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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE  
COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE  
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**on the application of Directive 94/80/EC on the right to vote and to stand as a candidate  
in municipal elections**

## **1. 1. INTRODUCTION**

The future of Europe rests on the ability of its people to uphold the common values that bind them together: democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights. Free and fair elections are a basic expression of democracy, and elections in the EU must follow the highest democratic standards. As Commission President Juncker declared in his State of the Union speech in September 2017,<sup>1</sup> now is the time to build a more united, stronger and more democratic Europe for 2025.

Municipal or local government is the level of governance closest to European citizens and an essential part of European political life that affects people directly. Participating democratically in municipal elections reflects wider engagement in the local community. It is also linked to better inclusion in society, a sense of belonging and broader democratic engagement. However, EU citizens who have exercised their right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States ('mobile EU citizens') risk disconnecting from local political culture when they move.

### **1.1. The right to vote in municipal elections**

EU citizenship gives every EU citizen the right to vote and stand as candidate in municipal and European Parliament elections regardless of whether they are a national of the EU country in which they reside, and this under the same conditions as nationals. This right is enshrined in Article 22(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union<sup>2</sup>. The detailed arrangements for the exercise of this right are laid down by Council Directive 94/80/EC ('the Directive')<sup>3</sup>.

However, two restrictions exist. First, a Member State may decide that only its own nationals are eligible to run for head of the executive body of a basic local government unit<sup>4</sup>. Second, if more than 20 % of the eligible voting population are non-nationals, a Member State may require an additional period of residence to take part in municipal elections.

### **1.2. Content of the report**

With this third report<sup>5</sup>, which follows up on the 2017 EU citizenship report, the Commission takes stock of the extent to which since 2012 EU citizens have been exercising their right to vote in municipal elections in the Member State of residence.

The report is largely based on data that Member States provided directly in a questionnaire sent to the relevant national authorities. The questionnaire sought information about the size of the mobile EU citizen electorate in each Member State and their representation on the electoral rolls for municipal elections in their Member State of residence. Information was also sought about the voting turnout of these citizens in the most recent municipal elections and about what was done to encourage such turnout. This information has been combined and complemented

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<sup>1</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-17-3165\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-17-3165_en.htm)

<sup>2</sup> It is also a fundamental right laid down by Article 40 of the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union.

<sup>3</sup> Council Directive 94/80/EC of 19 December 1994 laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections by citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals (OJ L 368, 31.12.1994, p. 38).

<sup>4</sup> These terms are defined in the Directive, and would be e.g. a town mayor.

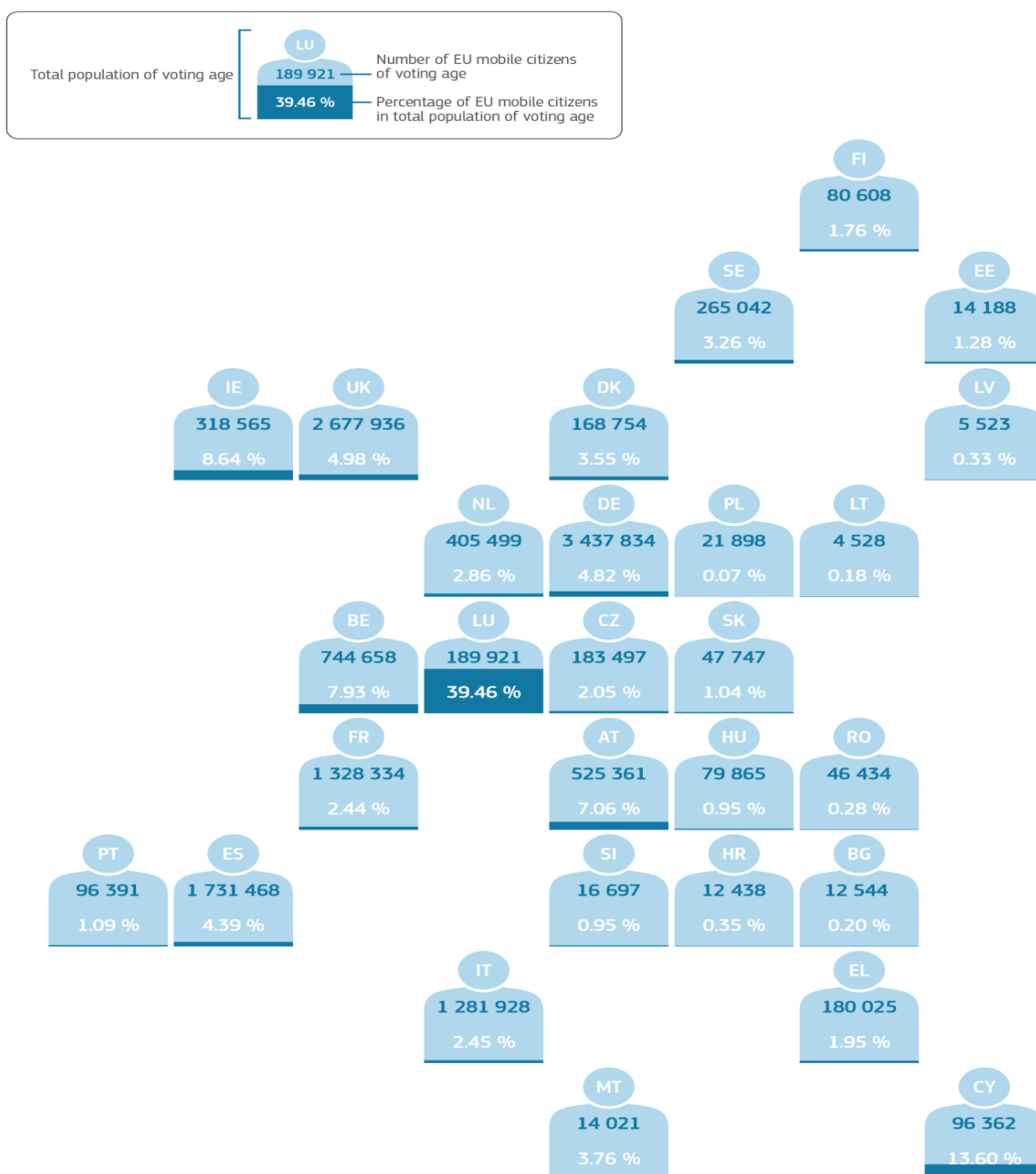
<sup>5</sup> The first report on transposition and implementation of the Directive under Article 13 was adopted by the Commission in 2002 (COM(2002) final 260). The second report was adopted in 2012 (COM(2012) 99, 9.3.2012). It assessed the state of transposition and implementation in the Member States which had joined the EU since 2002 and reported on the Commission's assessment of the declarations to the Directive under Article 14.

with other Commission data. Because national and municipal electoral and population registers each have their specific features, data was not available in all cases.

## **2. 2. AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION**

Since free movement was first enshrined in the Treaties, it has become much easier to live, work, study and travel in the European Union. The largest absolute numbers of mobile EU citizens were found in Germany, the UK, France, Spain and Italy. The largest shares of the total population represented by mobile EU citizens were in Luxembourg, Cyprus, Ireland, Belgium and Austria.

**Figure 1: Population on 01.01.2016 of mobile EU citizens of voting age (15 years and older) per Member State<sup>6</sup>**



*Eurostat data for 2016 on population by age group, sex and citizenship [migr\_pop1ctz], extracted on 31.10.17.*

Many of these mobile EU citizens reside in urban centres, but also outside the main cities, where work opportunities act as a deciding factor<sup>7</sup>. The main countries of nationality of mobile

<sup>6</sup> The relevant Eurostat data on population is available according to three age groups (0-14, 15-64 and 65+). For the purposes of this report, the population of voting age is counted from 15 onward.

<sup>7</sup> Exact data on the regions and municipalities where mobile EU citizens live cannot always be obtained.

citizens are diverse and vary from country to country and place to place. In some places, such as border areas, one or only a few nationalities are represented; in other places the picture is more complex.

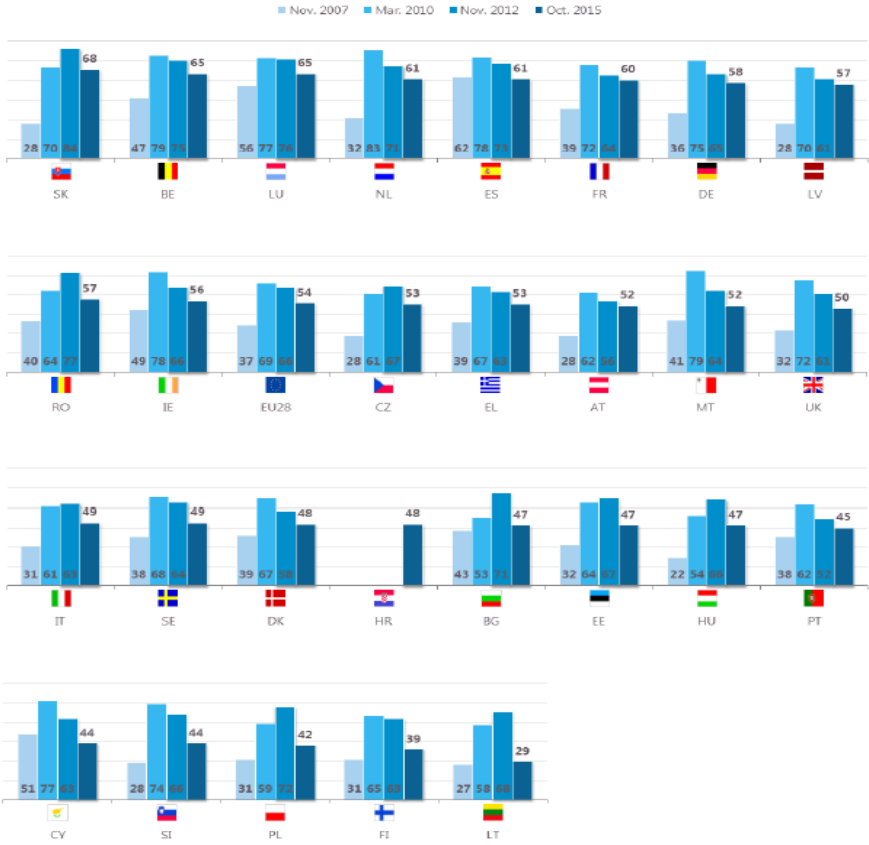
EU citizens exercise their right to reside in other Member States, especially to work. They also move to study, retire or to join family members. Many mobile EU citizens do not take up the citizenship of their host Member State<sup>8</sup> but may invest much of their lives and resources there.

**2.1. Awareness of the right to vote or stand as candidate in municipal elections**

Recent Eurobarometer surveys indicate that 87 % of EU citizens are familiar with the term "Citizen of the European Union"<sup>9</sup>. On average, 54 % of Union citizens know about their right to vote and stand as a candidate in municipal elections in their Member State of residence. This is a significant decrease compared to 2012<sup>10</sup> and can be observed in all Member States (except Croatia, for which no data is available for 2012). While awareness of this right is substantially higher now than in 2007, when it was at its lowest level (37 %), it has declined in over half of Member States since 2010.

**Figure 2: Awareness of EU electoral rights among citizens, 2007-2015**

*A citizen of the EU living in [OUR COUNTRY], has the right to vote or to stand as a candidate in municipal elections — True*



Source: Flash Eurobarometer No 430 European Union Citizenship (March 2016)

<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics) .

<sup>9</sup> Flash Eurobarometer No 430 European Union Citizenship 2016.

<sup>10</sup> 66 % knew about the same right in 2012. Flash Eurobarometer No 364 Electoral Rights 2012.

## 2.2. Participation in municipal elections

Of the more than 16 million mobile EU citizens in 2016, almost 14 million were of voting age and eligible to vote. They accounted for 3.25 % of the voting population.

The number of mobile EU citizens of voting age has increased significantly in many Member States since the 2012 report. Since 2014<sup>11</sup>, most Member States have experienced an increase in this population group, and the overall number is up by 11.1 % (from 12.6 to almost 14 million)<sup>12</sup>.

To participate in a municipal election, a citizen must be registered on the electoral roll. However, few mobile citizens appear to have exercised their electoral rights in municipal elections in recent years in their states of residence — while figures related to voter turnout in municipal elections were only available for the handful of states which collect this data, the low rates of voter registration in the states which provided data suggest this is the case<sup>13</sup>. The low number of Member States which could provide data makes it difficult to draw further conclusions. Figures 3 and 4 attempt to provide as complete a picture as possible of registration using Eurostat data and the questionnaire responses as a base.

The formalities for mobile EU citizens to register on the electoral roll vary<sup>14</sup>. On the Commission's *Your Europe* portal, mobile citizens can find easily accessible information on these electoral formalities in their Member State of residence.

In Member States where registration on the electoral roll is not automatic, the data provided showed that only 18.5 % of mobile EU citizens who were residents requested to be entered on the electoral rolls. The percentage of mobile EU citizens on the electoral roll more than doubles to 51.2 % in Member States using automatic enrolment. Some Member States which practice automatic enrolment oblige mobile citizens to register their residence, others do not. Therefore, in Member States where registration is not obligatory the number of mobile EU citizens on the electoral roll will differ from the number of mobile EU citizens who are residents.

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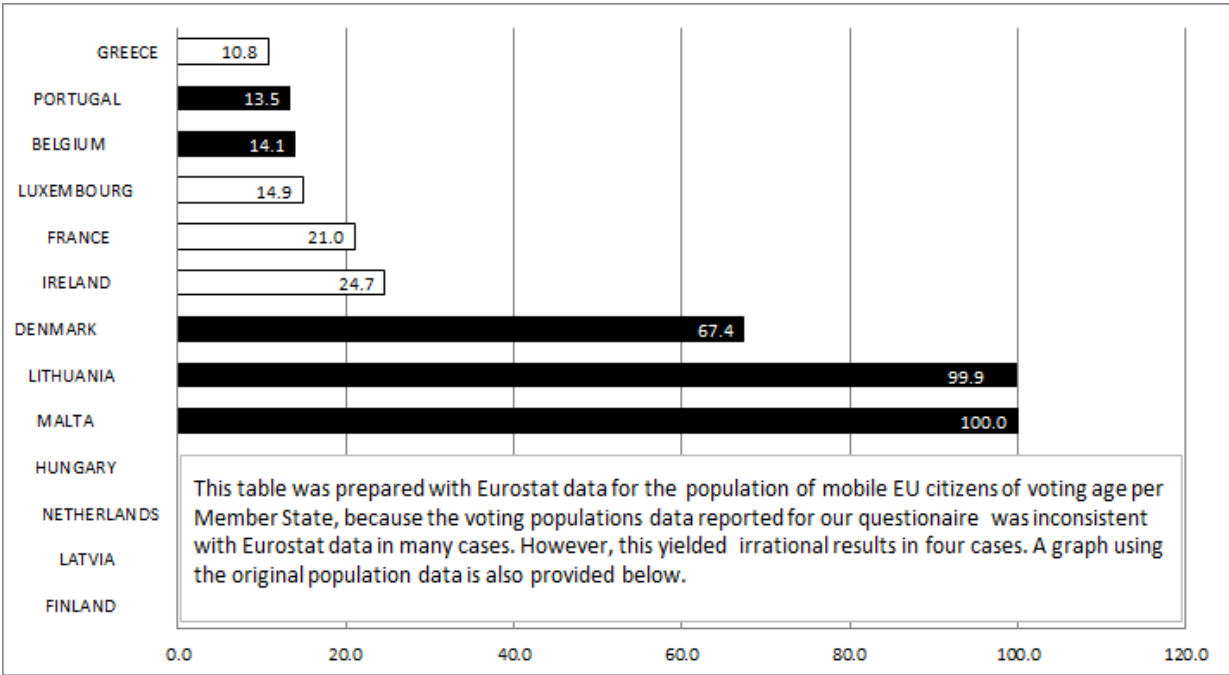
<sup>11</sup> The earliest period for which largely complete data becomes available from Eurostat for this age group of mobile citizens.

<sup>12</sup> 13 Member States experienced double digit percentage increases: the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Croatia, Estonia, Malta, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Austria, Romania Slovakia, Finland and the UK.

<sup>13</sup> This is also reflected in the study prepared for the 2014 European election report [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/final\\_report\\_2014\\_ep\\_elections\\_study\\_cses\\_10\\_march\\_2015.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/citizen/document/files/final_report_2014_ep_elections_study_cses_10_march_2015.pdf)

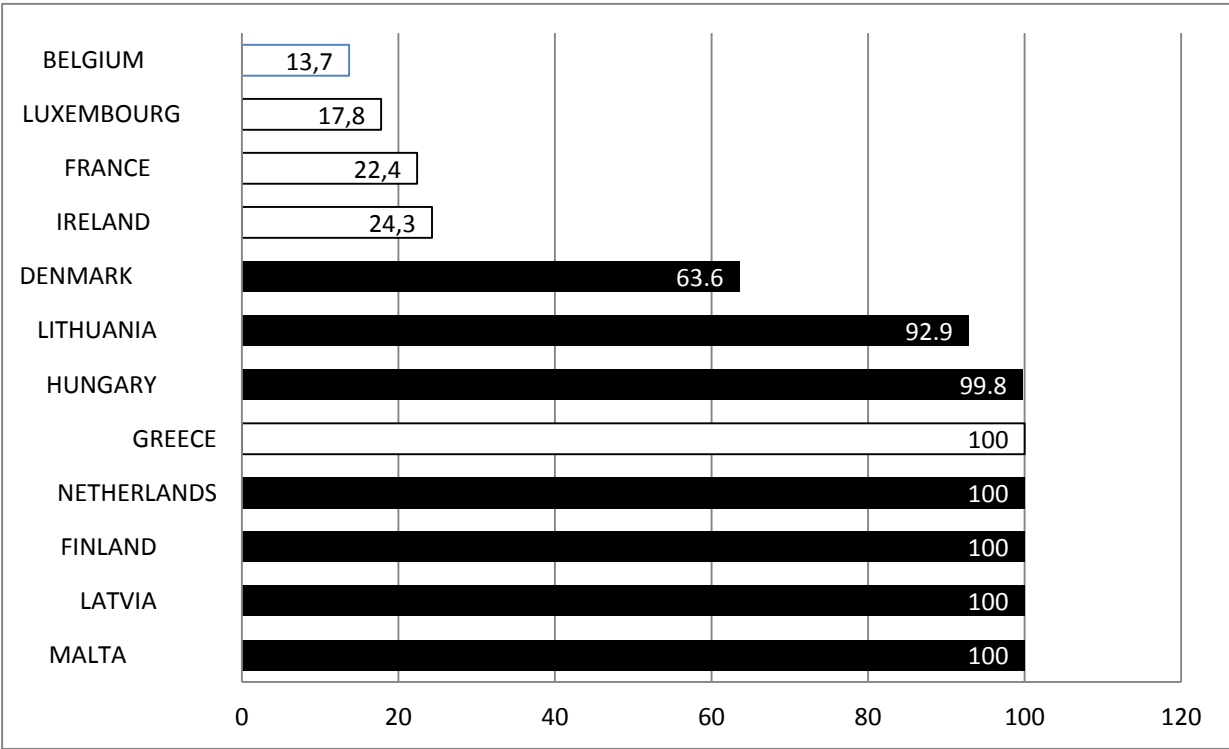
<sup>14</sup> Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Sweden and Slovenia automatically enrol their citizens on the electoral rolls.

**Figure 3: Percentage of mobile EU citizens registered to vote in municipal elections (Member States in white do not enrol citizens automatically)**



Based on Eurostat data for 2016 on population by age group, sex and citizenship [migr\_pop1ctz], extracted on 31.10.17 and data provided by the Member States

**Figure 4: Percentage of mobile EU citizens registered to vote in municipal elections (Member States in white do not enrol citizens automatically — Member State data only)**

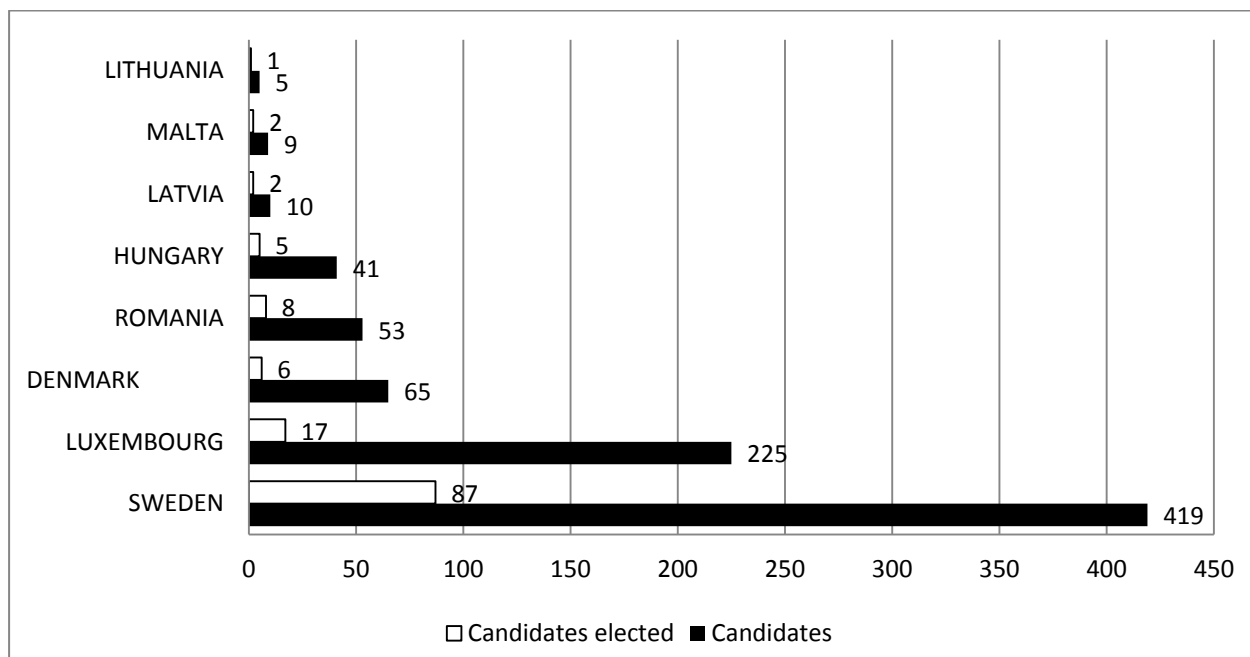


Based on Member State data only (Only registration data was provided for Portugal).

Very little data is available on the number of EU citizens who are non-nationals standing as candidates. 20 Member States indicated that such data is not collected or is difficult to obtain.

Spain reported the highest number of EU citizens who are non-nationals standing as candidates: 1 913 mobile EU citizens stood for election there.

**Figure 5: Mobile EU citizens standing as candidate and elected in their State of residence**



*Based on data provided by the Member States. (No data for candidates elected in Spain available)*

The highest percentages of mobile EU citizens elected in relation to those who stood as candidates were in Malta (22.2 %) and Sweden (20.8 %). On average 15.5 % of EU citizens who run for office in their host Member State’s municipal elections get elected.

### 3. 3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DIRECTIVE

#### 3.1. Update on transposition

Seven Member States have adopted new transposition legislation since the last report<sup>15</sup>. The level of transposition of the Directive in all Member States appears generally satisfactory. Almost all issues on the Directive's transposition have been successfully resolved, though some issues of incorrect or incomplete transposition, which could represent an obstacle to the full exercise of electoral rights, are still being discussed with specific Member States.

#### *Definitions and common principles*

Member States have effectively transposed the definitions of terms in Article 2<sup>16</sup> of the Directive. Different practices have been adopted at national level mainly for the definition of ‘electoral roll’. Some Member State legislation establishes a separate roll (Cyprus) or part of the roll (Bulgaria, Poland, France, Italy, Czech Republic and Romania) for mobile EU citizens.

#### *Beneficiaries of the right to vote*

Some Member States had incorrectly transposed Article 3 of the Directive and required mobile EU citizens to have permanent residence for 5 years to vote or stand as candidate in municipal elections. Since then, all Member States have amended their national legislation and removed

<sup>15</sup> Finland, Hungary, Malta, Slovenia, UK, Luxembourg and Sweden.

<sup>16</sup> Article 2 defines ‘basic local government unit’, ‘municipal elections’, ‘Member State of residence’, ‘home Member State’, ‘electoral roll’, ‘reference date’, ‘formal declaration’.



any such requirements.<sup>17</sup> In one Member State, mobile EU citizens without fixed abode could not register to vote, even though the nationals of that Member State could. The national legislation was changed and the issue resolved.

### ***Conditions of residence***

Article 4 of the Directive lays down that when the nationals of a Member State have to reside in the territory of that State for a certain minimum period to vote and stand for election, they are deemed to have fulfilled that condition if they resided for an equivalent period in other Member States. The Commission is still assessing how this provision is being implemented by one Member State.

### ***Specific exclusions***

The Directive allows Member States to deprive citizens of their right to stand as candidate in municipal elections if, through an individual decision, they have been deprived of their right to stand as a candidate under the law of their home Member State.

### ***Incompatibility of mandates***

Persons standing as candidates are subject to the same conditions on incompatibility as those which apply to the nationals of the Member State of residence. This provision appears to have been correctly transposed in all Member States.

### ***General conditions for exercising the right to vote***

Article 7 provides that EU citizens may exercise their right to vote in municipal elections in the Member State of residence if they so request. Most Member States adopt a favourable system of automatic registration on the electoral roll<sup>18</sup>.

### ***Entry on the electoral roll***

Member States have to fulfil certain duties provided by the Directive to make it easy for mobile EU citizens to register on the electoral roll.

In particular, Member States must take the necessary measures to enable voters to be entered on the electoral roll sufficiently in advance of polling day. Furthermore, non-national citizens requesting to be entered on the electoral roll should only need to provide the same documents as a national. However, Member States may require a non-national citizen to produce a valid identity document, along with a formal declaration stating his/her nationality, and his/her address in the Member State of residence.

### ***Supporting documents to stand as candidate***

EU citizens entitled to stand as candidate should only need to produce the same supporting documents as national citizens. A limited number of optional documents may be required by the Member States other than a formal declaration stating nationality and address in the Member State of residence.

National legislation which requires the submission of a certificate from the home Member State attesting that the citizen has not been deprived of the right to stand as a candidate would not be compliant with the Directive. Such a certificate can only be requested if the authenticity of the declaration is in doubt. Otherwise, it would constitute an additional burden on mobile EU citizens. Requiring the reference number of a residence certificate would also not be in compliance with the Directive. The Commission brought infringement proceedings against one

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<sup>17</sup> See nevertheless for further reference point 3.3.

<sup>18</sup> Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Sweden and Slovenia.

Member State that imposed such additional requirements, following which the national legislation was amended and brought into compliance with the Directive.

### ***Information requirements for Member States***

The Directive requires that the Member State of residence inform mobile EU citizens of the conditions and detailed arrangements for the exercise of electoral rights in municipal elections ‘in good time and in an appropriate manner’. The Netherlands, as member of the Commission’s expert group on electoral matters, has proposed a multilingual form to make this exchange of information easier. The form is currently under consideration by other Member State experts.

In particular, mobile citizens have the right to be informed of the action taken on their applications to be entered on the electoral roll or to stand as a candidate. If a request to be entered on the electoral roll or to stand as a candidate is rejected by the Member State of residence, the Directive requires that mobile citizens be afforded the same legal remedies as national citizens.

All Member States communicated actions and institutional initiatives to inform citizens of their electoral rights, thus implementing those provisions of the Directive.

### ***Derogations where justified by a Member State's specific situation***

Article 12 of the Directive permits exceptions to the principle of equal treatment where this is justified by problems specific to a Member State. A Member State where the proportion of mobile EU citizens of voting age exceeds 20 % of the total electorate can require both voters and candidates to have a minimum period of residence. It can also take measures to modify the composition of the lists of candidates. It does this to better integrate non-nationals and to avoid polarisation between lists of ‘national’ and ‘non-national’ candidates.

Luxembourg is the only Member State that uses this derogation. It only gives the right to vote to mobile EU citizens who have had their legal domicile in Luxembourg and have resided there at least 5 years before registration. Luxembourg also requires mobile EU citizens to have resided there at least 5 years before they can apply to stand as candidate. Pursuant to the procedure set out in the Directive, Luxembourg communicated to the Commission its desire to continue using this derogation. According to data provided by Luxembourg authorities, the number of non-national EU citizens of voting age currently residing in Luxembourg was 159,485. The total number of EU citizens of voting age residing there was 481,358. It follows that the proportion between the former and the latter was 33.1%, beyond the threshold of 20% set by Directive. Thus, the grant of a derogation to Luxembourg is still warranted.

### **3.2. Restriction of some functions to national citizens**

The Directive allows Member States to restrict a number of offices in the local administration to its own nationals, namely head, deputy or member of the governing college of the executive of a basic local government unit. This applies whether the Member State national is elected to hold office for an entire term or for the temporary or interim performance of the functions.

At the time of the last report in 2012, 14 Member States<sup>19</sup> did not restrict any office in their local administration to their own nationals, and 3 Member States<sup>20</sup> only imposed restrictions for the heads of their local administration. Six Member States restricted all offices above member of the executive committee<sup>21</sup>, and 2 Member States adopted all permitted restrictions<sup>22</sup>. Since

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<sup>19</sup> Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

<sup>20</sup> Hungary, Poland and Slovenia.

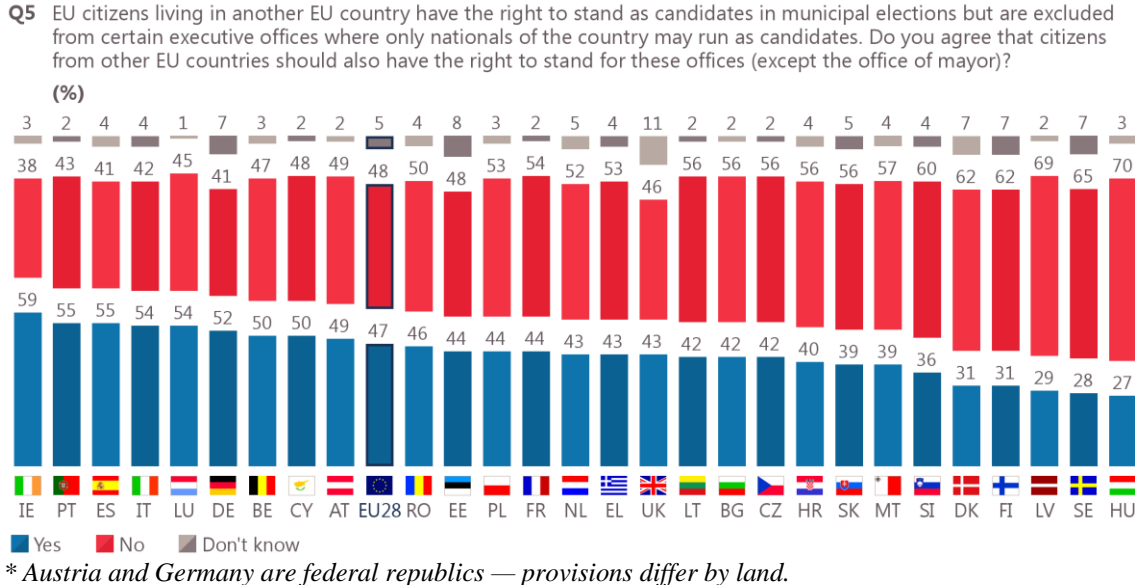
<sup>21</sup> Belgium, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, France, Italy and Lithuania.

<sup>22</sup> Bulgaria and Greece.

that report, Hungary and Romania have notified the Commission of a change to their implementing legislation which lifts the previous restrictions.

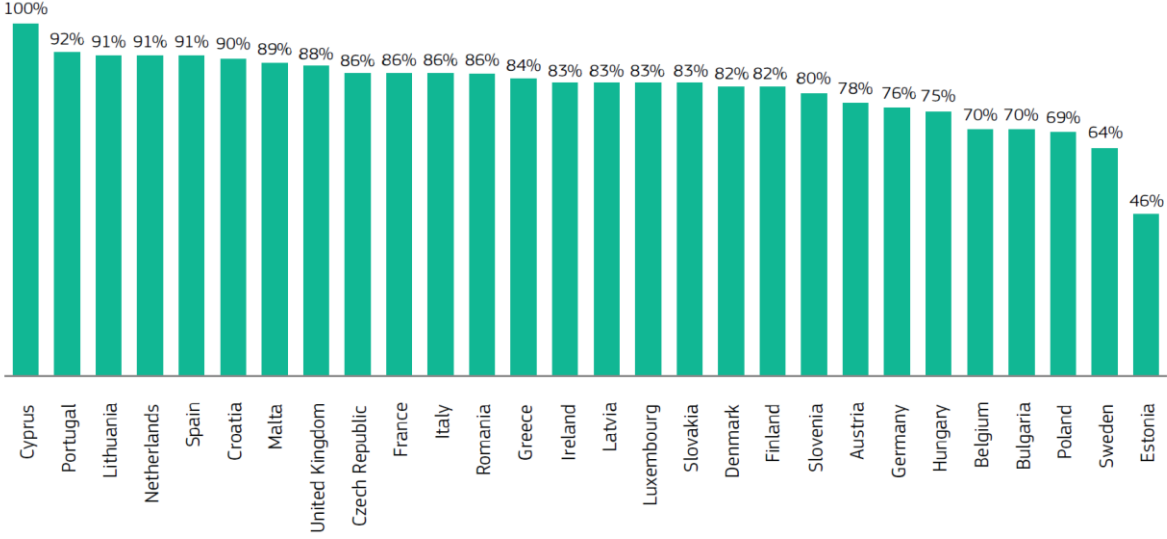
The Commission has measured citizens’ attitudes on this issue. In a Eurobarometer and public consultation conducted in 2015<sup>23</sup>, the Commission asked citizens for their views. Eurobarometer figures show an even split on whether to grant mobile EU citizens the right to stand as candidates for certain executive offices in their country: 47 % think that they should and 48 % think that they should not.

**Figure 6: Offices which can be held by EU citizens in local basic government units**



However, more than 8 out of 10 respondents (83 %) to the public consultation launched by the Commission in 2015 on EU citizenship thought that EU citizens living in another EU country should be able to become members of the executive bodies of a municipality.

**Figure 7: Views of citizens — mobile EU citizens should be able to become members of the executive bodies of a municipality in their host Member State**



<sup>23</sup> Flash Eurobarometer No 431 Electoral Rights 2015

### 3.3. Right to join or found political parties in the State of residence

In accordance with the principle of non-discrimination, EU citizens should enjoy electoral rights under the same conditions as nationals of the Member State where they reside. That requires, for example, access to the same appeal procedures for any omissions or errors in the electoral roll or the candidature statement or in the extension of compulsory voting to non-nationals. The principle of non-discrimination also means that EU citizens must be able to take part in the political life of the Member State of residence and join political parties in their country of residence.

The Commission has been in contact with the Member States and is still in dialogue with some Member States where the national legislation does not allow mobile EU citizens to have the same rights for political parties. A number of Member States have already amended their legislation. Discussions are ongoing with others.

### 3.4. ‘Basic local government units’ — defining the scope of application of the Directive

The Directive contains an Annex with a list of national definitions of ‘basic local government unit’<sup>24</sup>, which is how the Directive establishes what a municipal election within its scope of application is. The Commission has been informed by Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, the UK and the Netherlands<sup>25</sup> that amendments are needed and is preparing the necessary action.

## 4. 4. ENSURING SUPPORT FOR THE EXERCISE OF VOTING RIGHTS

Albeit by different means, many Member States carry out activities to inform mobile EU citizens of their electoral rights in municipal elections<sup>26</sup>. For example, 10 Member States send polling cards or individual letters informing mobile EU citizens about the electoral process. Ten Member States provide electoral information on an official website. Luxembourg, Spain and Malta organise campaigns specifically targeting foreign nationals to raise electoral awareness. Latvia and the UK have dedicated ‘helplines’. Information in leaflets or the local press is provided by five states.

For instance, in Ireland, the local authorities in Dublin provided support to mobile EU citizens to vote at the 2014 municipal elections. These were combined municipal and European Parliament elections. They used various out-of-home advertising and online information. An online campaign targeted all residents — i.e. Irish and non-Irish — to get young people in Ireland to register to vote. Brochures were also published in 17 languages to explain the electoral roll and systems for registration in the country.

Some Member States have specific practices to support turnout of specific groups. In Malta there are facilities to make it easier for voters with a disability to vote, including mobile EU citizens (braille templates for the ballot paper, audio recorders at polling booth, and voting instructions written and read in Maltese and English). The Local Councils Act was amended to enable national and mobile EU citizens residing in retirement homes to vote inside their homes and patients in hospitals to vote inside their hospital. Also, if justified, EU citizens can cast their vote a week before Election Day<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Article 2(1)(a) of the Directive defines ‘basic local government unit’ as the administrative entities listed in the Annex.

<sup>25</sup> Questionnaire handed out at the Commission’s expert group on electoral matters.

<sup>26</sup> Source: Questionnaire handed out at the Commission’s expert group on electoral matters.

<sup>27</sup> They have to declare that they would be either abroad, or undergoing a medical operation, or are pregnant and expect delivery on Election Day. Source: Questionnaire handed out at the Commission’s expert group on electoral matters.

The Commission has also taken specific initiatives to improve awareness of electoral rights. This includes providing information to EU citizens through the *Your Europe* portal, which currently receives over 1.4 million visits per month<sup>28</sup>.

Through the *Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme*, the Commission has allocated a total of EUR 3.5 million in action grants for projects in 2014, 2016 and 2017 to foster the successful inclusion and participation of mobile EU citizens in their host countries, including participation in municipal elections. The projects were carried out by organisations across the EU and reached many thousands of mobile EU citizens. .

For instance, the ‘Welcome Europe project’ brought the cities of Amsterdam, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Gothenburg and Hamburg together with universities and the non-governmental sector. Running from January 2015 to December 2016, the project sought to encourage the exchange of good practices on designing ‘welcome policies’ for mobile EU citizens. Project results were disseminated through a series of transnational conferences and the production of a toolkit<sup>29</sup>.

The project showed that it was important for municipal authorities to actively inform mobile EU citizens about their rights, entitlements and duties and about the practicalities of living in their new community. This could be done, for example, through a one-stop-shop and brochures. Municipal authorities’ communication channels should be made accessible to people who have imperfect abilities in the local language. Municipal authorities should also try to include representatives of mobile EU citizen groups in local advisory bodies and discussion groups. Finally, the local population should be encouraged to interact with mobile EU citizens living in the city.

## 5. 5. CONCLUSIONS

Free and universal elections are the foundation of legitimate democratic governance, and supporting turnout at all levels of power is a priority. In its 2017 EU citizenship report, the Commission called on the Member States to promote participation in democratic life by better informing citizens of their electoral rights and removing barriers to their participation. This was supported in the Conclusions issued by the Council of the European Union on 11 May 2017<sup>30</sup>. The European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions are expected to adopt their opinion on the citizenship report in late 2017.

EU citizens are increasingly moving and residing in other Member States. Since the previous two reports, the population of mobile EU citizens has doubled, with around 14 million of voting age in 2016, but the levels of voter registration for mobile EU citizens in municipal elections remain low. Voter turnout is an ongoing challenge for all democracies. The very low turnout for mobile citizens is worrying as there is a real danger that they do not exercise their electoral rights both in their home and host countries. This excludes them completely from any democratic participation. Voting is a habit which should be encouraged<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> COM(2017) 30 final.

<sup>29</sup> The work of this project, and that of others funded through the 2014 action grant calls of the *rights, equality and citizenship programme*, was recently showcased at the European Week of Regions and Cities, co-hosted by the Commission and the Committee of the Regions. Contributions included: the ONTHEMOVE project by the Centre for European Constitutional Law — Themistocles & Dimitris Tsatsos Foundation; The ‘Living Rights’ Project by the Law Centres Network; ACT Active Citizens Together by the East of England and Local Government Association; and One-stop-shops for the political participation of mobile EU citizens by the Migration Policy Group.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/22130/st09008en17.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> ‘I always vote’ was reported as the number one reason for voting, according to a European Parliament study [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2014/post/post\\_2014\\_survey\\_analitical\\_overview\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2014/post/post_2014_survey_analitical_overview_en.pdf).

Better data collection appears necessary. More quantitative and qualitative data on mobile EU citizens' awareness and exercise of political rights and any difficulties they experience in participating in their local communities would help to address the low turn-out of mobile EU citizens. Data on the number of mobile citizens is often only collected at national level, not at regional or local level. Yet such regional and local data are needed to assist targeted EU policymaking and raise the visibility of mobile EU citizens among local stakeholders.

While many issues have been resolved, the Commission continues to monitor the Directive's implementation and is still in dialogue with a few Member States.

Restrictions on mobile EU citizens holding executive posts in their local administrations are slowly diminishing in the Member States.

The Commission considers that Luxembourg's request to continue its derogation under the Directive remains warranted. It will also take the necessary steps to amend the Annex to the Directive, updating the list of national definitions of a basic local government unit in the light of recent changes in some Member States.

Getting mobile EU citizens more involved in municipal elections and more broadly in European political life is a challenge that requires a joint effort by the Member States, including their local and regional authorities, the EU institutions, civil society and political parties. This is essential to ensure the inclusion of mobile EU citizens in the social and political lives of their host communities.

The Commission will implement the following actions:

### **Better knowledge**

Looking ahead to the participation of EU citizens in municipal elections in the Member States and in the 2019 European elections, the Commission will run a special Eurobarometer survey on democratic participation of mobile EU citizens in 2018. The aim will be to improve the exercise of electoral rights and democratic standards in the Union. The Commission will seek to improve the collection of regional-level demographic data for mobile EU citizens. It will also task the network of academics on EU citizenship rights to compile more qualitative evidence on what mobile citizens' need to participate politically in municipal and European elections and the democratic context, and practices to support participation.

### **Informing and raising awareness**

In preparation for the next European elections, the Commission will incorporate information on EU citizenship rights, including electoral rights, in its information campaigns. Awareness-raising activities will be also taken to promote voter registration and participation of mobile citizens in Member States where municipal elections are to be held<sup>32</sup>.

The Commission will actively promote the 'Your Europe' portal, where EU citizens will find easily accessible information on the electoral formalities in their resident Member State.

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<sup>32</sup> Municipal elections will be held in 2018 in Belgium, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and the UK. In 2019 they will be in Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland and Lithuania.

## **Making the voting process easier**

Making it easier for voters to register and vote is especially important. Studies show that EU citizens themselves, in particular those voting in a country other than their country of nationality, would welcome practices making it easier for them to vote in these elections as non-nationals (e.g. individual letters, online registration on the electoral roll, etc.)<sup>33</sup>.

Automatic registration of voters, including through the network of Member State experts in electoral matters will be promoted.

A study on remote voting (including postal and e-voting) will be completed in 2018. It will consider further ways to facilitate voter registration and voting in all types of elections.

Finally, a high-level event on democratic participation with a particular focus on encouraging best practices to increase the participation of young people and vulnerable and underrepresented groups will be organised in 2018.

## **Engaging stakeholders**

The Commission intends to cooperate with the Committee of the Regions (through its CIVEX Commission<sup>34</sup>) and its network of regional and local authorities. The aim is to promote activities that increase participation in political life by gathering information on the experience of local authorities and promoting best practices at local level. The Commission will coordinate this work with its network of Member State experts in electoral matters.

The Commission will address the issue of political participation of mobile EU citizens, including those with disabilities or belonging to minorities, as part of its high-level event on democratic matters in 2018. The Commission also organised a workshop on ‘engendering our democracies’ during its annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights in November 2017. The aim here was to contribute to practices to foster women’s political engagement and a commitment to greater gender equality and empowerment of women in the European elections.

The Commission will continue to use the *rights, equality and citizenship programme* to fund projects promoting the successful inclusion and participation of mobile EU citizens in their host countries, including participation in municipal elections. These projects are carried out by organisations across the EU and reach many mobile EU citizens.

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<sup>33</sup> See Flash Eurobarometer 430 on EU citizenship, and the 2015 public consultation for the EU citizenship report.

<sup>34</sup> Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs, Committee of the Regions.

## ANNEX

### Data tables

**Table 1.1: EU citizen registration for municipal elections\***

	Member State reported applying automatic registration for municipal elections (Member State data)	Member State population of voting age (aged 15+) on 01.01.2016 (Eurostat data of 2016)	Number of EU citizens (aged 15+) resident in the Member State on 01.01.2016 (Eurostat data of 2016)	Numbers of EU citizens reported as entitled to vote in municipal elections (Member State data)	Numbers of EU citizens registered to vote in municipal elections (Member State data)	Percentage of EU citizens (aged 15+) registered to vote in municipal elections on 01.01.2016 (Eurostat and Member State data)	Percentage of EU citizens registered to vote in municipal elections (Member State data)	Member State voting population vs EU citizens voting age (%)
Finland	x	4 591 285	80 608	81 062	81 062	-	100.0	1.76
Latvia	x	1 668 697	5 523	15 452	15 452	-	100.0	0.33
Netherlands	x	14 179 348	405 499	430 985	430 985	-	100.0	2.86
Hungary	(x)	8 406 037	79 865	105 061	104 805	-	99.8	0.95
Malta	x	372 514	14 021	14 021	14 021	100.0	100.0	3.76
Lithuania	x	2 464 811	4 528	4 870	4 524	99.9	92.9	0.18
Denmark	x	4 746 977	168 754	178 909	113 773	67.4	63.6	3.55
Ireland		3 687 782	318 565	323 460	78 648	24.7	24.3	8.64
France		54 431 181	1 328 334	1 248 807	279 488	21.0	22.4	2.44
Luxembourg		481 358	189 921	159 485	28 342	14.9	17.8	39.46
Belgium		9 389 775	744 658	765 490	104 683	14.1	13.7	7.93
Portugal	x	8 880 498	96 391		12 992	13.5	-	1.09
Greece		9 226 985	180 025	19 413	19 413	10.8	100.0	1.95

\* Based on Eurostat data for 2016 on population by age group, sex and citizenship [migr\_pop1ctz], extracted on 31.10.17 and data provided by the Member States



**Table 1.2 Overview of mobile EU citizen data\*\***

Country	Number of EU citizens (aged 15+) resident in the Member State on 01.01.2016 (Eurostat data of 2016)	Numbers of EU citizens reported as entitled to vote in municipal elections (Member State data)	Numbers of EU citizens registered to vote in municipal elections (Member State data)	Percentage of EU citizens registered to vote in municipal elections (Member State data)	Member State population of voting age (aged 15+) on 01.01.2016 (Eurostat data of 2016)	Member State voting population on vs EU citizens voting age (%)	Numbers of EU citizens registered to stand as a candidate in municipal elections (Member State data)	Percentage of EU citizens standing for candidates elected in municipal elections
Belgium	744,658	765,490	104,683	14,1	9,389,775	7,93		
Bulgaria	12,544				6,155,578	0,20		
Czech Republic	183,497				8,930,127	2,05		
Denmark	168,754	178,909	113,773	67,4	4,746,977	3,55	65	9,2
Germany	3,437,834	1,885,464*			71,294,558	5,33		
Estonia	14,188				1,104,499	1,28		
Ireland	318,565	323,460	78,648	24,7	3,687,782	8,64		
Greece	180,025	19,413	19,413	10,8	9,226,985	1,95		
Spain	1,731,468	2,074,248			39,414,699	4,39	1,913	
France	1,328,334	1,248,807	279,488	21,0	54,431,181	2,44		
Croatia	12,438				3,579,197	0,35		
Italy	1,281,928				52,383,692	2,45		
Cyprus	96,362				708,781	13,60		
Latvia	5,523	15,452	15,452	279,8	1,668,697	0,33	10	20,0
Lithuania	4,528	4,870	4,524	99,9	2,464,811	0,18	5	20,0
Luxembourg	189,921	159,485	28,342	14,9	481,358	39,46	225	7,6
Hungary	79,865	105,061	104,805	131,2	8,406,037	0,95	41	12,2
Malta	14,021	14,021	14,021	100,0	372,514	3,76	9	22,2
Netherlands	405,499	430,985	430,985	106	14,179,348	2,86		
Austria	525,361				7,444,897	7,06		
Poland	21,898				32,258,354	0,07		
Portugal	96,391		12,992	13,5	8,880,498	1,09		
Romania	46,434		40,846		16,695,321	0,28	53	15
Slovenia	16,697				1,757,798	0,95		
Slovakia	47,747				4,594,209	1,04		
Finland	80,608	81,062	81,062	100,6	4,591,285	1,76		
Sweden	265,042				8,133,874	3,26	419	20,8
United Kingdom	2,677,936				53,795,166	4,98		

\*18 years of age and over in the Ländern Bayern, Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hessen, Niedersachsen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Rheinland-Pfalz, Sachsen and Sachsen-Anhalt

\*\* Based on Eurostat data for 2016 on population by age group, sex and citizenship [migr\_pop1ctz], extracted on 31.10.17 and data provided by the Member States

**Table 1.3 Overview of qualitative returns submitted by Member States to questionnaire used to prepare this report**

	Measures to assist citizens	Are there information measures taken by Member State authorities to help mobile citizens?	Are there actions and initiatives to promote participation in political life?	Are you aware of practical difficulties encountered/feedback from non-nationals?	Update on national legislation	Has new legislation concerning transposition of Directive 94/80/EC entered into force since January 2011?	Does the Annex of Directive 94/80/EC referring to 'Basic local government units' need to be updated?	Have national rules on restrictions on non-nationals occupying executive posts changed?
<b>COUNTRY</b>								
BELGIUM		LG	LG Bruxelles	NO				
BULGARIA								
CZECH REPUBLIC		NO	NO	NO				
DENMARK		YES	NO	na		YES	YES	
GERMANY		LG	LG	na				
ESTONIA								
IRELAND		YES	YES	na			YES	
GREECE		LG	YES	NO				
SPAIN		Y/LG	LG	NO				
FRANCE								
CROATIA								
ITALY		YES	na	na		YES		
CYPRUS								
LATVIA		YES	NO	NO				
LITHUANIA		YES	Y/LG	NO				
LUXEMBOURG		YES	YES	NO		YES		
HUNGARY		YES	na	na		YES	YES	YES (removed)
MALTA		YES	Y/LG	NO		YES		
NETHERLANDS		NO	NO	NO			YES	
AUSTRIA		Y/LG	Y/LG	NO				
POLAND								
PORTUGAL								
ROMANIA		YES	na	NO		YES	NO	YES (removed)
SLOVENIA		YES	Y/LG	NO		YES	YES	
SLOVAKIA		LG	N/LG	NO				
FINLAND		YES	NO	NO		YES		
SWEDEN		Y/LG	YES	NO		na		
UNITED KINGDOM		YES	NO	NO		YES	YES	

**Legend and notes** LG: The activities have been put in place by the local government

Y/LG: The activities are a matter of competence and are carried out by both central and local government

N/LG: The activities are a matter of competence by both central and local government but are carried out only by