

Centre for Women & Democracy

Women in the 2014 European Elections

1. Headline Figures

- Of the 73 MEPs elected on 22 May in Great Britain and Northern Ireland 30 (41 percent) are women.
- This represents a numerical increase of six; in percentage terms a rise from 33 percent in 2009 to 41 percent now. (In our January 2014 European Election Briefing CFWD predicted that the maximum possible increase in the number of women MEPs was seven.)
- 55 percent of Labour MEPs are women, 32 percent of Conservative and 29 percent of UKIP.
- In regional terms, the East of England (one woman out of the region's seven MEPs) and Scotland (one woman out of six MEPs) fared worst, although there is now no region without a female representative in Brussels.
- In the North East, the North West, Northern Ireland, the South West and Wales women constitute 50 percent or more of the region's MEPs.
- A total of 737 candidates stood for election to the European Parliament on 22 May, of whom 247 (33.5 percent) were women. This is a slight increase on the 2009 level of 32 percent.
- 31 percent of Conservative candidates were women, 48 percent of Green, 53 percent of Labour, 34 percent of Liberal Democrat and 18 percent of UKIP.
- Labour and the Green Party were most likely to have women in one or more of the top three positions in their lists, and were thus the most successful parties when it came to getting women elected. Both use some form of positive action to select and/or rank candidates.
- As a comparison, 22.5 percent of Westminster Members of Parliament are women.

2. Background

Elections for the European Parliament took place in the UK on 22 May 2014, and across Europe between then and 25 May.

In all, a total of 751 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) were elected, including 73 in the UK.

Each member state is allocated a certain number of seats based on population¹. 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 system². 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 UK constituencies for the election are the nine English regions, plus Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Table 1: Number of Seats in Each Region/Nation

Region/Nation	Number of Seats
East Midlands	5
East of England	7
London	8
North East	3
North West	8
Northern Ireland	3
Scotland	6
South East	10
South West	6
Wales	4
West Midlands	7
Yorkshire & the Humber	6
Total	73

3. The Representation of Women

In the UK, women generally form a greater proportion of MEPs than they do of Members of the Westminster Parliament. 41 per cent of MEPs elected in Britain and Northern Ireland in 2014 were women, as against 22.5 per cent of Westminster MPs in 2010 and 33 percent of MEPs in 2009. 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.

¹ See Appendix 1 for the breakdown of seats for each EU member state.

² 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. A different system is used in Northern Ireland.

The gender breakdown by party of women elected to the European Parliament in 2014 is as follows:

Table 2: Women Elected by Political Party on 22 May 2014

Party	Total MEPs Elected	Women Elected	Women as % MEPs elected 2014	Women as % MEPs elected 2009
Conservative	19	6	31.6%	24%
Democratic Unionist Party	1	1	100%	100%
Green	3	2	66.6%	100%
Labour	20	11	55.0%	38%
Liberal Democrat	1	1	100%	64%
Plaid Cymru	1	1	100%	100%
Scottish Nationalist Party	2	0	0%	0%
Sinn Fein	1	1	100%	100%
UKIP	24	7	29.2%	15%
Ulster Unionist Party	1	0	0%	0%
Totals	73	30	41%	33%

Europe-wide figures are not yet available, but in 2009 35 per cent of MEPs elected across the EU as a whole were women, and it is likely that this level rose in 2014.

The UK regional breakdown of women elected is:

Table 3: Women MEPs elected in 2014 by region/nation

Region/Nation	Number of MEPs	Number of women MEPs
East Midlands	5	3
East of England	7	1
London	8	3
North East	3	1
North West	8	4
Northern Ireland	3	2
Scotland	6	1
South East	10	4
South West	6	4
Wales	4	2
West Midlands	7	3
Yorkshire & the Humber	6	2
Total	73	30 (41.1%)

4. Candidates

A total of 737 candidates stood for election to the European Parliament on 22 May, of whom 247 (33.5 percent) were women. This is a slight increase on the 2009 level of 32 percent.

In total, 35 parties ran candidates (see Appendix 1 for the full list and the percentage of women candidates for each) but in the event only ten parties - Conservative, Democratic Unionists (DUP), Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green, Plaid Cymru, Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP), Sinn Fein, Ulster Unionists (UUP) and UKIP - were successful in getting candidates elected. The gender breakdown of the candidates for these parties was:

Table 4: Women Candidates for Successful Parties May 2014

Party	Total Candidates	Women Candidates	Women as % candidates 2014	Women as % candidates 2009
Conservative	71	22	30.9%	30%
DUP	1	1	100%	100%
Green	71	34	47.9%	52%
Labour	70	37	52.8%	53%
Liberal Democrat	70	24	34.3%	34%
Plaid Cymru	4	1	25%	50%
SNP	6	1	16.7%	16.5%
Sinn Fein	1	1	100%	100%
UKIP	71	13	18.3%	19%
UUP	1	0	0%	0%
Totals	366	134	36.6%	34%

Except in Northern Ireland, each party produces what is known as a 'closed list' of candidates numbered according to the number of seats available in each region. Obviously, those at the top of the list stand a significantly greater chance of election than those at the bottom, and the key factor in determining women's success overall is therefore not how many women candidates there are, but where on their parties' lists they are ranked.

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 determining the rankings.

Only the Green Party and the Labour Party use any form of positive action for women in the selection of their candidates, and as result both parties fielded very high levels of women in winnable positions on their lists. The fact that women constituted more than 50 percent of MEPs elected for both parties reflects their success in ensuring that women candidates occupied high positions on their lists.

The de Hondt system of voting means that it is practically 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 2014³

Party	First Place		Second Place		Third Place	
	m	f	m	f	m	f
Conservative	7	4	8	3	9	2
Green	6	5	3	7	5	6
Labour	4	7	7	4	3	8
Liberal Democrat	8	3	7	4	5	6
UKIP	8	2	7	4	8	3
Totals	33	21 (63.6%)	32	22 (68.7%)	30	25 (83.3%)

4. Conclusions

1. The use of a form of proportional representation for European elections makes it much easier for political parties to ensure that women stand in positions in which they stand a reasonable or good chance of getting elected.
2. The use of positive action mechanisms by the Green and Labour Parties has resulted in very high levels of women being elected to represent them. By contrast, those parties which do not use positive action had lower levels of candidates and lower percentages of women elected. The argument that positive action does not work has therefore again been shown to be erroneous.
3. The general trend of more women being elected to Brussels than to Westminster has been continued in 2014.

The Centre for Women & Democracy will be producing a detailed analysis of the results in Europe as a whole when detailed results for all 28 countries become available.

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³ This table excludes Northern Ireland.

Appendix 1 - Candidates for All Parties in England, Scotland, Wales and N Ireland

73 MEPs to be elected.

Party	Candidates	Women Candidates	% Candidates Women
4 Freedoms Party	8	3	37.5%
Alliance	1	1	100%
An Independence from Europe	60	22	36.7%
Animal Welfare Party	8	4	50.0%
Britain First	10	5	50.0%
British National Party	70	12	18.6%
Christian People's Alliance	24	10	41.7%
Communities United Party	8	4	50%
Conservative Party	69	22	31.9%
DUP	1	1	100%
English Democrats	60	14	23.3%
Europeans Party	6	1	16.7%
Green Party	71	34	47.9%
Harmony Party	5	0	0%
Labour Party	70	37	52.8%
Liberal Democrat Party	70	24	43.3%
Liberty Great Britain	3	1	33.3%
National Health Action Party	8	3	37.5%
National Liberal Party	8	1	12.5%
No2EU	46	17	37.0%
Peace Party	10	1	10.0%
Pirate Party	3	1	33.3%
Plaid Cymru	4	1	25.0%
Roman Party Ave!	1	0	0.0%
Scottish National Party	6	1	16.7%
SDLP	1	0	0%
Sinn Fein	1	1	100%
Socialist Equality Party	8	3	37.5%
Socialist Labour Party	4	2	50.0%
Socialist Party of Great Britain	14	1	7.1%
UKIP	71	13	18.3%
Ulster Unionist	1	0	0%
We Demand a Referendum Now	7	4	57.1%
Yorkshire First	3	0	0%
YOUR Voice	3	2	66.7%

**Appendix 2 -
Number of European Parliament seats elected by member states in 2014**

Listed in order of number of seats.

Country	Seats
Germany	96
France	74
Italy	73
United Kingdom	73
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
Total	751

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