

## EU urged to up its game on tackling racism

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News

The EU has been urged to “show a true commitment” to tackling racism after a new report revealed that only 5 percent of the new European Parliament intake are from racial and ethnic minorities.



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The Brussels-based European Network Against Racism (ENAR) analysed the racial and ethnic minority representation of the Parliament following the results of the recent European elections.

It says that while it is estimated that racial and ethnic minorities make up at least 10 percent of the EU population, only 36 ethnic minority MEPs were elected last month. Of these, 19 are men and 17 are women.

ENAR says that six are national minorities, for example, Russians in Lithuania and Hungarians in Romania, while seven are people of African descent.

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There will be six black women in the new Parliament, compared to just one in the last mandate. Six of the new intake are of North African descent and six of Middle Eastern descent.

However, all six MEPs of South Asian descent are from the UK and will leave when the UK exits the EU.

The UK elected seven minority MEPs, France six, Germany five and Sweden four. Only 13 of the 28 Member States elected ethnic minority MEPs.

ENAR says its review of the 751 MEPs shows that racial/ethnic minorities are “hugely underrepresented” according to proportion of population.

“We estimate that racial and ethnic minorities make up at least 10 percent of the European Union population but make up 5 percent [36 MEPs] of the total elected MEPs on the election lists” **ENAR**

The report says, “We estimate that racial and ethnic minorities make up at least 10 percent of the European Union population but make up 5 percent (36 MEPs) of the total elected MEPs on the election lists.”

After Brexit, this figure will reduce to 4 percent.

It says, “Brexit will have a huge impact. The departure of UK MEPs will greatly reduce representation of racial minorities in Parliament.”

“Ideologically, UK MEPs also tend to bring a clear racial diversity angle including cross-party agreement on the need for representation and equality data collection.”

ENAR press representative Georgina Siklossy said, “Racial and ethnic minorities are hugely underrepresented in the new European Parliament - 4 to 5 percent - whereas they are estimated to make up at least 10 percent of the EU population.”

She added, “Although we see a welcome increase from the last mandate, many of the gains will be rolled back with Brexit because the UK elected 7 MEPs of colour - more than any other country.”

“Representation of ethnic minorities and people of colour is vital to the democratic legitimacy of the European Parliament, and indeed of any political institution. But now more than ever, it has to go hand in hand with a true commitment to anti-racism and equality. We expect new Members of European Parliament to take on that commitment.”

ENAR says the lack of representation can be attributed to a number of factors, including “structural racism and exclusion in society, direct discrimination in voting, a low proportion of ethnic minority

candidates.”

The report adds, “In our previous analysis of candidates' lists, it was clear that national parties failed to elevate minority candidates to the top of the lists, affecting electoral success particularly in countries which do not have preferential voting.”

The group says left-leaning parties are far more representative than right-wing parties, adding, “However, we do see a number of people of colour and ethnic minorities elected from (far) right-wing parties.”

### **‘OVERWHELMING LACK OF RACIAL DIVERSITY’**

Its analysis said there is a “wider problem” with representation in European policymaking, stating that alongside the European Parliament, there is a need for EU institutions, such as the Commission, to recognise and address the “overwhelming lack of racial diversity.”

“The Commission has a staff of over 33,000 and has real power in European policy making, and yet publishes no data on racial/ethnic diversity, nor does it implement positive action to improve representation.”

Improving representation in politics is, according to ENAR, “an issue for European institutions, national level parties, and voters alike.”

It says, “All institutions must prioritise diversity and representation of racial and ethnic minorities as an urgent issue for democratic legitimacy. They must produce data on the scope of the issue and take clear measures to ensure there is no discrimination in party lists or in institutional structures.”

A separate ENAR study before the 23-26 May elections showed an “abysmal representation of people of colour” on candidate lists.

Sarah Chander, senior advocacy officer at ENAR, also told this website, “Fewer than 3 percent of 6,500 European Parliament candidates were people of colour. Migrants, minorities and people of colour are an undeniable fact of Europe’s reality. It’s time Europe reflected that.”

Meanwhile, separate figures show that more women have been elected than ever before but men still account for 60 percent of MEPs.

The proportion of female MEPs has increased slightly from 36 percent five years ago to about 39 percent, or 286 out of 751 seats, with nearly all of the results confirmed.

The gender balance is above the 30.2 percent average of national parliaments for the 28 Member States and better than the UK’s House of Commons where 32 percent of MPs are women and the House of Representatives in the US where 23.6 percent are female.

In 1979, the first direct European parliamentary elections, only 15.2 percent of the intake were women.

### **About the author**

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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