

The European elections concern a quarter of the Swiss population

Preparations for this year's European Parliament elections are running at full speed. The elections take place from 6 to 9 June. There are 2.3 million EU citizens - including dual nationals - living in Switzerland, 1.9 million of whom are of voting age. They have the right to take part in the European elections.



Bern, in April 2024 - The European Parliament is the first and only directly elected transnational parliament in the world. Every five years, its 720 members (previously 705) are elected by EU citizens in Europe-wide elections since 1979. The competences of the European Parliament were gradually extended and nowadays come close to those of national parliaments. The European Parliament decides on European legal acts and the EU budget on an equal footing with the EU Council of Ministers, the chamber of the member states. Most international agreements that the EU concludes with third countries also require the approval of the European Parliament. The latter therefore also decides on EU agreements with Switzerland.

The European elections have a decisive influence on the political direction of the European Commission, the executive branch of the EU. The heads of state and government of the member states must take the result of the parliamentary elections into account when appointing the Commission President. As in 2014 and 2019, the major European parties have therefore announced their intention to put forward lead candidates (“Spitzenkandidaten”) for this year's election. When it comes to the composition of the Commission, each designated candidate is examined by the European Parliament in a hearing. The Commission as a whole must then be confirmed by the Parliament. The Commission is accountable to the Parliament and can be dismissed by means of a vote of no confidence.

EU citizens in Switzerland have the right to vote

This year's European elections take place between 6 and 9 June. Almost 400 million EU citizens of voting age are called upon to elect candidates of European parties from their member state to the European Parliament. Slightly over 1.5 million EU citizens are currently living in Switzerland, according to the official foreign population statistics. Another 750,000 dual citizens hold the citizenship of an EU country in addition to the Swiss citizenship, as calculations based on census figures by the Federal Office of Statistics show. Together, this amounts to some 2.3 million people holding an EU passport, about a quarter of the Swiss

population. Of these, 1.9 million are of voting age. They have the right to take part in the European elections. That is more eligible voters than in several EU member states.

More than one million Swiss also have an EU passport

The close social and human ties between Switzerland and the EU become even more apparent when the Swiss residing in EU member states are taken into account. 450,000 Swiss nationals were living in the EU at the end of 2022. They are affected by decisions taken by the European Parliament. According to statistics on the Swiss abroad, 334,000 of them also hold the citizenship of an EU country. Together with the 750,000 EU-Swiss dual citizens living in Switzerland, this means that almost 1.1 million Swiss nationals also have the EU citizenship and therefore are directly concerned by the European elections.

How to take part in the European elections from Switzerland?

Citizens of EU member states who are of voting age (generally 18 years, 16 in Austria, Belgium, Germany and Malta, 17 in Greece) are eligible to vote. The modalities for EU citizens in Switzerland to participate in the European elections depend on the national electoral law of their country of origin. This varies from member state to member state. While Spanish citizens, for example, can vote either by postal mail or at the consulate, citizens from France cast their vote either at the polling stations established by the consulates or by proxy. Portuguese can vote at their consulates, Germans only by postal mail. Italian citizens wishing to vote, on the other hand, need to travel to the commune in Italy where they are registered as voters. They will automatically receive a notification from the municipality about a month ahead of the elections.

In many member states, timely entry in the electoral register is required. We recommend that you inform yourself about the deadlines and modalities applicable in your member state.

You can find more information about the European elections and the modalities to vote on this special website of the European Parliament: <https://elections.europa.eu/de/>

Here you find an overview of the registration deadlines for EU citizens abroad: <https://europa.eu/!WNRby8>

Delegation of the European Union
to Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein
Christoffelgasse 6, CH-3011 Bern
Phone: +41 31 310 15 30
delegation-bern@eeas.europa.eu
www.delegation-bern.eu