

2019 European elections: Record turnout driven by young people

The high turnout in the 2019 European elections was driven by a surge in participation by young people, according to a Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the European Parliament in June. Good news but we watch with worry and some amusement at what is happening in the UK and we see there how voters there are not concerned how Brexit will affect the young



In the UK the youth person turnout in the Brexit referendum, three years back was low in that category and affected the result.

The young generation in the UK are now worried by the consequences of Brexit as they are today by the environment.

Nationalist sentiments were heavily expressed by the UK PM last week who did not apologise for misleading the Queen to defer parliament for 5 weeks. The loss in court showed disdain for the rules, but he will have to obey the law and someone will grant the extension or the courts will again intervene.

The results of the post-electoral Eurobarometer survey, one of the most comprehensive quantitative surveys on the last European elections publicly available, show that the turnout increase was powered mostly by the younger generation across the EU. Specifically, young citizens under 25 years (+14 percentage points) as well as the 25-39 year-olds (+12 percentage points) turned out in greater numbers than before.

Overall turnout at European elections was 50.6% – the highest since 1994. Ireland was 50 per cent. 19 Member States registered increases in voter turnout since 2014, especially Poland, Romania, Spain, Austria, Hungary and Germany as well as Slovakia and Czechia, where turnout is traditionally very low. Meanwhile turnout fell in only eight countries, though by less than 3 percentage points. Voting is compulsory in five countries – “Brexit played a role too, with 22% of respondents citing it as influencing their decision to vote, at least ‘to some extent’”

Results show that voters in the 2019 European elections were also motivated by an increased sense of civic duty, a rising sentiment that voting can make things change, as well as voters’ strengthened support for the EU. Observed on average at EU level, the study finds economy and growth (44%) as well as climate change (37%) as top drivers for voting. Significant motivators were also human rights and democracy (37%), the way the EU should be working in the future (36%) and immigration (34%). While the economy was the biggest issue for voters in 16 Member States, climate change led the list in eight countries overall.

More than two-thirds of respondents (68%) across EU28 think their country has benefited from EU membership, the joint highest level recorded since 1983. 84 per cent of Irish are satisfied with the EU. More than half of Europeans (56%) also agree that their voice counts in the EU, 69 % Ireland.