

# Joint lessons from the 2024 European Parliament Elections Post-Electoral Assessment and Building a Baseline for Future Advocacy Summary of Concluding SEEEDS Webinar - Working Package 5

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## 1. Summary of the SEEEDS Project

The [Supporting Engagement in European Elections and Democratic Societies \(SEEEDS\) project](#) was initiated to enhance the democratic process by improving the participation and engagement of underrepresented groups, such as women, youth, mobile EU citizens, and other marginalised communities. The European Commission (EC) Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV)-funded project has been creating a stronger link between active citizens and EU decision-making bodies, as well as sought to contribute to ensuring the integrity of the 2024 European Parliament elections.

Key achievements of the project included fostering transnational collaboration among civil society organisations (CSOs) and providing a platform for deliberation on electoral rights and voter mobilisation in cooperation with decision makers in European institutions and bodies. Following a [webinar series](#), a [SEEEDS policy paper](#) (available in 11 European languages) on the 2024 EP elections was presented during a [high-level event at the EP](#) on 4 July 2023, which included all four major political groups in the EP and was opened by the EP's First Vice President.

The [citizen-to-citizen capacity building workshop](#) conducted by Election-Watch.EU brought together focal points from 24 Member States (MS) and combined presentations on the newest election-related developments ahead of the 2024 EP elections with working group discussions and practical preparations for an Election Assessment Mission (EAM).

## 2. Joint Lessons from the 2024 European Parliament Elections

Ahead of the 6-9 June 2024 EP elections, the project partners organised [three voter education webinars](#) focusing on enhancing inclusion of mobile EU citizens, women in elections and empowering youth. As EP official communication partner, Election-Watch.EU compiled 24 Answers to 24 Questions ([Q&A](#)) surrounding the EP elections to support a broad, interested public, but especially a new generation of young and first-time voters.

Aside of the SEEEDS project, Election-Watch.EU conducted a Pre-Election Assessment Mission and issued a [Report](#) in February 2024, building on the [first EAM report 2019](#). Further, [Election-Watch.EU](#) conducted the second comprehensive civil society-led EAM and assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the European elections across all MS. The [2024 EAM report](#) has been a reference document for the [SEEEDS lessons learned webinar](#) on 24 September 2024, and highlights good practices and areas of progress while identifying key challenges that require attention across the six areas of equality, inclusion, transparency, accountability, integrity, and resilience, and to achieve the overall objective of enhancing the European elections.

The final [SEEEDS lessons learned webinar](#) (Working Package 5) evaluated the overall success of the 2024 elections, drawing on insights from both citizens and policy experts. With the goal to set

the foundation for future electoral reforms, advocacy policy makers, representatives of think tanks and the four SEEDS project partners presented their findings and discussed good practices and areas in need of improvement.

[European Partnership for Democracy](#) (EPD) opened the webinar with an interactive poll involving more than 100 participants. Respondents highlighted security, turnout, and integrity as positive take aways of the elections. Most respondents considered that social media had a negative or neutral impact on the elections. As an improvement for the 2029 European elections, participants would like to see greater transparency, stronger youth engagement, more diversity, and introduction of transnational lists.

Election-Watch.EU presented five of its 21 recommendations and 19 best practices across MS and highlighted respective existing challenges:

- 1) inconsistent voter registration systems, particularly for mobile EU citizens who faced difficulties registering and voting; highlighting the good practice example of Latvia with an electronic voter register, which enables voters to vote in any polling station.
- 2) need for stronger legal frameworks for election observation as only nine MS have legal provisions for both international and citizen election observers in place; highlighting the good practice example of Finland, which does not differentiate between international and citizen election observers in its accreditation procedures.
- 3) election laws vary significantly across the 27 MS with requiring stronger EU and MS-level collaborative efforts to advance legislative reforms to ensure equal opportunities across the EU; mentioning Lithuania's consolidated electoral code as a positive practice.
- 4) considerable differences in the availability and requirements for the use of alternative voting methods, with no provisions for voting from abroad in four MS; citing Greece's postal voting for citizens abroad as a positive example.
- 5) missing EU-level guidelines for complaints and appeals and the effectiveness that depends on national systems, which vary considerably in scope of regulation and approach; highlighting the Netherlands as good practice example for planned reforms in this area.

[Democracy Reporting International](#) (DRI), provided insights from their social media monitoring projects during the 2024 elections, focusing on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. One of the key findings was that toxicity levels in online discourse were low, but toxic content generated higher engagement. While youth were a target audience for most of political actors, far-right parties were more successful in engaging younger voters on social media. The use of generative AI in election campaigns has increased and was especially used by far-right parties in Germany, France, and Italy. There are concerns about the lack of transparency in labeling AI-generated content, calling for stricter regulations.

The [Political Accountability Foundation](#), a member of the [European Platform for Democratic Elections](#) (EPDE), provided insights into citizen election observation in Poland and explained how the rule of law, as well as legal and electoral systems had been affected by eight years of rule by the former governing Law and Justice Party. There have been various efforts by the civil society to advocate for electoral law reforms, particularly in relation to state resource abuse during campaigns.

The EC Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) representative highlighted that, while the organisation of elections is a national competence, the EC plays a crucial role in supporting preparedness for elections. Through initiatives like the [European Democracy Action Plan](#) and the [Defense of Democracy Package](#), the EC has made strides to protect democratic values and ensure electoral integrity and also referred to the [EC Recommendation on Inclusive and Resilient Electoral Processes](#) of December 2023. The EC supports election observation, noting that it enhances trust in the electoral process, and encourages the inclusion of legal provisions for both international and citizen election observers in all MS. Key challenges include disinformation, inclusiveness, gender equality, electoral transparency, and protection against cyber threats. These are discussed in the [European Cooperation Network on Elections](#), which facilitates exchanges of best practices and information to safeguard elections. There is important new legislation, such as the Digital Services Act and the AI Act, for regulating political advertising and the use of AI in campaigns. The EC representative emphasized that democracy is a collective effort and collaboration between institutions, civil society, and citizens is crucial to safeguarding democratic processes.

The [Jacques Delors Institute](#) representative elaborated on the need to harmonise electoral laws across the EU as the European elections are effectively 27 separate national elections, rather than one European election. There is need for standardising voting processes, such as having a common voting day, lowering the voting age, and setting consistent thresholds across MS to create a more Europeanised election system. Past focus on defending democracy has been predominantly on external threats, rather than addressing domestic challenges, such as political populism and far-right movements, which are becoming more adept at using AI campaign tools and social media to influence voters. There is a need for national political parties to assume greater responsibility for promoting and supporting European democratic reforms and increase transparency and accountability during elections. A comprehensive strategy is needed, including for strengthening the resilience of democratic institutions and increasing awareness of how to combat far-right narratives in public debates.

### 3. Recommendations and Way Forward

Based on the insights gathered during the webinars and the overall assessment of the 2024 elections, recommendations were proposed to guide future electoral reforms on improving electoral inclusion, transparency, and accountability, while also addressing the role of technology in elections. Involving citizens and organised civil society in the electoral processes as observers fosters ownership, trust, and transparency, aligning with democratic decision-making ideals. [Election-Watch.EU](#) and the other [SEEEDS project partners](#) will continue advocating for electoral reforms at the European level with EU institutions, the new legislators, and the relevant EP committees.

Additionally, it is crucial to sensitise national governments and national Election Management Bodies about the need for reforms and greater cooperation to address the growing challenges in an increasingly complex electoral environment. A human rights-based approach to further electoral and democratic reforms is necessary, in line with international and European standards and commitments, as trust in elections is difficult to gain and easy to lose.

## Annex<sup>1</sup>

**TABLE 1: SUFFRAGE RIGHTS**

Member State	Voting age	Candidacy age	Voting rights granted to persons with intellectual & psychosocial disabilities & under guardianship	Voting rights restricted for prisoners	Voting rights extended to specified non-EU citizens	Independent candidates	Electoral threshold	Multi-member constituencies
Austria	16	18	yes	partly		lists with others	4 %	
Belgium	16	18	with limitations	partly		lists with others	none	yes (3)
Bulgaria	18	21	no	blanket		individual	none	
Croatia	18	18	yes			lists with others	5 %	
Cyprus	18	21	no		yes	individual	1.8 %	
Czechia	18	21	with limitations			within party lists	5 %	
Denmark	18	18	with limitations			no	none	
Estonia	18	21	no	blanket		individual	none	
Finland	18	18	yes			individual	none	
France	18	18	yes	partly		lists with others	5 %	
Germany	16	18	yes	partly		no	none	
Greece	17	25	yes	partly		no	3 %	
Hungary	18	18	with limitations	blanket		no	5 %	
Ireland	18	21	yes			individual	none	yes (3)
Italy	18	25	yes	partly		no	4 %	yes (5)
Latvia	18	21	yes			within party lists	5 %	
Lithuania	18	21	with limitations			no	5 %	
Luxembourg	18	18	yes	partly *		lists with others	none	
Malta	16	18	with limitations	blanket		individual	none	
Netherlands	18	18	yes	partly	yes	lists with others	none	
Poland	18	21	no	partly		lists with others	5 %	yes (13)
Portugal	18	18	with limitations	partly	yes	lists with others	none	
Romania	18	23	with limitations	partly *		individual	5 %	
Slovakia	18	21	yes			no	5 %	
Slovenia	18	18	yes			lists with others	none	
Spain	18	18	yes	partly		lists with others	none	
Sweden	18	18	yes			no	4 %	

\* Voting rights are not automatically reinstated upon serving a sentence.

<sup>1</sup> For Tables 1-4 see [Election-Watch.EU Final Report Election Assessment Mission 2024 European Parliament Elections](#), Sept. 2024.

**TABLE 2: VOTING**

Member State	Compulsory voting	Preferential voting	Out of country voting (postal or embassy)	Postal voting (in-country and abroad)	Advance voting	Mobile ballot box voting	Internet Voting & Electronic Voting	Proxy voting	Ballot paper (only one or one for each party)
Austria		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes			one
Belgium	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		EV	yes	one
Bulgaria	yes	yes	yes			yes	EV		one
Croatia		yes	yes			yes			one
Cyprus		yes	yes						one
Czechia		yes				yes			each party
Denmark		yes	yes		yes				one
Estonia		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	IV		one
Finland		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes			one
France		closed list	yes	yes	yes		EV	yes	each party
Germany		closed list	yes	yes					one
Greece	yes	yes	yes	yes					each party
Hungary		closed list	yes	yes		yes			one
Ireland		yes	milit. & dipl. only	yes					one, STV
Italy		yes	yes			yes			one
Latvia		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes			each party
Lithuania		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes			one
Luxembourg	yes	yes	yes	yes					one
Malta		yes			yes				one, STV
Netherlands		yes	yes	yes				yes	one
Poland		yes	yes	yes		yes		limited	one
Portugal		closed list	yes	yes	yes	yes			one
Romania		closed list	yes			yes			one
Slovakia		yes				yes			each party
Slovenia		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes			one
Spain		closed list	yes	yes				limited	each party
Sweden		yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		limited	each party

**TABLE 3: PARTY AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE**

Member State	Foreign funding permitted	Public funding available	Funding from companies prohibited	Limited anonymous funding permitted	In-kind donations permitted	No campaign spending limit or bans on types of expenditure in place	Online campaign included in campaign finance laws
Austria	limited			yes	limited		
Belgium					limited		no
Bulgaria			yes		unlimited		no
Croatia					limited		
Cyprus	unlimited	no			unlimited		
Czechia	limited				limited		
Denmark	unlimited	no		yes	unlimited	yes	no
Estonia		no	yes		no	yes	
Finland	limited	no			limited	yes	
France					unlimited		
Germany	unlimited			yes	unlimited	yes	no
Greece	limited				limited		no
Hungary		no			limited	yes	no
Ireland				yes	limited		no
Italy		no			unlimited		no
Latvia			yes		limited		
Lithuania			yes		limited	yes	
Luxembourg	unlimited		yes		unlimited	yes	
Malta	limited	no			limited		no
Netherlands				yes	unlimited	yes	no
Poland			yes		limited		
Portugal			yes		limited		
Romania					limited		
Slovakia		no			limited		
Slovenia	limited		yes		limited		
Spain			yes		limited	yes	
Sweden	unlimited			yes	unlimited	yes	no

**WOMEN REPRESENTATION**

Quota for Women on Candidate Lists (%)	Percentage women MEP elected 2024
	40.00%
50	40.91%
	23.53%
40	41.67%
	0%
	38.10%
	33.33%
	28.57%
	60.00%
50	50.62%
	36.46%
40	28.57%
	47.62%
	42.86%
50	32.89%
	22.22%
	18.18%
50 (incentive)	33.33%
	16.67%
	48.39%
35	28.30%
40	38.10%
equality	18.18%
	46.67%
40	33.33%
40	50.00%
	61.90%

**TABLE 4: SEAT ALLOCATION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

Member State	total # of registered voters	Population (end of 2023)	EP mandates 2024	Inhabitants per mandate 2024	2024 deviation from median inhab/seat in %	EP mandates (post-Brexit)	Deviation from media inhab/seat in % (post-Brexit)	Changes in disproportionality (post-Brexit to 2024)
Austria	6,372,204	9,104,772	20	455,239	27%	19	37%	reduced
Belgium	8,537,902	11,742,796	22	533,763	14%	21	26%	reduced
Bulgaria	6,170,472	6,447,710	17	379,277	39%	17	43%	reduced
Croatia	3,524,179	3,850,894	12	320,908	49%	12	52%	reduced
Cyprus	683,432	920,701	6	153,450	75%	6	80%	reduced
Czechia	8,212,628	10,827,529	21	515,597	17%	21	31%	reduced
Denmark	4,301,255	5,932,654	15	395,510	37%	14	44%	reduced
Estonia	980,014	1,365,884	7	195,126	69%	7	75%	reduced
Finland	4,546,589	5,563,970	15	370,931	40%	14	46%	reduced
France	49,462,981	68,172,977	81	841,642	-35%	79	-16%	increased
Germany	61,963,020	84,358,845	96	878,738	-41%	96	-18%	increased
Greece	9,814,685	10,413,982	21	495,904	20%	21	30%	reduced
Hungary	7,803,603	9,599,744	21	457,131	27%	21	36%	reduced
Ireland	3,554,450	5,271,395	14	376,528	40%	13	49%	reduced
Italy	51,214,348	58,997,201	76	776,279	-25%	76	-9%	increased
Latvia	1,541,102	1,883,008	9	209,223	66%	8	66%	same
Lithuania	2,387,327	2,857,279	11	259,753	58%	11	65%	reduced
Luxembourg	319,410	660,809	6	110,135	82%	6	86%	reduced
Malta	370,184	542,051	6	90,342	86%	6	91%	reduced
Netherlands	13,542,363	17,811,291	31	574,558	8%	29	19%	reduced
Poland	29,098,155	36,753,736	53	693,467	-11%	52	0%	increased
Portugal	10,789,781	10,467,366	21	498,446	20%	21	33%	reduced
Romania	18,025,329	19,054,548	33	577,411	7%	33	19%	reduced
Slovakia	4,337,093	5,428,792	15	361,919	42%	14	47%	reduced
Slovenia	1,689,602	2,116,972	9	235,219	62%	8	64%	reduced
Spain	38,050,286	48,085,361	61	788,285	-26%	59	-8%	increased
Sweden	7,942,272	10,521,556	21	501,026	20%	21	35%	reduced