

ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2024: LITHUANIA, ESTONIA, POLAND




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This analysis has been developed within the framework of the project “Very Important Participation” (V.I.P.) (reference number: 2023-3-LT02-KA210-YOU-000174679). The V.I.P project is funded by the European Commission’s Erasmus+ Programme.

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Year of publication: 2025

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Landscape of Candidates: European Parliament Elections 2019-2024 in Lithuania, Poland and Estonia

In the 2019 and 2024 European Parliament elections, Lithuania, Poland, and Estonia experienced notable shifts in their political landscapes, particularly with the growing influence of independent committees, radical candidates, and an overall increase in political diversity.

In Lithuania, the 2019 elections saw 16 political groups, including parties, committees, and coalitions, with 301 candidate. Among these, five parliamentary parties, one coalition, and one committee won seats in the European Parliament¹. By contrast, the 2024 elections had 15 political groups and 319 candidates. The number of independent committees decreased, comparing to 2019 elections².

In Poland, the 2019 elections were marked by 9 political groups and 866 candidates³. Two parliamentary parties and one coalition secured seats, with the leading party winning 27 mandates and the coalition gaining 22. In 2024, the number of participants increased to 11 groups and 1,019 candidates⁴. The rise in independent committees, particularly non-parliamentary ones, led to greater diversity in the results. Radical candidates remained a significant presence, reflecting Poland's strong right-wing political scene. Despite some shifts in the number of liberal candidates, the most conservative party still secured six mandates, underlining the enduring strength of right-wing politics in Poland.

In Estonia, the 2019 elections saw 9 political groups, including 5 parliamentary parties, with a total of 215 candidates. All parliamentary parties secured seats, with the nationalist EKRE party sending two MEPs to the European Parliament. In 2024, the number of parties participating dropped slightly to 8, but the number of mandates increased, particularly for pro-European, liberal, and green parties. Radical candidates from EKRE remained important figures, but pro-European parties gained more ground in 2024. Issues like environmental concerns and the war in Ukraine played a bigger role in shaping Estonia's political discourse compared to 2019, which had been more focused on Euroscepticism.

Overall, the 2024 European Parliament elections in all three countries saw a rise in the participation of independent committees, an increase in candidates, and shifts in the political dynamics. Radical figures continued to make their presence felt, while the political landscape became more diverse in some areas and more consolidated in others.

¹ The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania. European Parliament Elections on 26 May 2019: Online source <https://www.vrk.lt/documents/10180/676652/EP+bendras+leidinys++A5+2019.pdf/36efb36d-7f88-479e-855a-66c4060b322>

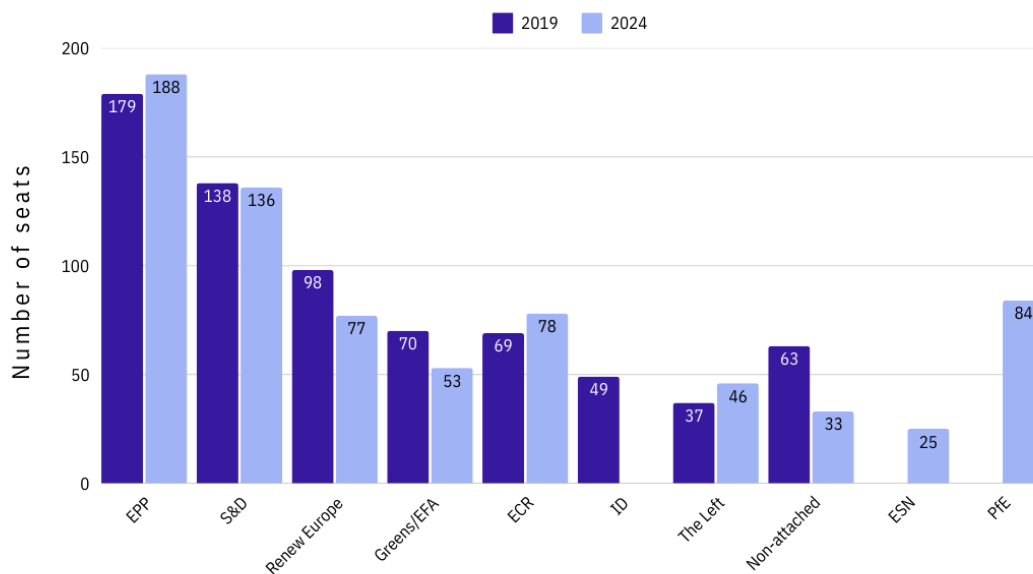
² Official Webpage of The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania. List of Candidates of European Parliament election 2024. Online source <https://www.vrk.lt/kandidatai-kandidatu-sarasai-2024-ep>

³ State Election Commission of Poland. Online Source: https://pe2019.pkw.gov.pl/pe2019/statics/pe2019-obwieszczenia/pliki/1558966697_Obwieszczenie_Panstwowe_j_Komisji_Wyborczej_z_dnia_27_maja_2019_r_o_wynikach_wyborow_poslow_do_Parlamentu_Europejskiego_przeprowadzonych_w_dniu_26_maja_2019_r.pdf

⁴ State Election Commission of Poland. Online Source: https://pe2024.pkw.gov.pl/pe2024/statics/PKW_OBWIESZCZENIA/uploaded_files/1718049863_obwieszczenie.pdf

Turnout of European Parliament Elections in 2019-2024

In the 2019 European Parliament elections, the European People's Party (EPP) secured 179 seats, establishing itself as the largest group in the Parliament. The Socialists and Democrats (S&D) followed with 138 seats, while Renew Europe held 98 seats, reflecting strong support for pro-European and liberal ideologies. The Greens/EFA group obtained 70 seats, signalling notable backing for environmental policies. The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) gained 69 seats, representing a significant portion of conservative and reformist representation. The Identity and Democracy (ID) group secured 49 seats, showing the rise of nationalist and far-right factions. The Left (GUE/NGL) group garnered 37 seats, while Non-attached Members (NI) held 63 seats, indicating a more fragmented representation⁵.



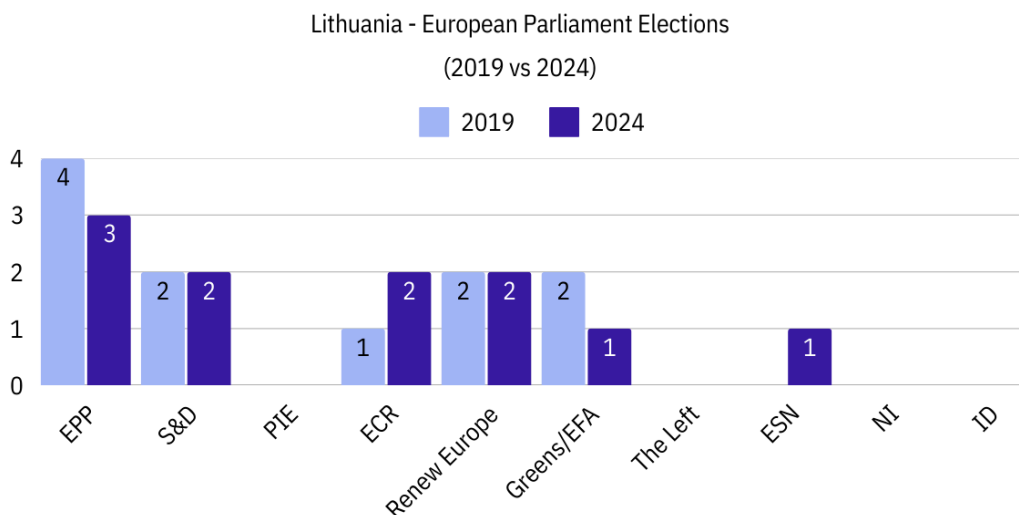
In contrast, the 2024 European Parliament elections resulted in a slight shift in the distribution of seats. The EPP's representation grew, increasing to 188 seats, solidifying its status as the largest group. However, the S&D saw a decrease, falling to 136 seats, reflecting a slight decline in support for center-left policies. Renew Europe experienced a significant reduction in seats, dropping to 77, signalling a decline in pro-European and liberal support. The Greens/EFA group saw a notable decline as well, with only 53 seats, indicating a reduced emphasis on environmental issues. The ECR group gained ground, securing 78 seats, while the Left group saw a slight increase to 46 seats. New political forces emerged, with the Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN) securing 25 seats and the Patriots for Europe (PfE) obtaining 84 seats, marking the rise of nationalist and sovereignty-focused factions. The number of Non-attached Members (NI) dropped significantly to 33, reflecting a more consolidated political landscape⁶.

⁵ European Parliament Webpage. 2019 Election Results: <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/european-results/2019-2024/outgoing-parliament/>

⁶ European Parliament Webpage. 2024 Election Results: <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/>

This comparison shows a shift towards more conservative and nationalist politics in the 2024 elections, with the rise of groups like ECR, ESN, and PflE. At the same time, traditional pro-European and center-left factions like Renew Europe and the Greens/EFA experienced a decline. The EPP remains the dominant political force, although its growth was not enough to offset the decline of other centrist and left-wing groups. The 2024 elections suggest a polarization in the European political landscape, with a stronger emphasis on nationalism and national sovereignty, which may influence future European Union policies.

Based on results of European Parliament elections in 2019, Lithuania had strong support for center-right policies, with the European People’s Party (EPP) securing four mandates⁷. However, by 2024, the EPP’s influence declined to three mandates, signaling a shift away from conservative values. The Socialists and Democrats (S&D) maintained stable representation, with two mandates in both years. The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) gained ground, increasing their mandates from one to two, showing a shift towards more nationalistic policies. Renew Europe, representing pro-European ideologies, held steady with two mandates. The Greens/EFA, which had two mandates in 2019, saw a decline to one in 2024, suggesting less focus on environmental issues⁸.



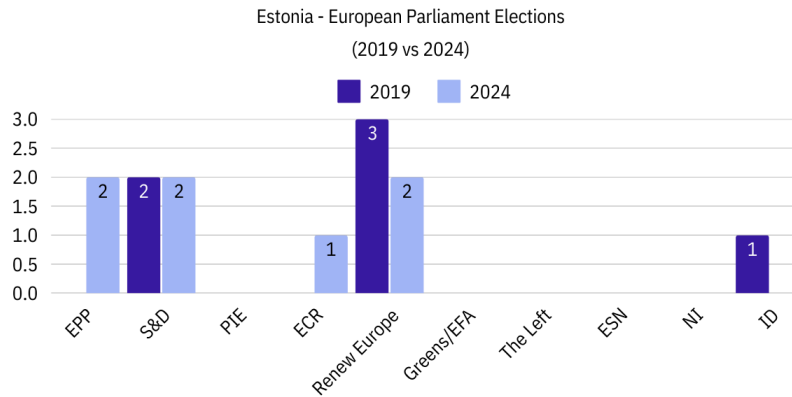
In Estonia, the decline in mandates for Renew Europe, from three to two⁹, suggests reduced support for liberal-centrist policies, which previously held a dominant position. The emergence of the European People’s Party (EPP) with two mandates and the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) with one mandate¹⁰ signals a rise in support for more conservative and traditionally right-leaning policies. The stability of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) with two mandates shows consistent backing for social democratic ideals among Estonian voters.

⁷European Parliament Webpage. 2019 Election Results in Lithuania:
<https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/national-results/lithuania/2019-2024/constitutive-session/>

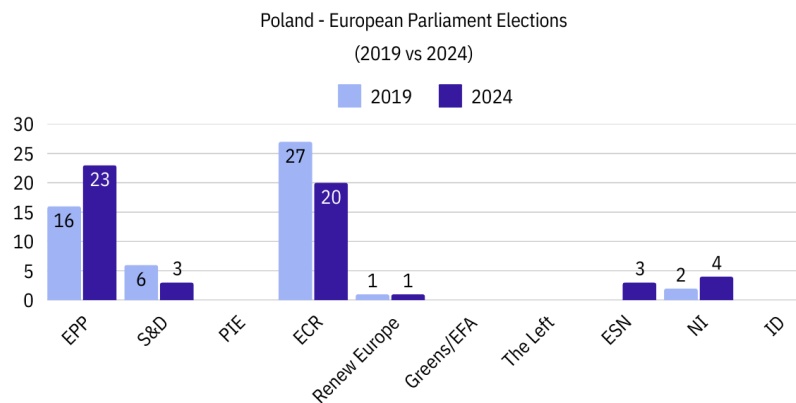
⁸European Parliament Webpage. 2024 Elections Results in Lithuania:
<https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/national-results/lithuania/2024-2029/>

⁹European Parliament Webpage. 2019 Election Results in Estonia:
<https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/national-results/estonia/2019-2024/constitutive-session/>

¹⁰European Parliament Webpage. 2024 Election Results in Estonia:
<https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/national-results/estonia/2024-2029/>



Based on official data of European Parliament, The 2019 and 2024 European Parliament election results for Poland show some clear shifts in voter preferences. The European People's Party (EPP) gained more support, increasing from 16 mandates in 2019 to 23 in 2024, suggesting more Poles favor its center-right, pro-European stance. On the other hand, the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), which led in 2019 with 27 mandates, dropped to 20, indicating a decline in support for its nationalist-conservative policies. The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) also saw a drop, going from 6 to 3 mandates, while Renew Europe held steady with just one mandate. Other groups like the Greens, The Left, and PIE remained unrepresented, showing no major interest in their platforms. Interestingly, non-affiliated (NI) representatives doubled from 2 to 4 mandates, and a new group, the Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN), gained 3 seats, despite not being represented in 2019. These changes highlight a growing diversity in political preferences, with EPP rising as a stronger force, ECR and S&D losing ground.



The election results across Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland highlight evolving voter preferences and shifting political dynamics in the region. While the European People's Party (EPP) strengthened its presence, reflecting growing support for center-right policies, the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) experienced mixed outcomes, showing varied appeal for nationalist-conservative ideologies. Social-democratic support remained steady in some areas but declined in others, while liberal and environmental movements faced challenges in maintaining influence. The rise of new political groups and unaffiliated representatives signals an increasing diversification of political preferences, suggesting that voters are exploring a broader spectrum of ideas and priorities in shaping their representation in the European Parliament.

Participation in European Parliament elections 2019 – 2024: Comparison to National Elections in Lithuania, Poland and Estonia

In the 2019 European Parliament elections, voter turnout across the EU was 50.66%, edging up slightly to 50.74% in 2024¹¹. While the overall numbers stayed relatively stable, the trends in Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland tell very different stories.

In Lithuania, turnout for the 2019 European Parliament elections was an impressive 53.48%¹², but it dropped dramatically to just 28.00% in 2024¹³. Why the sharp decline? A key factor seems to be timing. In 2019, the European Parliament elections were held alongside the second round of Lithuania's presidential elections, which likely encouraged more people to vote. In 2024, however, the European elections were held separately, and turnout suffered. This pattern lines up with other election trends in Lithuania. For instance, turnout in the national parliamentary elections in the year 2024 went from 52.18% in the first round to just 41.41% in the second¹⁴. Meanwhile in 2019 during national parliamentary elections the voter turnout was 54.5 % during the first round and dropped to 37% during the second¹⁵. All of this suggests a growing voter apathy, especially when elections aren't paired with major political events and require more than one round of elections.

Estonia's story is different. Turnout for the European Parliament elections was consistently low—37.60% in 2019 and only slightly higher at 37.64% in 2024¹⁶. This is surprising given that Estonia offers online voting, making it much easier for people to participate. In contrast, Estonia's national parliamentary elections see much higher engagement: 63.67% in 2019 and 63.53% in 2023¹⁷. This gap suggests that Estonians might not feel as connected to European elections, even with the convenience of online voting.

Poland, meanwhile, saw a steady decline in turnout for the European Parliament elections, from 45.68% in 2019 to 40.65% in 2024¹⁸. This stands in stark contrast to their national elections, where turnout was much higher: 61.7% in 2019 and an impressive 74.4% in 2023. So, what's behind this difference? The difference between European and national election turnouts suggests that Polish voters might place greater importance on national elections and feel less invested in European parliamentary elections. Additionally, Polish National Parliament elections and Local Government elections took place 8 and 2 months before the

¹¹European Parliament Webpage. Voter Turnout of European Parliament Elections 2024: <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/turnout/>

¹²The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania. Election Map System. European Parliament Elections 2019: <https://rinkimai.maps.lt/rinkimai2019/ep/>

¹³The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania. Election Map System. European Parliament Elections 2024: <https://rinkimai.maps.lt/rinkimai2024/ep/>

¹⁴Official Webpage of The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania. Results of Lithuanian Parliament Elections 2024: <https://www.vrk.lt/naujienos/-/content/10180/1/patvirtinti-galutiniai-2024-m-seimo-rinkimu-rezultatai>

¹⁵The Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania. Election Map System. President Elections 2020: <https://rinkimai.maps.lt/rinkimai2020/aktyvumas/>

¹⁶Official Estonian Elections website. Statistics of European Parliament Elections: <https://www.valimised.ee/en/archive/european-parliament-elections/european-parliament-elections>

¹⁷Official Estonian Elections website. Statistics of National Estonian Elections: <https://www.valimised.ee/en/archive/riigikogu-parliament-elections/riigikogu-elections>

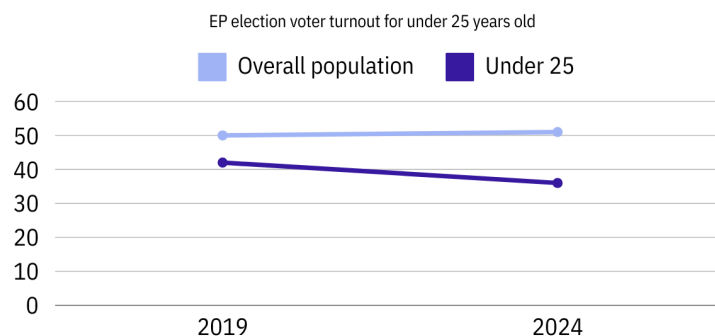
¹⁸ <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/turnout/>

European Parliament ones causing people to feel "tired" of the elections in terms of having to go voting and constant political campaigns being No. 1 topic in media and public life.

In summary, while the EU-wide voter turnout for the European Parliament elections remained steady from 2019 to 2024, the trends in Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland highlight some clear differences. Lithuania saw a dramatic drop, likely due to election timing. Estonia's turnout stayed low despite online voting, suggesting limited interest in European elections. And in Poland, a consistent decline points to voters prioritizing national elections. These trends show that European Parliament elections still struggle to engage voters compared to national ones, with timing and perceived importance playing a big role in turnout.

Youth Participation in European Parliament Elections 2019-2024

The 2024 European Parliament elections brought a significant decline in youth participation across the European Union, with just 36% of eligible voters under the age of 25 casting their votes¹⁹. This figure represents a concerning drop of 6% from the 42% youth turnout recorded in 2019²⁰. While overall voter turnout across all age groups remained steady at 51% in both elections, the diminishing engagement of younger voters raises critical questions about the future of youth involvement in European electoral politics.



A Closer Look: Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland

Youth voter participation in European Parliament elections has seen a noticeable decline in recent years, especially in Lithuania. Back in 2019, 43.86% of young Lithuanians aged 18 to 29 turned out to vote, contributing to an overall national turnout of 53.48%. Fast forward to 2024, and that number had dropped sharply to just 18.25%²¹. This stark drop highlights a

¹⁹Official European Union webpage. Eurobarometer Survey 2024: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3292>

²⁰Official European Union webpage. Eurobarometer Survey 2019: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2312>

²¹ Webpage of Vilnius University. Article “ Public figure Domantas Katelė: low youth turnout in elections is a signal to society” (2024). Online Source: <https://naujienos.vu.lt/visuomenininkas-domantas-katele-zemas-jaunimo-aktyvumas-rinkimuose-signalas-visuo-menei/>

significant disengagement among younger voters. Meanwhile, older age groups in Lithuania were much more active in 2024: 46.70% of those aged 75 and above cast their votes, compared to 29.01% of voters aged 55 to 64 and 22.50% of those aged 30 to 34. The generational gap in voter participation has clearly widened.

In Estonia, youth voter turnout also declined, but the drop wasn't as steep as in Lithuania. In 2019, 44% of Estonians aged 18 to 25 participated in the elections. By 2024, that number had fallen to 36%. Interestingly, older age groups in Estonia showed a slight increase in participation. Turnout among voters aged 26 to 40 rose from 50% in 2019 to 52% in 2024, while those aged 41 to 60 went from 60% to 62%. This stability among middle-aged and older voters in Estonia stands in contrast to the sharper declines seen in Lithuania.

Poland's trends were somewhat similar to Lithuania's, with youth turnout slipping from 27.6% in 2019 to 26.5% in 2024²². While the decrease wasn't as dramatic, it still points to a broader issue of youth disengagement. Turnout among all age groups in Poland saw declines, with the sharpest drops among voters aged 40 to 49 (a 7.7% decrease) and 30 to 39 (a 3.8% decrease). Even older voters, including those over 60, participated less, though their declines were smaller²³.

Looking at the bigger picture, the decline in youth participation across Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland reflects a broader trend seen throughout the European Union. However, each country has its own story to tell. Lithuania saw the steepest drop in youth turnout, with participation among 18 to 29-year-olds plummeting by over 25 percentage points. Estonia's youth turnout decreased more modestly, and older voters actually became slightly more engaged. In Poland, declines were consistent across all age groups, with youth turnout remaining the lowest.

These trends point to a growing generational divide in voter participation. Older voters, especially in Estonia, continue to show up at the polls, while younger voters are increasingly disengaging. This gap highlights an urgent need to reconnect with young voters, particularly in countries like Lithuania, where the decline has been most severe.

Youth Voting Patterns and Motivations

Eurobarometer EU post-electoral survey (2024)²⁴ highlights that young voters were primarily driven by a sense of civic duty (38%), aligning closely with the general population's motivation (42%). Habitual voting was less common among young people (31%) compared to the overall population (46%), reflecting their limited voting history. Interestingly, young voters expressed a stronger connection to the EU: 21% cited support for the EU as a motivation (compared to 17% overall), and 24% were inspired by their European identity or citizenship (versus 18% overall). Additionally, 24% believed their vote could make a difference at the EU level, higher than the 18% among all voters.

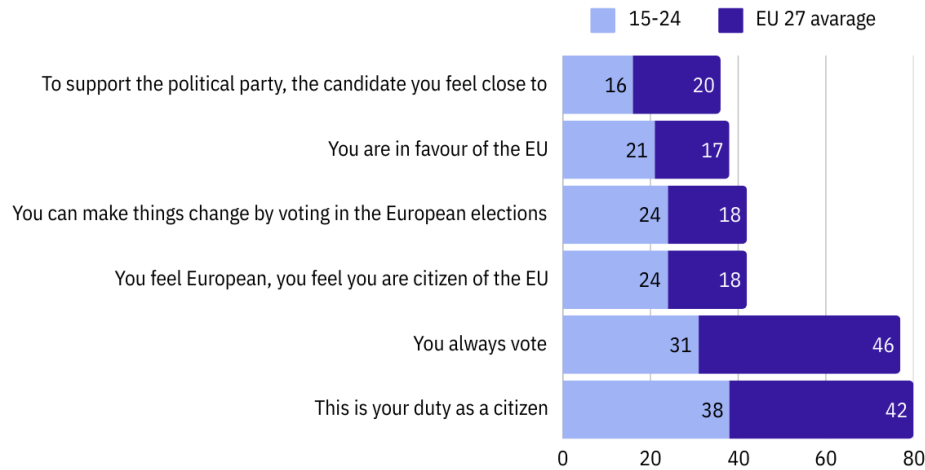
²²TVN24 Webpage. Participation in European Parliament Elections 2024 by Age. Online Source: <https://tvn24.pl/wybory-do-europarlamentu-2024/wybory-do-parlamentu-europejskiego-2024-jak-glosowali-najmlodsi-jak-najstarsi-jaki-wynik-konfederacji-st7955037>

²³TVN24 Webpage. Article "Low turnout, good results for smaller parties. This is how young people voted". Online source:

<https://tvn24.pl/polska/wyniki-do-europarlamentu-najnizsza-frekwencja-wsrod-mlodych-na-kogo-glosowali-ra939145-ls2309704>

²⁴Official European Union webpage. Eurobarometer Survey 2024: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3292>

What are the main reasons why you decided to vote in European Parliament elections? (Max 3 answers) %




Among young non-voters, the top reason for abstaining was a lack of interest in politics (28%), compared to 20% among the general population. However, distrust in politics and feelings of political inefficacy were less prominent among young non-voters, suggesting that disinterest, rather than cynicism, is a key barrier to participation. Notably, more than 70% of young non-voters reported reasons other than apathy for not participating, underscoring the need to make politics more relevant and engaging.

Young people were more likely than older generations to make last-minute voting decisions. Among voters under 25, 29% decided to vote in the final weeks or days before the election, compared to just 9% of voters over 55. This trend was mirrored among young non-voters, with significant numbers deciding not to vote just before election day. These patterns highlight the importance of ongoing and last-minute engagement strategies by political parties to mobilize youth voters effectively.

Young voters also displayed less loyalty to political parties, with only 22% consistently supporting the same party compared to 41% of the general population. Instead, their choices were heavily influenced by values and issues, with 48% prioritizing European issues, 45% focusing on national concerns, and 44% aligning with parties addressing key matters of importance. This openness makes young voters particularly responsive to targeted messaging and late campaign efforts.

Key Issues for Young Voters

The primary concerns for young voters in 2024 included the rising cost of living (38%) and the economic situation (36%), though these issues resonated slightly less with them than with older voters. Climate change remained a significant motivator for young people (32% versus 28% overall), while education was far more critical for voters under 25 (29% versus 13% overall). Issues such as defence, security, and crime were less influential for this demographic.



Among young non-voters, similar concerns dominated. However, issues like unemployment (21%) and housing (18%) stood out as areas that could have encouraged them to vote, suggesting a gap between the priorities of voting and non-voting youth.

To sum up, while young voters are driven by civic duty, a strong sense of European identity, and belief in their ability to make a difference, a significant portion of non-voters cite disinterest in politics as their primary reason for abstaining. Additionally, the issues young people prioritize, such as education, climate change, and housing, often differ from older generations, reflecting distinct generational concerns. To effectively engage youth in Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland, it is crucial to delve deeper into the specific factors that motivate and demotivate young people in these countries. Understanding their unique priorities can help develop targeted strategies to inspire greater youth participation in future elections.

Motivators and Demotivators of Young Voters and Non-Voters in Lithuania, Poland and Estonia

Report of Focus Groups and Methodology

Social Sustainability Academy (Lithuania), Progress Center Estonia, and Reflection on Europe (Poland) held 3 focus group discussions with 30 young people who have participated in European Parliament elections 2024. Focus groups were held on 19th of December 2024 (Lithuania), 20th of December 2024 (Estonia) and 5th of January 2025 (Poland). Another 3 focus groups were held with youngsters who have not participated in European Parliament elections 2024. These focus groups were held on 2nd of January 2025 (Lithuania, Estonia) and 5th of January 2025 (Poland). The focus groups were conducted as part of analysis of European Parliament elections 2024 done in the frames of the Erasmus + “Very Important Participation” project. Participants provided information in group discussions.

The discussion was designed to gather information from the youngsters regarding to the following outcomes:

Introduction Questions (1st and 2nd question)

Objective 1: To understand young people's initial experiences with voting and explore their perceived value of the European Parliament elections, focusing on whether they recognize the elections' relevance to their lives and communities.

Motivational Questions (3rd and 4th question)

Objective 2: To gather personal stories and memorable events that inspired young people to participate in elections, identifying specific experiences that reinforced their desire to vote and could potentially motivate others.

Demotivational Questions (5th and 6th questions)

Objective 3: To understand the factors that discourage young people from participating in the European Parliament elections, including personal concerns such as distrust in politicians, logistical challenges, lack of awareness, and systemic issues like accessibility or bureaucratic obstacles that could prevent active participation.

Information Awareness Questions (7th and 8th questions)

Objective 4: To understand which communication channels young people use to gather information about the European Parliament elections and assess whether they feel adequately informed to make an informed voting decision, identifying effective outreach strategies and any gaps in current educational efforts.

Social Influence Question (9th question)

Objective 5: To explore how family and friends influence young people's decisions to vote, providing insight into the role of social networks in shaping voting behaviour and attitude.

Concluding Question (10th question)

Objective 6: to gather creative or practical suggestions from young people on how to make the European Parliament elections more appealing and engaging for their demographic, focusing on actionable changes to improve youth participation.

1. Remember the first time you took part in any kind of elections/voting, tell about it?

Family Influence: Estonian (4), Lithuanian (4) and Polish (1) respondents highlighted the role of their parents in shaping their attitudes toward voting. For example, respondents shared that being taken to polling stations as children instilled a sense of duty to vote. Others mentioned (3) how witnessing their parents' involvement in elections made voting feel significant.

"It's hard to remember. It was probably the presidential election. I went to vote with my mom" (EST)

"The elections were in my hometown, and I went with my mom" (LT)

The youngsters who have not participated in the elections did not name any previous experiences of voting related to their family.

Civic Engagement in Youth: 7 Lithuanian respondents cited their involvement in civic or political activities as formative experiences. For instance, some had worked at elections, volunteered in "White Gloves" or followed political developments closely, deepening their understanding of and connection to the electoral process. Meanwhile only 2 youngsters who have not participated in the elections 2024 were able to mention previous civic engagement activities.

".....my first elections were also at school. In youth organizations, there would often be elections when I participated in their activities."(LT)

Symbolic Milestones: For 8 Poles, 5 Estonians and 9 Lithuanians who have and haven't participated in EP elections, turning 18 (16 in Estonian case) and gaining the right to vote marked an empowering transition into adulthood. Participants expressed excitement about voting for the first time shortly after their birthdays, some of participants noted that voting was in their bucket-list and "must to do when you turn 18 years old".

"It was interesting to try because I had turned 18, so I felt I had to go vote. It was a kind of "bucket list" thing everyone should do when they turn 18"(LT)

Informal Election Experiences: 9 Poles, 6 Estonians and 6 Lithuanians who have participated in the EP elections, recall their first experience with voting through informal elections, such as class or school council elections, some of respondents participated in simulations of national elections. Just 2 Lithuanian and 3 Polish respondents who have not participated in EP elections could recall their previous voting experience in schools.

“Previously, we had class leader elections at school, but later, when I transferred to high school, there were school council elections. I didn’t run for a position, but I did vote” (LT)

“My first time when I had a chance to participate in any kind of elections was back in primary school, when we were choosing our school council representatives.” (PL)

2. What do you think is the importance of participating in elections, especially the European Parliament elections? Why participation in elections is important?

Civic Duty and Responsibility: 6 Lithuanian, 11 Polish and 6 Estonian respondents emphasized that voting is a civic duty and an essential way to ensure that one’s voice is heard in the political process. This sentiment aligns with the understanding that elections are a core aspect of democratic systems. None of respondents who have not participated in EP elections, mentioned participation in elections as a civic duty.

“Unfortunately, Estonia has little influence in Europe due to its small population, but voting is still necessary”. (EST)

Country’s Image in European Union: 12 Lithuanian, 11 Polish, 9 Estonian participants expressed their opinion that it is important to participate in EP elections and elect the most suitable representatives because they represent the whole country, values and views of citizens of the country.

“Lithuania didn’t look good in front of the whole Europe when Petras Gražulis voted against aid for Ukraine.” (LT)

Representation in European Parliament: Polish (9), Lithuanian (6) and Estonian (8) respondents recognized that European Parliament elections have a direct impact on country’s standing in Europe, particularly on issues like economic, environmental, and migration policies. Several (5) individuals highlighted that voting ensures that country’s representatives reflect their values and priorities, influencing the direction of European Union policies.

“We have our voice, so we should use it to elect a representative who shares views similar to ours.” (PL)

European Union Funding: There is a clear understanding that the European Parliament wields significant power in shaping policies that affect member states, such as funding for public services and international relations.

“.....funding for schools is brought in, and there are opportunities to visit the European Parliament. Lithuania has improved significantly over the years due to EU funding...” (LT)

However, 7 Lithuanian participants also noted that many young people don't fully grasp the importance of these elections, indicating a gap in awareness or engagement. Meanwhile 2 Estonian participants believes that people should get fines for not participating in elections.

“We often don’t think about European Parliament elections, but I believe they’re just as important as national elections. For some strange reason, we don’t give them much importance” (LT)

“It should be done like in Austria. Maybe people would participate then” (EST)

Dissatisfaction with the Status Quo and Election Results: Several (4) Lithuanian respondents expressed frustration with the election process and the individuals who have been elected, suggesting that more change is needed in the European Parliament. This sentiment was tied to a desire for fresh representation and the avoidance of long-standing incumbents who may no longer serve the public’s interests.

“Unfortunately, there have been instances where we haven’t elected the best candidates” (LT)
“Personally, it’s not important to me because our voice isn’t heard” (LT)

3. What motivates you or your friends to participate in European Parliament elections?

Preventive Motivation: Fear of undesirable outcomes, such as inadequate candidates being elected, encouraged participation. 5 Lithuanian voters note that they participated in EP elections because they feared that inadequate, unsuitable, incompetent representatives will be elected. **3 Lithuanian non-voters** stated that they did not participate in the elections because they are sure that no matter what – inadequate representatives will be elected.

“I’m not motivated by discussions, but by the fear that an unsuitable, inadequate person might be elected, someone who could drag Lithuania down.”(LT)

“Since I know that some idiot will be elected anyway, I lack motivation.”(LT)

Community Engagement Before the Elections: 3 Lithuanian respondents are passionate about watching debates with their friends, discussing candidates with their friends, colleagues and people from their environment.

“ I’m motivated by the discussions with friends and colleagues about “who are you voting for?” I’m also motivated by the process leading up to the vote, like discussions, interviews, and debates”(LT)

Recognition: Polish (10) and Lithuanian (4) respondents experience positive feelings associated with fulfilling a civic duty and sharing their participation on social media.

“ I’m motivated by the chance to announce on social media that I fulfilled my civic duty.”(LT)

Desire for Change and Belief That Each Voter Matters: The desire for change emerged as a significant motivator among young voters, reflecting their aspirations for a better future and a more equitable society. For Lithuanian (5) Estonian (5) and Polish (5) respondents, voting was not just a civic duty but a tool to influence the direction of policies and representation. This desire stemmed from a belief that their active participation could lead to meaningful outcomes, both at a national and European level.

“The EU can shape important policies, and even small countries like Estonia benefit from being part of it” (EST)

“The vision of changing the future and making an impact on the next generation”(PL)

During the focus group with non-voters, researchers asked them **what would motivate them or their friends to participate in European Parliament elections?**

Increased Awareness and Information: 6 Polish, 4 Estonian and 5 Lithuanian young people felt uninformed about the European Parliament’s role and its relevance to their lives. The absence of accessible and engaging information, particularly on social media, was a common issue that they have mentioned. Non-voters believe that they would show more interest in the elections if they would have more knowledge about European Parliament generally. Additionally, it would encourage them to vote if they would see the information about EP elections as much as national elections in Lithuania and Estonia. Youngsters believe that governments invest less effort when spreading information about EP elections. More easily accessible, concise information about MEP reports, preferably on social media, would motivate voters as well.

” Also, easily accessible, clear, and concise information about their work and achievements would motivate me. But that information should be everywhere, especially on social media”(EST)

Flexible Voting Time and Location: 4 Lithuanian youngsters would participate in elections if there would be longer time dedicated during pre-elections because youngsters are studying and working at the same time, so they struggle to find time to vote. Additionally, during

pre-election there is only couple pooling stations in cities which most of the time are crowded. Having more pooling stations would encourage youth participation.

“I study in Vilnius, and during advanced voting, you often have to wait a long time to cast your vote” (LT)

Organizing EP Elections Together with National Elections: 3 Lithuanian youngsters noted that organizing EP elections together with Presidential elections or national parliamentary elections would encourage greater turn out because youngsters find it difficult to participate in 3 elections during the same year.

“I’d be motivated if the elections were held together with Lithuanian parliamentary or presidential elections. When elections are held separately, it’s harder to go” (LT)

Remote voting: 7 Lithuanian youngsters outlined that many issues that sometimes prevent youngsters from voting such as uncomfortable pooling booth location or unsuitable time, would be solved due to remote voting.

“Electronic voting would help. Then I’d vote in all elections” (LT)

“Remote voting, because it would be much more convenient and faster” (LT)

Extra benefit: 4 Estonians would be motivated to vote if they would receive small gifts or be excused from work.

“Why should I waste my personal time? If they would allow us to leave work earlier to go to vote, I would do that” (EST)

4. Could you share any positive experiences or events that made your friends / you want to participate in elections?

Engagement through Memorable Events: Debates, educational trips to European Parliament such as Level Up, Erasmus+ and transparency campaigns were cited by 5 Lithuanian voters, 5 Polish voters and 4 Estonian voters as key events that reinforced the importance of voting. These experiences created a sense of connection to the political process.

“This time I was especially encouraged by a trip to Brussels to the European Parliament to see how everything works in real life” (EST)

“The debates in Neringa moderated by Andrius Tapinas. That situation with the USB drives, when Tapinas began his transparency campaign in Lithuania, really encouraged me to vote” (LT)

“Europe Day in Starachowice, where we discussed the positive effects of participating in elections and also what benefits does the EU give us. It was an amazing event, which motivated me to take part in elections” (PL)

Meanwhile, Lithuanian and Polish non-voters shared their experience of becoming a part youth organizations (5), political parties (1) which encouraged to participate in elections not only them but their friends as well. 3 Lithuanians outlined emergence of new political parties such as Freedom Party (LT: Laisvės partija) who pays attention to questions that are important for young people, such as equality of LGBTQ+ community and partnership.

“In 2019, I was encouraged by the emergence of the Freedom Party because the issue of partnership was important to me” (LT)

5. What discourages you (or would discourage you) from participating in European Parliament elections?.

Lack of Suitable Candidates. 5 Lithuanian voters, 6 Polish and 5 Estonian voters mentioned that they would be discouraged by the absence of candidates or parties that aligned with their values or expectations.

“If there were no representatives who matched my views” (EST)

“If all candidates would be like Petras Gražulis” (LT)

“By the lack of candidates whose views align with mine. It’s obvious that I’ll never fully agree with any candidate, but the complete absence of views similar to my own would be demotivating” (PL)

2 Lithuanian non-voters named lack of suitable candidates as a main reason why they missed European Parliament elections.

“Lack of candidates who represent my needs. That’s the reason why I never vote” (LT)

Inconvenient Voting Conditions, such as unsuitable polling times, long lines, or restricted voting locations would discourage 3 Lithuanian voters.

“Many things could discourage me: an inconvenient day, like a workday, an inconvenient location, or if I had to wait in line for several hours. But now, these things aren’t an issue” (LT)

3 Lithuanian non-voters named inconvenient voting conditions as a reason why they have not participated in previous EP elections.

“Timing. I don’t have the time to return to my hometown to vote, and during the three days of pre-election, I don’t have enough time to get there because I’m working” (LT)

Lack of Information and Knowledge was outlined by 3 Lithuanian, 4 Polish and 5 Estonian non-voters.

“Lack of information—it requires a lot of personal effort to delve into it, unlike national elections where there’s plenty of information about candidates and parties everywhere” (EST)

„A lack of clear information about candidates or policies might make it more difficult for some people.” (PL)

Lack of Direct Motivation or so called “laziness” was named by 3 Lithuanian, 4 Polish and 4 Estonian non-voters as a main reason of not participating in previous European Parliament elections.

“Actually, nothing discouraged me this time. It was my negligence and lack of interest because it was the beginning of summer, so I didn’t pay attention or even think about it” (EST)

“My laziness” (LT)

6. Have your friends or you faced any obstacles that made it difficult for you to participate in elections? If yes, could you describe them?

Accessibility Issues: 2 Lithuanian voters named that voting locations were not fully accessible for people with disabilities.

“I noticed not all polling stations was accessible for people with disabilities.” (LT)

Limited Accessibility to Voting Options: The inability to vote online was seen as an obstacle by 4 Polish and 5 Lithuanian non-voters. 8 Estonian non-voters outlined that online voting system is not comfortable.

“Yes, you can vote online, but only from a computer, by downloading and installing the program. Why can’t you make an app? Or go to the website and vote using Smart-ID?” (EST)

“The biggest obstacle is the inability to vote online” (LT)

7. How do you usually receive information about the European Parliament elections? What attracts your attention the most in political campaigns?

Information Sources:

Dominant Channels: 8 Estonian voters and 2 non-voters, 6 Lithuanian voters and 2 non-voters, 9 Polish voters and 3 non-voters received the information from social media (mainly on Facebook and Instagram). Lithuanian (4) voters and 1 non-voter receives information on news portals (LRT, Delfi). 7 Lithuanian voters and 3 non-voters receives information from debates on TV or YouTube (e.g., LRT, Laisvės TV).

“From the media, sometimes billboards, and through Laisvės TV and the media. I also watch debates on LRT and Laisvės TV” (LT)

Supplementary Sources: Flyers in mailboxes grabs attention for 2 Lithuanian voters. Central Electoral Commission’s social media pages are the source for Lithuanian 2 voters, acquaintances were mentioned as a source by Lithuanian 3 non-voters. E-mails and newspapers grab attention by 9 Polish voters and 3 non-voters. 4 Estonian voters pay attention to advertisement in streets.

“I get information from social networks or close people.” (PL)

Attractive Elements in Political Campaigns

Focus on Values: Party programs aligning with personal values, especially equality and liberal views attracts attention of 3 Lithuanian and 4 Polish voters.

“Values that are defended and promoted catch my attention, particularly equality and liberal views” (LT)

Visual Appeal: High-quality ads and well-organized campaign materials attracts attention for 4 Lithuanian voters and 2 non-voters, 3 Estonian voters and 1 non-voter, while only 1 Polish non-voter found visual appealing elements important.

“The campaign tactics that attract my attention the most are billboards and nice posters” (PL).

Interactive Elements: Candidate interactions at conferences or voter meetings grabs attention for 4 Lithuanian voters, 2 Polish voters and 1 non-voter, and 4 Estonian voters

“Candidates who are active in debates, meet voters, give lectures, and participate in conferences catch my attention.” (LT)

“Direct contact between the candidate and me” (PL)

Unappealing factor: Overexposure (e.g., repetitive billboards) irritate Lithuanian 2 voters and 2 non-voters, 5 Estonian non-voters, 1 Polish non-voter. Poorly designed materials and campaigns done in Russian language irritate 2 Lithuanian voters.

“I dislike outdoor billboards because seeing the same faces on them constantly is annoying.” (EST)

“Campaigns in Russian language turn me off” (LT)

For 4 Lithuanian non-voters the biggest unappealing factor is perceived dishonesty or superficiality in ads and the absence of substantial content.

“ I don’t like pre-election advertisements because they seem artificial. I prefer when people are straightforward and honest.” (LT)

8. Do you feel you have enough information about European Parliament elections to make an informed decision? Why or why not?

Access to Information: 8 Lithuanian and 8 Estonian voters, 9 Polish voters and 2 non-voters, responded that feel they have enough information, primarily due to personal interest and proactive efforts (e.g., watching debates, following political news, and exploring candidates' platforms). 7 Lithuanian, 8 Polish 9 Estonian non-voters believe they do not have enough information because of lack of interest to search for more information.

“Yes, I think I have enough information because I am interested” (EST)

“I think my knowledge is not wide enough because I don’t know precise plans of particular candidates and political groups.” (PL)

Challenges: 3 Lithuanian voters note an oversaturation of information about candidates, making decisions harder, and Lithuanian 2 voters and 2 non-voters outlined less visibility for EP elections compared to national elections.

“There is a lack of information. I would like more of it. It would be great if I didn’t have to search for information about the values candidates stand for. In these elections, I missed information on TV, for example, debates or interviews with candidates” (LT)

“I don’t think I have enough information because there’s not as much as there is for national elections” (LT)

9. Do your family or friends have an influence on your decisions to vote? If yes how?

Moderate Influence: 9 Polish, 5 Lithuanian and 7 Estonian voters reported minimal or no influence from family or friends, while others noted that social discussions played a role in shaping their decisions, 1 Lithuanian non-voter reported not participating because everyone in their environment does the same.

“It has an impact, but not from everyone” (EST)

“„I think they do but this influence is not very strong because I am open-minded for opinions of others but I still have my own position.” (PL)

“Influences me not to vote because none of my friends or family go to vote” (LT)

Family as a Reminder and Source of Information: Polish and 3 Lithuanian voters mentioned that family members reminded them about election dates or provided helpful information, encouraging them to learn more about candidates and parties.

“Family members have an impact; they remind me when the elections will be held.” (LT)

Friends as Discussion Partners: For 3 Polish and 5 Lithuanian voters and 2 non-voters discussions with friends sometimes provides new insights or perspectives, leading participants to reassess their opinions.

“When we discuss and talk about candidates, sometimes our views change about one candidate or another” (LT)

Resistance to Influence: 6 Polish voters and 2 non-voters, 5 Lithuania voters and 8 non-voters, 3 Estonian voters emphasized their independence in decision-making, 2 Lithuanian voters occasionally avoiding political discussions with family or friends whose views they found misaligned or inconsistent.

„I don’t depend on my family decisions.” (PL)

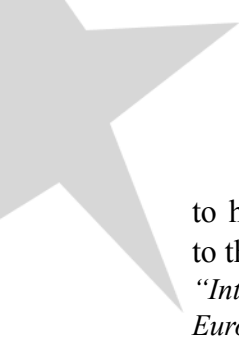
10. If you could suggest one change to make the European Parliament elections more appealing to young people, what would it be?

Education and Awareness: 5 Polish and 15 Lithuanian respondents emphasized the need for better education about the European Parliament's functions, its impact on citizens' lives, and the work of parliamentarians. Suggestions included introducing lessons, presentations, and events in schools, as well as having candidates visit schools.

“It’s very important to educate young people about what the European Parliament does and how it affects our country” (LT)

“Empowering schools and universities to discuss the importance of the EU and elections could also significantly boost participation.” (PL)

Interactive and Engaging Methods: 3 Polish and 14 Lithuanian respondents included organizing international exchanges, hosting debates, and offering interactive tools like quizzes



to help young people identify which candidates align with their values. Events such as visits to the European Parliament or live presentations by candidates were highlighted as impactful.

“International exchanges to the European Parliament, like the Level Up event I attended at the European Parliament. It was an impressive experience” (LT)

“„I think more projects like V.I.P. that are sharing the idea of democracy and importance of participating in elections or any voting.” (PL)

Electronic/remote voting: Electronic/remote voting were proposed by 11 Lithuanian respondents as methods to make the voting process easier and more appealing for young people. Meanwhile 7 Estonian respondents outlined that it is necessary to improve electronic voting by making adjustments to be able to vote using mobile applications.

“Remote voting, because with it, you could vote from anywhere in the world” (LT)

Representation and Relevance: 1 Polish and 5 Lithuanian respondents would like to see younger candidates to participate in elections to better represent the perspectives and priorities of younger voters.

“I would publicize more that young people can also be candidates in the European Parliament elections. Because from what I’ve seen in the candidate lists, almost all the candidates were over 40 years old or older” (LT)

“„Conduct a consistent campaign to show young people that participating in elections isn’t scary and that it’s crucial for our future.” (PL)

Social Media and Advertising” The importance of visual and video-based advertising on platforms young people frequently use was stressed by 5 Lithuanian and 8 Polish respondents. 4 Estonian respondents outlined it is important to involve famous people who have influence on young people in advertisements.

“....advertisements should be in the form of videos, not just posters” (PL)

Youth-Friendly Communication 4 Estonian respondents outlined the importance of youth-friendly communication about European Parliament elections and European Parliament generally.

“They use too many big words, it would be great if they use more simple language”(EST)

Conclusions

Objective 1: The focus groups revealed key factors shaping young people's attitudes toward voting and the European Parliament (EP) elections. Family influence, particularly **early exposure to voting through parents**, instilled a sense of civic responsibility in many participants. **Turning 18 (or 16 in Estonia)** was a significant milestone, often accompanied by excitement to vote for the first time. **School elections and civic engagement activities** also positively influenced attitudes toward voting, particularly among those who participated in EP elections.

Many participants viewed **voting as a civic duty** and a **way to influence policies** on funding, environmental issues, and international relations by electing representatives who reflect their values. However, those who had not participated in EP elections **often lacked these formative experiences and expressed disengagement, skepticism, or frustration** with the political system. **Limited understanding of the European Parliament's relevance and dissatisfaction with some elected representatives** also contributed to low participation.

Objective 2: The focus groups revealed several factors motivating young people to vote in European Parliament elections. **Fear of undesirable outcomes**, like unsuitable representatives, was a strong motivator, while some non-voters felt **discouraged by the belief** that their vote wouldn't change the outcome. **Community engagement**, such as debates, discussions, and sharing voting experiences on social media, also encouraged participation, as did the **desire for change** and the **belief that every vote matters**. Many young people viewed **voting as a civic duty** and took pride in sharing their participation.

Non-voters cited a **lack of awareness** about the EP's role and **insufficient information** as barriers. They suggested that **providing engaging, concise information, especially on social media**, could make elections more relatable. Practical solutions, like **flexible voting times, more polling stations** during advanced elections, **combining EP elections with national elections**, and **remote voting**, would encourage young people participate in EP elections.

Memorable experiences, such as **educational trips to the EP, debates, and Europe Day events**, were cited as inspiring. **Involvement in youth organizations and political parties** focused on issues like LGBTQ+ rights also encouraged participation.

Objective 3: The focus groups revealed key barriers that **would** discourage or discourages youth participation in European Parliament (EP) elections. Voters outlined that lack of suitable candidates would discourage them. Meanwhile some non-voters do not participate in elections due to the **absence of representatives aligned with their values**. Logistical challenges during **advanced voting**, such as **inconvenient polling times, long lines, and restricted locations**, also deterred participation, particularly for those balancing work or studies.

Limited accessibility to voting options, including **outdated and complicated online systems**, was highlighted by non-voters in Estonia. Meanwhile respondents from Lithuania, and Poland outlined **the lack of online voting**. Additionally, a **lack of clear and engaging information** about candidates and the EP's relevance contributed to voter apathy, especially **compared to the better-publicized national elections**.

Personal factors, such as **low motivation or “laziness”**, also played a role, with some participants citing the **timing of elections** as a distraction. Accessibility issues, like **polling stations not accommodating people with disabilities**, further compounded these challenges.

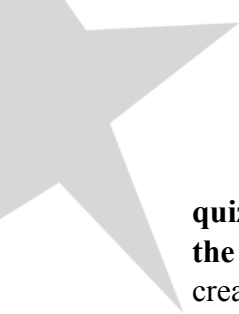
Objective 4: The findings reveal that young people primarily **rely on social media, especially Facebook and Instagram**, to receive information about the European Parliament elections, with some turning to **news portals, TV debates, and YouTube** as supplementary sources. **Flyers, emails, newspapers, and even street advertisements** also attract attention, but to a **lesser extent**. Political campaigns that **emphasize personal values**, particularly those **aligned with equality and liberal views**, seem to capture interest. Additionally, **well-designed, visually appealing campaign materials, and interactive elements such as candidate interactions at conferences or meetings**, are effective in engaging young people. However, **overexposure to repetitive content, poorly designed materials, or campaigns in languages other than their own**, particularly Russian, are off-putting for some.

When it comes to feeling adequately informed, most young voters in Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland believe they have sufficient information to make an informed decision, thanks to their **personal interest in politics and proactive efforts** such as watching debates, following news, and exploring candidates’ platforms. On the other hand, many **non-voters express a lack of interest in seeking out information and feel they do not have enough knowledge** to make a well-informed decision. Some young people also mentioned that they felt overwhelmed by the **abundance of information**, which made decision-making harder, and others **highlighted the limited visibility of European Parliament elections** in comparison to national elections.

Objective 5: Family and friends have a moderate influence on young people's decisions to vote, but the degree of this influence varies. For many young voters, the influence is minimal or non-existent, as **they value their independence in decision-making and remain open to various perspectives**. A few mentioned that their family and friends have little or no impact on their voting behaviour, with some even **avoiding political discussions when views don't align**. However, for others, social networks, especially family and friends, play a more active role. **Family members often serve as reminders** about election dates and **can provide helpful information about candidates and parties**, which encourages some young people to become more informed. **Friends**, on the other hand, **are frequently seen as discussion partners**, offering new insights or perspectives that sometimes lead individuals to reassess their opinions about candidates.

Objective 6: The suggestions provided by young people to make the European Parliament elections more appealing and engaging highlight several key areas for improvement. First and foremost, many respondents emphasized the **need for better education and awareness about the European Parliament's role and its impact on citizens’ lives**. This includes introducing lessons, presentations, and events in schools, as well as inviting candidates to visit schools to engage with students directly. **By empowering educational institutions to discuss the EU and its elections**, young people could be better informed, leading to higher participation rates.

Interactive and engaging methods were also frequently suggested. Many respondents advocated for events like **international exchanges, debates, and interactive tools such as**



quizzes that help young people understand which candidates align with their values. **Visits to the European Parliament and live presentations by candidates** were also seen as ways to create a more hands-on and immersive experience.

To make the voting process more accessible, **electronic/remote voting** options were proposed. Many young people believe that being able to vote online or via mobile applications would make the process easier and more appealing, especially for those who may be abroad or have busy schedules.

In terms of representation, some respondents suggested **increasing the visibility of younger candidates** in the European Parliament elections to ensure that young people's perspectives are better represented. They also emphasized the **need for campaigns that make young people feel that voting is relevant** to their future and that it is not a daunting task.

Finally, **social media and youth-friendly communication** were highlighted as crucial for reaching young voters. The **use of visual and video-based advertisements on platforms young people use**, as well as **involving influential public figures in campaigns**, would likely increase engagement. Additionally, **simplifying the language used in communications about the European Parliament elections** was seen as an important step in making information more accessible to young people.

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