

The European Parliament



What is it?

The European Parliament is one of the EU's decision-making bodies. It is the only directly elected institution of the European Union. Each Member State elects its Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) every five years to represent and protect their interests. The last elections were in May 2014 and the next ones will take place in 2019.

The Parliament is made up of 751 MEPs, divided into 8 political groups, which represent 500 million citizens. The European Parliament is considered an advocate for human rights, democracy, freedom of speech, and fair elections - not just in Europe but around the globe.

How does EU decision-making work?

- The European Parliament, Member States, and civil society make recommendations to the European Commission, which are taken into account in proposals for laws made by the Commission.
- The European Parliament and the EU Council review and amend the proposals the Commission makes.
- If approved, they become directives that are transferred into law in all the Member States.

What does an MEP do?

It is the MEP's job to consult with interested parties - including civil society - and experts to make informed decisions and vote on our behalf. The laws they approve are applied in all the EU Member States.

MEPs also vote on international agreements, EU enlargements, and how the EU budget is allocated. They examine petitions made by citizens and elect the president of the European Commission.



How is the European Parliament relevant to community, voluntary and charitable organisations?

- Community, voluntary and charitable organisations often represent the most vulnerable people in society. It is essential that such organisations ensure that their voices, and the voices of those they represent, are heard at the European level.
- The members of the European Union are collectively the largest international development donor in the world and make billions of euro of funding available each year. Irish community, voluntary and charitable organisations are eligible to apply for multiple European funding programmes. Awareness of EU policy and objectives will increase your chances of being funded. If you feel that the people you represent are being overlooked in the EU budget, it is important to communicate this to the Parliament to ensure representation in future budgets.
- Community, voluntary and charitable organisations have unique insight to share in relation to many societal challenges that the European Union is currently tackling, including health and wellbeing; environmental sustainability; climate change; inclusive societies and protection of citizens' freedom.

How can I participate?

- Visit the European Parliament section of the europa.eu website to learn more about it and how to petition action on an issue.
- Visit the European Parliament Information Office in Dublin's website www.europarl.europa.eu/ireland for more information or to find your MEP.
- Most importantly: vote! Make sure that you are informed and vote in the 2019 European elections. Mobilising your community to do the same is the most effective way of ensuring that your MEP represents your interests at a European level.

If your organisation would like to find out about how to engage in European programmes, contact The Wheel's Europe Team at europe@wheel.ie.



**the
wheel**

**Stronger Charities.
Stronger Communities.**

www.wheel.ie
T: 353 (01) 14548727
E: Info@wheel.ie
48 Fleet Street (entrance Parliament Row)
Dublin 2, D02 T883
Registered Charity Number: 20040963
Company Number: 302282