

European Parliament electoral reform

Adopting the improved Bundestag system

Summary

The choice of a preferred electoral system rests on the values, goal and priorities we choose to enshrine. Given our values of democracy, equality, and simplicity¹, and our goals and priorities — ensuring local representation and proportionality, guaranteeing the equality of all citizens, and creating a system both simple and clear for all —, the improved Bundestag system² presented here is our optimal voting system.³

Based on the German lower house's electoral system, it gives citizens a **dual vote**: one vote for a local candidate, one for a European party.⁴ Through this, we ensure both the representation of citizens at the most local level, and the proportional representation of the population's opinion in Parliament.

However, we must build upon this system and we therefore propose a number of improvements on the Bundestag's electoral system, including **using Majority Judgment** instead of first-past-the-post for the local election, **lowering the threshold** for the proportional vote, **capping the number of elected representatives**, and **ensuring gender balance**.

Between this and our proposal for the creation of true European parties — which is to work in tandem with this electoral reform —, we can finally create the basis of a solid and lasting democratic Union for all European citizens and engage them fully in the electoral and political process.

This model guarantees:

- True local representation
- True proportionality
- Equality for all EU citizens

This model is compatible with:

- Europarties as main actors of EU politics
- Gender balance
- The Spitzenkandidat system

¹ While less often mentioned, simplicity is a central requirement for citizens to understand their institutions and get engaged into the political process.

² The term “Bundestag system” is used here for ease of reference, since it relies heavily on the election system of the German lower house. However, we also propose a number of useful innovations that aim at improving the system's democracy and efficiency.

³ For more information on a common European voting mechanism, see: <https://europeanconstitution.eu/a-new-voting-system>

⁴ By “European party”, we mean “an entity registered as a political party at the European level”. These parties may exist in all or some of the Member States. However, they are not national political parties.

Our values, goals and priorities

Let us first address the elephant in the room: there is no perfect or ideal voting system. Voting systems can differ widely, and each has its strengths and weaknesses. It is a voting system's adequacy with our values, goals and priorities that must be the deciding criteria.

Our core values of democracy, equality and simplicity translate to the following goals and priorities:

- **Proximity of representatives to the citizens.** A prerequisite for a working legislature is the representation of citizens at the most local level across the territory. Citizens must therefore be able to directly elect a representative locally. This MEP will be their point of contact in Parliament and ensures a close link between citizens and representatives.
- **Proportional representation of citizens' preferences in Parliament.** A legislature should also properly reflect the opinion of the population. The voting system must therefore ensure proportionality in the Parliament's composition.
- **Equality of citizens.** Since this is a European election, all EU citizens must be able to participate under the same conditions, including for their eligibility (voting age, residency criteria, etc.), the voting modalities (proxy voting, postal voting, etc.) and for the voting system itself (type of vote, threshold, apportionment methods, etc.).
- **A simple voting system.** In order for citizens to engage in the political process, institutions must be clear and understandable. It is therefore essential for the voting system, alongside the rest of our institutions, to be simple and transparent.
- **Emphasis on true European parties.** The system we design must go hand-in-hand with our call for the creation of true European parties; in particular, this system should not place the interest of national parties above that of citizens.

Under the light of these goals and priorities, we can assess the current EP electoral system.

Deficiencies of the current electoral system

The European Parliament's current electoral system is a simple proportional system mostly organised at the national level. As such, it has a number of grave deficiencies that must be addressed. In particular:

- **Representatives are far from their citizens.** Member States elect between 6 and 96 MEPs each, most of them chosen on nation-wide lists. Asking citizens to know these candidates (and sometimes rank them) is more than can be expected of citizens. As a result, citizens vote for a party and have virtually no knowledge of the candidates themselves. This also means that citizens have no identifiable point of contact they can turn to in the European Parliament.
- **Citizens are not equal before the vote.** Beyond general principles, all voting modalities are decided at the national level, which induces wide differences in

eligibility and in the way citizens' preferences are expressed. For instance, Belgian citizens (or EU citizens voting in Belgium) can rank their preferred candidates from a small constituency; French citizens (or EU citizens voting in France) can only vote for a predetermined, closed list of 79 candidates covering the entire territory.

- **The system entrenches the national aspect of elections.** From beginning to end, and beyond the national voting systems, the electoral system is led by national parties: national parties choose candidates, draft electoral programmes, decide on political alliances, spend money, go on the campaign trail, are elected, and, under certain conditions, get reimbursed for their campaign expenses. Once elected, national candidates decide to join this or that European party (with predictability for some parties, and bargaining for others).

For all these deficiencies — and their critical impact on the EU's democracy —, we must propose an alternative system for the European Parliament's election: a system that remedies these deficiencies and, at the same time, upholds our values and priorities.

Our proposal: the improved Bundestag system

For ease of reference, we call this proposal the “improved Bundestag system”, since it relies heavily on the election system of the German lower house. As a large federal parliamentary democracy with a rather recent constitution, updated federal electoral law, and varied multi-party political system, Germany can indeed serve as a solid reference for the EU's own lower house.⁵

However, as we will see, we also propose a number of useful innovations that aim at improving the system's democracy and efficiency.

Review of the distribution of seats between Member States

Before addressing the issue of the voting system above, we must mention the distribution (or “apportionment”) of European Parliament seats among the Member States.

The European Parliament currently has 751 seats (pre-Brexit figure) and distributes them among Member States using a system called “degressive proportionality”. According to this system, the 751 seats are allocated in proportion to Member States' population, with a minimum number of 6 representatives (Cyprus, Estonia, Luxembourg and Malta) and a maximum of 96 (Germany).

This system was adopted for two reasons:

- A purely proportional system, even with a baseline number of 2 representatives for the Member State with the smallest population would have given us a Parliament with 2332 representatives. Clearly too large for an efficient democracy.

⁵ The United States is another large federal democracy, but the structure of its party system (mostly limited to two parties), which is closely linked to its electoral system, limits the usefulness of the comparison here.

- Member States insisted on having a rather large number of MEPs even for the smallest national populations.

As a result, citizens are not equal and their voices in Parliament are heavily distorted:

- Over 10 millions citizens from 7 Member States are **more than 3 times** more represented than German citizens (themselves the least represented), with rates going as high as 6, 8 or even **11 times more represented**.
- Over **32 millions citizens from 11 Member States** have more than double the representation of German citizens.
- Over **114 millions citizens from 20 Member States** are more than 1.5 times more represented than German citizens.

While exact figures may vary and increase occasionally, this level of distortion is anti-democratic and unacceptable.

We therefore propose to change the distribution of seats, in order to focus not on Member States' number of MEPs, but on citizens' rights to equal representation. In our proposal, the European Parliament counts a baseline number of 700 to 800 seats. Since the Bundestag system gives two votes to citizens (one local, one for a party), 350 to 400 seats would go to local constituencies, with a minimum of 1 representative for the Member State with the smallest population.

As a result of ensuring proportionality, the final number of MEPs goes slightly beyond the baseline number. For instance, here is the distribution for a baseline of 800 MEPs, and a final number of 841 MEPs (although we may expect a slightly larger increase in real life).

Member State	Population (2017)	Current distribution	Proposed distribution (for 800 baseline seats)
Germany	82.800.000	96	130
United Kingdom	67.545.757	73	120
France	67.024.459	74	106
Italy	60.589.445	73	102
Spain	46.528.966	54	74
Poland	37.972.964	51	61
Romania	19.638.309	32	30
Netherlands	17.081.507	26	26
Belgium	11.365.834	21	19
Greece	10.757.293	21	17
Czech Republic	10.578.820	21	16
Portugal	10.309.573	21	16

Member State	Population (2017)	Current distribution	Proposed distribution (for 800 baseline seats)
Sweden	9.995.153	20	17
Hungary	9.797.561	21	17
Austria	8.772.865	18	15
Bulgaria	7.101.859	17	12
Denmark	5.748.769	13	8
Finland	5.503.297	13	9
Slovakia	5.435.343	13	9
Ireland	4.774.833	11	8
Croatia	4.154.213	11	6
Lithuania	2.847.904	11	5
Slovenia	2.065.895	8	5
Latvia	1.950.116	8	4
Estonia	1.315.635	6	2
Cyprus	854.802	6	3
Luxembourg	590.667	6	2
Malta	440.433	6	2
EU-28	513.542.272	751	841

With this distribution, not only do we prevent a damagingly large size for the Parliament, but we restore the equal representation of citizens to an overwhelming margin. Because of the minimum 1 direct representative for each Member State, there are some disparities, but the number of citizens represented more than 2 times the floor level is contained to 1 million (compared to 32 million before), and not a single citizen is more than 3 times as represented.

It must be noted that the ratio between the populations of the smallest and largest federated entities in Germany and the US is smaller than in the EU. In Germany, the largest Land (North Rhine-Westphalia) has 27 times the population of the smallest (Bremen). In the US, the ratio between the populations of California and Wyoming is 68. In the EU, Germany has 174 times more citizens than Malta.⁶ This wide difference in populations is a fact we must taken into account. We propose to focus on citizens' rights, instead of on guaranteeing a large number of MEPs to all Member States at the expense of citizens themselves.

⁶ This remains smaller than the ratio between Uttar Pradesh and Sikkim, in India, which stands at 327.

Baseline model: the Bundestag election

The system we propose is largely based on the election system of the Bundestag, the German lower house. This system checks all three of our priorities: it ensures a local representation, it ensures the proportionality of political parties in the Parliament, and all citizens are equal before the vote.

The Bundestag system is characterised by a dual vote, meaning that each citizen, on a single ballot, votes twice:

- **Direct vote.** The first vote is the direct vote. It is a vote for an individual and serves to elect a direct representative from a local constituency. In order to do this, every Member State is split up into as many constituencies as it has direct representatives. As we have seen above, we propose a figure between 350 and 400 for local constituencies.

For instance, with a total of 400 local constituencies across Europe, Germany would be split into 64 electoral constituencies; meanwhile, France would be split in 52, Portugal in 8, and Malta would be a single constituency.

This direct vote allows citizens to vote at a very local level and to have a direct point of contact in the European Parliament: their directly, locally elected representative.

- **Proportional vote.** The second vote is the proportional vote. It is a vote for a European party and serves to ensure proportionality in Parliament. Proportionality is essential, in order to avoid one party narrowly winning a large number of local constituencies and ending with a disproportionately large number of MEPs.

For instance, in France's 2017 presidential election, Emmanuel Macron won 24% in the first round (which includes most of the votes of another centrist party whose leader decided not to run in order to support Emmanuel Macron). However, following the legislative elections, just over a month later, President Macron's alliance won over 60% of the National Assembly's seats, by narrowly winning many constituencies. As a result, En Marche possesses a large majority to enact its programme, despite receiving support from less than a quarter of voters. With a proportional vote, his share of the Assembly would have remained around 25%.

Following the vote, all candidates who have won a seat from the direct vote are guaranteed a seat in the European Parliament. The proportional vote is then used to fill in the remaining seats and ensure proportionality in every Member State.⁷ This is done by adding candidates from Member State-wide lists.⁸

⁷ Technically, this is now done in a two-step process, first with so-called "overhang" seats (überhangsmandate), and then with "balancing" or "leveling" seats (ausgleichsmandate), which aim at compensating States that received few overhang seats (because their direct vote was more in line with their proportional vote). However, this second system does inflate the Parliament's size noticeably and may not be really needed here or should be heavily capped.

⁸ In order to avoid parties tricking the system by supporting like-minded independent candidates, thereby lowering their number of official directly elected candidates and increasing their number of proportionally elected candidates to make up for it, a provision dismisses the second vote of citizens who voted for a successful independent candidate.

Ballot
for the election of
the European Parliament
of 9 May 2019

You have two votes

One vote here

For the election
of a direct candidate
from your local
constituency

One vote here

For the election
of proportional candidates
from Member State-wide
party lists

First vote

1	Maria Avina	S&D	<input type="radio"/>
2	Paul Bimon	Greens	<input type="radio"/>
3	Stefanie Eradt	Voit	<input type="radio"/>
4	Marcel Fuchamp	EPP	<input type="radio"/>
5	Joao Silva	Renew Europe	<input type="radio"/>

Second vote

<input type="radio"/>	Greens		1
<input type="radio"/>	EPP		2
<input type="radio"/>	Renew Europe		3
<input type="radio"/>	Voit		4
<input type="radio"/>	GUE/NGL		5
<input type="radio"/>	S&D		6
<input type="radio"/>	ID		7
<input type="radio"/>	ECR		8

Example of voting ballot with the regular Bundestag system

A few points are important to keep in mind:

- Truly local representation.** When ensuring local representation, we must be careful to provide a really local representation. For instance, in 2009 and 2014, France experimented with regional constituencies. The country was divided in 8 electoral regions, each electing its MEPs. Unfortunately, the regions remained so large (with each region electing from 5 to 15 candidates⁹), that the election was not made more local. Citizens did not feel any closer to their representatives and the country switched back to a nation-wide constituency for the 2019 elections. This is why we emphasize the need for a local election and the importance of single-MEP constituencies, in order to create a real link between representatives and citizens. With 841 MEPs (400 local constituencies), every MEP represents just over 607,000 citizens; with 742 MEPs (350 local constituencies), each MEP represents 692,000 citizens. This remains inferior (and therefore, more local) than the US House of Representatives, with an average of 711,000 citizens per Representative.
- No need for transnational lists.**¹⁰ The direct vote elects local candidates, while the proportional vote draws candidates from nation-wide lists. Therefore, even using the Bundestag system, there is no need for transnational (or pan-European) lists of candidates. Drawing proportional candidates from national lists helps ensure that each Member State receives a fair number of representatives, in line

⁹ Having a much smaller population, overseas territories were split into three single-MEP constituencies.

¹⁰ For more on transnational lists and transnational parties, see: <https://europeanconstitution.eu/not-transnational-lists-transnational-parties>

with the distribution of seats that was discussed above. Of course, as is already the case, this does not prevent any European citizens from running wherever he or she resides across Europe, even outside of his or her country of nationality.

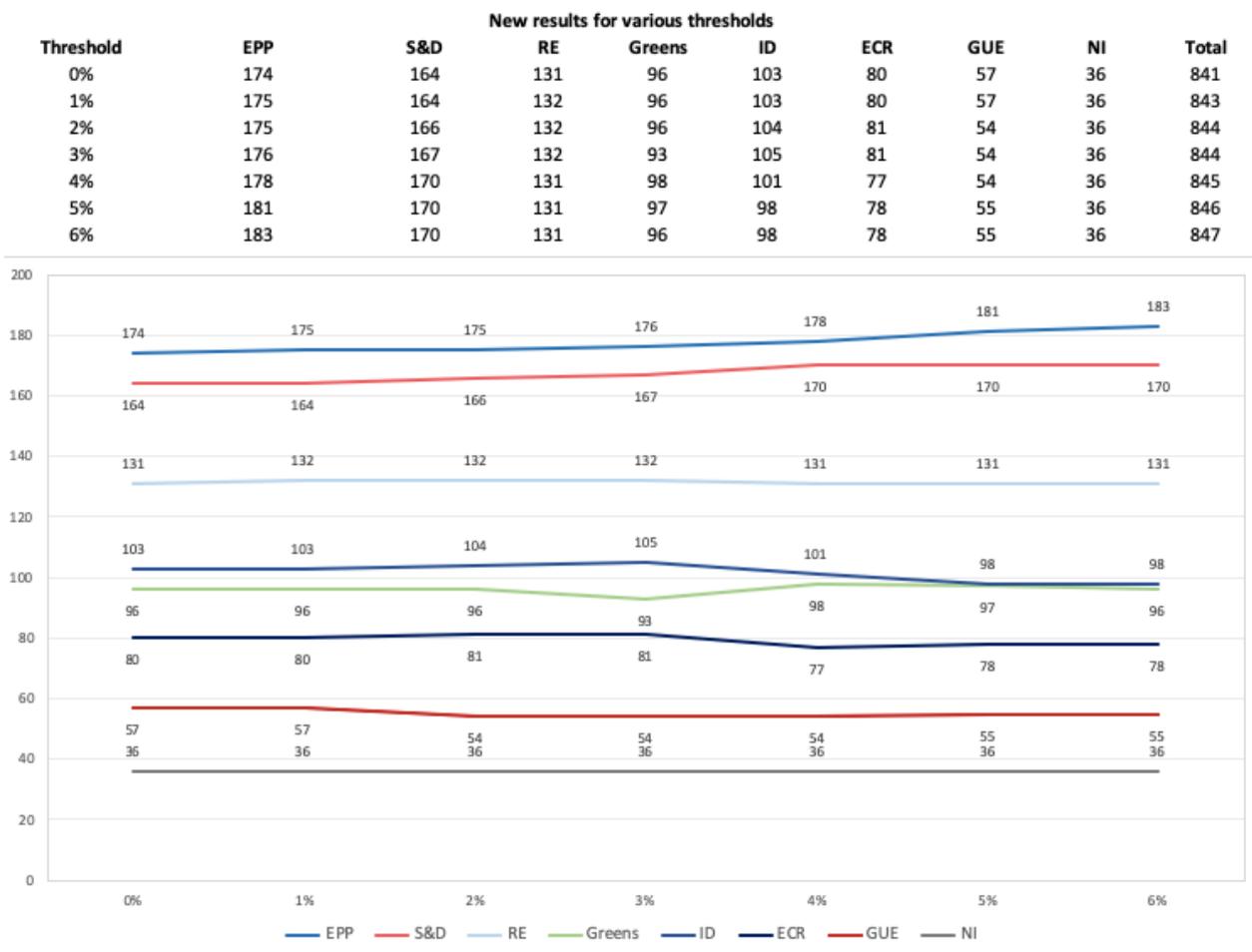
- **European parties.** While transnational lists are not needed, it is essential for a true political union to have pan-European parties. The Bundestag system must therefore be promoted alongside a reform on the status of European parties, in order to ensure that the campaigns are lead by European parties and their national chapter (akin to Volt Europa's structure), instead of by national parties. This will ensure that each national chapter's message is in line with the message of the European party and therefore addresses all European citizens, not simply a national audience.
- **Spitzenkandidat system.** The Spitzenkandidat system, at the European level, is the attempt to link the choice of the President of the European Commission to European elections by having European parties choose a leader (the Spitzenkandidat); the Spitzenkandidat of the winning party would, in turn, be appointed by the European Council as President of the Commission. As we have seen following the 2019 elections, the European Council decided to nominate another candidate as President-elect of the Commission and that candidate was confirmed by the European Parliament.
The Bundestag system is fully compatible with the Spitzenkandidat (both system come from Germany) and can work smoothly if we ensure that European parties lead the elections: European parties can then organise pan-European primaries for its supporters to identify a Spitzenkandidat, and the Spitzenkandidat of the party or coalition gathering a majority in the European Parliament ought to be appointed by the European Council.

Useful innovations: taking the model further

While the Bundestag's electoral system provide a solid basis to work from, there are innovations we can bring to fine-tune it.

1. **Thresholds.** For the distribution of proportional seats, the Bundestag imposes a threshold of 5% of the proportional vote or 3 direct seats. These measures make sense in order to avoid volatility in Parliament. However, the 5% bar is a particularly high one. For this, we propose lowering it down to 1 or 2%. In practice, for most Member States, there is a higher natural threshold, which represents the minimum number of votes to get a seat, as the number of seats is low.
The picture below shows the impact of various thresholds, from 0% to 6% on the number of MEPs of European parties, according to our model.
 - In terms of parties, by cutting out smaller national branches, thresholds give a bonus to larger national parties. Overall, the EPP gains as much as 7 representatives for a 5% threshold; the largest increase for a 2% threshold is only 2 seats, for the S&D.
 - In terms of countries, thresholds mostly impacts national branches in the largest countries but, at the same time, gives these countries more seats. With a 2% threshold, national branches of the Greens, ECR and GUE are cut in Germany, the UK, Italy, Spain and Poland (the EU's largest countries, except France);

however, Germany, the UK and Spain actually each gain a seat and the size of Parliament grows by three seats. This grow continues with higher thresholds.



Impact of thresholds on the composition of Parliament using the improved Bundestag system

2. **Gender-alternate lists.** We propose imposing that the nation-wide lists used for the proportional vote be gender-alternate, meaning that no two candidates of the same gender may be placed next to each other on the list.

We can even go one step further in requiring the proportional vote to make up for any gender over-representation in the direct vote: this way, should more men be elected locally, more people of other genders would be drawn from nation-wide lists in order to ensure gender balance in the Parliament. On the one hand, this may face legal challenges as a positive discrimination measure. On the other, we can argue that voters' preferences are not tempered with, since this only applies to the proportional vote, where citizens vote for a party and not for individual candidates; as a result, even by ensuring gender balance, we are not affecting the party's outcome and, therefore, the intent of voters.

3. **Cap on seat numbers.** In order to ensure that directly-elected candidates have a guaranteed seat and, at the same time, that proportionality is ensured, the size of Parliament must be increased. Since this helps ensure two core priorities, this is an important element to consider. However, an overly large parliament is neither wishable for its own efficiency, nor for the increased cost at the taxpayer's expense. In particular, a 2013 reform in Germany led to the growth of the Bundestag from its

baseline of 598 to an actual 709 representatives. Such an increase (of almost 20%) is detrimental and, in particular at the EU level where accusations of bureaucracy abound, would tarnish the image of the European Parliament. For this, we propose a cap on the size of Parliament. Mechanically, this cap would limit the amount of proportionality that would be ensured, but it would be a useful trade-off between proportionality and efficiency. We therefore propose a maximum 10 to 15% cap on the increase of the Parliament’s size. Our model, using data from the 2019 elections, shows an increase of 5,1%, although it is reasonable to expect a slightly higher increase in real life.

For a nominal number of 800 MEPs



Exactly 400 seats are elected locally to ensure local representation. Seats are distributed among Member States based on their population. Member States are divided into as many local constituencies as they have seats; each local constituency elects one MEP. We use the Webster/Sainte Laguë method to distribute seats among Member States.



In each Member State, each European party sets up a State-wide lists of candidates. At least 400 candidates are elected from these lists to ensure the proportional representation of European parties; extra seats may be created. Lists are gender-alternate, meaning that consecutive candidates cannot be of the same gender.

Ballot
for the election of
the European Parliament
of 9 May 2019

You have two votes

One vote here

For the election
of a direct candidate
from your local
constituency

First vote

One vote here

For the election
of proportional candidates
from Member State-wide
party lists

Second vote

To represent my local district in the European Parliament, I consider the following candidates...
(indicate your opinion of the various candidates)

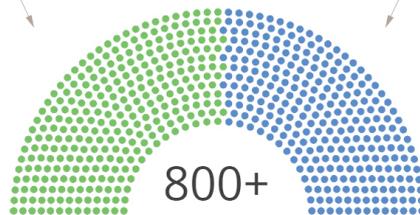
		To be re-elected	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very good	Excellent
1	Maria Avina	S&D	<input type="radio"/>					
2	Paul Simon	Greens	<input type="radio"/>					
3	Stefania Eradt	Volt	<input type="radio"/>					
4	Marcel Fochamp	EPP	<input type="radio"/>					
5	João Silva	Renew Europe	<input type="radio"/>					

I support the following party(ies) to represent me in the European Parliament
(Tick one or more boxes)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Greens		1
<input type="checkbox"/>	EPP		2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renew Europe		3
<input type="checkbox"/>	VOLT		4
<input type="checkbox"/>	GUENGL		5
<input type="checkbox"/>	S&D		6
<input type="checkbox"/>	ID		7
<input type="checkbox"/>	ECR		8

400 MEPs are elected locally to ensure local representation. All locally-elected MEPs are guaranteed a seat in Parliament.

At least 400 MEPs are elected through lists to ensure the proportional representation of European parties. Proportionality is applied at the State level: for each party, seats are first filled with locally elected candidates and the remainder is drawn from State-wide lists.



Members of Parliament

Infographic of the improved Bundestag system

4. **Majority Judgment for the direct vote.** One of the greatest flaws of the Bundestag system is its reliance on “first-past-the-post” voting for the direct vote. In this system, citizens vote for one single candidate among several. First-past-the-post is useful in its simplicity, but it is the worst of all voting systems in accounting for citizens’ opinions, as it forces citizens to give all their support to a single person, while saying nothing of their support (or lack thereof) for other candidates. Instead, voters could have the right to vote for more than one local candidate, or rank candidates, or even give them grades — all in order to bring some nuance to the vote. But the most efficient system is Majority Judgment, whereby voters assess candidates separately by giving them a “mention”, ranging from “excellent” to “rejected”. This allows voters to give their clear opinion of each candidate (leaving blank where there is no opinion), including the possibility to equally support several candidates. Without going into details, this voting system also avoids a number of voting paradoxes and eliminates strategic voters, where voters are incited vote against their own opinion in order to cheat the system. We therefore propose using Majority Judgment for the direct vote.
5. **Exploring other voting options for the proportional vote.** In the same way, the proportional vote does not need to be limited to picking one single party. While Majority Judgment would not work for the proportional vote, we can indeed explore alternative solutions, such as splitting one’s vote between different parties (with parties receiving, for instance, $\frac{1}{2}$ vote if a voter supports two parties) or a point-based system. This is less of a concern than the direct vote, but it is important to keep an open mind about these options.

Example: the 2019 European election using our model

So what would an election with this system look like? After all, if we are to propose a system, it is important to test it out in practice.

For this, we have used the data from the 2019 European election and simulated an election using the Bundestag model for a baseline of 800 MEPs.

[All the data for our model can be found here.](#)

Here is how it went:¹¹

1. First of all, we calculate the distribution of seats between Member States, using both the Saint-Laguë method and the Largest Remainder method. They bring the same results.
2. With this new distribution, we show that the principle of equal representation is widely more guaranteed than with degressive proportionality.

¹¹ Since we support a system where European parties lead the campaign, the model takes this into account and groups national parties according to their European party membership (or, at least, the European party they would join if they were elected). In practice, national parties currently lead elections, which means they would have to agree on how to divide the seats among themselves (in case several national parties belong to the same European party), but this does not affect the results of the model.

3. Using the results of national parties for each Member State, we can find the seats gained by each European party in each Member State, as well as their share of the vote at the national level.
4. In order to simulate a realistic direct vote, we start with the seats gained by each European party at the national level, apply a ratio in order to account for the lower number of seats (400 direct seats, compared to 751 seats in the current election), and then introduce some changes here and there to create a mismatch between the direct and the proportional vote.
 - For instance, the S&D in Austria wins 2 local constituencies (out of Austria's 7 direct seats).
5. Since we have calculated the score of each European in each Member State, we have the result of our proportional vote, which serves to know how many seats are "owed" to each European party in each Member State.
 - For instance, the S&D in Austria gets 23,9% of the vote and is therefore owed 3 seats (out of Austria's total 14 seats).
6. By subtracting the number of seats directly gained from the number of seats owed, we can calculate the number of candidates to be drawn from national lists.
 - For instance, the S&D in Austria is owed 3 seats and already has 2 seats filled directly, which means that the 1st candidate (and only the 1st candidate) from the S&D's Austrian list is elected.
 - Conversely, in Poland, the S&D won 5 local constituencies (out of 15), but, having won only 6,1% of the proportional vote, it is only owed 4 seats (out of Poland's total of 30 seats). Since locally elected MEPs are all guaranteed their seats, the S&D keeps its 5 seats, but other parties gain extra seats to make up for it and ensure State-wide proportionality.
7. In the end, while the number of directly-elected candidates is exactly the number of constituencies (400), the number of proportionally-elected candidates goes slightly beyond the nominal number of 400 to reach 441.

We therefore end up with a European Parliament of 841 MEPs, close to our original baseline, with voters' opinions proportionally represented and close to half of the MEPs directly elected at the closest level to the citizens. Here are the results:

Member States	EPP	S&D	RE	Greens	ID	ECR	GUE	NI	Total
Austria	5	3	1	2	3	0	0	1	15
Belgium	2	3	4	3	2	2	2	1	19
Bulgaria	5	3	2	0	1	1	0	0	12
Croatia	2	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	6
Cyprus	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3
Czech Republic	3	1	4	2	2	3	1	0	16
Denmark	0	2	3	1	1	0	1	0	8

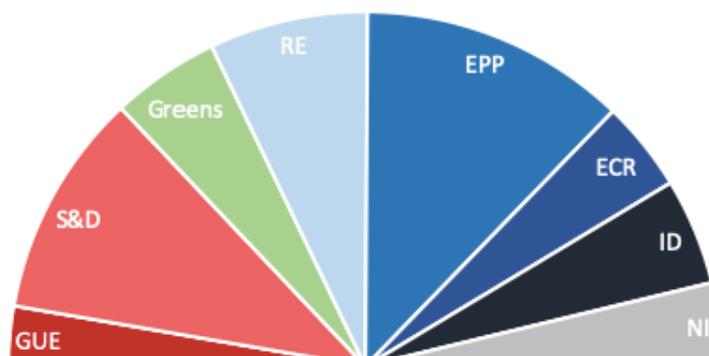
Member States	EPP	S&D	RE	Greens	ID	ECR	GUE	NI	Total
Estonia	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Finland	2	1	2	1	1	0	1	1	9
France	12	11	25	15	27	4	10	2	106
Germany	38	21	10	34	15	1	9	2	130
Greece	7	2	0	0	0	1	6	1	17
Hungary	8	4	2	1	1	0	0	1	17
Ireland	3	0	1	1	0	0	3	0	8
Italy	11	26	4	3	40	8	2	8	102
Latvia	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	4
Lithuania	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	5
Luxembourg	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Malta	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Netherlands	6	6	6	3	1	3	1	0	26
Poland	23	5	0	0	3	29	1	0	61
Portugal	5	7	0	1	0	0	3	0	16
Romania	12	9	9	0	0	0	0	0	30
Slovakia	4	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	9
Slovenia	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	5
Spain	16	25	12	1	0	5	13	2	74
Sweden	4	4	2	2	0	3	2	0	17
United Kingdom	0	22	36	25	5	15	1	16	120
EU-28	174	164	131	96	103	80	57	36	841

Having a closer look at our results, we can see that the proportionality that we end up with is extremely close to the proportional vote itself:

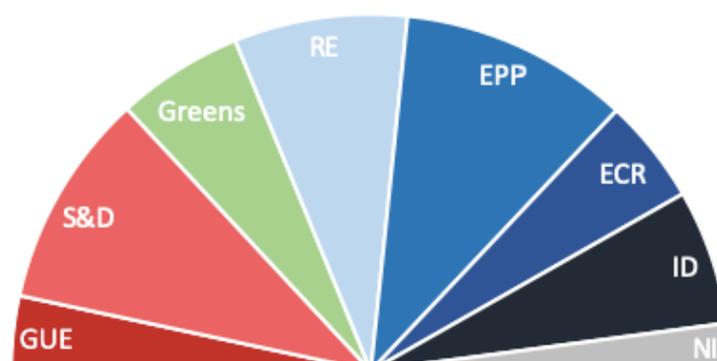
	EPP	S&D	RE	Greens	ID	ECR	GUE
Proportional vote	21.8%	20.4%	16.1%	12.0%	12.9%	9.9%	7.0%
Final result	20.7%	19.5%	15.6%	11.4%	12.2%	9.5%	6.8%
Difference	-1.1	-0.9	-0.5	-0.6	-0.6	-0.4	-0.2
Final result - NI	21.61%	20.37%	16.27%	11.93%	12.80%	9.94%	7.08%

	EPP	S&D	RE	Greens	ID	ECR	GUE
Difference	-0.14	0.00	0.15	-0.07	-0.08	0.06	0.08

Actual 2019 seating



New results



Composition of Parliament under the current seating and using the improved Bundestag system

Although we had to make some changes ourselves in the data, we also observe an impact on the composition of Parliament.

In particular, we notice a strengthening of smaller parties. This is mostly due to using European parties, instead of national ones. As such, in the 2019 election, many small national parties whose votes would have gone to smaller European parties did not meet electoral thresholds; by bundling national parties according to which European party they would join, these votes are no longer lost.

Since the left-wing part of the political spectrum is more divided, left-wing parties would also gain more than right-wing parties.

So, overall:

- the larger parties, especially on the right, would see the most downward correction with this system;
- the smaller parties, especially on the left, would see the most upward correction; and

- while extreme-right parties do see an increase in their numbers, the model shows an overall shift to the left/centre-left of the European Parliament.

Q&A

Won't this system be too complicated?

The Bundestag system is not the only system with a dual vote. More broadly, this system is an example of “mixed-member proportional representation”, which are also used in New Zealand, Scotland, Wales, London or Bolivia. The fact that it was used by close to 47 million voters in Germany’s 2017 election shows that can be used on a large scale. Of course, as with any new system, voters must be explained this voting mechanism, but the result is worth the learning time.

Isn't the proposed distribution of seats in the European Parliament unfair? Won't smaller States be under-represented in Parliament with this distribution of seats?

The goal of Parliament is not the representation of States, big or small, but the representation of citizens. In this sense, it is normal that smaller States — some of them with population of middle-sized cities — have a small number of MEPs.

The current “degressive proportionality” is unfair to citizens, as it gives some citizens of the Union way more voice in Parliament than it does to others. While discrepancies on the margins are the inevitable result of differences in population sizes, degressive proportionality institutionalises wide and unacceptable levels of inequality.

In the proposed distribution of seats, proportionality — and the equality of citizens — is restored. The small number of representatives of some Member States is simply the reflection of the size of their population. In practice, thanks to the minimum number of candidate (1 for direct election, and at least 1 for the proportional election) and by keeping their equal representation in the Council, citizens of smaller Member remain more represented than citizens of larger Member States, but to an acceptable level.

Therefore, while less advantageous than the current system, the new distribution remains to the benefit of smaller States, as well as of all European citizens.

Do we really need so many constituencies?

One of the core goals of any parliament is to represent the interest of citizens in the law-making process. For this, it is useful to bring representatives as close as possible to the citizens. This is what we achieve with local, single-MEP constituencies.

Without these local constituencies, MEPs (as they currently are) would be elected proportionally and remain far from their representatives, at least as soon as you reach around 6 MEPs per country. On the contrary, if we only had these local constituencies, there may be a large discrepancy between voters’ opinions and the allocation of seats in Parliament — as the example of France shows.

Finally, settling for sub-national but large constituencies (for instance, breaking up large countries in constituencies of 6 or more MEPs) would not solve the issue, as the MEPs would remain far from the citizens and the constituency would most likely be too large compared to the local administrative divisions citizens are used to.

Can't we have larger constituencies where we elect more people?

As explained in the question above, settling for a middle-ground of sub-national but large constituencies would not be sufficient to achieve our priorities. France's experiment with large sub-national divisions (of 5 to 15 MEPs) proved a failure: not only did citizens not have their "own" representative in the European Parliament, but the constituencies remained much too large compared to the scale of administrative divisions that citizens were used to (commune, département or région).

We could indeed decide to have small constituencies of 2 to 5 MEPs each. However, if we are going through the trouble of dividing Member States into small constituencies, then we would be better placed to do this all the way and ensure a close link between citizens and representatives by designing local, single-MEP constituencies.

How will we draw local constituencies?

Drawing up local electoral constituencies is not an easy task, but it is by no means an unsurmountable one either. Germany is divided into 299 electoral districts, while the US has been drawing congressional districts since 1789.

Given variations in population density, we may have to compromise between the geographical size of a district and its population. However, this is an issue faced by every nation in the creation of its own electoral districts, and one that nations have solved and improved on continuously. For instance, [Finland's Parliament](#) uses much wider constituencies in the north of the country to make up for the region's scarce population.

The solution is to follow local administrative boundaries and to remain flexible where necessary. We propose that electoral districts be approved by an independent electoral commission or, when applicable, by a Supreme Court.

Isn't this Majority Judgment system too complicated for voters?

Just like the Bundestag system of dual voting, majority judgment will indeed require citizens to get familiar with a new voting mechanism. However, its advantages in terms of more fully capturing voters' opinion of the various candidates, as well as its ability to avoid strategic voting, are extremely important if we are serious about improving our democracy. Overall, the system is not very complicated in its functioning, and even less so in its implementation: all you have to do is give an honest opinion about the candidates.

What's wrong with just choosing one candidate for the direct vote?

As we have seen before, candidates with a rather low percentage of the vote (sometimes as low as 20%, if there are a few candidates) are able to win an election - with or without a second round. However, these candidates may have the support of a

small but unity minority, and be wholly rejected by the rest of the population. This is why a voting system where voters only pick one candidate may lead to results that defy common sense, in particular when two close candidates syphon votes away from each other, allowing a third and less-appreciated candidate to win the election.

Using Majority Judgment, voters give a mention (“excellent”, “very good”, “good”, “fair”, “bad”, “very bad”, “rejected”, for instance) to each candidate. They are free to give the same mention several times. A candidate final mention is the best one given to him by a majority of the population; candidates gets a “good” mention of 52% if 52% of voters have given the mentions “good”, “very good” or “excellent”. The candidate with the best mention wins (in case of equality, percentages are used).

Majority Judgment is a particularly powerful voting system, as it allows voters to independently assess all candidates (with the possibility to vote blank for one or more candidates). As a result, voters may strongly support several candidates and strongly oppose others, without being constrained by a fixed number of votes to allocate or by a strict ranking (which doesn’t allow, for instance, to oppose all candidates). It is not unlike grading candidate, except the mentions are more consensual in their meaning than grades and using the mean mention and not the average mention ensures support by 50% or more of the population (using the average mention, voters would be tempted to exaggerate their support in order to affect the average).

Conclusion

By adopting the improved Bundestag system, we ensure that our proposal is fully in line with our values, goals and priorities, and matches our vision of Europe.

With this system, we provide voters with a clear point of contact in Parliament at the most local level and ensure the proportional representation of citizens’ views in our legislative assembly.

Furthermore, by designing a simple and uniform system, where all voters are treated fairly and equally, we contribute to simplifying our institutions and governance and help engage citizens in the political process.

With this clear and precise proposal, we possess a powerful tool to contribute efficiently and clearly to the national and European discussions on electoral reform.

Between this and the proposal for the creation of true European parties, we can at the forefront of proposing concrete and tested solutions for a solid and lasting democratic Union for all European citizens.