



Policy report

Comparative Policy Report on the Electoral Rights of Mobile EU Citizens

*Policies, findings, and good practices
from the MobileEU project*



MobilEU project

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Executive Summary

Increasing human mobility challenges us to reconsider the way democracy is conceived and practiced. Inequalities in franchise rights and in levels of electoral participation persist across the European Union. Mobile EU citizens have the right to vote at local and European Parliament elections in their chosen EU Member State of residence, but they still cannot vote in national legislative elections in residence countries. Most of them also retain voting rights in the European Parliament and national legislative elections held in their Member States of nationality, although their enfranchisement for sub-national elections held in origin countries is much more limited across EU27. Some Member States still do not grant electoral rights to their non-resident citizens, while others impose rather strict requirements for exercising the right to vote from abroad. Franchise entitlements for non-resident nationals and non-national residents vary both within and across EU27 Member States.

The MOBILEU project investigates these variations by focusing on the voting rights of mobile EU citizens in their respective EU Member States of residence and nationality. Detailed information on these electoral rights is much needed, especially given the significant gap in research and policy in relation to elections held in origin countries. The project develops policy recommendations aiming to identify best practice solutions that align with the preferences of mobile EU citizens, and which will be shared with the network of election administrators involved in the project, as well as with relevant policy, academic, and civil society stakeholders.

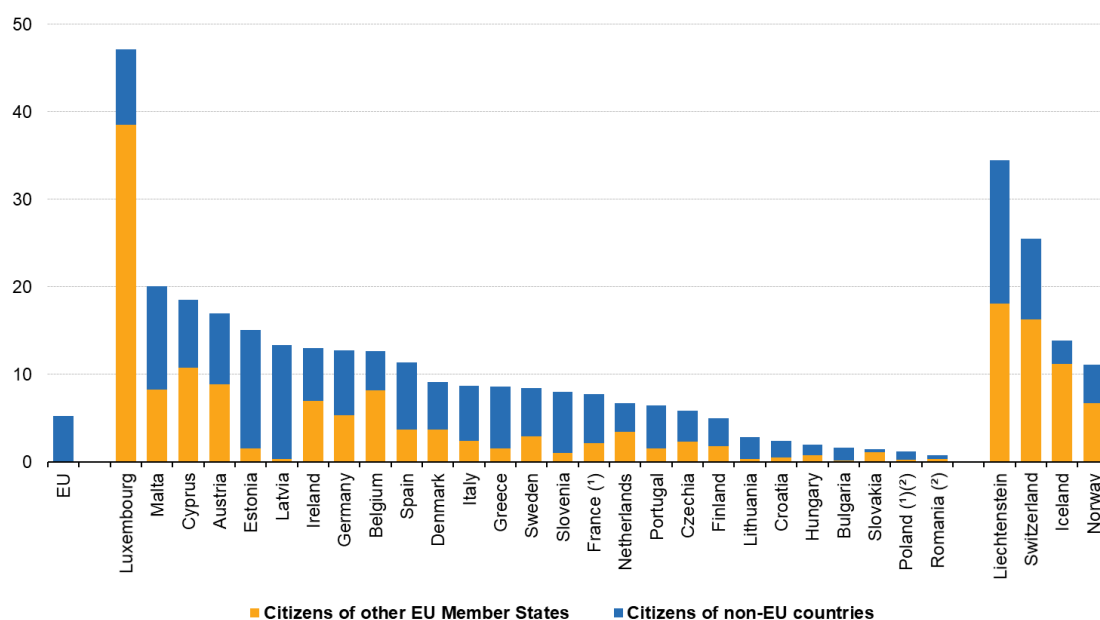
This comparative report draws on the analysis of the data collected on electoral legislations across EU27 to identify patterns of convergence and divergence in the implementation of voting rights for mobile EU citizens. The information included in this report encompasses details on voting modalities, the legal requirements under which electoral rights can be exercised, and the diplomatic missions and electoral authorities that can guide mobile EU citizens in the process of exercising their electoral rights across the EU. The report focuses on the voting rights of mobile EU citizens in different types of elections (EP elections, national legislative elections, and local legislative elections) held in their EU countries of residence and nationality, by referring to the policies in place in January 2022.

Based on this comparative analysis, this report also aims at formulating evidence-based policy recommendations on good practices for election administrators, policy actors, civil society organizations, academics, and other stakeholders in order to facilitate the engagement of mobile EU citizens in the political life of the EU and its Member States. In doing so, the report also draws on the results of different MOBILEU surveys aiming to examine Europeans' attitudes towards the voting rights of mobile EU citizens.

Introduction and General Context

As many EU citizens move from their countries of nationality to other EU Member States to find job opportunities, advance their careers through further education abroad, or for family reasons, they become subject to electoral processes during their stay abroad. According to Eurostat data¹, more than 3% of EU's working age (20-64 years) population are mobile EU citizens, that is, as citizens of an EU country living in another Member State. This significant share continues to increase, with around 1.3 million EU citizens who decide every year to set up their residence in an EU country that is different from their country of nationality². However, there is significant variation across countries (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Share of non-nationals in the resident population (1 January 2021).



(¹) Provisional.
(²) Estimate.

Source: [Eurostat](#)

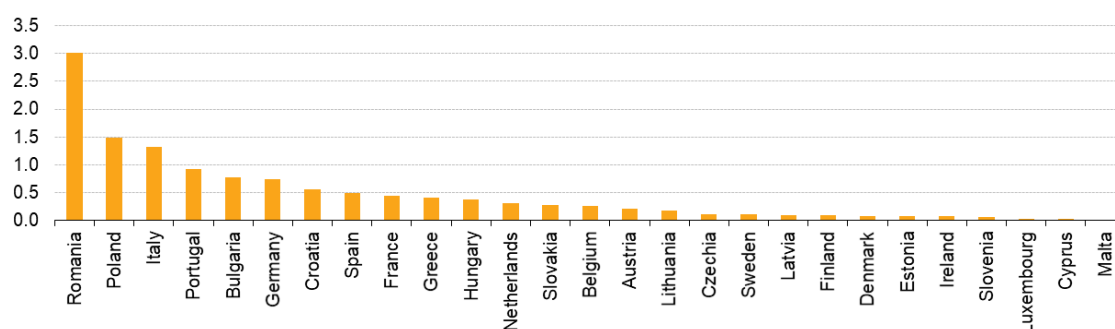
¹ Eurostat (2021). *EU citizens living in another Member State - statistical overview*. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=EU_citizens_living_in_another_Member_State_-_statistical_overview#Key_messages.

² See the 2021 Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the document for a proposal for a Council Directive laying down detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in municipal elections by Union citizens residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals: https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/13_1_177543_dirs-ia_en.pdf.

The proportion of non-national EU citizens from the total resident population is larger in countries such as Luxembourg, Belgium, Malta, Austria or Cyprus, where mobile EU citizens account for more than 6% of all residents, up to almost 34% in the case of Luxembourg. In some Member States (see the examples of Luxembourg, Belgium, or Cyprus), mobile EU citizens also represent most of the foreign population. By contrast, their demographic concentration is more reduced (less than 2% of the total resident population) especially in some EU countries from Central and Eastern Europe.

As for the main origin countries, Figure 2 shows that Romania, Poland, and Italy are the Member States with the largest absolute numbers of nationals living in another EU country. More than one million citizens of each these countries have set up their residence in other Member States. Portugal, Bulgaria, Germany, Croatia, and Spain also return significant figures of nationals living in other EU countries (around half a million in each case).

Figure 2. Number of mobile EU citizens in other Member States (1 January 2021, millions)



.Source: [Eurostat](#). Note: Data not available for Belgium, Estonia, Cyprus and Malta

The evolution of migration flows from each Member State during the period 2010-2020 (Figure 3) further indicates that, although most countries returned relatively stable numbers of national emigrants over the past years, some Member States experienced an increase in the yearly number of national citizens moving abroad, as it is the case for Germany, Italy, and Spain. In turn, the absolute numbers of national emigrants from France, Poland or Lithuania has decreased in more recent years.

Figure 3. Number of national citizens emigrating from EU Member States (2010- 2020)



Source: Own elaboration based on [Eurostat data](#) on emigration by age group, sex and citizenship (last updated on 30-03-2022).

Overall, these demographic variations remain highly relevant when trying to better understand the electoral behaviour of mobile EU citizens, especially since existing evidence seems to suggest that international mobility is usually associated with lower turnout³. Given the importance of ensuring the electoral rights of all EU citizens as part of the functioning of the EU in terms of representative and participatory democracy (Articles 10(1) and 10(3) of the Treaty on European Union), the MOBILEU project aims at identifying the main opportunities or challenges that may strengthen or hinder mobile EU citizens' ability to exercise their electoral rights.

We study this phenomenon in different ways. First, we map the voting rights of mobile EU citizens across EU27 to identify the main patterns emerging from the analysis of the electoral regulations in place.⁴ Second, this report provides evidence-based policy recommendations on

³ See the post-election study among expatriates: European Elections 2019 (Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the European Parliament). Available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2019/2019_post-election_survey_among_european_expatriates/en-post-election-expats-2019-ppt.pdf

⁴ The MOBILEU data on electoral regulations presented in this report was collected through a variety of sources, including the websites of national electoral authorities across EU27, [Your Europe](#) portal, and the

franchise regulations, with the aim of sharing this information with national electoral authorities and key stakeholders to enable and facilitate democratic participation of mobile EU citizens. Third, we also bring new evidence on the awareness and views of the resident and non-resident EU population on the voting entitlements of mobile EU citizens. In doing so, we focus on five Member States (Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Poland, and Portugal) that put forward different approaches when it comes to regulating the voting rights for mobile EU citizens.

- ✚ An **increasing number of mobile EU citizens** decide to set up their residence in other Member States that are different from their countries of nationality.
- ✚ The demographic distribution of mobile EU citizens still **varies greatly across countries**.
- ✚ The **share of non-national EU citizens** within the total resident population is particularly high in some Member States (Luxembourg, Belgium), while other EU countries mostly host non-EU citizens (Estonia, Latvia).
- ✚ EU Member States have **different emigration trajectories**. Romania, Poland, Italy, Portugal, Bulgaria, Germany, Croatia, and Spain are the EU countries with the largest absolute numbers of nationals living in other Member States.
- ✚ **Electoral settings are essential** for understanding how mobile EU citizens can participate in the political life of their EU countries of residence and nationality.

electoral information publically available from past projects such as [SPACEU](#), [IvoteAbroad.eu](#), [GLOBALCIT](#), [FAIREU](#) or [International IDEA](#).

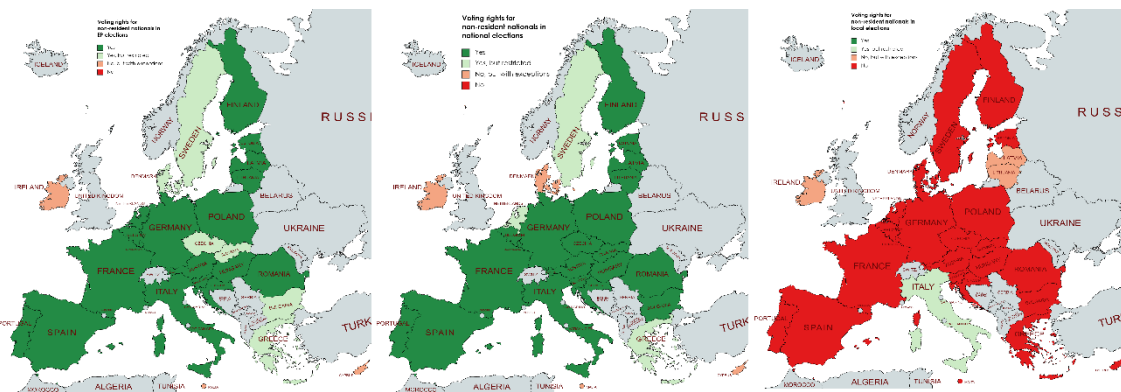
Section 1. The Electoral Rights of Mobile EU Citizens in Elections Held in their Countries of Nationality

Mobile EU citizens living in another Member State have a differentiated access to voting rights for elections held in their countries of nationality. Such access depends on different aspects, among which the most significant ones relate to: a) the type of elections for which they are entitled to vote; b) the electoral registration procedures they need to follow to be able to cast the ballot during the election day; and c) voting modalities available to those abroad.

The right to vote of non-resident EU citizens

First, there is some variation across EU27 in what refers to the right of mobile EU citizens to vote in elections held in their countries of nationality (Figure 4). Overall, most EU Member States do allow their nationals living abroad to vote in European Parliament elections or national legislative elections.⁵ However, there are still some exceptions. For instance, countries such as Cyprus, Denmark, Ireland or Malta only grant electoral rights in European Parliament or national elections to specific groups of citizens abroad, such as diplomats, civil servants, members of the military forces, or specific categories of workers posted abroad, whereas the rest of their non-resident nationals remains excluded from these electoral processes.

Figure 4. Voting rights of mobile EU citizens in the EP, national, and local elections held in their countries of nationality



Source: Own elaboration based on MobilEU data. The data refers to policies in place in January 2022.

When it comes to local elections, non-resident EU citizens usually remain disenfranchised as they are not allowed to vote in municipal legislative elections held in their countries of nationality. Across the EU, there are only few exceptions to this pattern. Such exceptions are

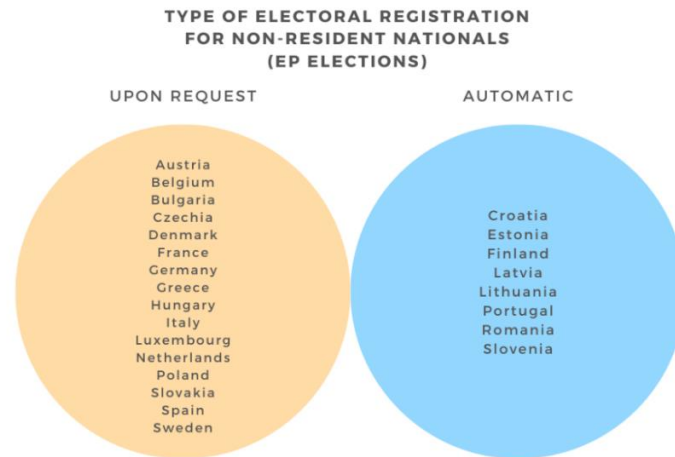
⁵ In most EU Member States that grant voting rights to all or selected groups of nationals living abroad, the latter are entitled to exercise this right after the age of 18, with only four EU countries (Austria, Estonia, Greece, Malta) having a lower threshold for the minimum voting age.

observed in Latvia (whose citizens residing abroad retain voting rights in Latvian local elections if they still hold a property in the specific municipality where elections are held) and Italy (Italians abroad may vote in Italian local elections provided they return to Italy during the election day to cast the ballot in person).

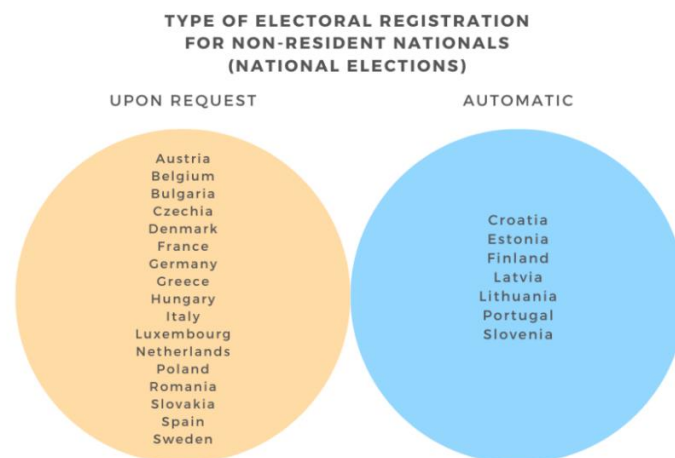
Procedure for electoral registration of non-resident EU citizens

Second, as much as enfranchisement rules are the first relevant determinant of electoral participation, many aspects related to the electoral registration procedure also become essential for better understanding if non-resident EU citizens entitled to vote in elections held in their countries of nationality can exercise this right in practice.

Figure 5. Procedures for electoral registration of mobile EU citizens in EP and national elections held in their countries of nationality



Note: The EU Member States which do not grant electoral rights to their non-resident nationals (Cyprus, Ireland, Malta) are not included in this figure.



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Source: Own elaboration based on MobilEU data. Local elections are not included as only two EU Member States exceptionally allow their citizens abroad to vote in such elections.

EU Member States allowing their non-resident population to vote still vary widely in terms of the specific electoral registration rules applied for this group; and this, in turn, has important implications regarding the time and effort that mobile EU citizens need to invest to be able to cast the ballot during the election day.

As illustrated in Figure 5 above, only around a quarter of EU countries have set up a system of automatic registration of their citizens abroad for EP or national elections. Such system does not require any additional effort from voters interested to participate in these elections from abroad. The cluster of EU Member States having an automatic electoral registration system also includes countries that count with sizeable populations abroad, such as Romania, Portugal, or Finland.

By contrast, the rest of EU countries that enfranchise their nationals abroad still request them to actively register to be able to cast the ballot in either EP or national elections. This leads to different opportunities for political participation between mobile and non-mobile Europeans, especially since resident nationals are usually automatically registered as voters for these elections. In practice, a system of electoral registration upon request implies that mobile EU citizens need to invest more time and energy if they wish to participate in democratic processes in their countries of nationality. This represents an important barrier constraining the way in which mobile EU citizens can exercise their voting rights in practice, especially since administrative procedure for electoral registration are not always easy to follow.

As an illustration of this complex process, non-resident German citizens who wish to vote in national legislative elections must submit an electoral registration form to the electoral district where they last reported a residence in Germany before departing or, for those who did not live in Germany for at least 3 months, to the German municipality with which they are more closely connected based on biographical links or family connections. Furthermore, German voters abroad are also requested to repeat this procedure prior to each election in which they are interested to vote, as their electoral registration is valid only for one election. In other EU Member States requesting their nationals abroad to register to vote, the electoral registration is valid only for a specific number of years (e.g., 10 years in Austria, Hungary or Sweden, for both EP and national legislative elections). By contrast, other EU countries (such as Belgium, the Czech Republic, Italy, or the Netherlands) require citizens abroad to register only once for either EP or national elections, as their electoral registration is automatically renewed for any subsequent election.

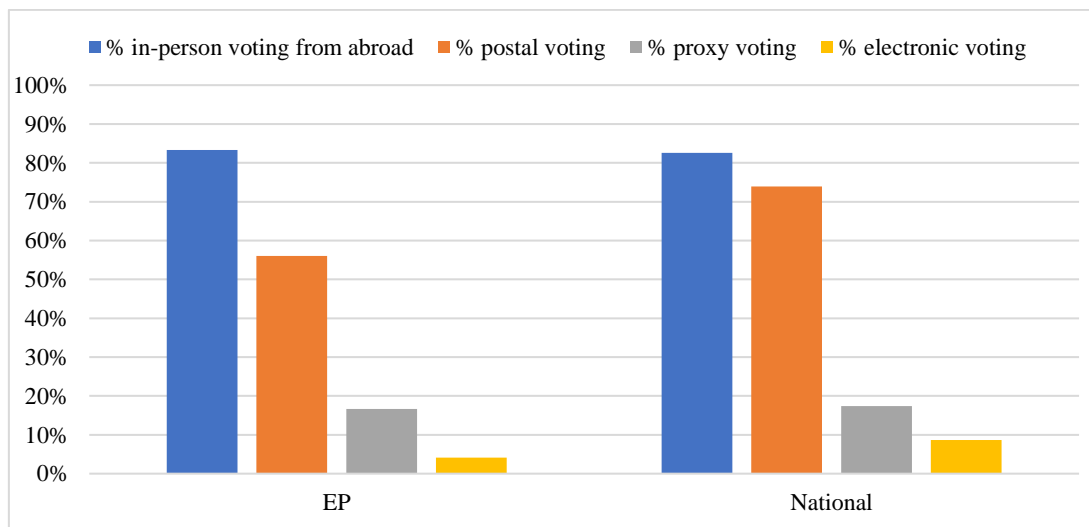
Moreover, the specific period of time that mobile EU citizens have at their disposal in order to complete the registration process for voting in their countries of nationality also stands

out as an important factor affecting their likelihood of casting the ballot abroad. In countries where electoral registration deadlines are in place, voters must usually complete the registration procedure around 45 days before the election takes place. For instance, to vote in national legislative elections in countries such as Austria, Greece, Italy or Spain, non-resident voters need to be registered at least 2 months before the election date, up to almost 6 months in the Spanish case. Meanwhile, countries such as Denmark, Poland or Romania have extended this registration deadline up to one week or just a few days before national elections, thus allowing their nationals abroad the possibility of finalising the electoral registration procedure closer to the election day. This data, however, does not take into account the actual time that national administrations need to process the registration applications. Consequently, even in countries where the registration can be requested shortly before the election day, there is still the risk that the inclusion of non-resident citizens in electoral registers may not be finalised or validated on time.

Voting modalities from abroad

Third, once registered to vote, the specific voting modalities made available by EU Member States to their nationals living abroad (Figure 6) may also facilitate or hinder their electoral participation in practice. To begin with, five EU Member States (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, and Luxembourg) implement compulsory voting system for different types of elections. Apart from that, most EU Member States granting voting rights for EP and national elections to their non-resident nationals do usually allow them to vote under the same modalities as those applies for national residents, although there are still some interesting cross-country variations.

Figure 6. Voting modalities from abroad (in-person, postal, electronic, proxy) for EP and national elections



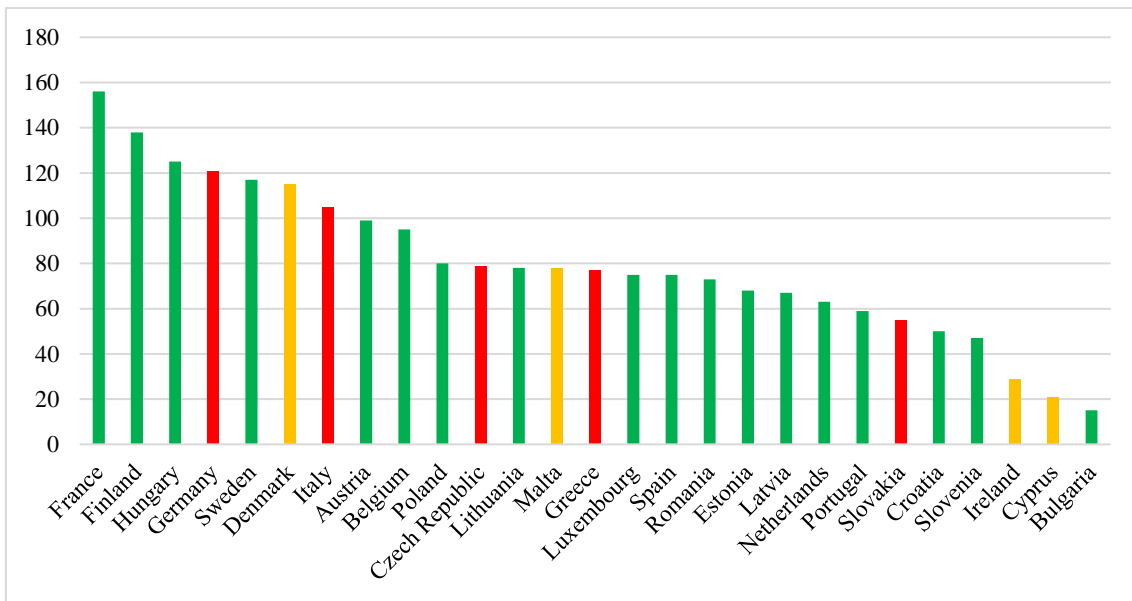
Source: Own elaboration based on MobilEU data. Note: Local elections are not included as only two EU Member States exceptionally allow their citizens abroad to vote in such elections. Cyprus, Ireland and Malta only allow specific categories of citizens abroad to vote in EP and national elections (e.g. diplomats, civil servants abroad, posted workers). The same applies for Denmark, but only in national elections.

In-person voting (at consulates or diplomatic mission abroad) represents, by far, the most common way in which mobile EU citizens can cast their ballot from abroad for EP or national elections held in their countries of nationality. Postal voting is also a rather common voting modality for non-resident citizens, as it is currently made available by more than half of EU Member States for EP elections and by three quarters of EU countries when it comes to national legislative elections. Postal voting also stands out as the only modality through which some groups of mobile EU citizens (such as the nationals of Germany, Luxemburg, or Slovakia) can vote in EP and national elections held in their countries of nationality (the same applies for Italian citizens in Italian national elections). In turn, proxy voting is less frequent and currently available only for the non-resident citizens of four EU countries: Poland, France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Moreover, electronic voting remains an exception across EU27, as this voting modality only applies for Estonia (for both EP and national legislative elections) and France (French citizens abroad can vote electronically only for national elections).

Finally, as in-person voting at diplomatic missions abroad remains the most common modality through which mobile EU voters can cast the ballot in elections held in their countries of nationality, it is also worth mentioning the significant variation across EU27 in the number of consulates that each EU country has set up in other Member States (Figure 7). Consulates remain important points of information regarding electoral regulations for mobile voters (in addition to the electoral bodies listed in the Appendix), while also being used as physical locations for the organization of elections abroad.

For instance, France, Finland, Hungary, and Germany are among the EU countries with the strongest consular presence across the EU. Of these, only France, Finland, and Hungary allow for in-person voting at consulates abroad, as non-resident German citizens can only vote by post in EP and national legislative elections held in Germany, based on their absentee ballot card. Meanwhile, countries such as Bulgaria, Slovenia, or Croatia, which do recognize voting rights for their non-national citizens while also allowing them to vote in person at diplomatic missions abroad, return a more limited number of consulates set up in other EU Member States.

Figure 7. Number of consulates of EU countries in other Member States



Source: Own elaboration based on MobilEU data. The countries marked in green allow for in-person voting abroad, whereas the ones marked in red do not allow this voting modality (in the case of Italy, this only refers to national elections, whereas for the Czech Republic, this only refers to EP elections). The countries marked in yellow only allow specific categories of citizens abroad (e.g. diplomats, civil servants abroad, posted workers) to vote (in Denmark, this only applies for national elections).

Key findings regarding the voting rights of mobile EU citizens in elections held in their countries of nationality

- ✚ Most EU citizens who decide to set up their residence abroad are still entitled to vote in **EP and national legislative elections** in their countries of nationality. However, changing the residence abroad leads to the loss of voting rights in **local elections**.
- ✚ **Electoral registration procedures vary greatly** across EU27, and active registration upon request (which also requires more time and effort from voters abroad) is the most common setting. Strict **registration deadlines** affect the turnout of mobile EU citizens—particularly in EP elections, which are already characterised by lower turnout.
- ✚ Most EU Member States allow for **in-person and postal voting** from abroad in EP and national legislative elections. **Proxy voting** from abroad is less common, whereas **electronic voting** remains an exception.
- ✚ The **consular presence abroad** is key to understand the opportunities and challenges faced by mobile EU citizens when voting in-person from abroad in elections organised by their Member States of nationality.

Section 2. The Electoral Rights of Mobile EU Citizens in Elections Held in their Countries of Residence

Whereas EU27 Member States vary widely in the way in which they regulate the voting rights of their nationals living abroad, there is much more convergence when it comes to the electoral entitlements of non-national EU citizens residing in their territory (Figure 9). Thanks to the EU legislation and the electoral rights associated to the EU citizenship status, mobile EU citizens are entitled to vote in both EP and local elections held in their EU countries of residence. However, they remain excluded from voting in national legislative elections held in these countries, which is an important barrier for their full political inclusion in the democratic life of the EU countries where they decided to set up their residence.

Figure 9. Voting rights for non-national residents in EP, national and local elections



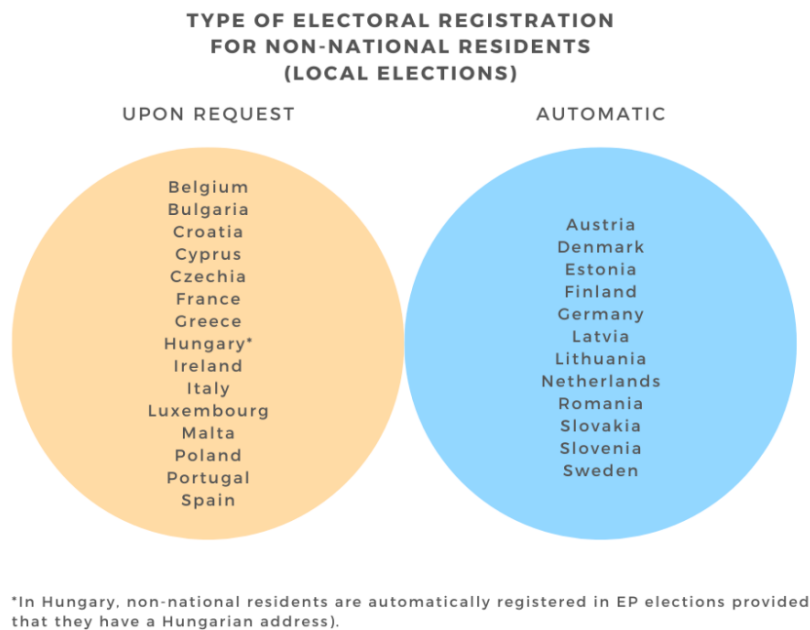
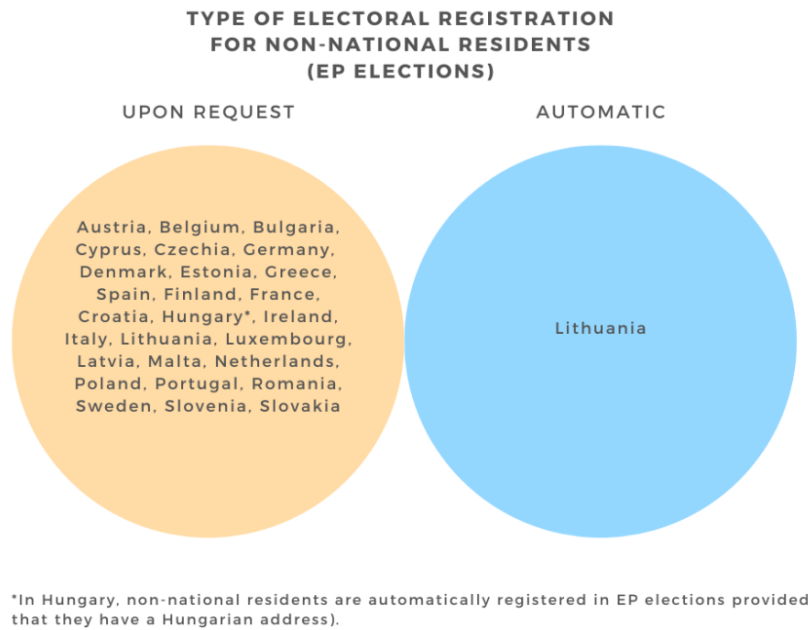
Source: Own elaboration based on MobilEU data.

Moreover, although mobile EU citizens are enfranchised for both EP and local elections held in their residence countries, there are still some variations in the practical arrangements through which this group of voters can exercise, in practice, their electoral rights (Figure 10).

For EP elections, non-national EU citizens usually need to personally request their registration in the electoral roll of their residence countries in order to be able to cast the ballot during the election day. The only exceptions where mobile EU citizens are automatically registered as voters for EP elections are in Lithuania and in Hungary (only for those having a permanent address in Hungary).

Having to register in advance to vote in EP elections remains an important obstacle for the political participation of mobile EU citizens. In most Member States, their electoral registration is a one-time procedure, as it remains valid for all subsequent EP elections. However, Croatia and Cyprus still request non-national EU citizens to register prior to each EP election in which they are interested to participate.

Figure 10. Procedures for electoral registration of mobile EU citizens in EP and national elections held in their EU countries of residence



Source: Own elaboration based on MobilEU data. National legislative elections are not included as there is no EU Member State allowing all nationalities of EU residents to vote in such elections.

Furthermore, the fact that the deadline for electoral registration is sometimes set up well ahead of the election day may further hinder mobile Europeans’ turnout. For instance, non-national EU citizens are requested to register three months or even more before the date of the EP elections, as it happens in countries such as Austria, Belgium, Finland, Italy, Luxembourg, or

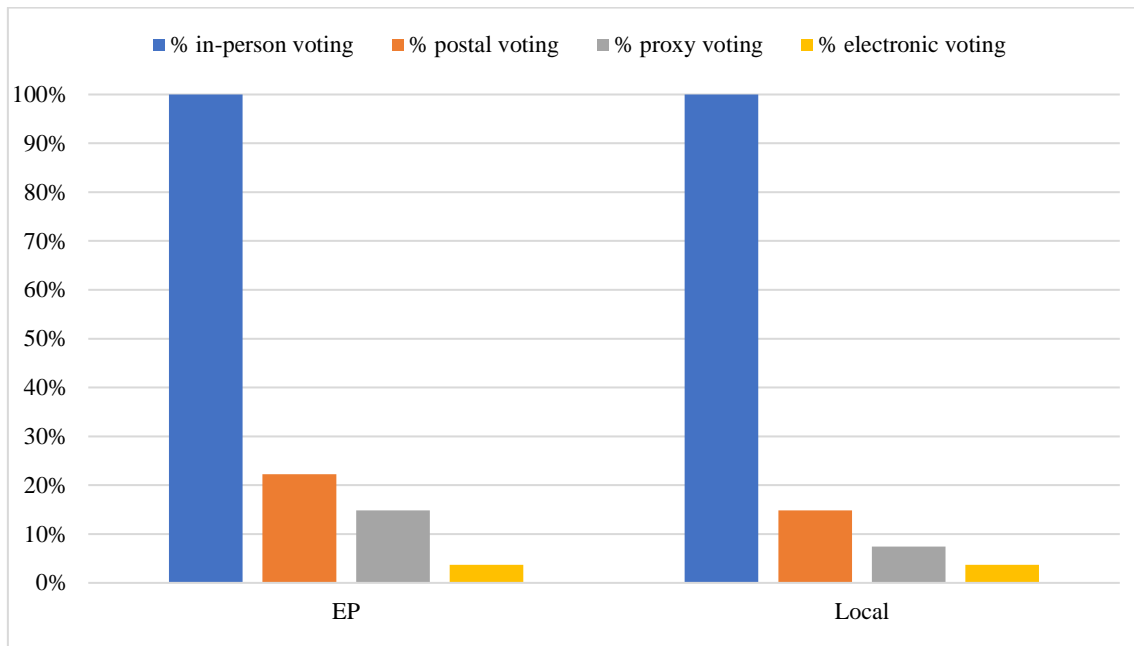
Spain. By contrast, other Member States (e.g. Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia or Sweden) reduce this registration deadline to around one month or even before the elections, thus allowing mobile EU citizens more time to personally request their registration as voters.

The situation is somehow different for local elections. In this case, almost half of the EU Member States do proceed with an automatic electoral registration of the non-national EU citizens living in their territory (Figure 10), thus making it easier for them to cast the ballot for the election of members of municipal assemblies. When registration is not automatic, in most cases, it remains a one-time procedure- except for the local elections in Croatia and Greece, where non-resident EU citizens are requested to register prior to each municipal election.

Just like for EP elections, the deadline of electoral registration is important, and some variations can be identified across the EU. By way of example, whereas some countries (e.g., Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain) require non-national EU residents to register with around 3 months in advance to be able to vote for local elections, in the Czech Republic, the registration is allowed even two days prior to the election day. Finally, for both EP and local elections, it is also relevant to note that, in countries applying a compulsory voting system (e.g., Belgium, Luxembourg), once registered as voters on the electoral lists, non-national EU residents must also comply with the mandatory voting regulations.

As for voting modalities, once non-national EU residents are registered on the electoral lists, they can usually cast the ballot for the EP and local elections held in their countries of residence under the same conditions as the national residents of these countries (Figure 11). All EU27 Member States allow non-national EU citizens to vote in-person for EP and local elections. For EP elections, mobile EU citizens can also vote by post in countries such as Austria, Estonia, Germany, Luxembourg, or Spain. In Luxembourg, they can use the postal voting modality also for local elections. Estonia further allows mobile EU citizens to vote electronically for EP elections, whereas proxy voting is available in Belgium (for both EP and local elections) as well as in France, the Netherlands, and Sweden (in these cases, only for EP elections).

Figure 11. Voting modalities (in-person, postal, electronic, proxy) available to non-national EU citizens for EP and local elections held in their EU countries of residence



Source: Own elaboration based on MobilEU data. National legislative elections are not included as there is no EU Member State allowing all nationalities of EU residents to vote in such elections.

Key findings regarding the voting rights of mobile EU citizens in elections held in their EU countries of residence

- ✚ EU citizens living in other Member States are entitled to **vote and stand for EP and local elections** held in these countries. However, they remain **disenfranchised when it comes to national legislative elections** in their EU countries of residence, which poses an important barrier for their full democratic participation in the political life.
- ✚ **The requirement of prior electoral registration upon request is an important obstacle** for the political participation of mobile EU citizens in their countries of residence. Such system remains the norm for EP elections although, for local elections, only half of EU27 Member States request non-national EU residents to pro-actively register as voters in the electoral lists to become eligible for casting the ballot.
- ✚ The **procedure for electoral registration and its validity** for subsequent elections are also factors that may make it easier or harder for mobile EU citizens to exercise their voting rights in the EU countries of residence.
- ✚ Mobile EU citizens can **vote in person** for both EP and local elections held in any EU country of residence, whereas **postal, proxy and electronic voting** remain the exception.

Section 3. Europeans' Attitudes towards the Voting Rights of Mobile EU Citizens

In the spring of 2023, MOBILEU conducted a survey to examine the views of both resident and non-resident citizens on electoral rights for non-resident citizens in national elections. Data was collected on citizens of five EU countries – Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Poland, Portugal – that exhibit significant variations in their national electoral systems and the type of voting rights granted to non-resident citizens. These five countries also represent different geographic regions within the EU and have varying proportions of non-resident citizens within their overall populations.

In the context of national elections, Portugal grants non-resident citizens extensive electoral rights, including the right to vote and to stand as candidates, as well as special political representation in parliament. Finland extends broad electoral rights to its non-resident citizens, allowing them to vote and stand as candidates, but does not provide special political representation. Belgium permits its non-resident citizens to vote but not to stand as candidates, limiting their political participation to voting alone. Poland allows non-resident citizens to vote and to stand as candidates but there is no convenience voting and voters need to register in advance. Ireland, in contrast, does not offer any electoral rights to its non-resident citizens, thereby excluding them from participating in national elections.

Data on resident citizens were collected via a Qualtrics online research panel, with quotas established for age, gender, and education. Non-resident citizens were recruited for the survey through Social Networking Sites (SNS), specifically Facebook and Instagram.⁶ This method was chosen to address the difficulties in locating and contacting non-resident citizens by other means and to bypass the need for individual gatekeepers often associated with snowballing recruitment methods. Using SNSs results in a convenience sample rather than a random one, which could introduce biases by skewing the views toward demographics that frequently use these platforms and are more tech-savvy. In contrast, the Qualtrics panel for resident citizens was quota-sampled to represent various age, gender, and education groups, aiming to provide a more balanced perspective. This limitation should be considered when interpreting the conclusions.

Both resident and non-resident citizens were presented with three statements regarding the political rights of non-resident citizens. These statements pertained to non-resident citizens'

⁶ Sample sizes of resident (and non-resident) citizens by countries: Portugal n=998(833); Poland n=1,046(778); Finland n=1,032(1,214); Belgium n=996(1,055); Ireland n=3,438(852). The sample size for Irish residents is notably larger – approximately three times the size of the resident sample in other countries. This discrepancy arose due to an error by the survey company, which inadvertently collected an excess of responses from Irish residents.

rights to vote in parliamentary elections, stand as candidates, and their entitlement to special representation. Special representation refers here to the provision of dedicated seats for non-resident citizens in parliament. Participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and 7 denoted "strongly agree".

Figure 12 illustrates that, on average, both resident and non-resident citizens are supportive of voting rights for non-resident citizens. The mean scores for each group surpass 4, the central point of the scale. In comparison to non-resident citizens of Belgium and Finland, resident citizens from these countries exhibit a more conservative stance towards the voting rights of non-resident citizens. In other countries, the difference in views between resident and non-resident citizens is not statistically significant. Collectively, both resident and non-resident citizens from Portugal express the strongest support for the voting rights of non-resident citizens.

Figure 12. Attitudes towards non-resident citizens' right to vote in parliamentary elections.

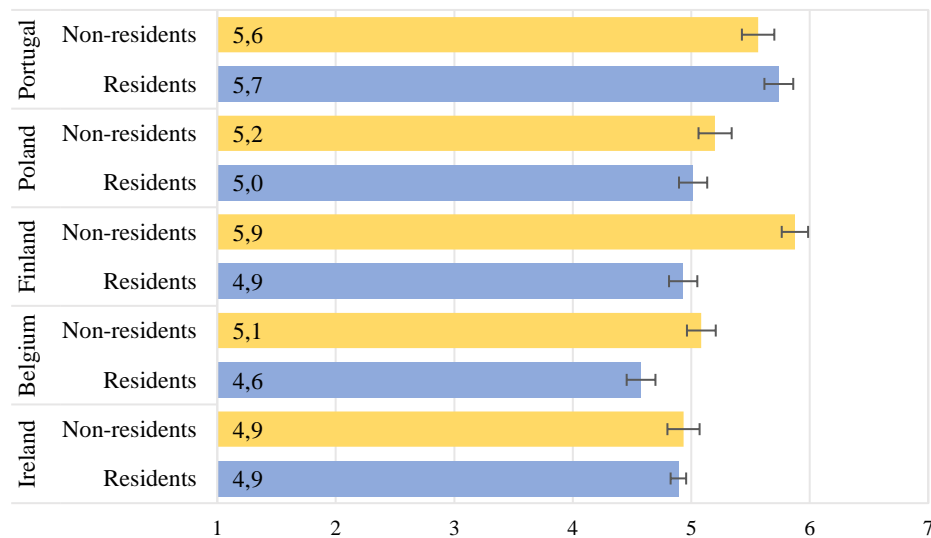


Figure 13 provides insights into the prevailing attitudes concerning the right of non-resident citizens to stand as candidates. The overall sentiment skews more conservative when juxtaposed with perspectives on voting rights. In Belgium, both resident and non-resident citizens tend to harbor reservations about the idea of non-residents standing as candidates. Similarly, Finnish resident citizens view this right for non-residents somewhat skeptically. A unique dynamic unfolds in Ireland: non-resident Irish citizens are hesitant about such rights, but their resident counterparts seem much more open to the idea. On a different note, Portuguese citizens, regardless of their residency status, consistently demonstrate a positive attitude towards non-resident citizens

standing as candidates, presenting a contrast to the more cautious viewpoints prevalent in other nations.

Figure 13. Attitudes towards non-resident citizens' right to stand as candidates in parliamentary elections.

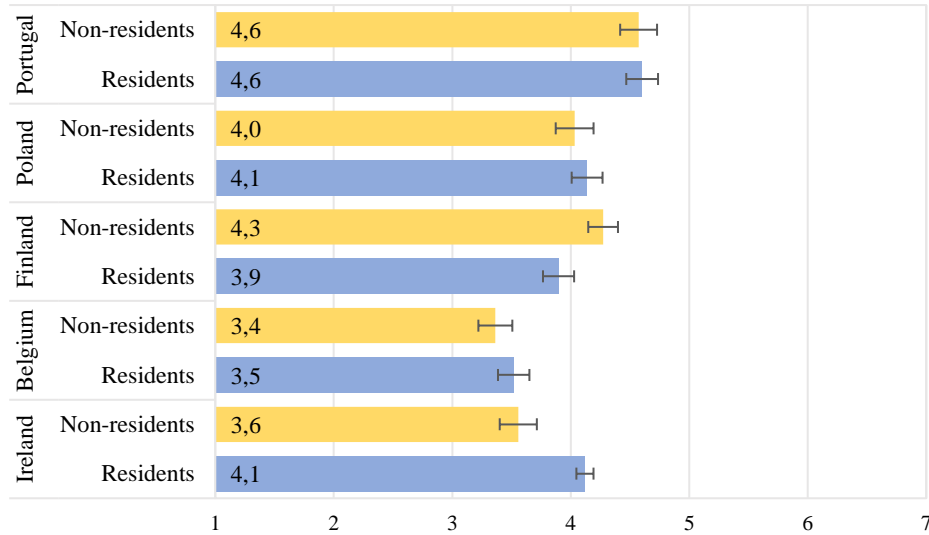
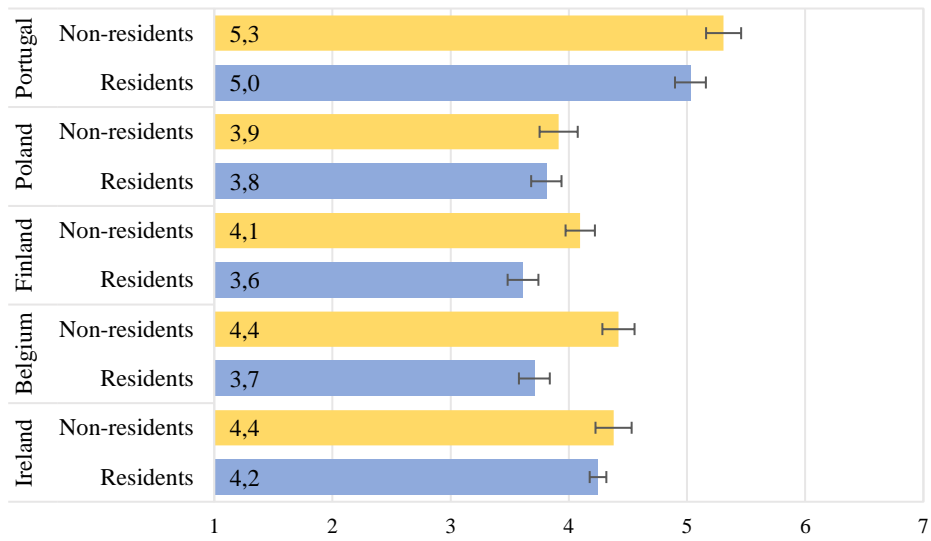


Figure 14 examines the attitudes of special representation in parliament based on country and residence status. It shows that Portuguese citizens distinctly emerge as the most supportive of the idea of dedicated representation in parliament for emigrants, setting them apart from the other countries in the study. A noteworthy observation from the Irish context is the evident preference of its non-resident citizens for special representation, even more so than their right to contest as a candidate (see Figure 13). In the case of Finland and Belgium, residence status plays a role in shaping views on special representation. Non-resident citizens from these countries exhibit a stronger inclination towards the idea, whereas their resident counterparts are less enthusiastic.

Figure 14. Attitudes towards non-resident citizens' right to special representation in parliament.



Based on the data from Figures 12, 13, and 14, some conclusions can be drawn about how resident and non-resident citizens in Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Poland, and Portugal perceive the electoral rights and special representation of non-resident citizens.

*Key findings regarding attitudes towards the Voting Rights of Mobile EU
Citizens among citizens and non-resident citizens.*

- ✚ Overall, both resident and non-resident citizens tend to **support the voting rights of non-residents**. This suggests a general acceptance of the idea that citizenship, regardless of residency, grants some form of political participation.
- ✚ The attitudes towards the **rights of non-resident citizens to stand as candidates** are on average **more conservative**. This suggests that while people may support some form of political participation for non-residents, they may see candidacy as a step too far.
- ✚ **Portuguese citizens stand out for their strong support** for all forms of political participation for non-residents. This is well in line with the current system in place in Portugal, which includes designated seats in the Portuguese parliament for citizens residing abroad.
- ✚ In Ireland, while non-resident citizens show hesitance toward their right to candidacy, they are more favourable toward the idea of special representation. This implies **a nuance in how different forms of political participation are valued**.
- ✚ Although attitudes towards rights for non-resident citizens is on average high, the existing variation appears to largely reflect the system in place. **Attitudes are hence influenced by the historical and political context**, which points towards that **citizens are somewhat aware of the current rules and regulations**.

Section 4. Comparative Overview, Challenges and Good Practices

As discussed, increased human mobility across EU27 has drawn the attention of policymakers, scholars, and civil society stakeholders on the need to further reflect on processes of electoral and democratic participation among mobile EU citizens. This report has aimed to provide key comparative evidence regarding the variation across EU Member States in what refers to the electoral regulations in place for mobile EU citizens, while also discussing how such regulations may affect the way in which mobile individuals can exercise their electoral rights in practice.

The information presented in the report helps identifying several challenges, but also good practices that could be addressed in public policies aiming to facilitate democratic participation of EU citizens who decide to settle their residence in other Member States. To begin with, our findings suggest that EU citizens' access to voting rights remains largely dependent on their nationality and place of residence. As discussed, despite important developments leading to the enfranchisement of mobile EU citizens for EP and local elections held in their countries of residence, EU nationals living in other EU Member States are still excluded from the national legislative elections held in the latter. Considering that these electoral contests are considered as first-order elections, this represents an important barrier for the full political inclusion of mobile EU citizens in their EU countries of settlement. In addition, the fact that some EU nationalities are also disenfranchised from parliamentary elections held in origin countries (see cases such as Ireland or Malta) as a result of international mobility further limits their right to democratic participation and to having their views expressed in electoral processes.

Second, even when entitled to vote in elections held in origin or residence countries, the possibilities of mobile EU citizens of exercising, in practice, their voting rights still remains largely dependent on applicable electoral procedures, with significant variations across the EU. As highlighted in this report, restrictive electoral registration modalities can represent an important obstacle for the political participation of mobile Europeans. For instance, authorities in countries with compulsory voting systems could further reflect on how to address mobile voters' fear of sanctions in case of electoral abstention, which remains an important element hindering their decision to register as voters in the first place. Similarly, good practices that some Member States have already implemented in view of facilitating the inclusion of mobile EU citizens in electoral registers could be further encouraged and generalised. This could include, for instance, the implementation of an automatic process for the registration of non-national EU citizens as voters in local elections of their EU countries of residence or for the automatic registration of EU nationals abroad as voters in national parliamentary elections held in their countries of nationality. When the electoral registration remains based on request, the process can also be further facilitated by raising awareness regarding existing registration modalities or by extending the

deadline for registration closer to the election day, as it is currently the case in some Member States. Similarly, it is also important to highlight the importance of offering mobile EU citizens information in their national languages about the procedures for voting both in EP and local elections held in residence countries.

Third, voting modalities should also be considered in order to ensure that mobile EU citizens can exercise their democratic rights of political participation. Offering EU nationals living in other Member States the possibility to choose between a wider array of voting modalities in an important aspect in such effort, together with the implementation of information campaigns aiming to provide voters with useful information on when and how they can cast the ballot in origin or residence countries elections. Additionally, since the consular presence abroad is key to understand the opportunities and challenges faced by mobile EU citizens when voting in-person from abroad, facilitating the possibility of casting the ballot at diplomatic missions abroad by extending the consular network when needed can also improve the provision of an adequate response to the needs and demographic concentration of citizens abroad.

Finally, in this report we have also presented novel information on attitudes and awareness of electoral rights for non-resident citizens. The data, based on resident citizens and non-resident citizens from five different EU countries with great variation in the electoral rights they provide their non-resident citizens, shows that overall, both resident and non-resident citizens tend to support the voting rights of non-residents. The generally high level of support suggests a general acceptance of the idea that citizenship, regardless of residency, grants some form of political participation. The variation found across countries is somewhat influenced by the system in place, which in turn points towards that citizens are somewhat aware of the level of rights in their country.

Appendix: Electoral Bodies across EU27

<i>EU Member State</i>	
Austria	Federal Electoral Board (<i>Bundeswahlbehörde</i>), https://www.bmi.gv.at/412/Bundeswahlbehoerde.aspx
Belgium	Federal Public Service Interior – Directorate General for Population and Institutions (<i>Service Public Fédéral Interieur - Direction générale Institutions et Population</i>), https://ibz.be/fr/elections
Bulgaria	Central Election Commission (<i>Централна избирателна комисия</i>), https://www.cik.bg/
Croatia	State Electoral Commission, https://www.izbori.hr/site/site/en/homepage/18
Cyprus	Ministry of Interior, http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/moi.nsf/page16_gr/page16_gr?OpenDocument
Czech Republic	Ministry of Interior, General Administration Department, Elections Section, https://www.mvcr.cz/mvcren/article/voting-in-elections.aspx
Denmark	Ministry of Interior and Housing, https://elections.im.dk/
Estonia	National Electoral Committee, http://www.vvk.ee/
Finland	Ministry of Justice, Election Unit, https://vaalit.fi/en/frontpage
France	Ministry of Interior, https://www.elections.interieur.gouv.fr/
Germany	Federal Ministry of Interior, Federal Returning Officer, https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/en/bundeswahlleiter.html
Greece	Ministry of the Interior, https://www.ypes.gr/en/
Hungary	National Electoral Office (<i>Országos Választási Bizottság</i>), https://www.valasztas.hu/web/national-election-office
Ireland	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Franchise Section, https://www.housing.old.gov.ie/corporate/other/what-we-do Citizens Information, https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government_in_ireland/elections_and_referenda/national_elections/
Italy	Ministry of Interior – Central Directorate for Electoral Service (<i>Ministero dell'Interno - Direzione centrale dei Servizi elettorali</i>), https://dait.interno.gov.it/dait/direzione-centrale-per-i-servizi-elettorali
Latvia	Central Election Commission, https://www.cvklv/en
Lithuania	Central Electoral Commission, https://www.vrk.lt/en/home
Luxembourg	Ministry of State, https://elections.public.lu/en.html
Malta	Electoral Commission, https://electoral.gov.mt/
Netherlands	Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations (<i>Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties</i>), https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-the-interior-and-kingdom-relations Electoral Council (<i>Kiesraad</i>), https://english.kiesraad.nl/elections/elections-of-the-municipal-council
Poland	National Electoral Commission (<i>Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza</i>), https://pkw.gov.pl/

Portugal	General Directorate of Internal Administration (<i>Secretaria-Geral do Ministério da Administração Interna, Administração Eleitoral</i>), https://www.sg.mai.gov.pt/administracaoeleitoral/Paginas/default.aspx National Electoral Commission (<i>Comissão Nacional de Eleições</i>), https://www.cne.pt/ Voters' Portal (<i>Portal do Eleitor</i>), https://www.portaldoeleitor.pt/Default.aspx
Romania	Permanent Electoral Authority, https://www.roaep.ro/prezentare/ Central Electoral Bureau
Slovakia	Ministry of Interior. Department of Elections, Referendum and the Political Parties, https://www.minv.sk/?uvod-komisija-pre-volby
Slovenia	State Election Commission (<i>Državne volilne komisije</i>), https://www.dvk-rs.si/
Spain	Ministry of Interior, Directorate General for Internal Affairs (<i>Subsecretaría Dirección General de Política Interior</i>), https://infoelectoral.interior.gob.es/opencms/es/inicio/ Central Election Commission (<i>Junta Electoral Central</i>), http://www.juntaelectoralcentral.es/cs/jec/inicio
Sweden	Election Authority (<i>Valmyndigheten</i>), http://www.riksdagen.se/en/