own country does not have representation there. You will receive the same assistance as that country's diplomatic services offer to their citizens. This support can include help during emergencies, legal issues, or replacing lost travel documents. This right ensures your safety and well-being when travelling or living outside the EU.
How may it work?	<p>Sofia, is a Greek citizen travelling through a remote region in a non-EU country where Greece does not have an embassy or consulate. Unfortunately, Sofia loses her passport and urgently needs a replacement to continue her journey and return home.</p> <p>Thanks to the EU's Consular Protection right, Sofia can approach the embassy or consulate of another EU Member State, such as Spain, located in the country she is visiting. Sofia is entitled to the same assistance she would receive if she was a Spanish citizen. The Spanish consulate helps Sofia obtain the necessary travel documents, allowing her to continue her trip and return to Greece safely.</p>
Legal Basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 20(2)(c) states that EU citizens shall have the right to enjoy, on the territory of a third country in which their home Member State is not represented, the protection of the diplomatic and consular authorities of any other Member State, under the same conditions as the nationals of that state. ○ Article 23 further elaborates on the consular protection right, specifying that EU citizens shall

	<p>be entitled to protection by the diplomatic or consular authorities of any Member State, under the same conditions as the nationals of that state.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directive 2015/637/EU: This directive, known as the 'Consular Protection Directive', provides the framework for the coordination and cooperation between EU Member States' consular authorities when assisting unrepresented EU citizens in third countries. It aims to ensure that EU citizens receive effective consular protection in accordance with the provisions set out in the TFEU.
--	---

Section	Description
Title of the right	Petition right
What does it mean?	As a citizen or resident of the EU, you have the right to submit a petition, which could be a complaint or request, to the EP on matters directly affecting you. This can relate to public or private issues within the EU's field of activity. The Petitions Committee of the EP will consider your petition and may investigate the issue further. This right allows you to directly address the EP to express concerns, request actions, or suggest changes in EU laws or policies.
How may it work?	<p>Maria is an EU citizen living in a city where an important river has become heavily polluted due to industrial waste from a nearby factory. Pollution is affecting the health and livelihoods of the local community, as well as the local wildlife.</p> <p>Concerned about the situation, Maria decides to use her right to petition the EP. She gathers information and evidence about pollution, its sources, and its impact on the community and the environment. She submits a petition to the EP, asking them to intervene and enforce environmental regulations against the factory that causes the pollution.</p> <p>The Petitions Committee of the EP receives Maria's petition and decides to launch an inquiry into the situation.</p>
Legal Basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 20(2)(d) grants every EU citizen the right to petition the EP in accordance with Article 227. This is further reiterated in Article 24. Article 227 states that any citizen of the Union and any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in a Member State have the right to address, individually or in association with others, a petition

	<p>to the EP on a matter which comes within the Union's fields of activity and which affects them directly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules of Procedure of the EP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rule 227 specifies the procedure for the submission and processing of petitions to the EP. • Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 44 upholds the right of any citizen of the Union and any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in a Member State to petition the EP.
--	--

Section	Description
Title of the right	Access to information
What does it mean?	As an EU citizen, you have the right to see documents from EU institutions such as the EP, the Commission, and the Council. If your request for information is denied, you can appeal this decision. The EU institutions also work to provide clear information about their activities and policies. They even maintain online registers where you can directly access many documents, helping you stay informed about what is happening in the EU.
How may it work?	<p>Sophia is an EU citizen who is very passionate about environmental conservation. She learns about a proposed EU regulation that could significantly impact local wildlife in her country. She wants to understand the details of the proposed regulation and its potential implications. Using her right of access to information, Sophia goes online to the Commission's register and searches for the draft proposal of the regulation.</p> <p>She finds the document and believes that some aspects could be detrimental to the habitats of certain species. She engages in a public consultation process held by the European Commission on the proposed regulation, bringing up the issues she identified.</p> <p>Sophia's story highlights the importance of the 'Access to Information' right for EU citizens in enabling them to participate actively in democratic processes at the EU level.</p>
Legal Basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 15(1) establishes that these EU institutions conduct their work as openly as possible to promote good governance and ensure the participation of civil society. It specifically states that they shall set out provisions for giving citizens and representative associations the right

	<p>to access EP, Council, and Commission documents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 24 sets out that every citizen of the Union may write to any of the institutions, bodies, offices or agencies referred to in this Article or in Article 13 of the Treaty on European Union in one of the languages mentioned in Article 55(1) of the Treaty on European Union and have an answer in the same language. ○ Article 207(3) and Article 218(10) also discuss the openness of EU institutions and access to documents in the context of the common commercial policy and the negotiation and conclusion of international agreements respectively. ● Regulation (EC) No. 1049/2001: This is the key piece of secondary legislation that provides the general principles and limits on access to documents. It applies to all documents held by the three key institutions, meaning not only documents drawn up by these institutions, but also documents received by them, and covers all areas of EU law.
--	--

Section	Description
Title of the right	Right to appeal
What does it mean?	As an EU citizen, you have the right to challenge decisions made by EU institutions that directly affect you. You can do this by making an appeal to the European General Court. If you're not happy with their decision, you can appeal further to the European Court of Justice. You also have the right to complain to the European Ombudsman if you believe there has been mismanagement within any EU institutions, or to petition the EP about issues that concern you directly. Anyway, it should be noted that successful appeals or petitions are rarely done by individual citizens. In the majority of cases, help from lawyers, experts or NGOs that operate within particular policy is needed.
How may it work?	Maria runs a small tech company that has developed a unique software product. She learns that her application for an EU trademark to protect her product has been rejected by the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) due to an alleged similarity to an existing trademark. Feeling that the decision is unfair and that her product's branding is distinct, Maria decides to exercise her right to appeal. With help of experts and lawyers, she gathers evidence, makes a detailed case, and then

	<p>submits an appeal against the EUIPO's decision to the Board of Appeal within the EUIPO.</p> <p>The Board of Appeal reviews Maria's case and evidence, and ultimately decides to overturn the original decision, acknowledging that her trademark is sufficiently distinctive and does not infringe upon the existing one. This allows Maria to protect her product and brand within the EU market. If the Board of Appeal had upheld the EUIPO's original decision, Maria could have further appealed the decision at the European General Court.</p>
<p>Legal Basis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 263 gives the Court of Justice the power to review the legality of acts of EU institutions. Article 265 gives the Court the power to act against EU institutions that fail to make a decision. • The Statute of the Court of Justice of the European Union and the Rules of Procedure of the General Court and the Court of Justice: These provide more detailed provisions on bringing a case to these courts. • The European Ombudsman: Established by Article 228 of the TFEU, the European Ombudsman is empowered to receive complaints from any EU citizen concerning instances of maladministration in the activities of the Union institutions, bodies, offices, or agencies. • Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 47 ensures the right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial. <p>In addition to the primary law provisions, several pieces of secondary legislation further refine the processes for appealing decisions of EU institutions.</p>

5.2 Benefits from EU policies

Section	Description
	<p>Consumer protection</p>
<p>What does it mean?</p>	<p>As an EU citizen, you have key consumer rights that protect you when you shop. You are entitled to clear information about products and services, and you have a right to cancel and return online purchases within 14 days. If what you buy is not as described or doesn't meet quality standards, you have the right to a repair, replacement, or refund. Furthermore, you are</p>

	protected against unfair marketing, contract terms, and unsafe products.
How may it work?	<p>Marta saw an advertisement for a high-quality blender in an online store. She was impressed by the features described and decided to buy it. However, when the blender arrived, it was not as powerful as described in the advertisement and it could not blend some foods as promised. Marta decided to exercise her EU consumer rights. She contacted the online store, asserting her right to an accurate product description and the right to redress, as the blender did not match the quality described. The store initially resisted, but Marta mentioned her rights under EU law, specifically the Consumer Rights Directive. Consequently, the online store accepted her claim and offered her a choice between a full refund or a replacement with a more powerful blender. Marta chose the replacement and the store arranged for the pick-up of the faulty blender and the delivery of the new one without additional charges.</p> <p>In this scenario, Marta successfully exercised her consumer rights as an EU citizen, demonstrating how these rights function to protect consumers from misleading product descriptions and ensure that they get what they pay for.</p>
Legal Basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Articles 169-170 of the TFEU establish the legal basis for EU legislation to protect the economic interests of consumers. The TFEU mandates that the EU contribute to the protection of the health, safety, and economic interests of consumers, as well as to promote their right to information, education, and to organise themselves in order to safeguard their interests. • Consumer Rights Directive (2011/83/EU): This directive provides key protections for consumers, particularly in relation to contracts concluded with traders. It sets out rules on information to be provided by traders prior to the conclusion of a consumer contract. It also regulates the right of withdrawal, delivery rules, and the passing of risk in distance and off-premises contracts. • Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (2005/29/EC): This directive protects consumers from unfair, misleading, or aggressive commercial practises. • General Product Safety Directive (2001/95/EC): This directive ensures that only safe products are sold in the EU. It provides for rapid exchange of information between

	<p>Member States and the Commission on dangerous products through the RAPEX system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfair Contract Terms Directive (93/13/EEC): This directive protects consumers against unfair terms in contracts they make with professionals. • Directive on Certain Aspects Concerning Contracts for the Sale of Consumer Goods and Associated Guarantees (1999/44/EC): This directive ensures that consumer goods are compliant with the contract of sale, providing for remedies in case of lack of conformity and certain guarantees. <p>In addition, there are several other pieces of EU secondary legislation that provide additional protections for consumers.</p>
--	---

Section	Description
Title of the right	Data protection
What does it mean?	In the EU, you have rights over your personal data. You can access your data, correct errors in your data, erase it, limit its use, move it to another service, object to its use, and avoid being subjected to automated decision-making processes. These rights, which are part of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), give you control over your data and require companies to respect your choices.
How may it work?	Sofia had been using a popular social media platform for years, sharing photos, updates about her life, and interacting with friends. However, she became concerned about the amount of personal information the platform held about her and how it was being used. So, Sofia decided to exercise her rights under the GDPR. She first requested access to all of her personal data held by the platform. The company responded and sent Sofia a file containing all her posts, likes, comments, and even the IP addresses from which she had accessed the platform. Reviewing the data, Sofia discovered that some information about her was outdated. She then exercised her right to rectification and had the company correct the incorrect data. Sofia also decided that she no longer wanted the social media platform to keep some of her old posts. Using her right to erasure, she requested these posts to be deleted permanently, which the company did. Feeling more secure about her data, Sofia continued using the platform, now with a greater understanding and control over her personal information. Anyway, Sofia must be aware that this right is not absolute as there are certain circumstances where the right to erasure does not apply. For example, if the processing is

	<p>necessary for exercising the right of freedom of expression and information; for compliance with a legal obligation; for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority; for reasons of public interest in the area of public health; for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes; or for the establishment, exercise or defence of legal claims.</p>
Legal Basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Article 8 of the Charter establishes a right to the protection of personal data. According to this article, everyone has the right to the protection of personal data concerning him or her. Such data must be processed fairly for specified purposes and on the basis of the consent of the person concerned or some other legitimate basis laid down by law.• General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679): The GDPR is the central piece of legislation governing the protection of individuals' personal data in the EU. It sets out the principles of data protection and establishes the rights of data subjects (individuals whose data are processed) and obligations of the data controller and processor. These data subjects' rights include the right to be informed, the right of access, the right to rectification, the right to erasure (also known as the 'right to be forgotten'), the right to restrict processing, the right to data portability, the right to object, and rights in relation to automated decision-making and profiling.• The Data Protection Law Enforcement Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/680) protects citizens' fundamental right to data protection when personal data is used by criminal law enforcement authorities for law enforcement purposes. It will in particular ensure that the personal data of victims, witnesses, and suspects of crime are duly protected and will facilitate cross-border cooperation in the fight against crime and terrorism.• Directive on Privacy and Electronic Communications (2002/58/EC, also known as the ePrivacy Directive): This directive complements the GDPR in the context of electronic communications. <p>The legal framework for data protection in the EU is therefore provided not only by the GDPR but also by these and other pieces of EU secondary legislation and national laws implementing and transposing EU legislation, all of which</p>

together contribute to a comprehensive regime for the protection of personal data in the EU.

Section	Description
Title of the right	Environmental rights
What does it mean?	As a citizen of the EU, you have the right to a healthy and high-quality environment and to access information about the environment around you. You can also join in making decisions about the environment and report if you see laws being broken without fear of retaliation. Additionally, if you believe an environmental law is not being followed properly, you can ask a court or another independent body to look into it.
How may it work?	Maria is a resident of a small coastal town in the EU. Maria learnt about a proposed construction of a large resort complex on a nearby beach, an area known for its rich biodiversity. Concerned about the environmental impact, Maria exercised her right to access environmental information and requested all the environmental impact assessments and plans related to the project from her local authority. After reviewing the documents, Maria believed that the project could significantly harm the local ecosystems. She decided to use her right to participate in environmental decision-making. She voiced her concerns at a public hearing and gathered signatures from fellow townsfolk for a petition opposing the project. Despite her efforts, the project was approved. Maria then used her right to access justice in environmental matters. She partnered with a local environmental group and filed a lawsuit against the local authority, claiming they had not adequately considered the environmental impact of the project.
Legal Basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ While the Charter does not explicitly refer to environmental rights, it does, under Article 37, state that a high level of environmental protection and the improvement of the quality of the environment must be integrated into the policies of the Union and ensured in accordance with the principle of sustainable development. • TFEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Articles 191-193 provide the basis for EU environmental policy, stating that the Union policy on the environment shall aim at a high level of protection taking into account the diversity of situations in the various regions of the Union.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directive on Public Access to Environmental Information (2003/4/EC): This provides a right to access environmental information held by public authorities. • The Aarhus Convention: This international treaty, to which the EU is a party, provides access to information, public participation in decision making, and access to justice in environmental matters. These are implemented through various EU regulations and directives. • EU Directive on the protection of persons reporting on breaches of Union law (2019/1937): Provides protections for individuals who report breaches of EU law, including environmental law. <p>There is also various sector-specific EU environmental legislation. These laws cover a broad range of environmental issues, including water and air quality, waste management, nature protection, industrial pollution control, chemicals, GMOs, and noise, and include mechanisms to ensure their enforcement. Additionally, there is a vast body of EU secondary legislation in the form of directives and regulations that supports and enforces the environmental rights of EU citizens.</p>
--	--

Section	Description
Title of the right	Mobile workers´ rights
What does it mean?	As an EU citizen, you can work in any EU country without needing a work permit and have the right to the same treatment as local workers. You are protected against discrimination, and you also have rights to a safe workplace, reasonable working hours, and breaks. If your employer goes bankrupt, your claims for unpaid wages are protected. Additionally, you have rights to maternity and parental leave, as well as protection in case of employment termination.
How may it work?	Lucia, a qualified nurse from Portugal, decided to move to another EU country to gain more experience and learn a new language. She got a job in a hospital in this country. Lucia was pleasantly surprised to find that she was entitled to the same benefits and salary as her new colleagues who were citizens of that country. Despite the challenging work environment, she felt safe knowing that the hospital followed EU standards for health and safety. Lucia worked 40 hours a week and received adequate rest periods between her shifts as required by the Working Time Directive. When Lucia became pregnant, she was able to take 14 weeks of maternity leave with pay, again in line with EU legislation. After maternity leave, she decided to reduce her

	<p>working hours to part-time. Despite this change, her employer maintained her job security and benefits proportional to her working hours.</p>
<p>Legal Basis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 45 provides the principle of freedom of movement for workers within the Union. ○ Article 157 provides for the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value. ○ Article 31 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights: states that every worker has the right to working conditions which respect his or her health, safety, and dignity, and every worker has the right to limitation of maximum working hours, to daily and weekly rest periods, and to an annual period of paid leave. • Directive 2003/88/EC (Working Time Directive): The document establishes minimum health and safety requirements for the organisation of work time. • Directive 89/391/EEC (Framework Directive): Introduces measures to encourage improvements in the health and safety of workers at work. • Directive 2000/78/EC (Employment Equality Directive): Establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, including protection against discrimination. • Directive 98/59/EC (Collective Redundancies Directive): Provides protection in the case of collective redundancies. • Directive 2008/94/EC: Deals with the protection of employees in the event of the insolvency of their employer. • Directive 92/85/EEC: Provides for the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the health and safety at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding. <p>This list covers only some of the main legal sources. There is a range of other Directives and Regulations, as well as case law from the Court of Justice of the EU, that provides further protection for workers' rights. Here are some additional pieces of EU secondary legislation that apply to workers' rights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directive 2001/23/EC (Transfer of Undertakings Directive): Protects employees in case the company they

	<p>work for changes ownership. Employees' existing rights must be maintained in a transfer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directive 2002/14/EC (Information and Consultation Directive): Sets out the minimum requirements for the right to information and consultation of employees in undertakings or establishments within the EU. • Directive 2010/18/EU (Parental Leave Directive): Provides the framework agreement on parental leave as concluded by the European Social Partners. • Regulation (EU) No 492/2011: Freedom of movement for workers within the Union. This regulation covers the rights of EU workers and their families to live and work in any EU country. • Directive 2014/54/EU: Measures facilitating the exercise of rights conferred on workers in the context of freedom of movement for workers. • Directive 91/533/EEC: Requires employers to provide employees with written details of the terms of their employment. • Directive 1999/70/EC (Fixed-Term Work Directive): The purpose of this document is to prevent abuse arising from the use of successive fixed-term employment contracts or relationships. • Directive 2008/104/EC (Temporary Agency Work Directive): Provides protection for temporary agency workers. • Directive 2002/73/EC: Implements the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of employment and occupation, and covers direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimization. <p>This list is not exhaustive, and workers' rights are subject to further protection by the national laws of individual EU Member States.</p>
--	--

Section	Description
Title of the right	Education and Training
What does it mean?	As an EU citizen, you have the right to study and train in any EU country, just like its own citizens. This includes equal fees and opportunities for EU scholarships. Your qualifications should also be recognised across the EU. Additionally, the EU supports opportunities to study abroad, vocational training, and language learning.

How may it work?	<p>Maria, a Spanish citizen, always had a keen interest in architecture. After finishing her high school in Madrid, she decided to pursue her Bachelor's degree in Architecture in Italy, drawn by the country's rich architectural history. Due to the rights granted by the EU, she was able to enrol in a renowned Italian university on the same terms as Italian students, paying the same tuition fees. During her studies, she took advantage of the Erasmus+ programme, spending a semester in Denmark to broaden her perspective on Scandinavian design and sustainability practises. This international exposure was not only enriching academically, but also personally as she became proficient in Italian and Danish during her stays. Upon graduation, Maria was able to seamlessly transition into the workforce. The EU's policy of mutual recognition of diplomas meant her Italian degree was recognised back in Spain, allowing her to work with a prominent architecture firm in Barcelona. In this manner, the education and training rights provided by the EU facilitated Maria's academic journey and career in architecture across multiple countries.</p>
Legal Basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Article 14 of the Charter provides that everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training. This includes the possibility to receive free compulsory education.• TFEU:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Articles 165 and 166 deal with education, vocational training, youth, and sport. They give the EU the task to support and supplement the actions of Member States while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching, organization of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity.• Directive 2004/38/EC: This is the key legislative document on the free movement of EU citizens. It enables family members of EU citizens to access education, regardless of their nationality.• Regulated Professions Directive (Directive 2005/36/EC): This directive enables the mutual recognition of professional qualifications between EU countries. It includes a system to enable qualifications to be recognized which is mandatory for certain regulated professions.

Section	Description
Title of the right	Access to healthcare
Explanation	As an EU citizen, you can access healthcare in any EU country, often at the same cost as residents of that country. If you are temporarily staying in another EU country, you can use the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) for necessary healthcare under the same conditions and at the same cost as those insured in that country. If you live in another EU country, you have access to any healthcare just as locals. Also, in some cases, you may be able to seek planned medical treatment in another EU country and receive reimbursement in your home country.
How may it work?	Thomas, a citizen of an EU Member State, who loves to travel and explore different parts of Europe. During one of his trips to another EU country, Thomas unfortunately has a minor accident. He needs immediate medical attention but is concerned about the potential costs since he is far from home. Fortunately, Thomas remembers that he has his European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) with him. With this card, he is able to access the necessary medical care from the local state-provided healthcare services, just like a resident of the country he is visiting. He is treated at a local clinic, where his ankle is bandaged, and some pain relief medication has been administered. The cost of this treatment is equivalent to what a local resident would have paid (or even free in some countries). Thomas can continue his trip with peace of mind, knowing that his EHIC provides him with access to healthcare, when he is travelling within the EU.
Legal Basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TFEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Article 168 requires the EU to ensure a high level of protection of human health in all its policies and activities, including ensuring access to healthcare. • Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems: This regulation provides the rules for entitlement to healthcare when moving within the EU, including the use of EHIC. It establishes the principle of equal treatment, ensuring that people moving within the EU have the same rights and obligations as nationals of the country where they are covered. • Directive 2011/24/EU on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare: This directive provides rules for planned medical treatment in another EU country, including the right to reimbursement for such treatment. • Regulation (EC) No. 987/2009 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems.

This regulation sets out the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems. As an implementing Regulation it includes more detailed rules on the coordination of healthcare care for people moving within the EU.

- **Regulation (EU) 2015/758:** This regulation requires that new vehicles be equipped with an eCall in-vehicle system. In the event of a severe accident, this system automatically dials the emergency number 112 throughout Europe, allowing efficient response and care in the event of accidents, thus indirectly affecting access to healthcare.

6 Possible target groups benefiting from the onboarding package

The European Union (EU) Citizenship grants a range of fundamental rights, essential for the protection and empowerment of its citizens. However, despite the EU's efforts to promote and uphold these rights, there is still a significant lack of awareness among its citizens concerning the scope of their protection and the benefits they entail. In this light, this section seeks to identify potential target groups that could benefit from a communication tool aimed at promoting awareness.

To that end, and following a deductive approach, the aforementioned groups will be inferred from the scope of protection provided by the EU citizenship rights (discussed in the onboarding package), building and justifying the selection based on available data sources (e.g., *Eurostat*).

The following section first discuss the obstacles in getting information about EU Citizenship rights to those citizens who reached the voting age, and those citizens who newly acquired the citizenship of an EU Member State. Then, analyse turns in the list of other potential target groups attending to their specific needs, and the role that EU citizenship rights could play to meet them. Ultimately, this will provide a better understanding of how to effectively communicate EU citizenship rights to those who need it most.

6.1 Citizens who reach the voting age

The information about EU citizens rights, communication about possibilities of the civic engagement and other tools of participatory democracy should be first aimed to the groups of EU citizens who reach the voting age. The young citizens might not be fully socialized in the EU democracy and its tools, and therefore they are crucial target groups in communication about EU citizenship and citizens rights. Before we discuss the reasons why this group of people should be a primary target group of communication, we first introduce the population data about this group of EU citizens. In the EU, the population was estimated at 446.7 million in 2022.²⁶ The young citizens in the age 15-29 represent approximately 16% (around 71 million people) of total EU population, see Table 2. Due to ageing EU society and lower fertility rates, their representation is decreasing, see Figure 1. These data are important in the context of the size of the target group for communication. Why is this group of people essential in the context of the communication about EU citizenship and citizens rights is explained further based on Eurobarometer data.

Table 2: Proportion of young population

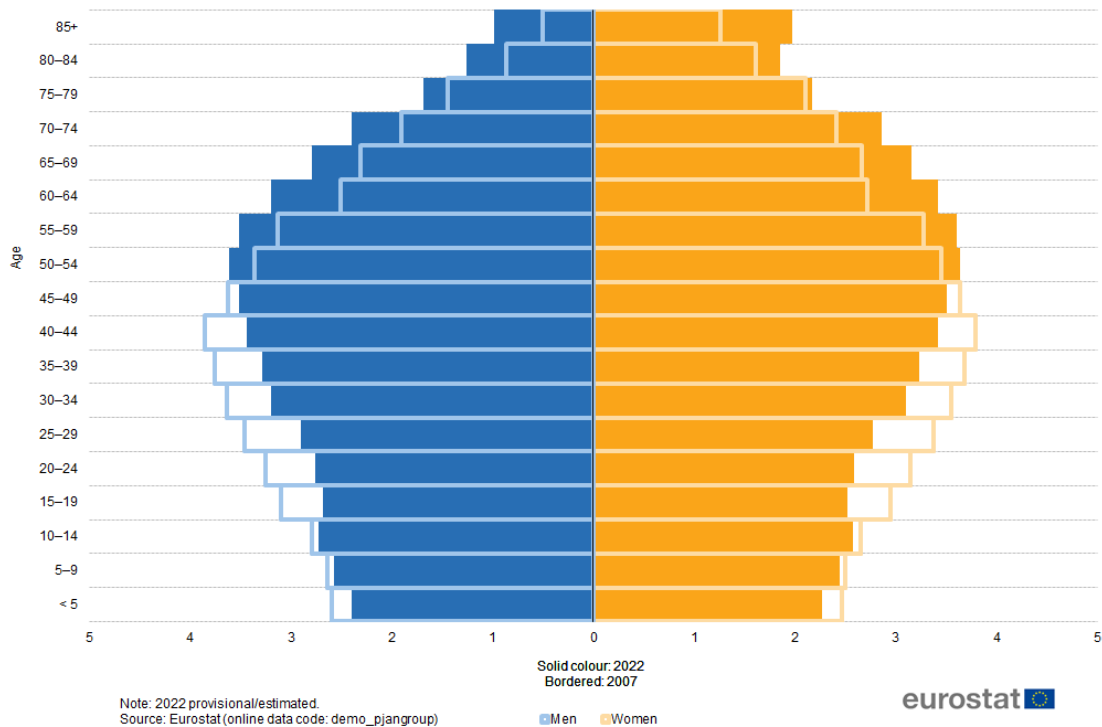
Age	Proportion on total population
15-19	5.2%
20-24	5.3%
25-29	5.7%

²⁶ See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population_structure_and_ageing

Figure 1: Population pyramid

Population pyramids, EU 2007 and 2022

Population pyramids, EU 2007 and 2022
(% of the total population)



In 2020, Eurobarometer released the survey requested by the European Commission on the topic of “European Union Citizenship and Democracy”.²⁷ The overall findings show high familiarity with EU citizens rights. However, looking closely to the data, slight differences in the age groups are detected. For example, the question of the familiarity with the term “citizen of the European Union”, see Table 3, shows that 55% of the young citizens (age 15 - 24) are familiar with that term and know what it means, meanwhile, the average response rate in that question over all age groups is about 10% higher. Young citizens have in general heard about this term, but they still are not sure what does this term means (37%).

Table 3: Are you familiar with the term “citizen of the European Union”?

	EU 27 Average	Age 15-24	Age 25-39	Age 40-54	Age 55+
Yes, and you know what it means	65%	55%	67%	67%	66%
Yes, you have heard it, but you are not sure what it means	26%	37%	25%	26%	24%
No, you have never heard the term "citizen of the European Union"	8%	8%	8%	7%	9%
Don't know	1%	-	-	-	1%
Total “Yes”	91%	92%	92%	93%	90%

²⁷ See <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2260>

Then, we analysed the questions testing the understanding of how EU citizenship is obtained (see Table 4), the knowledge of EU citizens rights (see Table 5), and the knowledge of electoral rights of EU citizens living in a EU Member State (see Table 6). The knowledge of young citizens about these issues does not differ significantly from that of other age groups. However, a striking general feature for all age groups is the relatively low knowledge of electoral rights, with only 58% of EU citizens answering correctly, compared to 81% for the question on EU citizens rights.

Table 4: Understanding of how EU citizenship is obtained*

	EU 27 Average**	Age 15-24	Age 25-39	Age 40-54	Age 55+
Average of correct answers	83%	81%	86%	85%	81%
Average of wrong answers	13%	16%	12%	12%	14%
Don't know	4%	3%	2%	3%	5%

* For each of the statements which I am going to read out, please state whether you think they are true or false: citizens of any Member State of the European Union need to apply to become a citizen of the European Union; You are both a citizen of the European Union and (NATIONALITY) at the same time; If you so wish, you can choose not to be a citizen of the European Union. True; False; Don't know.

** The average is based on the proportions of respondents who gave the right answer to the three statements.

Table 5: Knowledge of EU citizens rights*

	EU27 Average**	Age 15-24	Age 25-39	Age 40-54	Age 55+
Average of correct answers	81%	80%	83%	82%	80%
Average of wrong answers	11%	15%	10%	10%	10%
Don't know	8%	5%	7%	8%	10%

* In fact, all citizens of the EU Member States are "citizens of the European Union" since 1993. Do you know if, as an EU citizen, you have the following rights? The right to reside in any Member State of the European Union, subject to certain conditions like having sufficient resources for yourself and your family members; When in another Member State, the right to be treated in the same way as a national of that State; When outside the EU, the right to seek help from the embassy of any other EU Member State, if your country does not have an embassy there; The right to participate in a Citizens' Initiative, a request signed by at least one million EU citizens inviting the European Commission to propose a new policy measure; The right to make a complaint to the European Commission, European Parliament or European Ombudsman, for example when your EU rights have not been respected by your Member State. True; False; Don't know.

** The average is based on the proportions of respondents who gave the right answer to the five statements.

Table 6: Knowledge of electoral rights of EU citizens living in a EU Member State*

	EU27 Average**	Age 15-24	Age 25-39	Age 40-54	Age 55+
Average of correct answers	58%	57%	59%	59%	57%
Average of wrong answers	35%	37%	35%	34%	34%
Don't know	7%	5%	5%	6%	9%

* For each of the statements which I am going to read out, please state whether you think they are true or false: A citizen of the EU living in (OUR COUNTRY) has the right to vote or stand as a candidate in: European

Parliament elections; elections to the national Parliament; regional elections (by "regional" we mean any sub-national level of government between municipalities and the State); municipal elections. True; False; Don't know.

** The average is based on the proportions of respondents who gave the right answer to the four statements.

To sum, although the differences about the knowledge are rather marginal, the higher (and significant) uncertainty about the EU citizenship meaning (see Table 3) might be a decisive factor, why young citizens consequently resign to civic and political engagement. For this reason, communication on civil rights should primarily target this group of European citizens. These results are also crucial in the context of debates lowering down the voting age²⁸. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge about voting rights provides another avenue for communication to focus on.

6.2 Citizens who acquired the citizenship of an EU Member State

The previous part argues that young citizens are, compared to other age groups, more uncertain about the meaning of EU citizenship. Their knowledge about EU rights is not significantly worse compared to other age groups. We expect that uncertainty about EU citizenship meaning and lack of knowledge of EU citizens rights is even more evident in the group of citizens who acquired the citizenship of an EU Member State since, in many cases, they were born in different cultural and social contexts and regions. Unfortunately, the Eurobarometer does not contain data to proof this expectation. In this section, we rely on the data from Eurostat²⁹ and OECD³⁰.

The number of citizens who acquired the citizenship of an EU Member State is relatively low. Nevertheless, their importance for EU has increased with the ageing society, see above section. In 2021, EU Member States granted citizenship to 827 300 persons, an increase of around 14% (+98 300 people) compared with 2020. They represent 2.2% of all foreign citizens resident in the EU. The largest increases in acquisitions in absolute terms were recorded in France (+43 900 French citizenships granted compared with 2020), Germany (+18 800), Spain (+17 700), Sweden (+9 200) and Austria (+7 200). The vast majority (85%) of individuals granted citizenship by an EU Member State were citizens of non-EU countries. The largest groups were Moroccans (86 100 persons, or around 10.4% of all acquisitions of citizenship), Syrians (83 500, or 10.1%), Albanians (32 300, or 3.9%). Among the EU Member States, which granted most the citizenship is Spain (17% of all acquisitions of citizenship), France (16% of all acquisitions of citizenship), Germany (16% of all acquisitions of citizenship), Italy (15% of all acquisitions of citizenship), and Sweden (11% of all acquisitions of citizenship), for more details see Figure 2 below.

²⁸ In Austria (all elections), Malta (all elections), Estonia (local elections), Germany (local elections) is the voting age set to 16. In Germany, a law adopted in early 2023 lowered the voting age for European elections from 18 to 16. In Greece, people can vote at age 17. Belgium has already implemented lowering voting age to 16 for European Parliament elections.

²⁹ See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Acquisition_of_citizenship_statistics

³⁰ See Chapter five here: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/indicators-of-immigrant-integration-2018_9789264307216-en

Figure 2: Acquisitions of citizenship

Acquisitions of citizenship by group of previous citizenship, 2021

	Total number of recipients (1 000)	of which,							
		Citizens of another EU Member State		Citizens of a non-EU country		Stateless		Unknown previous citizenship	
		(1 000)	(%)	(1 000)	(%)	(1 000)	(%)	(1 000)	(%)
EU	827.3	104.5	12.6	706.9	85.4	6.9	0.8	9.0	1.1
Belgium	39.2	9.0	23.0	27.9	71.0	0.2	0.5	2.2	5.6
Bulgaria	2.2	0.0	0.9	2.1	98.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Czechia	4.3	0.8	19.6	3.4	80.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
Denmark	6.5	1.5	23.7	4.8	73.7	0.2	2.6	0.0	0.0
Germany	130.0	33.2	25.5	94.7	72.8	1.4	1.0	0.8	0.6
Estonia	1.0	0.0	1.8	0.4	36.3	0.6	61.9	0.0	0.0
Ireland	9.8	2.4	24.4	7.4	75.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Greece	10.1	0.7	6.6	9.4	93.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Spain	144.0	5.9	4.1	138.1	95.9	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
France	130.4	13.1	10.1	114.9	88.1	0.0	0.0	2.4	1.8
Croatia	0.7	0.1	10.0	0.6	89.6	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1
Italy	121.5	11.9	9.8	109.6	90.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Cyprus	1.9	0.3	15.5	1.6	83.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Latvia	0.9	0.1	8.6	0.8	90.7	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0
Lithuania	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.1	68.0	0.0	32.0	0.0	0.0
Luxembourg	4.9	3.2	64.7	1.7	34.9	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0
Hungary	2.5	1.8	71.2	0.7	28.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Malta	1.2	0.1	9.0	1.1	91.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Netherlands	63.0	2.7	4.2	57.8	91.8	1.5	2.4	1.0	1.6
Austria	16.2	1.7	10.5	14.4	88.9	0.1	0.5	0.0	0.1
Poland ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾	7.4	0.2	3.1	7.2	96.7	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Portugal	24.5	0.8	3.2	23.7	96.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Romania	6.7	0.0	0.2	6.4	95.0	0.0	0.1	0.3	4.7
Slovenia	1.8	0.1	5.1	1.7	94.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Slovakia	0.6	0.1	19.6	0.5	80.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Finland	6.6	1.1	16.4	5.4	81.3	0.0	0.6	0.1	1.7
Sweden	89.4	13.7	15.3	70.7	79.1	2.8	3.1	2.2	2.4
Iceland	0.9	0.4	42.8	0.5	56.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Liechtenstein	0.2	0.1	41.4	0.1	58.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Norway	41.1	11.7	28.5	29.1	70.9	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.0
Switzerland	37.0	21.8	58.9	15.2	41.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0

Note: The individual values do not add up to the total due to rounding. Data are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5 for Germany on provisional basis.

(¹) provisional

(²) estimated

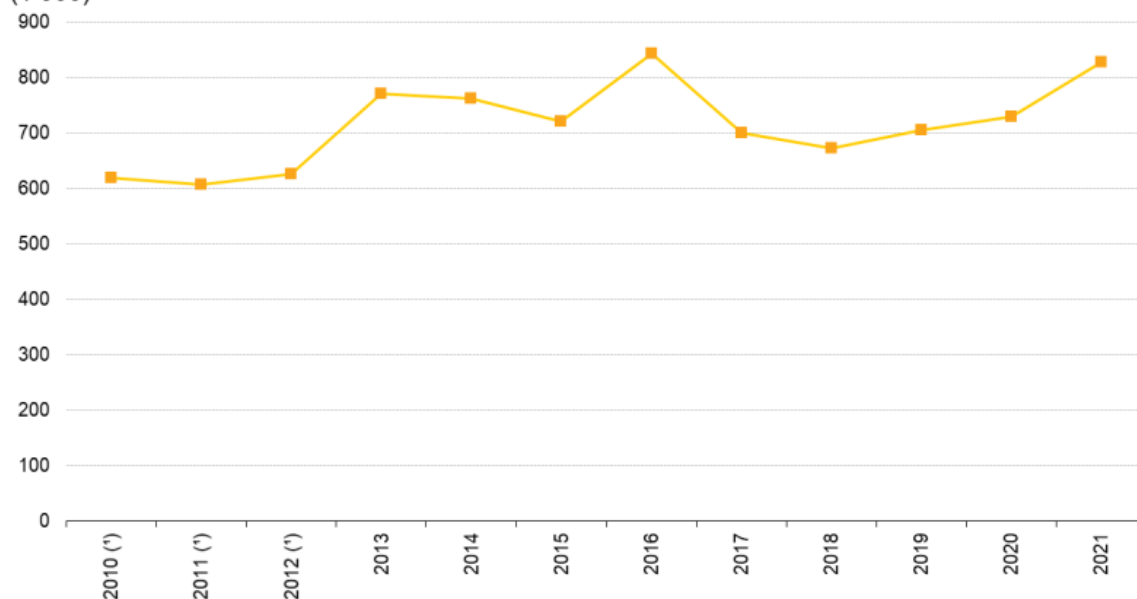
Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_acq)

In the age of climate crisis, it is not expected that the flows of immigrants from the third countries will decline. Naturalization with the acquisition of civil rights is an accompanying process of immigration. The recent trend indicates that the naturalization of people remains relatively stable, or it even shows a slight increase, as depicted in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Number of persons having acquired the EU citizenship

Number of persons having acquired the citizenship of an EU Member State, EU, 2010–2021

(1 000)



(*) Includes Romanian data for 2009.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: migr_acq)

eurostat 

Approximately 600 000 to 800 000 people acquire the citizenship of an EU Member State every year. Thus, their representation in the EU society is constantly increasing. What does it mean for civic and political engagement in the EU? The OECD data from 2018 shows that the self-reported turnout among foreign-born citizens (74%) is still lower than among their native-born peers (79%). Moreover, in almost all countries, foreign-born citizens who have been residents for over ten years generally boast higher rates of participation in national elections than newer arrivals already naturalised. This supports our presumption about socialization in a new society, making civic and political engagement for newly acquired foreign-born citizens demanding. Therefore, the communication about EU citizens rights should aim at this group of EU citizens too.

6.3 Target groups derived from the free movement of citizens

6.3.1 EU Mobile citizens

6.3.1.1 Overview:

By 'EU mobile citizens', this report addresses individuals who hold the citizenship of an EU Member State and have exercised their right to free movement within the Union. In other words, they have relocated themselves to another EU Member State, either temporarily or permanently. The purposes vary and encompass visiting, working, studying, retiring, or simply living.

This category of citizens, who are *de facto* exercising their right to free movement and residence, would additionally benefit from the following rights:

- Tied to the European Citizenship, the TFEU Art 18 establishes the prohibition of discrimination based on nationality: '*Within the scope of application of the Treaties, and without prejudice to any special provisions contained therein, any discrimination on grounds of nationality shall be prohibited.*' As highlighted in the onboarding package, the scope of this provision is broad and to be respected in every Member State.
- Tied to the EU non-discrimination legal framework, the anti-discrimination directives provide different levels of protection based on protected grounds:

Directive 2000/43/EC protects against discrimination on grounds of race and ethnic origin.

Directive 2000/78/EC protects against discrimination at work on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

Directive 2006/54/EC regulates equal treatment for men and women in matters of employment and occupation.

Directive 2004/113/EC regulates equal treatment for men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.

- The political rights granted by the EU citizenship, namely the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament (regulated in Council Directive 93/109/EC of 6 December 1993 laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals) and the right to vote and stand as a candidate in local elections (regulated in Council Directive 94/80/EC of 19 December 1994 laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections by citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals).

6.3.1.2 Data:

As highlighted above, this group is composed of the population that resides in another Member State. The latest available databases date back to the period 2021-2022. The table below shows the population who usually resides in another EU country in proportion to the total population of the country. This will facilitate the identification of the higher percentages of the population to be considered.

Due to the lack of updated data sets, this analysis departs from the year 2022 data encompassing the EU/EFTA born population residing in another Member State by country of birth, extracted from Eurostat (online data code: lfst_lmbpcoba). This data reflects the amount of mobile EU citizens by country of birth, encompassing the widest available range of ages (from 15 to 64 years old). This data will be followed by the estimations contained in the Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility for the year 2022, that includes the total amount of EU movers in the year 2021 in thousands (in this case, citizens from 20 to 64 years old). The data will be crossed with the population of the country (Eurostat - online data code: TPS00019) to obtain the percentages.

Simply put, the first column includes a list of the EU Member States. For every Member State, the second column reflects the number of leaving mobile citizens (EU citizens leaving the country they used to reside to settle in a different Member State) who moved out of that

country. The third column mirrors the amount of mobile EU citizens (EU citizens who have left their country of birth and have settled in another Member State) that are already established in every country. The fourth column contains the population of every member state, and the last one estimates the percentages of intra EU movers residing in every Member State.

Table 7: Distribution of EU mobile citizens among Member States

Country	EU born population of working age residing in another member state (lfst_lmbpcoba) (2022)	Leaving mobile citizens (2021) ³¹	Population (TPS00019) (2021)	% intra-EU movers population (2021)
Belgium	299.3	642	11,554,767	5.556
Bulgaria	592.2	8	6,916,548	0.116
Czechia	151.6	200	10,494,836	1.906
Denmark	77.1	171	5,840,045	2.928
Germany	1,242.3	3330	83,155,031	4.005
Estonia	77.3	16	1,330,068	1.203
Ireland	43.0	279	5,006,324	5.573
Greece	297.1	119	10,678,632	1.114
Spain	387.6	1285	47,398,695	2.711
France	842.3	898	67,656,682	1.327
Croatia	328.9	12	4,036,355	0.297
Italy	947.4	1073	59,236,213	1.811
Cyprus	13.2	75	896,007	8.37
Latvia	120.7	5	1,893,223	0.264
Lithuania	206.6	7	2,795,680	0.25
Luxembourg	62.4	170	634,730	26.783
Hungary	336.0	58	9,730,772	0.596
Malta	0	35	516,100	6.782
Netherlands	307.2	474	17,475,415	2.712
Austria	201.5	588	8,932,664	6.583
Poland	1,966.9	61	37,840,001	0.161
Portugal	828.0	117	10,298,252	1.136
Romania	2,713.0	49	19,201,662	0.255
Slovenia	58.2	17	2,108,977	0.806

³¹ Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, 2023. Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility 2022. European Commission, pp. 36-37. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=26778&langId=en>

Country	EU born population of working age residing in another member state (lfst_lmbpcoba) (2022)	Leaving mobile citizens (2021) ³¹	Population (TPS00019) (2021)	% intra-EU movers population (2021)
Slovakia	285.3	47	5,459,781	0.861
Finland	91.5	74	5,533,793	1.337
Sweden	136.1	213	10,379,295	2.052
Total	12612	10023		

Several aspects are worthy of consideration here. First, the amounts contained in the first two columns are to be interpreted as ‘in thousands’. Second, the imbalances between the numbers representing moving in and moving out (12,612 and 10,023) obey to the difference between the years (2022 and 2021), and the fact that the first column also includes intra-EU movers between 15 and 20 years old and to the fact that some Europeans might hold a different citizenship than the one of the member state they were born. And third, in the highlighted Member States the percentage of intra-EU Movers exceeds 2% of the total population.

In the context of strategic communication campaigns concerning citizenship rights, it is important to draw insights from the following observations. Firstly, Member States with a higher estimated share of intra-EU citizens provide clearer targets for such campaigns. In simpler terms, it is easier to identify the audience in states with a larger population of intra EU-migrants reside. Secondly, while certain states serve as destinations for intra-EU migrants, others primarily serve as sources or origin points. These dynamics should be taken into consideration when designing the campaigns.

7 Facilitating the citizens’ exercise of their electoral rights

This section focuses on the election observation by citizens in the Member States to analyse obstacles of civic engagement, especially in the European Parliament (EP) elections. The analysis is based on responses of nineteen Member States to questions on election observation circulated by the European Cooperation Network on Elections, validated and triangulated through the ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Reports (NAM reports). The analysis of election observation in the rest Member States (Austria, Denmark, Cyprus, Lithuania, Greece, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Malta), who did not respond to the questionnaire, is based on the literature review and the NAM reports. The analysis allowed us to further develop the principles of good practices, stated by a Discussion paper on election observation³² and the EU Election Observation Missions Handbook,³³ such as a need for clarification of election observation in the election law, cooperation with observer

³² Discussion paper on election observation prepared for the European Commission to support a discussion in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections by Franck Balme, Adolfo Cayuso, and Zoé Depasse.

³³ Handbook for European Union Election Observation, third edition, Brussels, 2016, http://www.eods.eu/library/EUEOM_Handbook_2016.pdf

groups, and simplification of the accreditation process. In the following section, we feel a need to firstly stress the importance of the election observation in the EU.

7.1 The importance of the election observation

The observer missions attract scholarly attention. Scholars argue that election missions enforce election-related political rights, fostering the integrity of electoral processes and impacting democratization and political participation in the country.³⁴ However, the researchers relate these findings to non-EU countries that are on a transition trajectory to become democratic societies. Research about the impact of observation missions in democratic societies is rare.

Yet, election observation is also important in democratic societies (in the context of EP elections) to ensure respect for electoral rights, empower and involve citizens and, more broadly, build public confidence, awareness and trust in electoral processes. In other words, 'citizen election observation should not only be implemented in times of crisis (and in non-democratic societies), but rather to anticipate and prevent the deviation from international principles. Citizen and international election observation with all its positive effects should be an intrinsic part of any electoral process in all OSCE participating states and EU member states.'³⁵ The European Commission in line with the above mentioned recognizes the importance of election observers and proposes 'to lay down rules on the transmission of information published with the political advertisement or contained in the transparency notice to interested actors such as vetted researchers, journalists, civil society organisations and accredited election observers'.³⁶

One of the most significant limitations in this sphere is that the election procedure to the EP is mainly in the hands of the Member States. The European Commission's manoeuvre possibilities are limited in that regard. The common election standards are stated in the Act concerning the election of the representatives of the assembly by direct universal suffrage from 20 September 1976, which was last amended by Council Decision in 2018.³⁷ Thus, any attempt to increase and create a new tool for observation by supranational actor may fail because of the national legislation not permitting inter/national observation. This is considered in the practical proposals at the end of this section.

The section is composed of three parts. The first elaborates on the practice and legal regulations for electoral observation in the EU Member States. It reveals a lack of civic engagement in the observer mission in the EU, different legislative settings, and various approaches towards accreditation. It creates a space for harmonization, or at least for mutual learning to achieve better access points for the election observation. The second part elaborates on the representation of the non-governmental (NGO) and civic sectors in the observation activities in the EU. Cooperation with these organisations is one of the accessible ways to disseminate information about election-related civic activities, such as

³⁴ See for example Bush, S. S., & Prather, L. (2018). Who's There? Election Observer Identity and the Local Credibility of Elections. *International Organization*, 72(3), 659–692. <http://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818318000140>; Bush, S. S., & Prather, L. (2017). The Promise and Limits of Election Observers in Building Election Credibility, 79(3), 921-935.

³⁵ Lidauer, Rabitsch and O'Rourke 2017: 374

³⁶ Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the transparency and targeting of political advertising of 25 November 2021: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021PC073>.

³⁷ EU, Euratom (2018/994) of 13 July 2018

election observation. The section concludes with practical points on how to increase the citizen election observation.

7.2 The practice of election observation in the EU

The EU and its Member States are long termly involved in international election observation to support democracy, human rights, and civic and political participation. Since 2000, the EU has deployed over 160 Election Observation Missions (EOMs) in more than 60 countries outside the EU.³⁸ Next to the EU EOMs, election observations are also held under the network of the International Election Observation missions (IEOM) composed of delegations coming from OSCE/ODIHR, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament (EP). Moreover, the ODIHR alone regularly carries out election observation in OSCE participating states, including all EU Member States. ODIHR election mission is composed of a core team of analysts, long-term observers (LTOs) and short-term observers (STOs). The LTOs presence³⁹ allow a through observation of the pre-election and the immediate post-election period. STOs are responsible only for observing election-day procedures. The ODIHR 'requests from all OSCE participating States the secondment of experienced and qualified observers', and they must be able to communicate in both spoken and written English.⁴⁰ Moreover, these observers cannot be nationals of the country in which the election is held in order to ensure objective and impartial analysis. National staff only assists to international observers as interpreters and administrative supporters. In sum, the qualification requirements and absence of domestic observers limits the election observation by citizens. This report addresses this issue by calling for more coherence of EU's external and internal democracy support policy by strengthening citizen election observation in the EU Member States.

All EU Member States as OSCE members signed the OSCE Copenhagen Document on the Human Dimension of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE)⁴¹ in 1990, by which they committed to facilitating access for international and citizen election observers. Paragraph eight of the Copenhagen Document states the following: 'The participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place. They therefore invite observers from any other CSCE participating States and any appropriate private institutions and organizations who may wish to do so to observe the course of their national election proceedings, to the extent permitted by law. They will also endeavour to facilitate similar access for election proceedings held below the national level. Such observers will undertake not to interfere in the electoral proceedings.'

Moreover, the EP, the EC, the Council of the European Union, and the European Committee of the Regions are endorsing organisations of the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation (DoP) and Code of Conduct for International Election

³⁸ See https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-election-observation-missions-1_en. For effectivity of norms diffusion through EOMs see Magnes, E. 2019. Electoral Tourism, Normative Power or Instrumentalised Practice? European Union Election Observation Missions in Africa. Undergraduate Journal of Politics and International Relations, 2(1): 2, pp. 1–17. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22599/ujpir.13>.

³⁹ In the election observation of the Turkish election in 2023, LTOs arrived 5 April 2023, and departure on 20 May 2023. The STOs arrived on 10 May 2023 and departure on 17 May 2023. The election day was on 14 April 2023.

⁴⁰ See <https://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/68439>

⁴¹ See <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/c/14304.pdf>

Observers, which was commemorated in 2005 at the United Nations.⁴² The document adheres to the guiding principles of impartial and non-partisan election observation, such as respect for sovereignty and international human rights, respect for the laws of the country and the authority of electoral bodies, respect for the integrity of the international election observation mission, or maintain strict political impartiality at all times etc.

7.2.1 Legislative support for observation in the Member States

Although all Member States have committed to facilitating access for international and citizen election observers through national law,⁴³ not every Member State had legislation and accreditation system in place for international and national observers; see the table below. Not having legislation allowing access for election observers is the crucial obstacle in order to increase civic engagement in the election observation. It could create a space for mutual learning and common minimum references across the EU Member States.

Table 8: Regulation for Election Observation in the EU Member States⁴⁴

Member State	Law foresees international election observation	Accreditation for international observers	Law foresees national election observation	Accreditation for national observers
Austria	x*	x		
Belgium**	X			
Bulgaria	X	x	x	x
Croatia	X	x	x	x
Cyprus				
Czechia	(x)***	(x)***		
Denmark****				
Estonia****	X		x	
Finland	X	x	x	x
France****				
Germany****	X		x	
Greece				
Hungary	x*	x		
Ireland				
Italy				
Latvia		x		x
Lithuania	X	x	x	x
Luxembourg	X	x	(x)*****	(x)
Malta				
Netherlands****	X	x		
Poland	X	x	x	x
Portugal				

⁴² See <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/dop-eng.pdf>

* Only by OSCE/ODIHR.

** In Belgium, a new electoral law enters into force from 01/10/2023 in order to make international election observation more accessible. This report work with the old provision.

*** For Presidential elections only. Draft law on the administration of elections, which is expected to take effect in January 2026, extends the observation possibility for all types of elections.

**** Voting, counting and tabulation process are open to the public.

***** The candidates at the elections can submit national observers, who must be electors themselves, in order to monitor the well-functioning of the election bureaus. (cf. article 138)

⁴³ Lidauer, Rabitsch and O'Rourke 2017.

⁴⁴ Data adapted and updated from Election-Watch.EU, <https://www.wahlbeobachtung.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/election-watch-eu-eam-ep-2019-final-report-160919.pdf>.

Romania	X	x	x	x
Slovakia****	X		x	
Slovenia	X	x	x	x
Spain				
Sweden****				

As scholars⁴⁵ claim, '[P]rovisions for citizen and international election observation are largely absent in European states with established traditions to conduct democratic elections. Moreover, OSCE/ODIHR recommendations to enhance provisions for election observation are not sufficiently followed up. This requires not only more international comparison of what concerns the existence of such laws as a global standard, but also introspective reflections among legislators in established democracies – and might invite a push by civil society in these countries to bring their respective national legislation in line with regional commitments and international standards.'

Although the law does not foresee (inter)national observation and does not specify the accreditation system (or just limitedly), it does not necessarily mean the observation is impossible in the country. In several countries (Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden), the voting, counting and tabulation process are open to the public. In these countries, there is a risk that newly acquired citizens, young and foreign-born voters, might not be socialized in the election procedure yet. In these cases, education and information campaigns are essential. In France, the emphasis on civic education is considered a good practice, as young people are educated on citizenship during moral and civic education classes. As part of their education, students in general and technological high schools, as well as those preparing for the vocational aptitude certificate, are required to participate in a cycle focused on 'Exercising citizenship in the French Republic and the European Union'. This cycle addresses issues such as the right to vote and its procedures.⁴⁶

The observation might also be hidden under the organisation of the elections, as in the case of Ireland, for example. As an Irish official argues, the Electoral Act 1992 sets out that returning officers are responsible for all arrangements in relation to the voting and counting processes during elections,⁴⁷ and '[c]andidates and their agents, members of political parties as well as members of the media are allowed to attend count centres. Members of the public are also provided for and are in a position to monitor the counting process. Applications by election observers to attend polling stations and count centres are routinely facilitated by returning officers.'⁴⁸

7.2.2 Approaches to citizen election observation

In this subsection, we focus on approaches towards election observation, which are country-specific. We analytically split the approaches into four categories, open system, closed system, accreditation, and nomination or delegation system. These categories should be viewed as ideal types. Member States often employ features of several systems, depending on the type of observer (civic society and citizens, international organization, or political candidates). Political candidates might be part of the election missions as in the case of the EU EOM. The Chief Observer of the EU EOM is a Member of the European

⁴⁵ Lidauer, Rabitsch and O'Rourke 2017: 374

⁴⁶ Response from France to questions circulated to Member States by the European Cooperation Network on Elections.

⁴⁷ See <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1992/act/23/enacted/en/print#sec30>

⁴⁸ Response from Ireland to questions circulated to Member States by the European Cooperation Network on Elections.

Parliament (MEP), and the EP may also decide to send a delegation of MEPs to observe the elections.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, as implies, this report focus on non-partisan election observation by citizens. Thus, Table 9 below table divides Member States according to their prevailing system towards citizen election observation.

Table 9: Approaches to civic election observation

Open system	Closed system	Accreditation	Nomination or delegation
Denmark	Austria	Bulgaria	Czechia
Estonia	Belgium	Croatia	Hungary
Finland	Cyprus	Ireland	Lithuania
France	Greece	Latvia	Luxembourg
Germany	Italy	Romania	Poland
Netherlands	Malta	Slovenia	
Slovakia	Portugal		
Sweden	Spain		

The table illustrates different regimes of election observation in the Member States. The (dis)advantages of these approaches (ideal types) are elaborated further, starting with the open system, where voting, counting and tabulation processes are open to the public.⁵⁰ These countries do not have a legislative arrangement for accreditation. Observing is not restricted, and those who do not have the right to vote can observe election processes, as in the case of Estonia. Moreover, polling station committees do not collect data on observes. This approach highly contributes to an open process and increases the possibility of observation in the elections. For example, according to the Slovak Election Law, ‘anyone interested in observing the process of voting and vote counting has the right to be present in the polling station without the need to be accredited’.⁵¹ Nevertheless, as the youth election observation (AEGEE) argues on the case of Slovak parliamentary observation, ‘the overly broad formulation does not mention all stages of the electoral process and therefore leaves space for inconsistent interpretation by election officials on how to deal with election observers, in particular before the opening of the vote.’⁵²

The open approach increases the risk of false observing and the disruption of the elections. As implied from the reply of Estonian authority to this issue, there exists an investigative procedure for reporting a ‘deficiency’, in which the observer must register himself: ‘The Observer have the right to submit a statement concerning a deficiency in the organisation of the elections. The observer must identify himself and describe exactly what happened and what the infringement consisted of. When adjudicating an application, the State Electoral Office asks for clarifications from the polling station committee where the violations took place, and the observer is given a reply. In case of information disseminated in the press, we also communicate with local governments and find out where the observers went and whether the information provided by them is true and we describe the electoral processes.’ In France, the chairman of the polling station ‘has general policing powers, enabling him or her alone to refuse entry to any person causing a disturbance to public

⁴⁹ See https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-election-observation-missions-1_en.

⁵⁰ Lidauer, Rabitsch and O'Rourke 2017.

⁵¹ See <https://www.projects.aegge.org/eop/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Final-Report-%E2%80%93-Mission-to-the-2020-Slovak-Parliamentary-Elections.pdf>

⁵² Ibid.

order. If, during voting operations, the president of the polling station becomes aware of attempted electoral fraud (e.g. attempted ballot box 'stuffing') or proven fraud, he or she has the means to put a stop to it immediately. As the person in charge of policing the polling station, he or she can call on the forces of law and order.⁵³ Moreover, as Finnish official argues '[i]t might be beneficial to change information between election officials of different member states concerning the criteria of fake election observation and about cases where access for a certain organization for observation has been denied or if there has been misuse of observation status.'

Digital platforms might also serve as tools for reporting the irregularities with the election process. It makes the election process even more accessible. This is particularly important as it motivates young people - who are the largest users of social networks and new technologies - to become engaged, responsible citizens and to participate in the democratic development of their countries. Although, some may argue that these tools invoke concerns about the reliability of the information that is sent and displayed in real time, the Ushahidi web platform showed to be successful. The Ushahidi web platform was created in the aftermath of the 2007 Kenyan presidential elections to collect eyewitness reports of violence.⁵⁴ This platform has proven to have enormous potential for citizen election observation activities that utilize geospatial applications. Since the launch of the first Ushahidi platform, which was built on an open-source web framework, it has evolved rapidly and has been utilized by citizen election observation groups in numerous elections worldwide. Countries⁵⁵ benefited from this technology, which has proven particularly effective for recording incidents of violence, fraud, and other irregularities. It provides real-time feedback to all stakeholders and offers possible remedies. The Ushahidi platform and its variations utilize crowdsourcing to promote public accountability and social activism, known as 'Activist Mapping.'⁵⁶

In the second category (a closed observation system), like in the open system, the legislation concerning the citizens and international observation is missing, including the accreditation system. Nevertheless, contrary to fully open systems in Northern countries like Estonia, there are elements of restrictions concerning observation. For example, in Cyprus, 'only candidate and party representatives and candidates themselves have the right to be present in polling stations during voting and counting. The access to tabulation centres is restricted to civil servants responsible for tabulation.'⁵⁷ Despite these restrictions, the countries provided unrestricted access to all aspects of the process and fully cooperated with the OSCE/ODIHR missions, and the public declared trust in the election administration.⁵⁸

The missing election observation regulation was questioned in Spain. The superior body of the electoral administration, the Junta Electoral Central (JEC), comprised of eight judges from the Supreme Court of Spain, in their resolution from 2011, emphasised the modification of the electoral law based on the recommendation of a Committee of the Minister of the Council of Europe: '[I]t would be necessary to make the appropriate amendments to the Electoral Law itself to incorporate the defining elements of the figure

⁵³ Response from France to questions circulated to Member States by the European Cooperation Network on Elections.

⁵⁴ See also activities of other Africa based organisations (AfricTivistes, YIAGA Africa, or West Africa Network for Peacebuilding) that focus on cultivating democracy and developing online tools for civic engagement and election observation.

⁵⁵ Such as Liberia, Mexico, the Philippines, Russia, Senegal, Sudan, and Uganda.

⁵⁶ Discussion paper on election observation prepared for the European Commission to support a discussion in the framework of the European Cooperation Network on Elections by Franck Balme, Adolfo Cayuso, and Zoé Depasse.

⁵⁷ See https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/5/508379_1.pdf

⁵⁸ See https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/0/535269_0.pdf

into Spanish law. Such amendments should regulate the accreditation procedure for both international and national observers, and the prerogatives recognized to all of them. Among these prerogatives, the power to obtain a copy of all the electoral documentation or to be able to move around all the polling stations during the voting day should be highlighted.⁵⁹ Non-regulation of the observation played a role in the context of the Catalanian pro-independence movement and the regional elections in 2017. The Central Electoral Committee rejected international observers on the grounds of not being recognized under Spanish National Law. The institution stated: 'It is not appropriate to comply with [the] request, given that our electoral legislation does not provide for the existence of international observers (...). This observation has only been authorized in special cases in which it has been requested by a public electoral body of a State or an international organization recognized by Spain, and to which statutorily correspond functions of observation of electoral processes.'⁶⁰ Citizens might only observe elections as randomly chosen delegates to polling stations in Spain.⁶¹ Because of this only possibility and above mentioned restrictions in the regional elections, the country's observation system is categorized as a closed system.

The third category represents countries with accreditation systems. In particular, Romanian accreditation system is proposed by⁶² The Permanent Electoral Authority (PEA), an autonomous administrative body with legal personality with general competence on electoral matters, including the oversight of political parties' and election campaigns' funding in Romania, is responsible for the accreditation of domestic observer organisations. They are in turn responsible for the individual observers. It also accredits international observers at the proposal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. '[t]he PEA creates the accreditation request form, outlines the required documentation for the various categories of eligible observers,⁶³ processes these requests, and issues the name-tags and badges templates. [...] Additionally, the voting-day observation procedures are designed to lessen the possibility of nefarious involvement. Observers are allowed only in specially designated areas of the polling stations and will face sanctions such as expulsion from the polling station and even legal sanctions if they are found to be engaging in electoral propaganda.'⁶⁴

Officials from several countries (Croatia, Luxembourg, Latvia) argued that the accreditation system and additional procedures, such as identification by the badge and collecting data about observers, are tools to detect and prevent the false observation. As in the case of Latvia, the accreditation allows to check the request for observing and, in the case of doubts, deny it: 'Fake observers in Latvia are not a problem. Several times the accreditation of the Central Election Commission (CEC) has been requested by doubtful foreign groups, but they have not been accredited by the CEC after consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the assessment of available information on these groups.'⁶⁵ Nevertheless, such

⁵⁹ See

[http://www.juntaelectoralcentral.es/cs/Satellite?c=Page&childpagename=JEC%2FJEC_layout_HTML&cid=1379062426836&packedargs=esinstruccion%3Dfalse%26idacuervo%3D-1%26operadorobjeto%3D-1%26sPag%3D1%26template%3DDoctrina%252FJEC_DetalleHTML%26tipoExpediente%3D339%26tiposautor%3D0%26total%3D1&pagename=jec%2Fwrapper%2FJEC_Wrapper](http://www.juntaelectoralcentral.es/cs/Satellite?c=Page&childpagename=JEC%2FJEC_layout_HTML&cid=1379062426836&packedargs=esinstruccion%3Dfalse%26idacuerdoinstruccion%3D29741%26materias%3D0%26numExpediente%3D85%26operadoracuervo%3D-1%26operadorobjeto%3D-1%26sPag%3D1%26template%3DDoctrina%252FJEC_DetalleHTML%26tipoExpediente%3D339%26tiposautor%3D0%26total%3D1&pagename=jec%2Fwrapper%2FJEC_Wrapper)

⁶⁰ See https://elpais.com/politica/2017/12/04/actualidad/1512405278_308454.html

⁶¹ Response from Spain to questions circulated to Member States by the European Cooperation Network on Elections.

⁶² Duță Daniel. 2015. The role of the Permanent Electoral Authority in the organization and conduct of the election for the European Parliament. Conference: Probleme actuale ale spațiului politico-juridic al UE.

⁶³ There are different application procedures for the NGOs, Romanian media organizations, foreign media organizations, and international observers.

⁶⁴ Response from Czechia to questions circulated to Member States by the European Cooperation Network on Elections.

⁶⁵ Response from Latvia to questions circulated to Member States by the European Cooperation Network on Elections.

a complex accreditation model might expel the civic society from participating in the observation. Indeed, the simple, timely and efficient accreditation process for citizen observers is stated as good practice in the EU Election Observation Missions Handbook.⁶⁶

The fourth category includes countries having a nomination approach to accreditation. For example, in Czechia, Hungary and Luxembourg, the legislation foresees only international observation groups and institutions. Although there is no accreditation for domestic observers, the observation is possible via nominations or delegations by political parties, candidates, and authorized bodies. For instance, there is a draft law on the administration of elections in Czechia called the Electoral Administration Act (EAA). On the one hand, observation is supposed to be possible for international organisations, like in Austria; the EAA does not count on national observers, which reduces the possibility of civic engagement. On the other hand, as Czech official explains,⁶⁷ there is 'a wide space for citizens to participate as members of nearly 15 thousand District Electoral Commissions, to which members are delegated by political parties and municipal authorities.'⁶⁸ However, it is less likely that citizens become committee members without affiliation to a political party, particularly in the bigger cities. In peripheral areas and small towns, where the civic and political engagement is low, nominees are very often without political affiliation, nominated by municipal authorities. More importantly, the EAA in Czechia counts with various entities for observation during the counting of votes for all types of elections, such as:

- observers of international organisations and international bodies under an international treaty binding on the Czech Republic or observers of the OSCE,
- media representatives,
- representatives of the candidate bodies, and
- other voters who demonstrate a legitimate interest.⁶⁹

Although the proposed new legislation (EAA) is not fully inclusive in Czechia, counting mainly on the authorised international bodies, there exist ways of participating in the election observation as nominees of the political parties. Moreover, the observation of the counting procedure is more inclusive. The EAA counts with the possibility for 'other voters' to observe the counting procedure. Nevertheless, such actors must demonstrate 'a legitimate interest' and, thus, their request might be denied.

A fully nominated system runs in Lithuania, where '[a]n observer may be a voter or a person nominated by an entity representing a foreign country or international organisation.'⁷⁰ Observers may be nominated by: political parties and candidates; non-governmental organisations registered in Lithuania whose activities are related to elections or the protection of human rights; international organisations whose activities are related to elections or the protection of human rights; persons representing foreign states; the High Electoral Commission (national election body) in accordance with the requests submitted. Although the nomination system means citizens must be affiliated with respective organisations, the types of entities, including NGOs, are richer than in Czechia. It increases

⁶⁶ Handbook for European Union Election Observation, third edition, Brussels, 2016, http://www.eods.eu/library/EUEOM_Handbook_2016.pdf

⁶⁷ Response from Czechia to questions circulated to Member States by the European Cooperation Network on Elections.

⁶⁸ The nomination of observers by the candidates, political parties or by the nominating organisations is also common in Hungary, and Luxembourg.

⁶⁹ Response from Czechia to questions circulated to Member States by the European Cooperation Network on Elections.

⁷⁰ See <https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/3a1df1101a7511edb36fa1cf41a91fd9>

the likelihood of civic engagement in this activity. Such a setting might be of interest to the Czech officials in order to make the observation more inclusive.

To sum up, we detected four approaches towards observation: open and closed systems, accreditation and nomination systems. The nomination and accreditation models have similar features. It ensures the smooth running of the election. At the same time, it might repel the public from the observation initiatives since they must be engaged in some form of institution and undergo bureaucratic procedures. In the open models, there are no obstacles to civic engagement, but there is a higher possibility of the nefarious involvement of the observers. Although the Romanian case representing the accreditation system is proposed as an ideal model for all 27 election systems, it might be problematic to adopt one model for all Member States since the cultural expectations and electoral customs are in each Member State different. For example, if Estonian society is used to fully open electoral management, establishing an accreditation system might be counterproductive and contribute to delegitimizing elections. Put simply, the open system might work in Estonia, and the accreditation system might work in Romania, but not necessarily applicable elsewhere. Nevertheless, countries with closed, restricted approaches towards observation should rethink their election management to increase election transparency and legitimacy.

7.3 Non-partisan observation and its support

The differences between Member States concerning election observation makes it impossible to give universal practical steps for citizens to take part as an observer in the elections. It should be a task for the national election bodies to provide information about the management of the elections. Nevertheless, to get information about the observation, the citizen first might visit a webpage of the central authority managing the elections (the Ministry of the Interior as in the case of Czechia). There should be all available information regarding the elections. Regrettably, how to become an observer is often not articulated. Nevertheless, the officials might also provide the information or electoral management bodies (EMBs) responsible for managing the elections in each electoral district. The webpage of the national election body should provide the list of the EMBs. The other option is to detect an NGO that bolsters participatory democracy, freedom, and human rights. Membership in the NGOs might be the only option for ordinary citizens to become an observer. The NGO's representation interested in the election observation in the EU Member States is a matter of the following paragraphs.

As the previous section implies, in some legal settings, the accreditation might be granted only to individuals involved in the organizations, such as media or non-governmental and non-profit organizations (NGOs). Therefore, this section focuses on NGOs' role and representation through the EU Member States. As this section argues, their representation and support are limited, which impacts the likelihood of civic involvement as election observers. The Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM),⁷¹ the European Platform for Democratic Elections (EPDE),⁷² and the European Network of Election Monitoring Organisations (ENEMO) are networks involving civic organisations and non-governmental organisations NGOs.⁷³ The existence of the non-partisan citizen observer

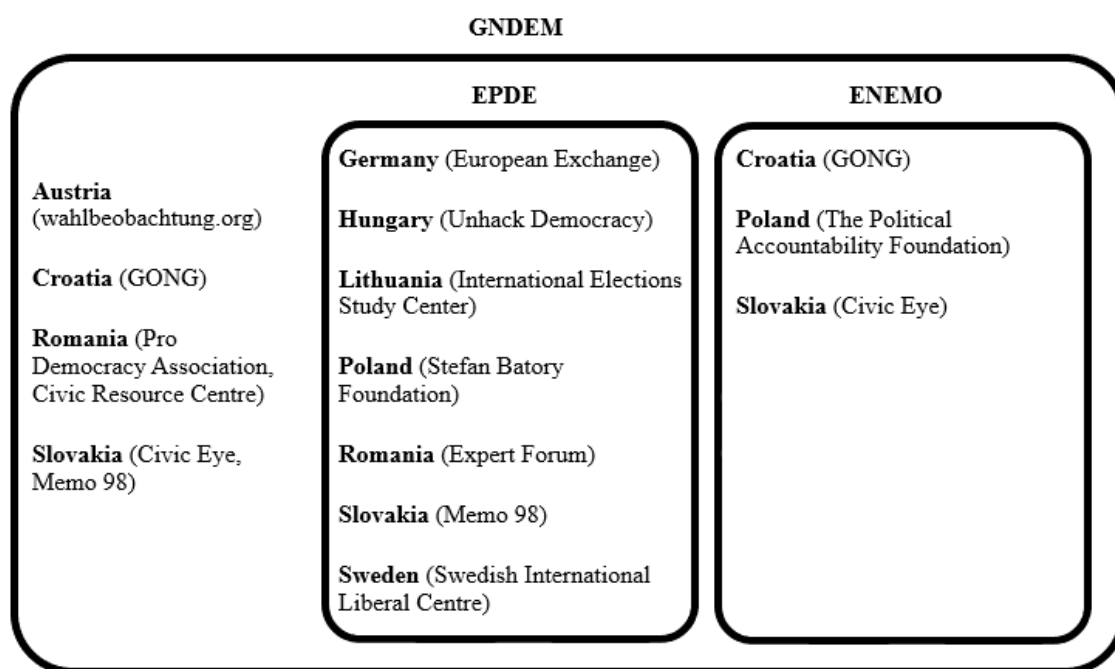
⁷¹ For members see <https://gndem.org/members/>

⁷² For members see <https://www.epde.org/en/about-us.html#members>

⁷³ For members see <https://enemo.org/members>

organisation is crucial for enhancing trust in the election process and increasing political and civic participation, as argued by the GNDEM: ‘nonpartisan election monitoring by citizens seeks to safeguard electoral integrity, including the rights to participate in electoral and political processes. That is inseparable from defending the ability of citizens to exercise a broad array of civil and political rights and is affected by the actions of a range of governmental authorities, as well as political contestants.’ Furthermore, civic citizen election observation ‘can play an active role in meditation where there is confrontational political context, by calling for a peaceful campaign [...]’.⁷⁴ The national observers might be more trustworthy than international observers. It may increase the possibility of fruitful collaboration with electoral management bodies (EMBs). The national observers are crucial in highly polarized societies where in collaboration with EMBs participate in generating ‘consensus among political players on the rules of the electoral game-particularly on the acceptance of results.’⁷⁵ Although the GNDEM has 251 member organizations in 89 countries and territories, the EU based organisations involved in the networks are sporadic; the exceptions are non-civic organisations from Austria, Croatia, Romania, and Slovakia. The EPDE and ENEMO are also part of the GNDEM. The EPDE consists of civic organisations from 15 European countries. However, only seven are from the EU (Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Sweden). Similarly, in the case of ENEMO, out of 21 member organisations, only three are settled in the EU countries (Croatia, Poland, Slovakia), see Figure 4.⁷⁶

Figure 4: Membership of the EU civic organisations in observation networks



In addition to the civic organisations and networks, there is also the European Students’ Forum (AEGEE), which initiated several electoral observation missions for European

⁷⁴ See <https://gndem.org/about/>

⁷⁵ Tuccinardi, Balme and McCormack 2012: 69.

⁷⁶ The EU is one of the donors of the EPDE and ENEMO.

students in the past few years. The AEGEE participated in national and regional elections (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Finland, Ukraine, Spain etc.) or the EU referendum in the United Kingdom.⁷⁷ The added value of the AEGEE is collecting age-disaggregated information and reporting on youth-specific challenges. Moreover, youth observers are likely to have a useful influence in convincing other young people to participate in elections, thus having a positive impact on the youth's turnout. In the last EP elections in 2019, the highest turnout since 1994 was mainly impacted by the participation of the young generations. As data from Eurobarometer⁷⁸ demonstrates, the participation of citizens under 25 increased by 14 percentage points to 42 per cent in 2019, compared to the 2014 elections.

The civic and student observer organisations are not set in every EU Member State or as a part of the broad European network. No network or organisation would systematically follow and observe the elections in the EU. As a consequence of these factors, until 2019, there was no comprehensive election observation of the EU elections.

During the EU elections in 2019, the independent, non-partisan initiative Election-Watch.EU established Election Assessment Mission (EAM) involving over 60 international election experts and eight citizen election observer organisations.⁷⁹ The EAM aimed for the first time comprehensively to observe the electoral process in the EP elections, including the right to vote, the right to stand as a candidate, the participation of people with disabilities, and conditions for election observation. Nevertheless, the EAM received accreditation for election observation only in 12 out of 28 EU Member States (including the UK).⁸⁰ The report⁸¹ does not say the reasons for refusing the accreditations. Nevertheless, it is most likely connected with the absence of legislation concerning election observation or with a strict accreditation system, see previous sections. One of the suggestions provided by the EAM are electoral reforms at the EU level and in individual Member States to improve and ensure an 'inclusive, consultative and participatory process, with the involvement of all stakeholders, including the civil society and citizen observer organizations.' In particular, according to the EAM, 'all EU Member States should include in their legislation provisions to explicitly allow for access and accreditation of international and national election observation according to international principles throughout the electoral process.'

As a good practice, we mention the NGOs activity and roles in Poland. Associations focusing on cultivating democracy, civil rights and civil society development, 'may appoint observers to election commissions, and enjoy similar rights to party and candidate proxies.'⁸² Moreover, in the national elections in 2019, 'several civil society organizations recruited and trained observers in different regions of the country'.⁸³ The NGOs also trained observers to serve as party nominees, or election committees.

⁷⁷ The list of all observer missions is available here: <https://www.projects.aegEE.org/eop/missions/>

⁷⁸ See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2019/post-election-survey-2019-complete-results/report/en-post-election-survey-2019-report.pdf>

⁷⁹ The organizations are: Gong (Croatia); EPDE (Germany); White Gloves (Lithuania); Observers in Action (Poland); FiecareVot (Romania); MEMO98 (Slovakia); Democracy Volunteers (United Kingdom); Wahlbeobachtung.org (Austria), the organization which initiated the establishment of the EAM.

⁸⁰ The accreditation was approved by Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, and the United Kingdom.

⁸¹ See <https://www.wahlbeobachtung.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/election-watch-eu-eam-ep-2019-final-report-160919.pdf>.

⁸² See <https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/europe/PL/poland-parliamentary-elections-final-report-2019/view>

⁸³ Ibid.

7.4 Making the observation more accessible

Below, we synthesise the best practices from the previous sections, suggesting how to remove obstacles to citizen election observation. We also provide argumentation points by which the communication about the election observation should be accompanied, not matter who is the communication actor.

- The Member States' law should include the individual right to observe elections.

Not having a clear indication of the election observation in the law opens the discussion of whether the observation is possible. Especially a new generation of eligible voters or people born outside the country, who do not know election procedures in detail, might be confused and miss the opportunity to be civically engaged. Although civic education about the election and its modalities is essential, the clear indication of the right to observe the election makes the process undoubtful.

- The Members States with strict accreditation or nomination system, and countries having closed system, should rethink how to open the accreditation systems more.

Despite understanding for diverse observation approaches in the EU, we would emphasize a more inclusive procedure for civic society, searching for inspiration in countries with open accreditation systems. Opening the observation for all citizens and reducing the bureaucratic procedures and other obstacles, increase the legitimacy of elections and civic engagement. Moreover, this openness might be applicable in diverse accreditation systems, preserving electoral customs in every Member State.

- The Member States with open accreditation systems could rethink their control mechanisms.

Indeed, the possibility of false observation and the disruption of the elections is the main weakness of this system. French control mechanisms might be an inspiration for these approaches.

- The Member States and the national election body may enhance the cooperation with the civic society organisations concerning the election observation.

The citizens in some countries are more likely to observe elections only as members of authorized institutions. Yet, the official observation missions organized under the OSCE/ODIHR provides limited possibility of the broad citizen observation. As shows the best practice in Poland, the civil society organisation may play a crucial role in the election observation. Enhancing the cooperation with the civil society groups is in line with the best practice stated in the Handbook for European Union Election Observation: 'EMBs and other authorities welcome, encourage and facilitate civil society participation in the electoral process, including through meetings and consultation with observer groups and cooperation on voter education activities'.⁸⁴

- The national election bodies may develop methodological material on election observation.

The election observation in the EU Member States is not a common exploitation of this right. Thus, the national election bodies could prepare a document with a legal basis and

⁸⁴ Handbook for European Union Election Observation, third edition, Brussels, 2016, http://www.eods.eu/library/EUEOM_Handbook_2016.pdf

indication of steps to become an observer in the elections. This document should be circulated among every EMBs before elections.

- The polling stations and the members of the EMBs should be as inclusive as possible to welcome different minority groups, including people with disability.

People with disabilities constitute a significant portion of the population in European countries, and their numbers are increasing due to demographic ageing. Roughly one quarter of the European electorate identifies as having some form of impairment or long-term health condition that impacts their daily lives, which amounts to approximately 80 million people.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the Member States still need 'to put in place the prerequisites for disabled people's political participation—rights, accessibility and representation.'⁸⁶

- In all cases, the national election bodies should enhance the communication about the election observation to encourage civil society to participate as election observers.

The possibility of election observation should be communicated repeatedly and in advance since it is one of the rights used occasionally and not publicly spread. Apart the broad public, the communication should aim to get attention of the youth, people born outside the country, and the minority groups, providing subtitles, sign language interpretation and/or audio descriptions. The communication should be accompanied by a sophisticated communication strategy and argumentation, emphasising the importance of election observation. The main argumentation points are stated below:

- The election observation anticipates and prevents deviation from international principles;
- the election observation as guardians of the fair political contest;
- it brings the attention of the public sphere, including the media, and, thus, increases the voting turnout;
- observation and participation of youth who are not eligible for voting has a socializing potential, increasing the likelihood of their political and civic participation in the future;
- overall, the election observation enhances trust and legitimacy in the EU democracy and voting process.

7.5 Summary

This part argues that election observation is essential to increasing political and civic participation. Nevertheless, several obstacles make the observation difficult, especially in the Member States with a closed system or strict accreditation or nomination systems. Further, we demonstrated that most of the EU Member States insufficiently fulfil the international commitments concerning the legislation and accreditation system allowing national and international observation. It was mirrored in the EP elections in 2019 when the

⁸⁵ See more here, Priestley, Mark, Martha Stickings, Ema Loja, Stefanos Grammenos, Anna Lawson, Lisa Waddington, and Bjarney Fridriksdottir. 2016. 'The Political Participation of Disabled People in Europe: Rights, Accessibility and Activism'. *Electoral Studies* 42 (June): 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2016.01.009>.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*: 8.

EAM received accreditation only in twelve EU Member States (including the UK). Moreover, civic engagement in the election observation within the EU is sporadic and not supported enough by the EU Member States. There is no comprehensive EU approach and network, including all civic and student activities and organisations. In order to improve civic and political participation in this activity, we proposed six suggestions of how to make the election observation accessible more, accompanied by the argumentation points stressing the importance of election observation.

8 Inclusive composition of the electoral lists for the EP elections

The aim of this section is to propose non-legislative measures and actions, eventually contributing to a more inclusive candidates list for the elections to the EP. The first part begins with a brief presentation of a legal framework of the right to stand as a candidate in the EP elections as well as the design of these elections. It also addresses the relationship between electoral rights and EU citizenship rights. The second part introduces the groups which can be considered underrepresented in the EP. In this regard, attention is paid to the representation of women, sexual and gender minorities, national and ethnic minorities, EU mobile citizens, persons with disabilities and youth. The third part provides an overview of good practices employed by political parties in order to increase inclusiveness of their candidate lists.

8.1 The right to stand as a candidate: an EU fundamental right and an indispensable aspect of the EU citizenship

The right to stand as a candidate (together with the right to vote) lies in heart of every democratic political system. One of the most crucial characteristics of representative democracy is that it provides citizens the opportunities to influence who will become their representatives. More importantly, it also offers them a chance to run for public office. The mentioned mechanisms of citizens' involvement in the political life of a country are expressed in elections. At the EU level, both active and passive electoral rights are in place since the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979.

With the entry of the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty) in force in 1993, electoral rights were further strengthened by the introduction of EU citizenship, especially via Article 8b(2). For the very first time, EU citizens could vote and stand as candidates in the EP elections as well as in municipal elections in a member state of their residence. In addition, the same conditions had to apply for both the citizens residing in other Member State and nationals of that state.⁸⁷ Thus, from 1993 on, partaking in the European Parliament elections represents a clear expression of EU citizenship rights.

Nowadays, the right of EU citizens to vote and stand as a candidate in the EP elections (and municipal elections) is guaranteed by the TFEU, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and the EU secondary law. The Article 20(2)b TFEU states that the

⁸⁷ Treaty on European Union, Official Journal of the European Communities, 29 July 1992, 92/C 191/01.

EU citizens shall have ‘*the right to vote and to stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament and in municipal elections in their Member State of residence, under the same conditions as nationals of that State*’.⁸⁸ Similarly, also the Charter stresses these rights in its Article 39(1) concerning the EP elections and Article 40 guarantees the same rights for municipal elections.⁸⁹

Even though the right to stand as a candidate in EP elections is protected by EU law, the **EU does not have full control** and influence over how the citizens exercise this right in individual Member States. As demonstrated below, access to the elected office – in this case, to the office of Member of the European Parliament (MEP) – is anything but equal for all EU citizens. Many important aspects of electoral rules are determined by national legislative authorities, and the national political parties remain the main gatekeepers when it comes to the candidate selection procedures. As a consequence, there is a rich diversity of Member States’ approaches to set up a part of electoral rules used for EP elections.⁹⁰ In this regard, it should be stressed that in some cases, the Member States’ discretion could also affect the exercising of electoral rights of underrepresented groups such as EU Mobile Citizens,⁹¹ women,⁹² youth,⁹³ or persons with disabilities.⁹⁴

The EP elections are not conducted according to a uniform procedure or set of rules and mechanisms applicable within the whole EU. The EU only sets a general framework. The common principles for all EU Member States were introduced by *Act concerning the election of the representatives of the Assembly by direct universal suffrage*⁹⁵ (Electoral Act of 1976), amended in 2002⁹⁶ and 2018.⁹⁷ The principles of electoral procedure for the EP elections include proportional representation (using a list system or single transferable vote), the possibility to impose an electoral threshold (up to 5 %), a common period during which the elections take place in the EU. In addition, the Electoral Act of 1976 and the Council decision of 2002 list a number of incompatibilities between the office of MEP and national public offices. Besides that, the Council Directive of 1993 (as amended in 2013)⁹⁸ provides detailed arrangements for exercising right to vote and stand as a candidate in the EP for citizens who are non-nationals in a country of their residence.

⁸⁸ Treaty on Functioning of the European Union, Official Journal of the European Union, 2007/C 306/01.

⁸⁹ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Official Journal of the European Union, 2012/C 326/02. Please note that pursuant to the Charter Article 51(1), the provisions of the Charter are binding to the EU institutions and bodies, and Member States only when implementing the EU law, while fully respecting the principle of subsidiarity.

⁹⁰ Nogaj, Monika and Eva-Maria Poptcheva. 2015. The Reform of the Electoral Law of the European Union. European Parliamentary Research Service, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/558775/EPRS_IDA\(2015\)558775_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/558775/EPRS_IDA(2015)558775_EN.pdf).

⁹¹ European Commission, Report on the 2019 elections to the European Parliament, COM(2020) 252 final, 19.6.2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0252&from=EN>, pp. 13–14.

⁹² Nogaj, Monika and Eva-Maria Poptcheva. 2015. The Reform of the Electoral Law of the European Union. European Parliamentary Research Service, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/558775/EPRS_IDA\(2015\)558775_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2015/558775/EPRS_IDA(2015)558775_EN.pdf).

⁹³ European Parliament: Directorate-General for Internal Policies, The European elections: EU legislation, national provisions and civic participation, 2014, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/493047/IPOL-AFCO_ET\(2014\)493047_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/493047/IPOL-AFCO_ET(2014)493047_EN.pdf).

⁹⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental rights (FRA), Who will (not) get to vote in the 2019 European Parliament elections? Developments in the right to vote of people deprived of legal capacity in EU Member States. 2019, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-right-vote-ep-elections-legal-capacity_en.pdf.

⁹⁵ Official Journal of the European Communities, No L 278/5.

⁹⁶ Council Decision 2002/772/EC, Euratom of 25 June and 23 September 2002, L 283/1.

⁹⁷ Council Decision (EU, Euratom) 2018/994 of 13 July 2018, L 178/1.

⁹⁸ Council Directive 93/109/EC of 6 December 1993 laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals; Council Directive 2013/1/EU of 20 December 2012, L 26/27, 26.1.2013.

At this point, the EU Member States have quite wide discretion in designing crucial aspects of their electoral laws within the limits of the general framework of the EU law. For example, national authorities are free to decide when exactly the EP elections take place, who is eligible to vote and stand as a candidate, under which conditions can be a citizen deprived of her/his electoral rights, whether the open or closed lists are used, what rules apply for electoral financing and campaigning, what are the requirements for registration, who is responsible for nominating the candidates and so on. All mentioned characteristics of the electoral process have the potential to influence who can become an MEP, and consequently, which groups achieve representation in the European Parliament and to what extent.

8.2 Underrepresented groups in the European Parliament

In democratic societies, every citizen fulfilling legal conditions is eligible to vote and to stand as a candidate. Nevertheless, when looking at the composition of legislative bodies around the globe, we can identify many instances when some groups of citizens are underrepresented, or unrepresented at all. In this regard, the EP is not an exception. In order to identify actions and practices political parties can use for achieving a higher level of inclusiveness in the process of candidate selection, it is necessary to look at individual groups of underrepresented citizens. In this section, attention is paid to women, sexual and gender minorities, national and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, youth, and their (under)representation in the EP. These groups represent the usually discussed groups of citizens when it comes to their political (under)representation.⁹⁹

8.2.1 Representation of women

According to Article 7(a) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)¹⁰⁰, signatory states (*inter alia* also all EU Members) are responsible for taking ‘*all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life...*’ and guaranteeing that women have the right ‘*to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies*’ under equal terms as men. During recent decades, many states – including EU Member States – and many political actors at the national level have been active in adopting measures with an ambition to increase women’s representation in elected bodies.¹⁰¹

Generally speaking, there seem to be three mostly used measures aiming at higher representation of women: legal gender/candidate quotas compulsory for all political parties; voluntary, and hence self-binding in nature, party quotas for parties which adopted them;

⁹⁹ See e.g. Krook, Mona Lena and Diana Z. O'Brien. 2010. ‘The Politics of Group Representation: Quotas for Women and Minorities Worldwide’. *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 3, pp. 253–272.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations General Assembly, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979. See also e.g. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Decision No. 7/09, Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life, Para. 3.

¹⁰¹ Schmidt, Gregory D. 2008. ‘The election of women in list PR systems: Testing the conventional wisdom’. *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp. 190–203; Corrêa, Diego Sanches and Vanilda Souza Chaves. 2020. ‘Gender quotas and placement mandates in open and closed lists: Similar effects, different mechanisms’. *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 66, No. August 2020, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0261379420300421>.

and reserved seats.¹⁰² In the context of the EU and its Member States, especially the first two measures are of importance.¹⁰³ During the last decades, 11 Member States introduced legal gender quotas for the EP elections, and at least one political party in 17 Member States adopted a party quota (See Table 10).¹⁰⁴

The purpose of gender quotas is to set the requirements for political parties about a minimal threshold of representation for male and female candidates in parties' lists. In the EU, 11 Member States used gender quotas for the 2019 EP elections, with a threshold (in 10 Member States) varying between 30 and 50% of candidates of an underrepresented gender group.¹⁰⁵ More specifically, Luxembourg, France, Italy and Belgium opted for parity between men and women (i.e. gender quota at level of 50%). In Greece, Slovenia, Spain and Croatia (a legally enforceable quota will be in place for the 2024 EP Elections), a minimal threshold for underrepresented candidates is set to 40%. In Portugal, political parties are required to compose party lists in a way that each gender is represented at a minimum of 33%, whilst in Poland, it is 35%. The weakest legal quota in the EU can be found in Romania, where the law forbids all-male/all-female lists.¹⁰⁶

It should be stressed that these kinds of legislative measures per se do not automatically lead to a better representation of women, unless they are properly designed and enforced. Even in a situation when a country decides to adopt such a measure, it has to be accompanied by an effective implementation (e.g. placement mandates eliminating a possibility that even though women are sufficiently included in party list, they are placed at unelected positions, or at positions at which their election is unlikely).¹⁰⁷

An effective way how to give women better chances for being elected are so-called 'placement mandates', that can be understood as instruments determining specific requirements on the position of women on ballots. Their aim is to limit political parties' discretion when deciding on the final form of their lists. Obviously, a combination of legal gender quotas and placement mandates is more effective in closed list systems in which the voters do not have preferential votes, and therefore, they cannot affect the order of candidates.¹⁰⁸ In practice, a so-called 'zipper' system based on alternation between male

¹⁰² See e.g. European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, Second Edition*, CDL-AD(2020)032; European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Report on the Impact of Electoral Systems on Women's Representation in Politics*, CDL-AD(2009)029; Schmidt, *supra* n. 101; Krook, Mona Lena. 2004. 'Gender Quotas as a Global Phenomenon - Actors and Strategies in Quota Adoption'. *European Political Science*, Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 59 –65; McAllister, Ian and Donley Z. Studlar. 2002. 'Electoral systems and women's representation: a long-term perspective'. *Representation*, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 3–14.

¹⁰³ No EU Member State has introduced reserved seats for women for the EP elections.

¹⁰⁴ The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). *Gender balance in politics: November 2022*, 26 April 2023, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-balance-politics-november-2022>, p. 1. See also European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, Second Edition*, CDL-AD(2020)032; Prpic, Martina, Giulio Sabbati and Samy Chahri. 2020. *At a glance: Infographic – February 2020. Women in parliaments*. European Parliamentary Research Service, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2020/646189/EPRS_ATA\(2020\)646189_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2020/646189/EPRS_ATA(2020)646189_EN.pdf).

¹⁰⁵ European Parliament: Directorate-General for Internal Policies, *The European elections: EU legislation, national provisions and civic participation*, 2014, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/493047/IPOL-AFCO_ET\(2014\)493047_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/493047/IPOL-AFCO_ET(2014)493047_EN.pdf); European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission). *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, Second Edition*, CDL-AD(2020)032.

¹⁰⁶ Crego, Maria Diaz. 2021. *Transnational electoral lists: Ways to Europeanise elections to the European Parliament*. European Parliamentary Research Service, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/679084/EPRS_STU\(2021\)679084_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/679084/EPRS_STU(2021)679084_EN.pdf); Prpic et al., *supra* n. 104.

¹⁰⁷ See e.g. European Parliament: Directorate-General for Internal Policies, *The European elections: EU legislation, national provisions and civic participation*, 2014, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/493047/IPOL-AFCO_ET\(2014\)493047_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/493047/IPOL-AFCO_ET(2014)493047_EN.pdf); Schmidt, *supra* n. 101.

¹⁰⁸ Schmidt, *supra* n. 101.

and female candidates is recommended most often by international organizations.¹⁰⁹ Other alternatives to the zipper system include ordering the candidates into smaller groups within the list so, for example, one of three candidates is a candidate of underrepresented gender.¹¹⁰ In the EU, a variety of requirements on the placement of candidates can be observed. In Belgium and Italy, the zipper system applies only for the first two positions. In Portugal and France, a same-gender candidates can be placed at maximum of two consecutive positions of the list. In Spain, a placement of candidates is specified for clusters of five candidates (at least 2 candidates from each gender). Slovenia has not opted for a strict requirement as at least one candidate of each gender must appear in the upper half of the list.¹¹¹

Gender quotas can only be effective if there is a mechanism (either legal or party ones) for enforcing compliance with quotas put in place.¹¹² At the national level of EU Member States, the sanctions for non-compliance with the legal requirements can include financial penalties in a form of reduced public funding (France and Portugal), or even a rejection of a candidate list (Spain).¹¹³ Alternatively, gender quotas' enforcement can also take the form of positive (financial) incentives rewarding the political parties for balanced composition of the candidates list.¹¹⁴

As far as EP elections are concerned, there is an observable and increasing trend toward a gender-balanced composition (See Figure 5: Proportion of Women in the European Parliament (1979-2019)). From 1979 (15.2% of women) on, every parliamentary term has been characterized by a higher proportion of women. After the last EP elections in 2019, female MEPs represent almost 40% of all MEPs.

¹⁰⁹ Council of Europe: Committee of Ministers, *Balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making*, Recommendation Rec (2003) 3; Council of Europe: Parliamentary Assembly, *Assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation*, PACE Resolution 2111 (2016), <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=22745&lang=en#>; European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Report on Electoral Law and Electoral Administration in Europe*, CDL-AD(2020)023; European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Report on the Method of Nomination of Candidates Within Political Parties*, CDL-AD(2015)020; European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, Second Edition*, CDL-AD(2020)032.

¹¹⁰ See e.g. Krook, Mona Lena. 2010. 'Why Are Fewer Women Than Men Elected? Gender and the Dynamics of Candidate Selection'. *Political Studies Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 155–168; Celis, Karen, Mona Lena Krook and Petra Meier. 2011. 'The Rise of Gender Quota Laws: Expanding the Spectrum of Determinants for Electoral Reform'. *West European Politics*, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 514–530; Corrêa and Chaves, *supra* n. 101.

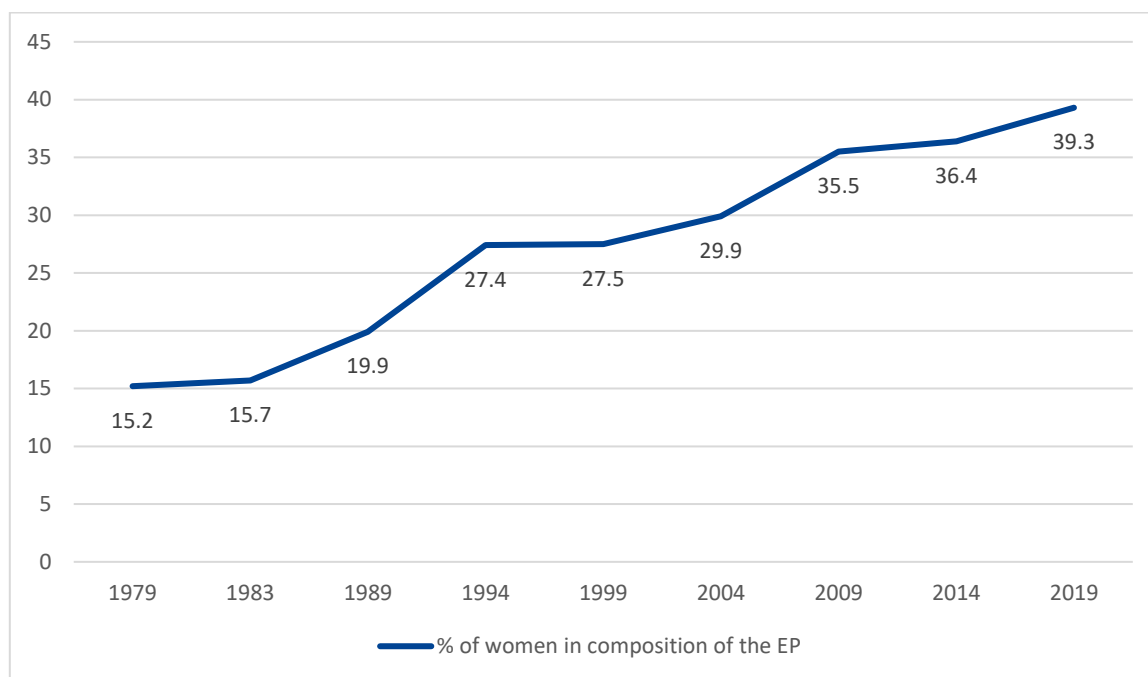
¹¹¹ Martina and Chahri, *supra* n. 106.

¹¹² European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, Second Edition*, CDL-AD(2020)032.

¹¹³ Norris, Pippa and Mona Lena Kook. 2011. 'Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan'. *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*, 9 September 2011, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/78432>; Ohman, Magnus. 2018. 'Gender-targeted Public Funding for Political Parties: A comparative analysis'. *International IDEA*, <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/gender-targeted-public-funding-for-political-parties.pdf>; European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters*, CDL-AD(2002)023rev2-cor; Kotevska, Biljana and Vera Pavlou. 2023. 'Promotion of gender balance in political decision-making'. European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination, European Commission: Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, 2023, <https://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/5824-promotion-of-gender-balance-in-political-decision-making>.

¹¹⁴ Norris and Kook, *supra* n. 113; Kotevska and Pavlou, *supra* n. 113.

Figure 5: Proportion of Women in the European Parliament (1979-2019) ¹¹⁵



Source: European Parliament. 'Women in the European Parliament (infographics)'

A promising picture can be drawn also when looking at country-level data on women's representation in the current EP. Out of 27 Member States, 9 countries achieved a balanced representation of men and women; in 5 cases, the proportion of women exceeds 40%; and in 7 Member States, women's representation ranges between 30 and 40%. However, still, there are 6 Member States with a representation of women under 30%.¹¹⁶

Table 10: Proportion of female MEPs per country (in %)¹¹⁷

Member State	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Austria	–	–	–	–	38	28	41	44	50
Belgium*	8	17	17	32	28	33	36	29	38
Bulgaria	–	–	–	–	–	44	41	29	29
Croatia*	–	–	–	–	–	–	33	45	36
Cyprus	–	–	–	–	–	0	33	17	0
Czechia	–	–	–	–	–	21	18	38	33
Denmark	31	38	38	44	38	43	46	38	46
Estonia	–	–	–	–	–	50	50	50	33
Finland	–	–	–	–	44	43	62	54	54
France*	22	21	23	30	40	45	44	42	50
Germany	15	20	31	35	37	33	37	36	36
Greece*	–	8	4	16	16	29	32	24	24
Hungary	–	–	–	–	–	37	36	19	38

¹¹⁵ European Parliament. 'Women in the European Parliament (infographics)'. 3 March 2022, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20190226STO28804/women-in-the-european-parliament-infographics>.

¹¹⁶ See also European Commission, *Report on the 2019 elections to the European Parliament*, COM(2020) 252 final, 19.6.2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0252&from=EN>.

¹¹⁷ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/mep-gender-balance/1989-1994/>; Martina and Chahri, *supra* n. 106. Note: Data on the United Kingdom is not included.

Italy*	14	10	12	13	11	21	21	40	41
Ireland	13	13	7	27	33	38	15	55	45
Latvia	–	–	–	–	–	33	38	37	50
Lithuania	–	–	–	–	–	38	25	9	27
Luxembourg*	17	50	50	50	33	50	17	33	50
Malta	–	–	–	–	–	0	0	67	50
Netherlands	20	28	28	32	35	48	48	42	50
Poland*	–	–	–	–	–	15	22	24	35
Portugal*	–	–	13	8	20	25	36	38	43
Romania*	–	–	–	–	–	29	36	31	22
Slovakia	–	–	–	–	–	36	38	31	15
Slovenia*	–	–	–	–	–	43	29	37	50
Spain*	–	–	15	33	35	25	36	41	47
Sweden	–	–	–	–	41	47	56	55	55

* There was a legal gender quota in place for the 2019 EP elections.¹¹⁸

8.2.2 Representation of sexual and gender minorities

Discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation is strictly prohibited under the EU law as it goes against the principles of equality and non-discrimination.¹¹⁹ Despite that, many LGBTIQ EU citizens face discrimination of various kinds and it seems that discrimination of sexual and gender minorities' representatives is quite widespread in the EU.¹²⁰ The LGBTIQ people have to deal with a wide spectrum of problems and obstacles in their (not only social but also) political lives. These range from discriminatory laws in many states, to all types of stereotypes, marginalization and social prejudice, or even physical and verbal violence.¹²¹ Furthermore, transgender people face additional problems when exercising their electoral rights, especially as far as voter identification and registration are concerned.¹²²

On the one hand, there is a trend of growing support for LGBTIQ communities' rights and their higher involvement into politics. At the same time, however, voters keep continue to 'penalize' LGBTIQ candidates, with a stronger negative effect on transgender people.¹²³

From the political parties' point of view, not only an actual representation of LGBTIQ community is worth to consider. The inclusion of LGBTIQ citizens into political process and eventually into legislative and executive bodies could have positive effects also in a long-

¹¹⁸ Election-Watch.EU, *Elections to the European Parliament 23-26 May 2019: Election Assessment Mission Final Report*, 16 September 2019; Crego, *supra* n. 106; Prpic et al., *supra* n. 104. Note that in the EU, there are 11 Member States employing legal quotas for the national parliamentary elections. Moreover, Malta opted for a gender corrective mechanism allowing for the allocation of additional seats to underrepresented gender, Nine EU Member States have legal gender quotas for both national and EP elections (Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain), while in Ireland, the legal quota applies only for national parliamentary elections, and in Romania, gender quota is used only for EP elections.

¹¹⁹ See, Articles 2 and 3 TEU, Article 10 TFEU, or Article 21(1) Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

¹²⁰ de Groot, David. 2022. 'The rights of LGBTI people in the European Union'. EPRS European Parliamentary Research Service, May 2022, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/729426/EPRS_BRI\(2022\)729426_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/729426/EPRS_BRI(2022)729426_EN.pdf); European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). *A long way to go for LGBTI equality*, 2020, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-lgbti-equality-1_en.pdf.

¹²¹ Ace Project, 'Discrimination in the electoral process on grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation and barriers to the effective participation of LGBTI persons', <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge1/ge15>; Council of Europe: Parliamentary Assembly, *Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making*, 31 May 2021, Doc. 15301 Report, <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/642b8cbc2c76eef51bc61c316b7705bf1159b5287abaa06598f80af900e31fab/doc.%2015301.pdf>.

¹²² Ace Project, 'Discrimination in the electoral process on grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation and barriers to the effective participation of LGBTI persons', <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge1/ge15>.

¹²³ Magni, Gabriele and Andrew Reynolds. 2021. 'Voter Preferences and the Political Underrepresentation of Minority Groups: Lesbian, Gay, and Transgender Candidates in Advanced Democracies'. *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 83, No. 4, pp. 1199–1215.

term perspective as their representation could affect future equality policies, minority rights, or voting behaviour of other members of a parliament.¹²⁴ Allowing a LGBTIQ candidate to run for a party in the elections does not mean that a party will perform worse. In contrary, an empirical study of the UK 2015 general election suggests that candidates representing sexual minorities do not have a negative influence on vote share. Furthermore, these candidates are able to perform as good as their colleagues from non-minorities.¹²⁵

8.2.3 Representation of national and ethnic minorities

Despite the EU Member States' commitments to take appropriate measures securing that 'persons belonging to minorities may exercise their rights ... individually as well as in community with other members of their group, without any discrimination',¹²⁶ the members of minorities continue to face challenges in the exercise of their electoral rights. The obstacles the minority members have to overcome may have various forms, such as lack of information, institutional difficulties, and administrative requirements.¹²⁷

In order to increase national and ethnic minorities' representation in legislative bodies, several (mostly institutional amendments) could be proposed. For instance, similarly to the situation of women's representation, there is a possibility of reserved seats for members of national and ethnic minorities.¹²⁸ Other options include lowering thresholds for access to public office or changes in constituency boundaries so they reflect the existence of a minority more accurately.¹²⁹

As a consequence of various kinds of obstacles, minorities are underrepresented in most states,¹³⁰ and their representation in the EP is far from adequate (despite some positive development in contrast to the 2014-2019 parliamentary term). In the EU – according to European Network Against Racism (ENAR) analysis – it is estimated that more than 10 % of the EU population belongs to national or ethnic minorities. However, only 4 % (5 % before Brexit) of MEPs are members of racial and ethnic minorities while people of colour make up 3 % of the whole EP.¹³¹ Nevertheless, for a full-fledged evaluation of the minorities' representation in the EP, more data is needed.

¹²⁴ Reynolds, Andrew. 2013. 'Representation and Rights: The Impact of LGBT Legislators in Comparative Perspective'. *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 107, No. 2, pp. 259–274.

¹²⁵ Magni, Gabriele and Andrew Reynolds. 2018. 'Candidate Sexual Orientation Didn't Matter (in the Way You Might Think) in the 2015 UK General Election'. *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 112, No. 3, pp. 713–720.

¹²⁶ United Nations, *Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*, Article 3(1); see also Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE*, Para. 35.

¹²⁷ European Commission, *A Union of equality: EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025*, COM(2020) 565 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0565&from=EN>; European Commission, *Report on the 2019 elections to the European Parliament*, COM(2020) 252 final, 19.6.2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0252&from=EN>.

¹²⁸ See e.g. electoral rules on minority representation in Croatia.

¹²⁹ European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), *Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters*, CDL-AD(2002)023rev2-cor.

¹³⁰ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Promotion, protection and implementation of the right to participate in public affairs in the context of the existing human rights law: best practices, experiences, challenges and ways to overcome them*, A/HRC/30/26.

¹³¹ European Network Against Racism (ENAR), *Ethnic Minorities in the New European Parliament 2019-2025*, https://www.enar-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019_06-Racial-diversity-EU-Parliament-elected-MEPs.pdf; See also European Commission, *Report on the 2019 elections to the European Parliament*, COM(2020) 252 final, 19.6.2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0252&from=EN>.

8.2.4 EU Mobile Citizens

The EU law grants EU citizens an opportunity to stand as a candidate in EP (and municipal) elections in the Member State of their residence and under the same conditions as nationals of a state in question.¹³² It is estimated that approximately 17 million EU citizens form a group of EU mobile citizens, out of which, 14 million are eligible to vote in the EP elections.¹³³ In reality, however, an exercise of EU mobile citizens' right to run as candidates remain limited for several reasons.

First, the national electoral provisions vary to a great extent. Even though the EU law prohibits discrimination of EU mobile citizens by national authorities, electoral laws contain various kinds of administrative requirements imposed on EU citizens willing to run in EP elections.¹³⁴ For instance, there are considerable differences in registration processes and opportunities to join or establish a political party in a country of residence¹³⁵

Second, the EU mobile citizens are rather unaware of their electoral rights.¹³⁶ The lack of information and communication activities are considered a real obstacle for achieving higher political inclusion of EU mobile citizens. The need to better inform EU mobile citizens about their rights has already been recognized by the EU institutions.¹³⁷

Third, generally speaking, political parties in the EU Member States do not seem to be interested in targeting non-national EU voters and candidates.¹³⁸ This manifests itself in two ways. First, at party level, not all political parties put non-national EU citizens on their candidate lists for EP elections. In majority of EU Member States, no political party run for 2014 EP elections with a nonnational candidate.¹³⁹ The situation has slightly changed in the 2019 EP elections in which nonnational candidates run for office in 18 Member States. Nevertheless, an overall number of EU mobile candidates decreased from 170 (in 2014) to 168 in 2019 (most of them campaigned in Belgium, France, Germany, Spain and

¹³² See Art. 20(2)b of the Treaty on Functioning of the European Union, Official Journal of the European Union, 2007/C 306/01; Council Directive 93/109/EC of 6 December 1993 laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals; Council Directive 2013/1/EU of 20 December 2012, L 26/27, 26.1.2013.

¹³³ European Commission, *Report on the 2019 elections to the European Parliament*, COM(2020) 252 final, 19.6.2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0252&from=EN>; De Groot, David. 2023. *At a glance: Electoral rights of mobile EU citizens in European Parliament elections*. European Parliamentary Research Service, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/739331/EPRS_ATA\(2023\)739331_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/739331/EPRS_ATA(2023)739331_EN.pdf).

¹³⁴ European Parliament, *Obstacles to the Right of Free Movement and Residence for EU Citizens and their Families: Comparative Analysis, Study for the LIBE and PETI Committees*, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/571375/IPOL_STU\(2016\)571375_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/571375/IPOL_STU(2016)571375_EN.pdf).

¹³⁵ De Groot, *supra* n. 133; Ostling, Alina. 2019. 'FAIR EU Synthesis Report: Electoral Rights For Mobile EU Citizens – Challenges and Facilitators of Implementation', https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/60991/RSCAS_GLOBALCIT_PP_2019_08.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y.

¹³⁶ Civic Observatory on the Rights of EU Citizens – CORE, *Analysis of the obstacles to freedom of movement and political participation - Policy Recommendations*, 2020 Policy Paper, <https://ecas.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Policy-paper-final-07022020.pdf>; De Groot, *supra* n. 133; European Commission, *EU Citizenship Report 2020. Empowering citizens and protecting their rights*, 2020, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2020-12/eu_citizenship_report_2020_-_empowering_citizens_and_protecting_their_rights_en.pdf; European Commission, *Report on the application of Directive 94/80/EC on the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections*, COM(2018) 44 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52018DC0044>.

¹³⁷ See e.g. European Commission, *Proposal for a Council Directive laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for Union citizens residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals*, COM(2021) 732 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021PC0732>; European Parliament, *Electoral rights of mobile Union citizens in European Parliament elections*, P9_TA(2023)0037.

¹³⁸ Ostling, *supra* n. 135; Civic Observatory on the Rights of EU Citizens, *supra* n. 136.

¹³⁹ Ostling, *supra* n. 135; Civic Observatory on the Rights of EU Citizens, *supra* n. 136.

Austria).¹⁴⁰ Second, at campaign level, it is not common that political parties conduct multi-lingual campaigns and campaign activities.

8.2.5 Representation of persons with disabilities

People with disabilities should enjoy the same electoral rights as the rest of the citizens. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) – to which all EU Member States and EU itself are signatories – the states ‘shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others’, meaning that they must be allowed to vote and stand as candidates in elections.¹⁴¹

An effective exercise of electoral rights by persons with disabilities can be undermined in various ways.¹⁴² In 14 EU Member States, there are legal restrictions imposed on the right to vote based on intellectual or mental disability, or due to lack of legal capacity. On the other hand, 13 Member States have not adopted any restrictions on right to vote for the persons with disabilities. In 14 Member States, legal obstacles and limitations are in place for exercising electoral rights by the persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, recent developments suggest that some Member States took a first step when deciding to evaluate the current position of persons with disabilities. Such review could eventually lead to narrowing down the restrictions, or even removing them.¹⁴³

Furthermore, even without legal restrictions, persons with disabilities have to deal with inhospitable environment and prejudice, or diverse forms of practical limitations such as lack of information, inaccessible campaign materials, or lack of training and funding needed for campaigning.¹⁴⁴ Bearing that in mind, it is not surprising that for this group of citizens, a low level of participation, an apathy towards politics, or a lack of ambitions to stand as candidates are characteristic.¹⁴⁵ Although there are no comparable and long-term data on

¹⁴⁰ European Commission, *Report on the 2019 elections to the European Parliament*, COM(2020) 252 final, 19.6.2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0252&from=EN>; the overall number of EU mobile citizens running in the 2019 EP elections includes also candidates from the UK.

¹⁴¹ Article 29(a)(b); See also Council of Europe, *Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life*.

¹⁴² Waltz, Mitzi and Alice Schippers. 2021. ‘Politically disabled: Barriers and facilitating factors affecting people with disabilities in political life within the European Union’. *Disability & Society*, Vol. 36, No. 4, pp. 517–540. See also European Union Agency for Fundamental rights (FRA). *The right to political participation for persons with disabilities: human rights indicators*. 2014, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-right-political-participation-persons-disabilities_en.pdf#page=45&zoom=100,0,0; Council of Europe: Parliamentary Assembly, *The political rights of persons with disabilities: a democratic issue*, Resolution 2155 (2017), <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=23519&lang=en>.

¹⁴³ These include Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Spain, France and the Netherlands. See European Union Agency for Fundamental rights (FRA), *Who will (not) get to vote in the 2019 European Parliament elections? Developments in the right to vote of people deprived of legal capacity in EU Member States*. 2019, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-right-vote-ep-elections-legal-capacity_en.pdf; Election-Watch.EU, *Elections to the European Parliament 23-26 May 2019: Election Assessment Mission: Final Report*. 16 September 2019, <https://www.wahlbeobachtung.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/election-watch-eu-eam-ep-2019-final-report-160919.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ European Disability Forum (EDF), ‘EDF Manifesto on the European Elections 2024’, 9 May 2023, <https://www.edf-efph.org/publications/eppd-manifesto-2023/>; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Promotion, protection and implementation of the right to participate in public affairs in the context of the existing human rights law: best practices, experiences, challenges and ways to overcome them*, A/HRC/30/26; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Guidelines on Promoting the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities*. 2019, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/6/414344.pdf>.

¹⁴⁵ National Democratic Institute, *Equal Access: How to Include Persons with Disabilities in Elections and Political Processes*, 2014, https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Equal-Access_How-to-include-PWD-in-elections-political-processes.pdf.

the representation of EU citizens with disabilities in the EP, the EC states that this group ‘appear to remain underrepresented’ in the EP.¹⁴⁶

8.2.6 Representation of youth

The involvement of young citizens in EU politics has been an important topic for the last decades. Although this group does not face so serious legal restrictions or other kinds of obstacles as discussed above, its level of representation is far from ideal.

In the EU, the possibility of lowering the minimum age for exercising electoral rights dominates the debates about how to stimulate youth participation in politics. In this regard, there are 15 Member States that allow their citizens to run for an office from the age of 18. In 10 Member States, the minimum age for standing as a candidate is set to 21 years. However, there are 3 countries with an even higher threshold, more specifically 23 years (in Romania), and 25 (in Greece and Italy).¹⁴⁷ It is worth mentioning that in contrast to women and minorities, the adoption of legal instruments other than minimum voting age are not really discussed at the EU level.¹⁴⁸

At first sight, it might seem that the representation of young EU citizens in the EP is not an issue. In the last EP elections of 2019, EU citizens in 12 Member States elected at least one representative younger than 30 years (see Table 11: Minimum age of MEPs elected in EU Member States (beginning of each parliamentary term)). However, the overall picture is less positive when looking at the actual representation of young EU citizens in the EP (see Figure 6). At the beginning of the current parliamentary term, a group of MEPs younger than 30 years represented less than 4% of all MEPs. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that in a broader category of MEPs under 40 years, for the very first time in EP history, the level of representation of this group exceeded 20% (more specifically, 21,5%) in the 2019 EP elections.

Table 11: Minimum age of MEPs elected in EU Member States (beginning of each parliamentary term) ¹⁴⁹

Member State	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Austria	–	–	–	–	31	36	30	35	27
Belgium	30	30	32	34	34	29	34	35	34
Bulgaria	–	–	–	–	–	23*	26	28	31
Croatia	–	–	–	–	–	–	29**	38	29
Cyprus	–	–	–	–	–	50	52	48	50
Czechia	–	–	–	–	–	35	37	33	26
Denmark	31	32	28	30	32	29	25	26	21
Estonia	–	–	–	–	–	42	42	37	28
Finland	–	–	–	–	24	29	28	36	40

¹⁴⁶ European Commission, *Report on the 2019 elections to the European Parliament*, COM(2020) 252 final, 19.6.2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0252&from=EN>; Waltz and Schippers, *supra* n. 142.

¹⁴⁷ European Parliament: Directorate-General for Internal Policies, *The European elections: EU legislation, national provisions and civic participation*, 2014, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/493047/IPOL-AFCO_ET\(2014\)493047_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/493047/IPOL-AFCO_ET(2014)493047_EN.pdf).

¹⁴⁸ From a general point of view, legal quotas for young representatives are rather exception. For national parliamentary elections, only Dominican Republic set quotas for political parties, requesting that at least 10 per cent of candidates must be under the age of 35. Nevertheless, legal quotas for youth are more common at sub-national level in some countries of Central and Latin America (Navarro Fierro, Carlos M. 2021. *International comparative study on electoral inclusion*. Instituto Nacional Electoral, <https://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/americas/MX/mexico-study-electoral-inclusion-2022>).

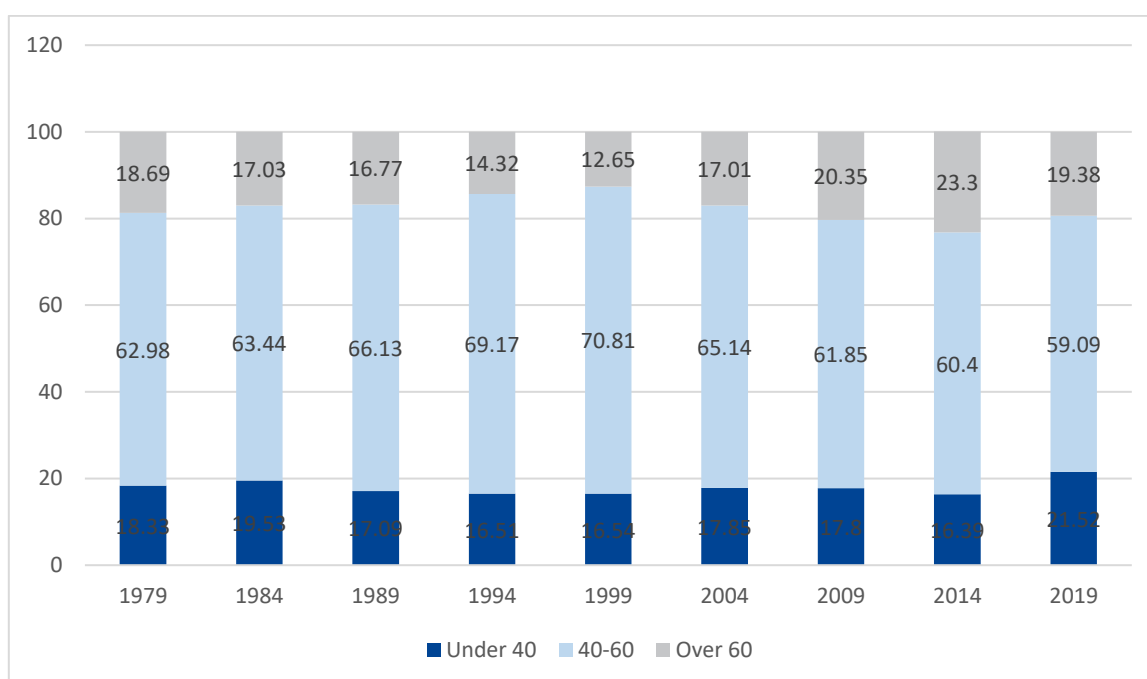
¹⁴⁹ European Parliament. ‘Age of MEPs by Member State’. 2022, <https://facts-and-figures.europarl.europa.eu/snapshot/term-1/start>. Note: Data on the United Kingdom is not included.

France	31	33	24	34	28	36	29	32	23
Germany	30	27	32	29	21	27	26	27	26
Greece	–	28	31	29	34	30	32	35	26
Hungary	–	–	–	–	–	28	26	36	30
Italy	31	31	26	27	28	27	26	28	30
Ireland	24	45	36	30	35	32	34	37	32
Latvia	–	–	–	–	–	33	44	38	43
Lithuania	–	–	–	–	–	33	25	32	54
Luxembourg	33	45	38	41	38	43	34	39	35
Malta	–	–	–	–	–	30	40	35	29
Netherlands	29	28	32	38	29	29	28	27	29
Poland	–	–	–	–	–	27	32	37	34
Portugal	–	–	34	32	27	29	30	32	28
Romania	–	–	–	–	–	29*	29	29	33
Slovakia	–	–	–	–	–	36	26	40	34
Slovenia	–	–	–	–	–	38	38	43	30
Spain	–	–	35	30	28	29	34	28	25
Sweden	–	–	–	–	31	27	32	34	32

*As of March 2007.

**As of May 2014.

Figure 6: Proportion of MEPs in the EP based on age (in %; beginning of each parliamentary term) ¹⁵⁰



Source: Sundström, Aksel and Daniel Stockemer. 2018. 'Youth representation in the European Parliament: The limited effect of political party characteristics'.

¹⁵⁰ Sundström, Aksel and Daniel Stockemer. 2018. 'Youth representation in the European Parliament: The limited effect of political party characteristics'. *Intergenerational Justice Review*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 68–78. Data for 2019 available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/640146/EPRS_BRI\(2019\)640146_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/640146/EPRS_BRI(2019)640146_EN.pdf).

8.2.7 Intersectionality and the political (under)representation

The EU citizens belonging to or identifying with the underrepresented groups discussed in this section face various obstacles on their way to an elected office. Indeed, many measures can be adopted with an intention to address their specific needs and motivate them to run as candidates. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that personal identities nor group membership are not exclusive. Rather, they are complex and multi-faceted.¹⁵¹ In other words, an EU citizen can belong to more underrepresented groups at the same time. As a consequence, she faces multiple obstacles and kinds of discrimination or disadvantages, making it even more difficult to succeed in the electoral process.¹⁵²

Even though we witness debates about how to increase representation of women, or how to attract young EU citizens to engage with politics, there is an overall lack of intersectional approach to political representation.¹⁵³ As shown by a recent report, 22 EU Member States have not adopted any measures targeting the representation of women from other underrepresented groups. If there are some measures related to the representation of minorities in place (for example in Hungary, Croatia, Sweden and Cyprus), these do not explicitly aim at women.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, in EU Member States having legal or voluntary party quotas, these usually are one-dimensional, targeting a gender aspect only.

Hence, the political parties could also opt for intersectional approach when designing their intra-party rules on selection of candidates and policies aimed at higher inclusiveness of the electoral process. Such a strategy can be seen as an opportunity for the political parties since a candidate could attract the voters from at least two groups. Data on the representation of women in the EP stresses that point as young women MEPs are represented the most.¹⁵⁵

8.3 Making the EP elections more inclusive

Political parties and their leadership are the main gatekeepers influencing who, and under which conditions, can stand as a candidate in (not exclusively) EP elections. Nevertheless, intra-party candidate selection procedures are only a part of the story. When looking at the whole process of how one becomes an elected office-holder, it is apparent that political parties are in position to play a **more active role**.

¹⁵¹ Slaughter, Christine M. and Nadia E. Brown. 2022. 'Intersectionality and Political Participation'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Participation*, edited by Marco Giugni and Maria Grasso. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 725–743; Ace Project, 'Discrimination in the electoral process on grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation and barriers to the effective participation of LGBTI persons', <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge1/ge15>.

¹⁵² Reingold, Beth, Kerry L. Haynie and Kristen Widner. 2020. *Race, Gender, and Political Representation: Toward a More Intersectional Approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Hughes, Melanie M. 2011. 'Intersectionality, Quotas, and Minority Women's Political Representation Worldwide'. *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 105, No. 3, pp. 604–620.; Council of Europe: Parliamentary Assembly, *Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making*, 31 May 2021, Doc. 15301 Report, <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/642b8cbc2c76eef51bc61c316b7705bf1159b5287abaa06598f80af900e31fab/doc.%2015301.pdf>; Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), *Guidelines on Promoting the Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities*. 2019, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/6/414344.pdf>.

¹⁵³ Kotevska and Pavlou, *supra* n. 113.

¹⁵⁴ Kotevska and Pavlou, *supra* n. 113

¹⁵⁵ Stockemer, Daniel and Aksel Sundström. 2018. 'Do young female candidates face double barriers or an outgroup advantage? The case of the European Parliament'. *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 58, No. 1, pp. 373–384.

For the sake of simplicity, we can characterize the process of becoming an MEP as follows¹⁵⁶:

1. There is a whole EU population eligible to stand as candidates in the EP elections (with country differences in legal requirements and restrictions);
2. Within the EU population, there is a pool of eventual candidates willing to run in the EP elections;
3. The small group of persons who are nominated as candidates (nominations are governed by national electoral rules and party rules); and
4. The smallest group of EU citizens in the individual Member States elected as MEPs.

When focusing on political parties' roles, especially the first three stages are of relevance. To begin with the first, the eligibility criteria for a candidacy in EP elections are set by both national and EU electoral provisions. Especially at the national level, political parties represented in a parliament have an opportunity to influence conditions for standing as a candidate in EP elections. However, an organized action by political parties via law-making procedure is not the only option. Political parties are best placed to actively promote rights of underrepresented groups, especially their electoral rights.

Stage 1: (Targeting) EU citizens eligible to stand as candidates

Making a party's commitment known and visible: One of the possible ways how to demonstrate a party's commitment to inclusive political process is to include it in **party's own statute, electoral manifestos and other party documents**. By doing so, political parties clearly indicate their stance on policies and rights relevant for particular underrepresented groups. It is quite common that political parties refer to non-discrimination and gender policies.¹⁵⁷ In Spain, for example, most parties included also references to LGBTIQ rights into their manifestos for the 2016 general elections.¹⁵⁸ In Belgium, some parties addressed non-national residents in the party statutes.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, mentions of other groups such as national and ethnic minorities, youth and person with disabilities could become an integral part of intra-party rules. Another eventual mean would be to allow underrepresented groups to provide policy inputs, eventually leading to a separate party manifesto (e.g. a youth manifesto).¹⁶⁰

It is important for members of underrepresented groups to see that their (not exclusively) electoral rights are important to a party. However, if a party wants to include underrepresented groups more into a political process, **comprehensive party strategies** on how to do it could be very useful. In this kind of party documents, parties could elaborate on how to enhance and guarantee political participation of various groups. More specifically, party strategies could, for example, contain provisions on recruitment, training and support of citizens from underrepresented parts of society willing to run in elections.¹⁶¹ In addition, such an approach would publicly acknowledge the shortcomings of previous

¹⁵⁶ See also Krook, *supra* n. 110; Norris, Pippa (ed.). 1997. *Passages to Power: Legislative Recruitment in Advanced Democracies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁵⁷ Ace Project, 'Promoting gender equality and women's participation in political parties', <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge3/g31/gender-sensitive-legal-frameworks-and-policies-in>; National Democratic Institute, *Win with Women: Strengthen Political Parties. Global Action Plan*, https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Global_Action_Plan_NDI_English.pdf.

¹⁵⁸ Ace Project, *supra* n. 157.

¹⁵⁹ Vintila, Daniela, Jean-Michel Lafleur and Louise Nikolic. 2021. 'Report on Political Participation of Mobile Citizens: Belgium', <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/72559>.

¹⁶⁰ Youth Forum. 2018. 'Youth & Political Parties: Toolkit for Youth-Friendly Politics in Europe', <https://tools.youthforum.org/policy-library/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Toolkit-Youth-and-Political-Parties-w-Key-Recommendations.pdf>.

¹⁶¹ National Democratic Institute, *supra* n. 157; Youth Forum, *supra* n.160.

intra-party recruitment policies and demonstrate an ambition to contribute to more inclusive politics.¹⁶²

Furthermore, it is also important for political parties to actively point to and condemn persisting harassment and violence (psychological, physical, sexual or economic) against underrepresented and/or marginalized groups of EU citizens. This is particularly apparent in the treatment of women political candidates and elected representatives¹⁶³ Especially these harmful kinds of interaction between public, political or party leadership on the one hand, and candidates on the other, could have a decisive influence on EU's citizens from underrepresented groups even considering a candidacy.¹⁶⁴

Communicating electoral rights:

Generally speaking, the right to candidate for a public office is granted to all EU citizens, with some differences in legal requirements in individual Member States. However, even without any restrictions, the EU citizens would not be able to exercise their rights if they do not know about them. For this reason, it is necessary for political parties to engage in **communication and outreach activities** with members of underrepresented groups.¹⁶⁵

Content wise, the communication activities should aim at providing relevant information in both the pre-election period and between-elections period. With respect to the first, political parties could play an active role in **informing EU citizens about candidacy-related procedures** such as legal requirements, intra-party selection procedures, deadlines for submitting a candidacy, and so on. Between the elections, political parties should keep informing about various political and non-political activities and events they organize. Such continual communication could lead to a higher awareness of the political rights of underrepresented groups as well as eventually to a higher interest in politics in general.¹⁶⁶

All of the mentioned should be communicated in a **language accessible to a targeted group**. In this regard, a good practice seems to be to provide information in foreign languages, or in the languages of national and ethnic minorities. Some parties even established migrant liaison officer posts responsible for informing about elections and party activities, or created a special sections on their websites targeting at members of a national minority in their own language.¹⁶⁷ Similarly, also a communication language with persons with disabilities should be adapted to specific needs of these persons (e.g. use of sign

¹⁶² Council of Europe: Parliamentary Assembly, *Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making*, 31 May 2021, Doc. 15301 Report, <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/642b8cbc2c76eef51bc61c316b7705bf1159b5287abaa06598f80af900e31fab/doc.%2015301.pdf>.

¹⁶³ Council of Europe: Parliamentary Assembly, *Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity*, Report by the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly, 2010, <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/12403>; Ace Project, 'Promoting gender equality and women's participation in political parties', <https://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/ge/ge3/g31/gender-sensitive-legal-frameworks-and-policies-in>; Council of Europe: Parliamentary Assembly, *Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making*, 31 May 2021, Doc. 15301 Report, <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/642b8cbc2c76eef51bc61c316b7705bf1159b5287abaa06598f80af900e31fab/doc.%2015301.pdf>.

¹⁶⁴ Kotevska and Pavlou, *supra* n. 113; United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Preventing violence against women in Elections: A programming guide*, 20 December 2017, <https://www.undp.org/publications/preventing-violence-against-women-elections-programming-guide>; Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians*, Issues Brief October 2016, <http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/issuesbrief-e.pdf>; Council of Europe: Parliamentary Assembly, *Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making*, 31 May 2021, Doc. 15301 Report, <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/642b8cbc2c76eef51bc61c316b7705bf1159b5287abaa06598f80af900e31fab/doc.%2015301.pdf>.

¹⁶⁵ Civic Observatory on the Rights of EU Citizens, *supra* n. 136.

¹⁶⁶ IMPEU, *Policy recommendations report on political inclusion policies for EU mobile citizens*, <https://impeu-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Policy-recommendations-report-on-political-inclusion-policies-for-EU-mobile-citizens.pdf>.

¹⁶⁷ Ostling, *supra* n. 135.

language interpreters).¹⁶⁸ As far as communication tools are concerned, it is crucial to use both traditional media (TV, press, radio) and more recent communication tools (e.g. social media campaigns, e-mail communication, websites).¹⁶⁹

Stage 2: Removing the obstacles, increasing the pool of aspirants for the office of MEP

Even in a hypothetical situation of universal right to stand as a candidate without limitations, there would not be a certainty that particular segments of the societies are sufficiently represented. For individual groups to be represented, their members must be willing, empowered and sufficiently equipped to run for an office.¹⁷⁰ Political parties are able to increase the number of aspirants in at least two ways.

Establishing party wings or branches: could be an effective way of granting a voice to citizens who find it difficult to become candidates. The **party wings** can fulfil many tasks and contribute to a better representation in several ways. These include defending the interests and needs of the underrepresented group in question, influencing the party's stance on individual policies, promoting leadership of the wing's members at all levels of intra-party decision-making, mobilizing voters of a particular underrepresented group, and providing support for candidates coming from a party wing to name a few.¹⁷¹

Granting the members of underrepresented groups such opportunities could lead to the higher interest of underrepresented citizens in party politics, their representation within a party structure, and consequently to increasing willingness to run as candidates. Many parties already established party wings for various underrepresented groups such as women, LGBTIQ, youth, or nationals living abroad.¹⁷²

Tackling a lack of resources of underrepresented groups' members:

One of the reasons for the underrepresentation of particular segments of society can be seen in the **lack of financial resources** for both the candidate selection process and the electoral campaign as such. Even when willing to run for office, the members of underrepresented groups often face uneven conditions when compared to other candidates. This can manifest itself in all stages leading to an elected office, such as inability to pay a membership fee, impossibility to lead a genuine media campaign, uneven access to party funds, and the list could go on. In order to provide support for candidates from underrepresented groups, political parties can consider various ways. Some parties opted for reducing or waiving nomination fees for candidates, initiating fundraising activities and establishing funds for candidates from underrepresented groups, or adopting other means of reducing campaign expenses such as covering travel costs or childcare expenses.¹⁷³ It is important to note that support for underrepresented politicians should not

¹⁶⁸ WFD, *Minimum Standards on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Political Parties*, <https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Minimum%20standards%20on%20PwDs%20inclusion.pdf>.

¹⁶⁹ Civic Observatory on the Rights of EU Citizens, *supra* n. 136.

¹⁷⁰ Fox, Richard L. and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2010. 'If Only They'd Ask: Gender, Recruitment, and Political Ambition'. *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 72, No. 2, pp. 310–326; Lawless, Jennifer L. and Richard L. Fox. 2022. 'The Gender Gap in Political Ambition: Everything You Need to Know in 10 Charts'. Center for Effective Lawmaking, https://thelawmakers.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Gender-Gap-in-Political-Ambitions_Report_Final-Jen-Lawless-2022-3-1.pdf.

¹⁷¹ Hooghe, Marc, Dietlind Stolle and Patrick Stouthuysen. 2004. 'Head Start in Politics: The Recruitment Function of Youth Organizations of Political Parties in Belgium'. *Party Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 193–212.; Ace Project, *supra* n. 157; iKNOWpolitics, *Best Practices Used by Political Parties to Promote Women in Politics*, https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/cr_best_practices_used_by_political_parties_to_promote_women_in_politics.pdf; YouthForum, *supra* n. 160.

¹⁷² Ace Project, *supra* n. 157; Ostling, *supra* n. 135; Vintila et al., *supra* n. 159.

¹⁷³ iKNOWpolitics, *supra* n. 171; Ace Project, *supra* n. 157; National Democratic Institute, *supra* n. 157; WFD, *supra* n. 168.

be reduced to the electoral process. Parties have more options at their disposal for promoting inclusiveness well beyond elections. Such measures would, for example, include support of networking activities and discussion forums, public campaigns, contributing to a better private life-work balance of underrepresented politicians, flexible working conditions, or establishment of parent groups within parties and/or parliaments. In this regard, for example, funds covering childcare expenses or establishing childcare centres for children of politicians on parental leave could provide more flexibility¹⁷⁴

Stage 3: Increasing the chances of underrepresented citizens for becoming candidates and for successfully running in EP elections/electoral campaign

Supporting and financing training and mentoring activities:

Once there is a pool of eventual candidates willing to run for an office, it seems important to consider additional measures eventually leading to an electoral success. Although providing a financial support in form of reduced membership/candidacy fees or reimbursement of travel expenses could be important, it is per se not sufficient. In order to give candidates better chances, it is also necessary to pay attention to **training and mentoring of candidates** (including the ones at leadership positions). For the candidates, it is crucial to acquire skills in, for example, campaigning, media management, speaking in public and debating techniques, fundraising, networking, or confidence building.¹⁷⁵ In this regard, practices adopted by political parties can take various forms. Some parties¹⁷⁶ create own mentoring and training programmes for candidates from underrepresented groups (e.g. pairing an experienced candidate with a first-time candidate), while the other parties establish special funds dedicated for training of candidates.¹⁷⁷

Providing training to the candidates is only a part of targeted measures to increase chances of underrepresented citizens. Similarly important is also to provide training to the intra-party leadership, party secretariat and campaign staff aimed at obstacles the eventual candidates face (e.g. violence, harassment, etc.), rights of the groups the candidates represent, biases that interfere with the decisions and recruitment procedures, or unequal access of underrepresented citizens to leadership and executive positions within a party.¹⁷⁸

Voluntary party quotas:

As it was already discussed in Section 8.2.1 above, one of the most effective measures for increasing representation of underrepresented groups are quotas. Bearing in mind the fact that legislative quotas can be difficult to adopt, voluntary party quotas could be perceived as the most visible (in terms of the declaration of party's commitment to political inclusiveness) and effective way how to increase the representation of a specific group of

¹⁷⁴ Kotevska and Pavlou, *supra* n. 113.

¹⁷⁵ National Democratic Institute, *supra* n. 157; WFD, *supra* n. 168; iKNOWpolitics, *supra* n. 171; Youth Forum, *supra* n. 160.

¹⁷⁶ For instance, Australia's Labour Party or UK's Conservative Party (Ace Project, *supra* n. 157).

¹⁷⁷ National Democratic Institute, *supra* n. 157; WFD, *supra* n. 168; iKNOWpolitics, *supra* n. 171.

¹⁷⁸ Kotevska and Pavlou, *supra* n. 113; Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), *Minimum Standards on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Political Parties*, <https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Minimum%20standards%20on%20PWDs%20inclusion.pdf>; Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians*, Issues Brief October 2016, <http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/issuesbrief-e.pdf>; The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). 'Gender balance in politics: November 2022', 26 April 2023, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-balance-politics-november-2022>; Council of Europe: Parliamentary Assembly, *Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making*, 31 May 2021, Doc. 15301 Report, <https://pace.coe.int/pdf/642b8cbc2c76eef51bc61c316b7705bf1159b5287abaa06598f80af900e31fab/doc.%2015301.pdf>.

EU citizens, such as woman,¹⁷⁹ youth,¹⁸⁰ LGBTIQ,¹⁸¹ or persons with disabilities.¹⁸² For the quotas to be effective, it is not sufficient to achieve the inclusion of underrepresented candidates into the party's list. More importantly, the candidates from specific groups should be placed at winnable positions within a list, or they should be running in winnable districts.¹⁸³ Furthermore, the political parties could also adopt voluntary nested quotas combining more requirements on candidates, taking intersectional perspective into account. An alternative approach can be observed in the adoption of 'reserved seats' should the voluntary party quotas prove insufficient.

8.4 Summary

The EU citizens have the right to stand as a candidate in the EP elections, irrespective of their country of residence within the Union. However, still, we are able to observe that some of the EU citizens are unproportionally represented in the EP, or – at a country level – they are not represented at all. Probably one of the possible explanations of unequal representation of groups discussed in this section could be seen in lack of uniformity of electoral rules within the EU. As a result, it is Member States' prerogative to decide upon important aspects related to the elections, candidacy rules, party formation procedures and so on. Since the uniform electoral act covering all EP elections-related aspects is unlikely to be adopted any time soon, the political parties are ideally placed to contribute to more inclusive EP elections. In the previous part, we have identified 3 stages in which the political parties' roles are obvious. First, the political parties can clearly demonstrate that EU citizens belonging to an underrepresented group are important to them. Besides that, the political parties should actively enhance the awareness of EU citizens about their electoral rights. Second, political parties have an opportunity to create special (and to a certain extent independent) sections/wings for the members of underrepresented groups within a party structure. Moreover, political parties have various means at their disposal to reduce or eliminate obstacles the underrepresented EU citizens face when thinking about running in EP elections. Lastly, once a political party decides to contribute to a more inclusive politics within the EU, and to increase chances of underrepresented EU citizens to get elected, the party can adopt additional measures improving the chances of being successful in EP elections for particular EU citizens.

¹⁷⁹ Ace Project, *supra* n. 157.

¹⁸⁰ Youth Forum, *supra* n. 160.

¹⁸¹ Ace Project, *supra* n. 157.

¹⁸² WFD, *supra* n. 168.

¹⁸³ A good example here would be the Queensland Labour Party and its party rules stating that at least 5 % of winnable seats is allocated to LGBTIQ candidates (Ace Project, *supra* n. 157).

Annex 1: How to better inform first-time EU voters?

In the main report, we discussed the general communication strategy concerning EU citizenship. Here, we focus on one specific target group of communication – the first-time EU voters. The EU's legitimacy and democracy are not sustainable unless it succeeds in continuously reinforcing norms, knowledge and behavioural patterns of engaged citizenship in new generations of citizens. For that reason, we stress the importance of communication towards this group of citizens. By first-time EU voters, we mean the young EU citizens who reach the voting age. To propose effective communication towards this group, we first introduce the characteristics of this group. Then, we discuss the platforms and ways how to better communicate EU citizenship towards them.

The EU youth grows up in a constantly changing and interconnected world. The use and knowledge of new media and technology is their daily bread. Scholars talk about 'networked young citizens', who are far less likely to become members of political parties or trade unions; they prefer participation in horizontal or non-hierarchical networks; they reflexively engage in lifestyle politics; they are not dutiful but self-actualizing; their historical reference points are rather global information networked capitalism than welfare capitalism; and their social relations are increasingly more connected through social media.¹⁸⁴

As explained, to sustain democracy and set the policy towards all age groups from different backgrounds, including the youth, their political and civic engagement is necessary. To support their engagement, delivering the messages meaningfully and, more importantly, through the media they follow is crucial. As the research about the youth turnout at EU elections shows, 'the exposure to news in offline media had no significant effect on participation, whereas exposure to relevant news in online media positively affected turnout.'¹⁸⁵ Besides online media, where the contents mainly depend on the media agencies and journalists, social media is the other source of mobilizing and where the youth get information.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, social media are environments that socialise young voters into polarized information environments that may increase their engagement in upcoming elections.¹⁸⁷ Thus, social media is the most efficient way to spread information about the EU to the first EU voters.

The popularity of the social platforms is changing, and citizens may prefer one platform over another. The Commission should not communicate on one platform to be as efficient as possible. The current trend from 2022 in the US shows arise of TikTok, grow of Instagram and Snachpat and drop of Facebook and Twitter compared to 2014-2015 among U.S. teens (age between 13 to 17). Youtube tops the online landscapes among the social media, as it used by 95% of teens.¹⁸⁸ The available data in Europe shows a similar picture, Youtube as the most popular platform, Facebook preferred by the Millennial generation (born between 1981 and 1996), meanwhile TikTok widely used among Generation Z (born after 1997).¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ Loader, Brian D., Ariadne Vromen and Michael A. Xenos. 2014. 'The networked young citizen: social media, political participation and civic engagement, Information'. *Communication & Society*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp. 143–150.

¹⁸⁵ Moeller, Judith, Rinaldo Kühne and Claes De Vreese. 2018. 'Mobilizing Youth in the 21st Century: How Digital Media Use Fosters Civic Duty, Information Efficacy, and Political Participation'. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, Vol. 62, No. 3, pp. 445–460, at p. 445.

¹⁸⁶ Yerkebulan Sairambay. 2022. 'The contributions of new media to young people's political participation in Russia and Kazakhstan'. *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 571–595.

¹⁸⁷ Ohme, Jakob. 2019. 'When digital natives enter the electorate: Political social media use among first-time voters and its effects on campaign participation'. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp. 119–136.

¹⁸⁸ See <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022/>

¹⁸⁹ See <https://www.ypulse.com/article/2022/11/15/young-europeans-use-these-social-media-platforms-the-most/>

In Finland, Facebook is still an important platform for youth engagement.¹⁹⁰ In the US, young adults perceive Facebook as a social media space rather than a space for expressing political views and information. Young Americans avoid political conversation on this platform to maintain social harmony.¹⁹¹ For example, the YikYak¹⁹², an anonymous social media platform, through anonymity, geo-boundedness, and ephemerality, created a beneficial environment for political expression that could counteract some of the challenges of youth political talk on mainstream social media.¹⁹³

A message without an attractive graphical design, accompanied by video and audio material, has a low chance of getting its target. Thus, besides the general communication strategy mentioned above, such as simple language and emotional tone, the communication should also work with popular culture, which can bring together politically heterogeneous audiences¹⁹⁴ and provide shared symbolic resources for collective political expression.¹⁹⁵

In addition to platforms and the visual style, the content of the message is crucial. Exposure to the relevant news for the youth contributes to a higher likelihood of turnout and political participation. This is one of the reasons why the turnout of the youth in the EU elections in 2014 was relatively low. '[R]elevant news for young voters was virtually invisible in the 6 months leading up to the elections.'¹⁹⁶ In order to achieve this, special attention should also be paid to raising awareness among young people from disadvantaged groups living in the EU and bringing them to their attention in a meaningful way.

What are the relevant news or relevant policy for the European youth? According to Eurobarometer from 2022, 'young people's main expectations from the EU for their generation are: preserving peace, reinforcing international security and promoting international cooperation (37%), increasing job opportunities (33%), fighting poverty and economic and social inequalities (32%), and promoting environmentally friendly policy and fight climate change (31%).'¹⁹⁷ Thus, the Commission should connect its communication with the policies relevant for the youth. For example, the promoting of a 'green citizenship', discussed above, could be beneficial. Similarly, youth mobility through the programme Erasmus+, or digital rights, are relevant policies for the youth.

Young citizens feel overlooked by politicians, and they do not trust them.¹⁹⁸ The year 2022 was characterized as the European Year of Youth, and Eurobarometer asks young adults the following question: what defines a successful European Year of Youth? '72%-71% of

¹⁹⁰ Lonkila, Markku and Pertti Jokivuori. 2022. 'Sharing and liking as youth nano-level participation. Finnish students' civic and political engagement in social media'. *Journal of Youth Studies*, DOI: [10.1080/13676261.2022.2049731](https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2022.2049731)

¹⁹¹ Thorson, Kjerstin, Emily K. Vraga and Neta Kligler-Vilenchik. 2015. 'Don't push your opinions on me: Young citizens and political etiquette on Facebook'. In John Allen Hendricks and Dan Schill (Eds.), *Presidential campaigning and social media: An analysis of the 2012 campaign* (pp. 74–93). Oxford University Press.

¹⁹² <https://yikyak.com/>

¹⁹³ Lane, Daniel S., Vishnupriya Das and Dan Hiaeshutter-Rice. 2019. 'Civic laboratories: Youth political expression in anonymous, ephemeral, geobounded social media. Information'. *Communication & Society*, Vol. 22, No. 14, pp. 2171–2186.

¹⁹⁴ Swartz, Lana and Kevin Driscoll. 2014. "'I hate your politics but I love your diamonds": Citizenship and the off-topic message board subforum'. In Matt Ratto and Megan Boler (Eds.), *DIY citizenship: Critical making and social media* (pp. 295–306). MIT Press.

¹⁹⁵ E.g. Literat Ioana and Neta Kligler-Vilenchik. 2021. 'How Popular Culture Prompts Youth Collective Political Expression and Cross-Cutting Political Talk on Social Media: A Cross-Platform Analysis'. *Social Media + Society*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 1–14.; Literat, Ioana and Neta Kligler-Vilenchik. 2019. 'Youth collective political expression on social media: The role of affordances and memetic dimensions for voicing political views'. *New Media & Society*, Vol. 21, No. 9, pp. 1988–2009.

¹⁹⁶ Moeller et al., *supra* n. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**, at p. 457.

¹⁹⁷ See <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2282>.

¹⁹⁸ Henn, Matt and Nick Foard. 2012. 'Young people, political participation and trust in Britain'. *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 1, pp. 47–6.

young people find it important success factors if decision-makers listen more to the demands of young people and act on them, and if it supports the personal, social and professional development of youth.¹⁹⁹ As academic research shows, the youth perceive participation offers from politicians and parties as least interesting and least identified with such actors, and traditional actors fail to respond to their identity and needs. The youth identified with citizen movements and perceived their issues as most relevant. 'High identification with actor and perceived issue relevance significantly increased the likelihood of participation.'²⁰⁰ Naturally, it is very hard for the Commission to connect with the youth personally. Nevertheless, the Commission might 'use' and motivates actors such as student organisations co-funded by the EU, who are close to the youth, to inform their audience about EU citizenship, for example. In the same vein, the Commission might also deliver information about EU citizenship to 'influencers', who highly impact the youth's political participation.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ See <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2282>.

²⁰⁰ Binder, Alice, Raffael Heiss, Jörg Matthes and Diana Sander. 2021. 'Dealigned but mobilized? Insights from a citizen science study on youth political engagement'. *Journal of Youth Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 232–249, at p. 232.

²⁰¹ Dekoninck, Heleen and Desiree Schmuck. 2022. 'The Mobilizing Power of Influencers for Pro-Environmental Behavior Intentions and Political Participation'. *Environmental Communication*, Vol 16, No. 4, pp. 458–472.

Annex 2: Additional target groups that might benefit from the onboarding package

Target groups derived from the free movement of citizens

EU 'MOBILE' WORKERS

Overview:

By EU mobile workers, this part refers to EU citizens that, holding the citizenship of a Member State, move into another for a longer time than the necessary for a short-term mobile work (such as seasonal or posted workers) or permanently for work reasons. In essence, it's a subgroup of EU Mobile Citizens.

This category of citizens, who are *de facto* exercising their right to free movement and residence, would benefit in particular from the rights highlighted in the subsection 6.3.1 rooted in the EU citizenship and the free movement of people. This category is of especial relevance for the enjoyment of rights applicable in the workplace.

Data:

This part will cross the data previously analysed with the employment rate by nationality group and country of residence (%) as provided by the Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility for the year 2022. The results will reflect the percentage of intra-EU movers that are actively working in the country of residence, not reflecting therefore those looking for a job.

Table 12: % of intra-EU movers that are actively working in the country of residence

Country	Employment rate of EU movers (2021) ²⁰²	Working EU movers (2021)	Population (TPS00019) (2021)	% Working EU movers' population (2021)
Belgium	0.74	475.08	11,554,767	4.112
Bulgaria	X	X	6,916,548	X
Czechia	0.86	172	10,494,836	1.639
Denmark	0.87	148.77	5,840,045	2.547
Germany	0.78	2597.4	83,155,031	3.124
Estonia	X	X	1,330,068	X
Ireland	0.8	225.99	5,006,324	4.514
Greece	0.56	66.64	10,678,632	0.624
Spain	0.66	848.1	47,398,695	1.789
France	0.74	664.52	67,656,682	0.982
Croatia	X	X	4,036,355	X
Italy	0.64	686.72	59,236,213	1.159

²⁰² Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, 2023. Annual Report on Intra-EU Labour Mobility 2022. European Commission, pp. 180.182. Values extracted from Table 59.

Country	Employment rate of EU movers (2021) ²⁰²	Working EU movers (2021)	Population (TPS00019) (2021)	% Working EU movers' population (2021)
Cyprus	0.78	58.5	896,007	6.529
Latvia	X	X	1,893,223	X
Lithuania	X	X	2,795,680	X
Luxembourg	0.81	137.7	634,730	21.694
Hungary	X	X	9,730,772	X
Malta	0.92	32.2	516,100	6.239
Netherlands	0.8	379.2	17,475,415	2.17
Austria	0.75	441	8,932,664	4.937
Poland	X	X	37,840,001	X
Portugal	X	X	10,298,252	X
Romania	X	X	19,201,662	X
Slovenia	X	X	2,108,977	X
Slovakia	X	X	5,459,781	X
Finland	0.87	64.38	5,533,793	1.163
Sweden	0.89	189.57	10,379,295	1.826

The data reflects no significant variation in relation to the previous group. Apart from Malta, which possess the highest employment rate for third-country nationals, the rest of the countries reflect a slight decrease in the final percentage in relation to the employment rates. It must be noted that, as shown in the table, many Member States do not address separately the employment rates for EU Mobile Workers. The countries with the highest number of them still reflect, once crossed with the employment rates, the highest groups of population established in the Member States.

Target groups derived from the EU anti-discrimination legal framework.

WOMEN

Overview:

Fighting against sex discrimination and achieving gender equality have been one of the core goals of the EU. Primary law defines equality as an EU value (pursuant to the Treaty on European Union Art 2), establishing that Member States share the common ideal of a society where, among others 'equality between woman and men prevail.' This goal appears enshrined in Art. 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and in the TFEU Art 10. The expression of these mandates in the secondary law can be found the following instruments:

- Directive 2006/54/EC regulates equal treatment for men and women in matters of employment and occupation.
- Directive 2004/113/EC regulates equal treatment for men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.

Women in the EU Member States can find a tool in the non-discrimination legal framework. By leveraging their knowledge of the EU's non-discrimination laws, women can foster solidarity, advocate for equitable treatment, and promote inclusive policies that advance gender equality throughout the EU Member States.

This section will analyse Eurostat datasets to cluster the target groups that could potentially benefit the most from communicating such rights.

Data:

Table 13: Equality and female occupation across the MSs

Country	E&A ²⁰³ - M (%) (2022)	E&A- F (%) (2022)	PTE (%) - M (2022)	PTE ²⁰⁴ (%) - F (2022)	G. Ov. Earn. Gap ²⁰⁵ (2018)	Gen. pay. Gap. ²⁰⁶ (2021)
Belgium	69.8	63.2	10.8	38.4	26.4	5
Bulgaria	73.8	66.8	1.4	1.7	24.2	12.2
Czechia	82.2	68.5	2.7	10.2	36	15
Denmark	79	74.5	15.2	33.8	25.1	14.2
Germany	80.6	73.1	11	47.2	41.9	17.6
Estonia	77.5	75.3	8.1	18.5	31.1	20.5
Ireland	78.1	68.4	10.9	30.3	35.9	:
Greece	70.3	51.2	4.9	12.2	41.3	:
Spain	69.3	59.5	6.3	21.5	33	8.9
France	70.8	65.6	7.5	25.9	29.6	15.4
Croatia	69.5	60.4	3.6	6	25.5	11.1
Italy	69.2	51.1	7.7	31.7	43	5
Cyprus	78.5	67.3	6.8	12	25.2	9.7
Latvia	72.5	70.2	4.2	8.9	25.7	14.6
Lithuania	73.9	73.6	3.9	7.4	20.4	12
Luxembourg	73	67.1	7.1	30.9	23.2	-0.2
Hungary	78.8	69.9	2.6	6	28.1	17.3
Malta	83.4	71	4.9	19.3	39.4	10.5
Netherlands	85.4	78.1	23.5	63.8	43.7	13.5
Austria	78	70	11.3	50.3	44.2	18.8
Poland	77.3	65.4	3.4	7.8	30.3	4.5
Portugal	74.1	69.5	4.5	9	20.4	11.9

²⁰³ E&A stands for Employment and Activity. Online code data: LFSI_EMP_A. Eurostat.

²⁰⁴ PTE stands for Part Time Employment. Online code data: LFSA_EPPGAN. Eurostat.

²⁰⁵ General Overall Earning Gap is a synthetic indicator. 'It measures the impact of (...) (1) the average hourly earnings, (2) the monthly average of the number of hours paid (before any adjustment for part-time work) and (3) the employment rate (...).'

²⁰⁶ Gender payment gap in unadjusted form by NACE Rev. 2 activity. Online code data: earn_gr_gpgr2. Eurostat.

Country	E&A ²⁰³ - M (%) (2022)	E&A- F (%) (2022)	PTE (%) - M (2022)	PTE ²⁰⁴ (%) - F (2022)	G. Ov. Earn. Gap ²⁰⁵ (2018)	Gen. pay. Gap. ²⁰⁶ (2021)
Romania	71.5	54.4	3.7	2.8	27.3	3.6
Slovenia	76.2	69.8	5.6	12.3	20.7	3.8
Slovakia	75	67.6	2	4.4	30.6	16.6
Finland	74.7	73.9	11.3	23	24.5	16.5
Sweden	79.4	74.7	12.5	28.9	23.8	11.2

Overall, several conclusions can be extracted from the available data.

- The employment and activity rates are higher for men (M) than for women (F) in every Member State.
- Part Time Employment (PTE) is dominated in absolute terms by female workers, reflecting a clear sexual distribution of jobs. The consequences are many, for spending less time than men in paid work contributes to a greater gender pay gap, a gender pension gap, and a weaker economic independence of women.²⁰⁷
- The % of women involved in PTE explains the differences between the overall earning gap and the payment gap. For instance, Belgium shows a relatively small payment gap. On average, men 'only' earn 5% more for the same job than women. However, while 38.4% of women are working part time, their counterpart amounts to only 10.8%. Therefore, the General Overall Earnings Gap escalates from the original 5% to 26.4%.

Despite being many the factors that contribute to the existence of payment gaps between men and women, the Commission acknowledge that pay discrimination plays a role in the explanation. In their own words, '*women earn less than men for doing equal work or work of equal value even if the principle of equal pay is enshrined in the European Treaties.*'²⁰⁸ The communication of the non-discrimination legal framework becomes paramount to tackle this issue.

To identify target groups more efficiently, the data provided above was sorted out as it follows:

Table 14: Equality and female occupation across the MSs, in descending order

E&A- F (%) (2022)		Gender payment gap (2021)		Gender Overall Earning Gap (2018)	
Netherlands	78.1	Ireland	:	Austria	44.2
Estonia	75.3	Greece	:	Netherlands	43.7
Sweden	74.7	Estonia	20.5	Italy	43
Denmark	74.5	Austria	18.8	Germany	41.9

²⁰⁷ Gender Equality Index 2019. Work-life balance. European Institute for Gender Equality. Available at <<https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2019-report/women-dominate-part-time-employment-consigning-them-jobs-poorer-career-progression#:~:text=This%20maintains%20the%20gender%20gap,of%20men%20worked%20part%2Dtime.>>

²⁰⁸ European Commission. The gender pay gap situation in the EU. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/gender-pay-gap-situation-eu_en It should be noted that the analysis published by the Commission was elaborated with data from 2020, what explains the distinct order.

E&A- F (%) (2022)		Gender payment gap (2021)		Gender Overall Earning Gap (2018)	
Finland	73.9	Germany	17.6	Greece	41.3
Lithuania	73.6	Hungary	17.3	Malta	39.4
Germany	73.1	Slovakia	16.6	Czechia	36
Malta	71	Finland	16.5	Ireland	35.9
Latvia	70.2	France	15.4	Spain	33
Austria	70	Czechia	15	Estonia	31.1
Hungary	69.9	Latvia	14.6	Slovakia	30.6
Slovenia	69.8	Denmark	14.2	Poland	30.3
Portugal	69.5	Netherlands	13.5	France	29.6
Czechia	68.5	Bulgaria	12.2	Hungary	28.1
Ireland	68.4	Lithuania	12	Romania	27.3
Slovakia	67.6	Portugal	11.9	Belgium	26.4
Cyprus	67.3	Sweden	11.2	Latvia	25.7
Luxembourg	67.1	Croatia	11.1	Croatia	25.5
Bulgaria	66.8	Malta	10.5	Cyprus	25.2
France	65.6	Cyprus	9.7	Denmark	25.1
Poland	65.4	Spain	8.9	Finland	24.5
Belgium	63.2	Belgium	5	Bulgaria	24.2
Croatia	60.4	Italy	5	Sweden	23.8
Spain	59.5	Poland	4.5	Luxembourg	23.2
Romania	54.4	Slovenia	3.8	Slovenia	20.7
Greece	51.2	Romania	3.6	Lithuania	20.4
Italy	51.1	Luxembourg	-0.2	Portugal	20.4

As highlighted, the PTE explains why the classifications differ when calculating gender payment gap and gender overall earning gap. For instance, Netherlands shows for the year 2018 the second highest difference between men and women when measuring overall earnings gap while presenting the highest values of female occupation (78.1%). This is explained by the fact that the Netherlands possess the highest percentage of women involved in PTE (63.8%). Something similar happens in Italy, when despite having a relatively low gender payment gap (5%), the share of working women is the lowest of the EU (51.1%) while keeping an involvement in PTE relatively high (31.7%).

While acknowledging that, women working in certain Member States, must deal with structural problems of greater magnitude, potentially benefiting from the dissemination on the EU citizenship rights. It should be nonetheless noted that the data reflects an issue that affects the totality of the EU Member States. Here only some cases are highlighted:

- Estonia, with an employment and activity rate for women of 75%, showed the highest payment gap for the year 2021 (of 20.5%).

- Austria, with a female employment and activity rate of 70%, showed the second payment gap for the year 2021 (of 18.8%) and the highest gender overall earnings gap of 2018 (44.2%).
- German women, with an employment rate of 73.1%, face the third largest earning gap (17.6%) and the fourth gender overall earnings gap in 2018 (41.9%).
- Hungary, with an employment and activity rate for women of 69.9%, showed the fourth largest earning gap (17.3%).
- Slovakia, with an employment and activity rate for women of 67.6%, showed the fifth largest earning gap (16.6%).

CITIZENS WITH MODIFIED OR LIMITED CAPACITIES

Overview:

Citizens with limited and modified capacities are protected by the scope of the Directive 2000/78/EC protects against discrimination at work on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.

These citizens often suffer from several types of discrimination at once, such as gender and limited capacities, substantially hindering the aim of the regulatory approach and policy goals of the EU.²⁰⁹

Therefore, they would potentially benefit from the protection against discrimination attached to the EU citizenship and regulated through secondary law. Unfortunately, there is no available data on the specific payment gap from country to country. Nonetheless, there is data regarding the Disability employment gap by Member States.

Data:

Table 15: Gap in employment for persons with disabilities

Disability employment gap (2021) ²¹⁰	
Ireland	41.3
Belgium	38
Poland	34.2
Romania	32.6
Germany	30.5
Hungary	28.8
Croatia	28.7
Cyprus	27
Malta	27
Austria	26.3
Czechia	25.9

²⁰⁹ Disability and Gender Gaps. The difficult situation of women with disabilities in the labour market. European Disability Forum, 16.09.2022. Available at: <https://www.edf-feph.org/disability-and-gender-gaps-the-difficult-situation-of-women-with-disabilities-in-the-labour-market/>

²¹⁰ Online code data: HLTH_DLM200. Eurostat.

Disability employment gap (2021)²¹⁰	
Netherlands	25.8
Slovakia	25.3
France	24.1
Lithuania	23.9
Greece	23.8
Finland	22.2
Bulgaria	22.1
Slovenia	21.1
Sweden	19.9
Estonia	18.7
Latvia	16.6
Portugal	16.2
Spain	15.9
Luxembourg	15.4
Italy	14.9
Denmark	7.9

The data shows the gap in descending order across the Member States. It should be noted that the gap reflects a variety of reasons. In addition, the lack of concrete data in terms of pay gaps, access to employment and other variables prevents addressing this target group in more detail. In this order, Ireland, Belgium, Poland, Romania, and Germany present the highest gaps of employment.

These gaps might reflect situations where the protection provided by the Directive is not enforced as it should. Therefore, these groups could potentially benefit from such a communication strategy.

ELDERLY WORKING CITIZENS

Overview:

Age constitutes a protected ground from discrimination pursuant to Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation.

Their inclusion as a category in the Special Eurobarometer 493 'Discrimination in the European Union' from May 2019 reflects the risk that they suffer when looking for a job. It should be pointed out that, there are no specific data sets specifically measuring discrimination based on age in the employed data sets. Hence, and considering the attention they deserve as a protected group, the conclusions of the survey will be briefly presented below.

Data:

The Special Eurobarometer 493 'Discrimination in the European Union' from May 2019 encompassed certain questions regarding age discrimination when applying for a job. However, the sample of respondents was 27,438 and the question involved determining, in the view of the respondent, which feature would put a candidate at a disadvantage when

deciding between two candidates of equal skills and qualifications. Therefore, the extrapolation of the results of this survey must carry attached a more in-depth study of the reality of the Member States.

The survey showed the following:

Table 16: Perceptions on age as a disadvantage in the labour market

Country	Age as a disadvantage (%) ²¹¹	Country	Age as a disadvantage (%)
Netherlands	67	Cyprus	66
Cyprus	66	Sweden	66
Sweden	66	Portugal	62
Finland	63	Latvia	59
Portugal	62	Lithuania	59
Greece	61	Spain	57
Latvia	59	Estonia	53
Lithuania	59	Czechia	49
Spain	57	Bulgaria	44
France	56	Croatia	41
Estonia	53	Italy	39
Belgium	50	Ireland	39
Denmark	50	Romania	34
Czechia	49	Netherlands	67
Germany	48	Greece	61
Slovenia	48	Belgium	50
Luxembourg	46	Denmark	50
Austria	45	Germany	48
Bulgaria	44	Luxembourg	46
Hungary	43	Slovakia	37
Croatia	41	Poland	29
Italy	39	Finland	63
Ireland	39	France	56
Slovakia	37	Slovenia	48
Romania	34	Hungary	43
Malta	31	Austria	45
Poland	29	Malta	31

The difference between colours reflects how often the age was mentioned as a reply to the question. Red was employed when it was the most frequently mentioned item. Yellow for

²¹¹ Data extracted from Special Eurobarometer 493. Report. Discrimination in the European Union. Directorate General for Justice and Consumer and coordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication. October 2019, p. 165. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/66ed1874-3d47-11ed-9c68-01aa75ed71a1>

the second most frequently mentioned item and green for the third one. The question permitted multiple answers.

In absolute terms, the results showed that 67% of Dutch respondents, 66% of Swedish and Cypriot respondents, and 62% of Portuguese respondents believed that age would put the candidate at a disadvantage. On the other side of the table, Poland, Malta, and Romania stood out with lower percentages of interviewed individuals considering age to put the candidate in a detrimental position.

LGBTIQ COMMUNITIES

Overview:

In a similar way to the previous groups, LGBTIQ people receive protection from the scope of the Directive 2000/78/EC that protects against discrimination at work on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation. And yet, they have been historically and systematically discriminated, with recent legislative proposals across the EU threatening to hinder the enjoyment of their rights.²¹²

These communities would potentially benefit from the protection against discrimination attached to the EU citizenship and regulated through secondary law, what makes them an ideal target for communication purposes.

The data to analyse and target potential Member States where LGBTIQ communities have perceived higher frequency of discrimination will be extracted from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights report 'A long way to go for LGBTI equality.'

Data:

Table 17: LGBTIQ perceived discrimination across the MSs

Country	Perceived discr. when looking for a job (%) ²¹³	Country	Perceived discr. in work (%) ²¹⁴
Greece	19	Lithuania	32
Cyprus	18	Greece	31
Bulgaria	17	Cyprus	30
Hungary	14	Bulgaria	29
Latvia	13	Hungary	24
Italy	12	Poland	24
Lithuania	12	Germany	23
Romania	12	Romania	23
Germany	11	Italy	22
Spain	11	Slovakia	22

²¹² European Commission. EU founding values: Commission starts legal action against Hungary and Poland for violations of fundamental rights of LGBTIQ people. Press release, 15 July 2021. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_3668.

²¹³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. A long way to go for LGBTI equality. 2020, Publication Office of the European Union, p. 32 Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/eu-lgbti-survey-results>.

²¹⁴ Ibid, p. 33.

Poland	11	Latvia	21
Croatia	10	Spain	20
Austria	10	France	20
Portugal	10	Austria	20
Slovakia	10	Portugal	20
Czechia	9	Estonia	19
Estonia	8	Belgium	18
Ireland	8	Ireland	18
France	8	Croatia	17
Slovenia	8	Malta	16
Belgium	7	Slovenia	16
Luxembourg	7	Denmark	14
Malta	7	Luxembourg	14
Netherlands	6	Sweden	14
Finland	6	Czechia	13
Denmark	5	Netherlands	13
Sweden	5	Finland	13

The first column was elaborated from a sample of 64,492 answers while the second involved 89,097. It should be noted that both total numbers also encompassed the United Kingdom. In addition, cultural perception of what constitutes discrimination might vary from Member State to Member State, what implies that the data reflected here cannot be taken as an absolute reflection of reality. However, it does facilitate the identification of certain states where the perception of discrimination is higher by the LGBTIQ communities. The results express the percentage of individual interviewed that perceived discrimination against them on the grounds of being LGBTIQ at work or while looking for one. Overall, the results evidence higher levels of discrimination at the workplace perception in Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Hungary. Other Member States show different levels of perception of discrimination in both columns. For instance, while Lithuania ranks first in perceived discrimination at work, it ranks 7th in perception of discrimination when looking for one.

In essence, the data provided here can contribute to the elaboration of the clustering strategy to target LGBTIQ communities across the EU for communication purposes regarding their EU citizenship rights.

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Overview:

Freedom of religion constitutes another protected ground under the Directive 2000/78/EC protects against discrimination at work on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

There are no specific data sets available and contemporary describing discrimination cases of religious minorities in the workspace. That is why this section will only use the data contained in the Discrimination in the EU in 2019 report, a special Eurobarometer.²¹⁵

Data:

The aforementioned Eurobarometer, with a sample of 27,438 respondents, provided the following:

Table 18: Perceptions on religion as a disadvantage in the labour market

Country	The expression of a religious belief (%) ²¹⁶
Netherlands	58
Sweden	56
Denmark	49
Belgium	46
Austria	46
Germany	44
France	43
Finland	42
Slovenia	33
Cyprus	27
Greece	26
Luxembourg	26
Malta	23
Estonia	21
Czechia	21
Spain	18
Croatia	18
Ireland	17
Lithuania	16
Bulgaria	15
Portugal	12
Poland	12
Italy	11
Romania	11
Latvia	10

²¹⁵ Data extracted from Special Eurobarometer 493. Report. Discrimination in the European Union. Directorate General for Justice and Consumer and coordinated by the Directorate-General for Communication. October 2019, p. 166-168. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/66ed1874-3d47-11ed-9c68-01aa75ed71a1>

²¹⁶ Ibid, p. 165.

Slovakia	9
Hungary	8

The data was extracted from the same question as the one highlighted above, where the results for age discrimination were extracted. The results are in descending order and green in this case represents only the cases in which the expression of a religious belief was the third most mentioned item when answering what feature would hamper the position of a job applicant.

The Netherlands (58), Sweden (56), Denmark (49), Belgium (46), Austria (46), Germany (44), France (43) and Finland (42) held the more replies highlighting the expression of a religious belief as an element that could hinder a job applicant.

Considering that discrimination on the grounds of belief is forbidden pursuant to EU Law, communication strategies could benefit from this data to target and cluster religious minorities in these countries that could benefit from their knowledge on EU citizenship rights.

ETHNIC MINORITIES

Overview:

Ethnic minorities in Europe are protected under the Directive 2000/78/EC protecting against discrimination at work on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation. Moreover, among the minorities, special attention must be given to the Roma population.

The Roma population, one of Europe's oldest and largest ethnic minorities, faces profound challenges within the EU. With a rich and diverse cultural heritage, the Roma people have a long history of migration across the continent. Today, they constitute the largest minority group in the EU, comprising an estimated 10-12 million individuals. Despite their significant presence, the Roma community endures pervasive discrimination and social exclusion. Marginalization in education, employment, housing, and access to healthcare perpetuate a cycle of poverty and inequality, underscoring the pressing need for greater awareness and concerted efforts to address the longstanding issues faced by the Roma population within the EU.

When analysing the results of the Eurobarometer survey already employed, it becomes evident that respondents placed a significant emphasis on 'being Roma' rather than just 'ethnicity' when determining who should be selected for a position. In other words, the data indicates a clear bias perception against Roma individuals.

Data:

The Eurobarometer, with a sample of 27,438 respondents, provided the following results:

Table 19: Perceptions on being Roma and ethnicity as disadvantages in the labour market

Country	The candidate being Roma ²¹⁷	Country	The candidate's ethnic origin ²¹⁸
Finland	74	Netherlands	64
Greece	64	Finland	56

²¹⁷ Ibid, p. 165.

²¹⁸ Ibid, p. 165.

Country	The candidate being Roma ²¹⁷	Country	The candidate's ethnic origin ²¹⁸
Sweden	57	Sweden	51
Slovenia	57	Denmark	49
Hungary	55	Belgium	47
Cyprus	48	France	45
France	47	Austria	43
Czechia	46	Germany	37
Denmark	44	Greece	37
Netherlands	41	Spain	33
Belgium	41	Slovenia	29
Lithuania	41	Malta	29
Croatia	40	Hungary	28
Germany	39	Cyprus	27
Spain	39	Czechia	27
Slovakia	39	Croatia	26
Austria	38	Portugal	26
Italy	36	Estonia	25
Ireland	35	Ireland	25
Bulgaria	34	Bulgaria	23
Portugal	30	Luxembourg	21
Latvia	30	Slovakia	20
Luxembourg	29	Italy	18
Malta	25	Poland	15
Poland	25	Latvia	14
Romania	25	Romania	13
Estonia	23	Lithuania	10

The data was extracted from the same source as before. The results are in descending order and green represents only the cases in which the expression of a religious belief was the third most mentioned item when answering what feature would hamper the position of a job applicant.

The data clearly reflects a more negative perception of the feature 'being Roman' rather than a general distinction on ethnicity. Nonetheless, some countries such as Finland or Sweden remain at the top of the table in both columns.

This data needs to be carefully considered, for the sample is not wide enough to create absolute abstractions. However, it does reflect the perceptions among the Member States and provides contextual support to cluster the target groups for a communication strategy on the EU citizenship rights.

Getting in touch with the EU

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you online (european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en).

On the phone or in writing

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696,
- via the following form: european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/write-us_en.

Finding information about the EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website (european-union.europa.eu).

EU publications

You can view or order EU publications at op.europa.eu/en/publications. Multiple copies of free publications can be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local documentation centre (european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en).

EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1951 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex (eur-lex.europa.eu).

EU open data

The portal data.europa.eu provides access to open datasets from the EU institutions, bodies and agencies. These can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes. The portal also provides access to a wealth of datasets from European countries.

