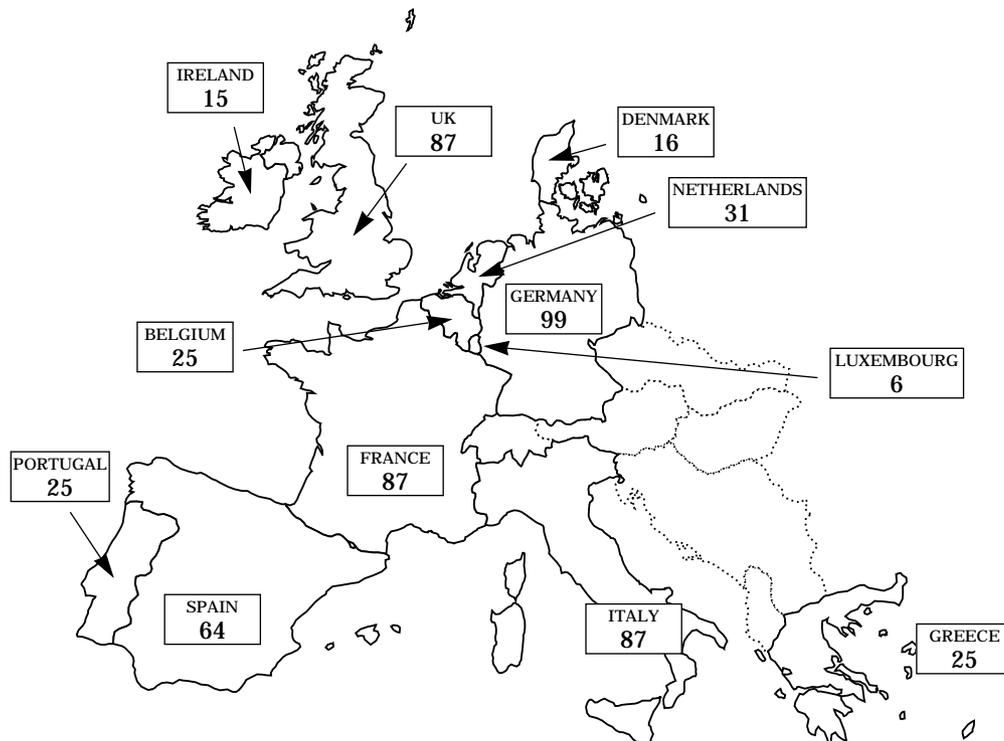


# The European Parliament Election

## What is the European Parliament election?

This is an election to choose the Members of the European Parliament, or MEPs as they are known. It is held every five years and the next European Parliament election is in June 1994. The number of MEPs will be increased from 518 to 567 from 1994.

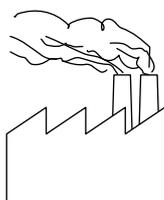
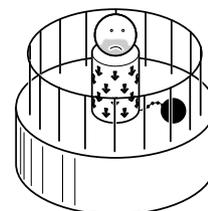
Each country in the EU elects a set number of MEPs, and for the 1994 election the numbers are: 99 from the country with the largest population, Germany; 87 from each of France, Italy, and the UK; 64 from Spain; 31 from the Netherlands; 25 each from Belgium, Greece and Portugal; 16 from Denmark; 15 from Ireland and 6 from Luxembourg.



## Why is the election important?

The outcome of the European Parliament election in 1994 will determine which parties and politicians control the European Parliament for the next five years. This is important for everyone living in the member countries because the European Parliament plays a key role in helping to select and shape EU laws. Many of the decisions which affect the way Britain is run are taken by the institutions of the EU of which the European Parliament is a part.

**Law and Order.** Organised crime is a problem throughout Europe. Increasingly, there are criminal groups who operate on an international scale, in areas such as drug trafficking, prostitution, fraud, and the disposal of stolen goods. In some cases, the removal of customs barriers between member countries has made it easier for criminals to run their rackets in more than one country. The challenge for the Union is to establish new organisations which can combat the threat of international crime through integrating the activities of police and security forces across Europe.



**The Environment.** Under the Maastricht Treaty the Union has acquired new powers for dealing with environmental problems in the member countries. The question is how are these powers to be used and whether or not the Union will play a leading role in coordinating international efforts to protect the environment at a global level.

**The Future of the Union.** The Maastricht Treaty in particular has opened up the debate about what form the Union should take and how it will develop over the coming years. There are calls for the institutions to be made more democratic and some people favour greater decentralisation of power (ie more power for regional and national governments, less power for Brussels). There is also the issue of whether or not membership of the Union should be increased to include countries like Austria, Finland and Sweden, and those in Eastern Europe. And if the number of members is increased, who should be allowed to join, when and under what conditions?



## Policies in the UK

A manifesto is a document which a political party produces a few months before a major election. It sets out the specific policies that the party intends to pursue if it wins the election. The party manifestos for the forthcoming European Parliament elections will be available in April/May 1994. We recommend that you find out about the specific policies of each party by:

- studying the manifestos (copies available from the national headquarters of each party, or try the local offices of the parties or your local reference library)
- reading about the policies in the national newspapers
- following the television and radio coverage of the election campaign
- taking the opportunity to attend relevant political meetings locally (representatives from the parties could be invited to the school to discuss policies).

## **Quick Election Guide**

This guide covers the minimum requirements for staging a mock European Parliament election. It can be adapted to a number of teaching situations, but is particularly suitable for use with a single class or small group of students.

The amount of classroom time required for this version of the mock election is approximately 1½ to 2½ hours, and can either be divided between a number of timetabled lessons or a single session.

Begin by explaining to the students the roles involved in the mock election. These are:

- Candidates – invite a small number of students to act as candidates.
- Election Officers – two students are required for this role to ensure that the correct voting procedure is followed, to count the votes, and to announce the result.
- Electorate – each student in the class or group is eligible to vote in the election. This can include the candidates, though the election officers should be excluded for obvious reasons.

### **Candidates**

Invite the candidates to choose policies which they support and to write a short election speech (about 5-8 minutes long) outlining:

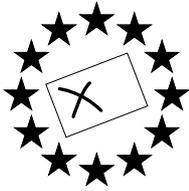
- the policies they support
- reasons why the electorate should vote for them in the European Parliament election.

As candidates will need time to prepare their speeches, this work might be undertaken in their own time or during a study period. The policies they choose may be their own, or they may derive ideas from studying the manifestos of the main political parties in the UK. Meanwhile, the rest of the class can be preparing questions to ask the candidates about their policies and suitability for the job of MEP.

Teachers might provide advice for candidates about how to choose policies and write a suitable speech. Help could also be provided by organising a classroom discussion where the students consider different policy issues affecting the EU and develop ideas about what would make a good election speech.

### **Speeches**

The basic idea for the quick election is that candidates take it in turns to speak to the rest of the electorate, then after the speeches a vote is taken to determine which candidate(s) will be elected as an MEP.



# Activities

## English



- 1 In 1991, some 5 million tonnes of industrial waste were dumped directly into the North Sea, together with 4600 tonnes of sewage sludge, and 92 million tonnes of dredge material. Other sources of pollution included waste discharges entering the sea via rivers, oil pollution, and agricultural run-off. Radioactive discharges from the Sellafield reprocessing plant on Britain's Cumbrian coast also added to the total pollution load.

Form into small groups for this activity. Each group takes the part of a political group in the European Parliament. Parliament is about to discuss what can be done to reduce the amount of pollution in the North Sea. Each group should agree three proposals for ways of reducing the pollution. They then let the other groups know what these proposals are. Each group discusses the proposals of the other groups and decides whether or not they agree with them and why.

Then hold a mock Parliamentary debate on the subject with speakers from each group outlining their proposals and taking it in turns to say what they think about the proposals of the other groups.

- 2 This is a role-play activity involving two people. One person plays the part of a citizen, the other takes the part of the citizen's MEP. The citizen chooses an issue they wish to discuss with their MEP. They then discuss this issue with their MEP, making clear what action they would like them to take on their behalf. The MEP listens, asks the citizen questions, and finally outlines what action, if any, they intend to take.
- 3 Find out if your MEP publishes a constituency newsletter. If so, obtain a recent copy and critically discuss its layout and content. Make constructive suggestions for how the newsletter might be improved.
- 4 Write a report on the forthcoming European Parliament elections for a newspaper aimed at teenagers. The report should give brief details about what the election involves and why the outcome is important for the citizens of the EU.
- 5 Stage mock interviews with the President of the European Commission (actors needed here) where the President explains why the European Parliament elections are important for the citizens of the EU and how the European Parliament works.
- 6 Write and present an election speech as if you are a candidate in the European Parliament election.