

## Centre for Women & Democracy

# Women in the 2014 European Elections

## 1. European Elections

Elections for the European Parliament will take place in the UK on 22 May 2014.

Across Europe a total of 751 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will be elected, with the results being counted and announced on 25 May, after polls have closed in all 28 member states.

Each member state is allocated a certain number of seats based on population<sup>1</sup>. Within each country, the seats are allocated to 'constituencies'. In the UK there are twelve constituencies, each of which has an allocated number of MEPs, again calculated by population.

The UK uses a form of proportional representation known as the de Hondt system<sup>2</sup>. In each region, parties nominate a list of candidates equal to the number of MEPs to be elected. These lists are ranked by the parties themselves, and electors then vote for the party rather than individual candidates. Once the votes have been cast, they are counted and a calculation applied to distribute the seats between the parties.

Individual candidates may also stand as Independents, and there is usually a proliferation of small/new/Europe-specific parties who stand a small number of candidates.

The last European elections were held on 4 June 2009, when 69 UK MEPs were chosen on a turnout of 35 per cent. Turnout across the EU was 43 per cent. Since 1979 turnout in the UK has remained more or less static in the mid-thirties; in Europe it has fallen from 61 per cent as more countries have joined. Turnout in Belgium, where voting is compulsory, has remained very high (90 per cent plus), whilst in Romania in 2009 it reached only 28 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

There are currently 70 British MEPs, one more than were elected in 2009. This is because the West Midlands gained a seat in 2011 when the Lisbon Treaty came into force.

The 'constituencies' for the election are the nine English regions, plus Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.<sup>4</sup> The breakdown of seats to be elected is as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for the breakdown of seats for each EU member state.

<sup>2</sup> Each Party fields a list of candidates in each region/nation, and seats are allocated in successive rounds. In each round, the votes cast for each party are divided by the number of seats the party has already been allocated in the region plus 1. The party with the highest remaining total in the round wins the seat.

<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/000cdcd9d4/Turnout-%281979-2009%29.html> accessed 7 January 2014

<sup>4</sup> Except where specified otherwise, Northern Ireland has been excluded from this report because it uses a single transferable vote system to calculate the result, which means that neither nominations nor outcomes are comparable with the rest of Britain. There are 3 European seats in Northern Ireland.

**Table 1: Number of Seats in Each Region/Nation**

Region/Nation	Number of Seats
East Midlands	5
Eastern	7
London	8
North East	3
North West	8
Scotland	6
South East	10
South West	6
Wales	4
West Midlands	7
Yorkshire & the Humber	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>

## 2. The Representation of Women

In the UK, women generally form a greater proportion of MEPs than they do of Westminster MPs. 22 (32 per cent) of MEPs elected in England, Scotland and Wales in 2009 were women, as against 22.5 per cent of Westminster MPs in 2010. This is at least in part because using proportional representation - even the rather unusual de Hondt system - makes it easier for parties to include women in winnable seats, though other factors may also be in play.

The gender breakdown by party of women elected in 2009 is as follows:

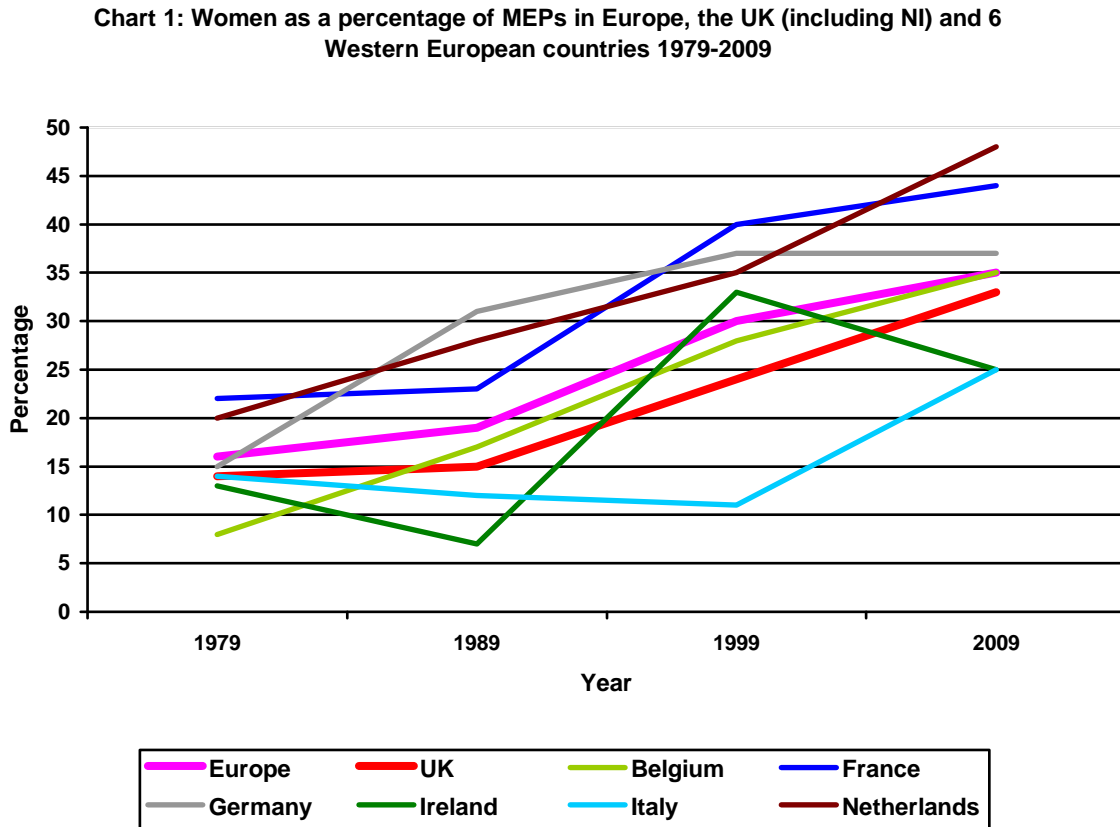
**Table 2: Women Elected by Political Party on 4 June 2009**

Party	Total MEPs Elected	Women Elected	% MEPs Elected Women
BNP	2	0	0%
Conservative	25	6	24%
Green	2	2	100%
Labour	13	5	38%
Liberal Democrat	11	6	55%
Plaid Cymru	1	1	100%
SNP	2	0	0%
UKIP	13	2	15%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>32%</b>

In the 2004 European Elections 24 per cent of those elected were women.

Across Europe, 35 per cent of MEPs elected in 2009 were women.

Chart 1 below shows how the percentage of women MEPs changed between 1979 and 2009 both in Europe as a whole and in seven long-standing member countries, including the UK.<sup>5</sup>



### 3. Candidates for 2014

Not all parties have yet published their full lists, and not all will field candidates in every region, but all the parties which currently have representation in the European Parliament have selected some of their candidates, and some have selected all.

Each party has its own selection process for determining its list of candidates in each region. In most cases this involves some form of ballot of the membership, particularly when it comes to ranking the candidates. This is important, since those at the top of the list stand a significantly greater chance of election than those at the bottom.

The total number of candidates known so far is 338, of whom 114 (34 per cent) are women.

<sup>5</sup> For a full breakdown of the percentage of women elected in all member states between 1979 and 2009, see Appendix 1

The nature of the election means that the smaller parties are more likely to get candidates elected, and there are currently Green, UKIP, BNP and Independent MEPs as well as those from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. This report looks in detail at those parties which currently have representation in the European Parliament; however it should be noted that more candidates for small parties, as well as independents, will emerge before the elections in May.

The gender breakdown for candidates declared to date (January 2014) is as follows:

**Table 3: Women Candidates for Six Key Parties as at January 2014**

Party	Total Candidates	Women Candidates	% Candidates Women
BNP	12	2	17%
Conservative	70	21	30%
Green	52	27	52%
Labour	70	37	53%
Liberal Democrat	70	24	34%
UKIP	64	12	19%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>34%</b>

Table 4 shows a comparison between the percentages of women candidates declared so far for each of the six parties and the percentage of women candidates actually fielded in 2009. It should be noted that, at the time of writing (January 2014) only the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats have so far announced complete lists.

**Table 4: Women candidates declared January 2014 and 2009**

Party	Total Candidates 2014	% Women	Total candidates 2009	% Candidates Women
BNP	12	17%	69	16%
Conservative	70	30%	69	32%
Green	52	52%	69	42%
Labour	70	53%	69	49%
Liberal Democrat	70	34%	69	26%
UKIP	64	19%	69	19%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>31%</b>

Of the three major parties, only the Conservatives will be fielding a lower percentage of women candidates than in 2009.

Because the European elections use proportional representation (PR), it is almost impossible for any party to get all the candidates on its list elected; indeed, the most any party is likely to see succeed is three, and, in most cases, it will be only one or two. The parties' ranking of their candidates in each of the regions/nations, and the

number of women occupying the higher places in those lists, is therefore relevant, and is shown in the following table.

**Table 5: Rankings for Women Candidates for 6 Political Parties as at January 2014**

Party	First Place		Second Place		Third Place	
	m	f	m	f	m	f
BNP	3	1	1	1	2	0
Conservative	7	4	8	3	9	2
Green <sup>6</sup>	6	5	3	7	4	3
Labour	4	7	6	5	4	7
Liberal Democrat	8	3	7	4	5	6
UKIP <sup>7</sup>	8	2	6	4	7	3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>22 (38%)</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>24 (44%)</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>21 (40%)</b>

The outcomes in terms of the numbers of women elected in 2014 are difficult to predict with any accuracy, and will be heavily dependent upon the fortunes of the various parties and their ability to secure more than one seat per region.

Despite this, it is possible to draw some conclusions. Most parties can reasonably hope to get at least the top person on their list elected, but in a significant number of regions the first-placed candidate for the Conservatives, Labour, the Liberal Democrats and UKIP are already MEPs, and their re-election will therefore neither increase nor decrease the number of women.

Of the 43 first-placed candidates for these parties, 31 are already in office, of whom nine are women. This leaves only 12 first-placed candidates whose election might make a difference; seven of these are female, (four Labour, two UKIP and one Liberal Democrat). If all seven of these women are elected there will be a significant increase in both the number and the percentage of women representing the UK in Europe. It does not follow, however, that it will come anywhere near to doubling.

The most recent polling on voting intentions (Survation, 3 January 2014)<sup>8</sup> suggests that Labour will do significantly better than in 2009, which, given the number and placing of Labour's women candidates would result in an improvement in the representation of women.

That said, at this stage some caution should still be exercised, if only because the outcomes of an election which is still five months away remains difficult to predict, particularly when the electoral system in use is not easy to project.

<sup>6</sup> The Green Party has not yet declared a full list in Wales, the North West, the West Midlands or Scotland.

<sup>7</sup> UKIP have only declared candidates in 10 European constituencies; to date they have none in Scotland.

<sup>8</sup> <http://survation.com/2014/01/has-intense-discussion-of-european-immigration-increased-euro-scepticism/>

The Centre for Women & Democracy will be producing a further report on the candidates after the close of nominations, and a detailed analysis of the results in terms of women elected after 25 May.

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**Appendix 1****European Parliament seats to be elected by member state in 2014**

Listed in order of number of seats.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Seats</b>
Germany	96
France	74
Italy	73
United Kingdom	73 <sup>9</sup>
Spain	54
Poland	51
Romania	32
Netherlands	26
Belgium	21
Czech Republic	21
Greece	21
Hungary	21
Portugal	21
Sweden	20
Austria	18
Bulgaria	17
Denmark	13
Slovakia	13
Finland	13
Ireland	11
Croatia	11
Lithuania	11
Latvia	8
Slovenia	8
Estonia	6
Cyprus	6
Luxembourg	6
Malta	6

Source: <http://www.elections2014.eu/en> accessed 7 January 2014

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<sup>9</sup> Includes Northern Ireland

## Appendix 2

### Women Elected in All Member States 1989-2009

Country	2009 Women MEPs	2004	1999	1994	1989	1984	1979
Finland	62%	43%	44%				
Sweden	56%	47%	41%				
Estonia	50%	50%					
Netherlands	48%	48%	35%	32%	28%	28%	20%
Bulgaria	47%						
Denmark	46%	43%	38%	44%	38%	38%	31%
France	44%	45%	40%	30%	23%	21%	22%
Latvia	38%	33%					
Slovakia	38%	36%					
Germany	37%	33%	37%	35%	31%	20%	15%
Spain	36%	26%	34%	33%	15%		
Hungary	36%	38%					
Portugal	36%	25%	20%	8%	13%		
Romania	36%						
Belgium	35%	33%	28%	32%	17%	17%	8%
Austria	35%	28%	38%				
Cyprus	33%	0%					
Luxembourg	33%	50%	33%	50%	50%	50%	17%
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Greece	32%	29%	16%	16%	4%	8%	
Slovenia	29%						
Ireland	25%	38%	33%	27%	7%	13%	13%
Italy	25%	21%	11%	13%	12%	10%	14%
Lithuania	25%	38%					
Poland	22%	15%					
Czech Republic	18%	21%					
Malta	0%	0%					
European Parliament	35%	31%	30%	26%	19%	18%	16%

Source: European Parliament website at  
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/00622bc71a/Distribution-of-men-and-women.html>  
 accessed 7 January 2014