

Women in the 2009 European Elections

Introduction

Elections for the European Parliament occur every five years across Europe; in 2009 they took place in the first week of June in all 27 member states (4 June in the UK).

The 'constituencies' for the elections in the UK are the nine English regions, plus Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Prior to 4 June 2009, there were 78 British MEPs, of whom 20 (26%) were women. Across Europe as a whole, 31% of MEPs were women.

A redistribution of seats following the enlargement of the European Union resulted in a reduction of 6 seats in the UK, and in 2009, therefore, a total of 72 seats were up for election. The results were calculated using a version of proportional representation known as the de Hondt system¹ (except in Northern Ireland, where the single transferable vote system was used).

The breakdown by region/nation (or 'constituency') of seats to be elected was as follows:

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
Northern Ireland	3
Scotland	6
South East	10
South West	6
Wales	4
West Midlands	6
Yorkshire & the Humber	6
Total	72

¹ 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.

In each region/country (other than Northern Ireland), parties nominated a list of candidates equal to the number of MEPs to be elected. These lists were ranked by the parties themselves, and electors then voted for the party rather than individual candidates. Once the votes had been cast, they were counted and a set of calculations applied to distribute the seats between the parties.

Individual candidates could also stand as Independents, but were significantly more likely to be associated with a party or group.

In Northern Ireland, where the single transferable vote system was used, electors voted for candidates in order of preference, and at the count a quota (based on turnout) was identified. Candidates reaching that quota on first preferences were elected. The candidates with the fewest votes were then eliminated, and their votes redistributed according to second or third preferences until three candidates had reached the quota.

Candidates

A total of 24 parties fielded candidates in some or all of the regions/nations shown above. Many of these parties also fielded candidates in the local elections taking place on the same day, but others came into existence specifically for the European elections.

Table 2 shows how many candidates each party fielded.

Table 2: Parties and Candidates

Party	Candidates
Alliance	1
Animals Count	3
British National Party	69
Christian Party	69
Conservative & Unionist	1
Conservative Party	69
DUP	1
English Democrats	59
Fair Pay Fair Trade Party	2
Green Party	70
Independents	9
Jury Team	59
Labour Party	69
Liberal Democrats	69
Mebyon Kernow -Party for Cornwall	6
No2EU:Yes to Democracy	69
Peace Party	10

Party	Candidates
Pensioners Party	6
Plaid Cymru	4
Pro Democracy:Libertas.eu	57
Roman Party. Ave!	1
Scottish National Party	6
Scottish Socialist Party	6
SDLP	1
Sinn Fein	1
Socialist Labour Party	69
Socialist Party of Great Britain	8
UKIP	69
United Kingdom First	14
WAID	2
Yes 2 Europe	1
Total	880

26.9% of candidates overall were women, and 31.1% of candidates for the parties most likely to win seats (see Table 3 below).

The nature of the election meant that the smaller parties were more likely to get candidates elected, and in the 2004-2009 European Parliament there were Green and UKIP MEPs as well as those from the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties. This report looks in detail at these five, plus the British National Party (BNP), but also gives the figures for women candidates for all parties fielding candidates in the list in Appendix 1 of this document.

The figures for women candidates for the six parties most likely to win seats are as follows:

Table 3: Women Candidates for Six Key Parties

Party	Total Candidates	Women Candidates	% Candidates Women
BNP	69	11	15.9%
Conservative	69	22	31.9%
Green	70	29	42.0%
Labour	69	34	49.3%
Liberal Democrat	69	20	29.0%
UKIP	69	13	18.8%
Totals	415	129	31.1%

Because the European elections use proportional representation (PR), it is always unlikely that any party will get all the candidates on its list elected; indeed, the most any party is likely to see succeed is three, and, in most cases, only one or two.

The parties' ranking of their candidates in each of the 11 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 4: List Rankings for Women Candidates for Six Key Parties

Party	First Place		Second Place		Third Place	
	m	f	m	f	m	f
BNP	10	1	8	3	10	1
Conservative	10	1	7	4	3	8
Green	6	6	6	5	8	3
Labour	8	3	3	8	4	7
Liberal Democrat	6	5	7	4	5	6
UKIP	11	0	8	3	10	1
Totals	51	16	39	27	40	26

MEPs Elected

24 (33%) of the 72 MEPs elected on 4 June 2009 were women. This represents an increase of 7%, or, in numerical terms, 4 women.

Table 5 below shows the number of women elected for each party, shows these as a percentage of the total, and compares these percentages with the position prior to 4 June 2009.

Table 5: Women Elected by Political Party

Party	Total MEPs Elected	Women Elected	% MEPs Elected Women	% MEPs Women prior to election
BNP	2	0	0%	0%
Conservative	25	6	24%	7%
Conservative & Unionist	1	0	0%	0%
DUP	1	1	100%	0%
Green	2	2	100%	100%
Labour	13	5	38%	37%
Liberal Democrat	11	6	55%	64%
Plaid Cymru	1	1	100%	100%
Sinn Fein	1	1	100%	100%
SNP	2	0	0%	0%
UKIP	13	2	15%	0%
Totals	72	24	33%	24%

The increase in women MEPs in the UK is thus seen to be due to the increase in the number of women representing the Conservative Party and UKIP, as well as to those parties' successes at the ballot box. Labour lost two women MEPs which very slightly pulled its level down, whilst the number of Liberal Democrat MEPs reduced by one, thus pulling its percentage down.

The electoral process - proportional representation rather than first past the post - also contributed to the increase, making it easier for parties to field women candidates in winnable positions and more likely that women will continue to be elected whatever their parties' fortunes. However, it should also be noted that there are a number of countries in which the representation of women has declined (see list below) despite PR being used, and PR is therefore in and of itself not the only answer to the challenge of increasing women's participation.

On the other hand, it has already been estimated that, with the first past the post system used in UK General Elections, the increase in women MPs at Westminster will at best rise very slightly, and at worst go into reverse at the next election. Although the electoral system is not the only significant issue - others include decisions about candidates made by individual parties and the absence of any coherent quota system - it is certainly a contributory factor.

The Results in Europe

Elections were also held in the other 26 member states, and the outcomes in terms of women elected are shown in Table 6 below, which also gives the representation of women at previous elections during the last thirty years². Countries are listed showing those with the highest level of women MEPs in 2009 at the top.

Table 6: 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%

² Source: European Parliament elections results pages at www.elections2009-results.eu/en/index_en.html

Country	2009 % Women MEPs	2004	1999	1994	1989	1984	1979
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%
United Kingdom	33%	26%	24%	18%	15%	15%	14%
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%

Conclusions

Although the representation of women as UK MEPs has continued to move in the right direction overall, it remains heavily dependent upon both the electoral system used and the decisions of individual political parties about candidates. If parties which do well at elections field high numbers of women candidates, and field them in winnable positions on the list where that system is used, then both the number and the percentage of women being elected will rise.

However, the lack of any overall policy or quota requirements means that some parties field very few women candidates, or very few in the top three positions on their lists, and this will inevitably impact upon results if those parties do well.

The Conservative Party had significant success in increasing its number of women MEPs; however, it should also be noted that it was still the case that only one Conservative woman

headed the regional list, whilst four were placed second and eight third, and of the six Conservative women elected one was placed first on the list, three second and two third.

Both the Labour, and - to a greater extent - the Liberal Democrat parties were more likely to field women candidates in either first or second place on the list, and, as a consequence, the representation of women was less impacted by their electoral fortunes than it might otherwise have been. The same is true of the Green Party, Plaid Cymru and Sinn Fein, all of which maintained 100% female representation.

The UK has, since the inception of the European Parliament, lagged behind the majority of member countries in terms of women's representation, and this has been the case regardless of the size or composition of the European Union. If the UK wishes to change this, at either national or international level, both it and the parties fielding candidates will need to take a much more structured and coherent approach to change.

For further information please contact:

Centre for Women & Democracy

2 Blenheim Terrace

Leeds

LS2 9JG

0113 234 6500

cfwd@cfwd.org.uk

www.cfwd.org.uk

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

72 MEPs to be elected.

Party	Candidates	Women Candidates	% Candidates Women
Alliance	1	0	0%
Animals Count	3	1	33.0%
British National Party	69	11	15.9%
Christian Party	69	26	37.7%
Conservative & Unionist	1	0	0%
Conservative Party	69	22	31.9%
DUP	1	1	100%
English Democrats	59	7	11.9%
Fair Pay Fair Trade Party	2	1	50.0%
Green Party	70	29	41.4%
Independents (no party)	9	1	11.1%
Jury Team	59	8	13.6%
Labour Party	69	34	49.3%
Liberal Democrat Party	69	20	29.0%
Libertas	57	8	14.0%
Mebyon Kernow -Party for Cornwall	6	2	33.3%
No2EU: Yes to Democracy	69	14	20.3%
Peace Party	10	2	20.0%
Pensioners Party	6	0	0.0%
Plaid Cymru	4	2	50.0%
Roman Party Ave!	1	0	0.0%
Scottish National Party	6	1	16.7%
Scottish Socialist Party	6	3	50.0%
SDLP	1	0	0%
Sinn Fein	1	1	100%
Socialist Labour Party	69	23	33.3%
Socialist Party of Great Britain	8	2	25.0%
TUV	1	0	0%
UKIP	69	13	18.85
United Kingdom First	14	4	28.6%
WAID	2	2	100%
Yes 2 Europe	1	0	0.0%