

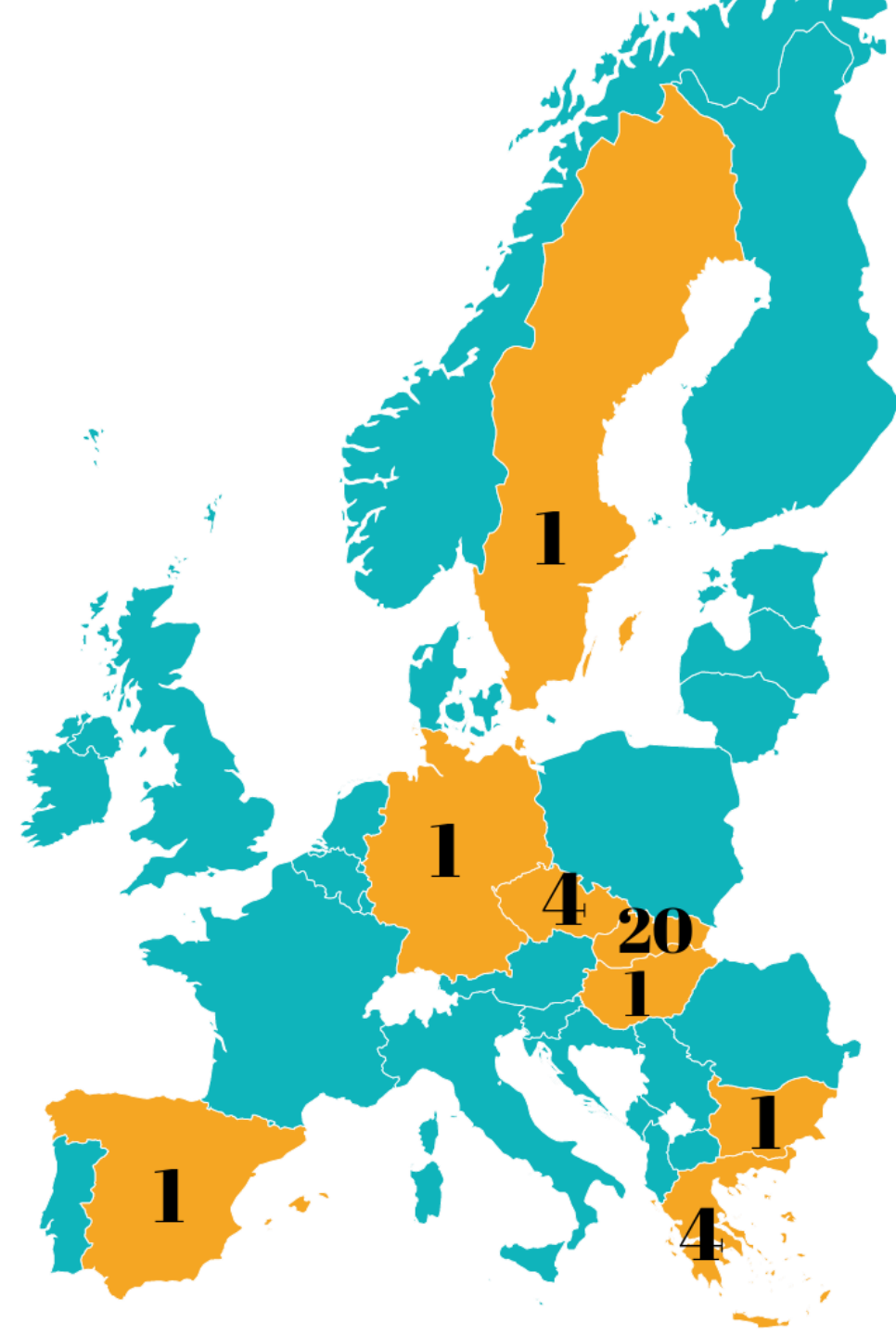


European Roma Information Office

Roma political participation at the 2019 European elections



- We know of over 30 Roma candidates at the last EU elections. 20 of them ran for election in Slovakia.
- Roma political participation, as candidates, is not equal throughout the EU. Only a few member States had Roma candidates.
- On all the Roma candidates, only 3 were elected as Member of the European Parliament.





Livia JÁRÓKA was re-elected as Member of the European Parliament with the *Fidesz* list in **Hungary**. She will stay with the EPP group.



Romeo FRANZ was re-elected as Member of the European Parliament with the *Green Party* list in **Germany**. He will stay with the Green EFA group.



Peter POLLAK is a new MEP, elected with the *Ordinary People and Independent Figures movement (OL'aNO)* list in **Slovakia**. He will join the EPP group.

Roma candidates who were not elected

- In **Sweden**, Soraya Post ran for re-election as the leading candidate for the *Feminist initiative party*. Since the list didn't get the required number of votes, she was not elected.
- In **Czech Republic**, four Roma (Miroslav Tancoš, Štefan Gorol, Miroslav Rusenko and Ladislav Sivák) stood as candidates, all for the *Romani Democratic Party*. The party didn't gather enough votes to send MEPs.
- In **Slovakia**, more than 20 Roma were candidates. Only Peter Pollak was elected. The others were either not running with strong political parties or not running in eligible places.

Roma candidates who were not elected

- In **Spain**, Patricia Caro Maya, ran with *Podemos Izquierda Unida*. As the list only gained 6 seats, she was not elected.
- In **Bulgaria**, Rosen Bogomilov was a candidate with the rightwing coalition “*Democratic Bulgaria*”. This list only sent 1 MEP, hence Rosen Bogomilov was not elected.
- In **Greece**, four Roma candidates (Maria E. Tzabazi, Athanasios Kamperis, Ioannis C. Gousbounaris and Vasilis D. Stirokleas) ran for four different political parties. None of them gathered enough votes to be elected.

Roma as candidates

- Roma candidates usually run for small or independent parties which makes their election unlikely.
- Often, if there is a Roma candidate for a mainstream party, (s)he will not be at an eligible place. Mainstream parties sometimes use Roma candidates just to appear more inclusive
- The diversity of political parties in which Roma ran as candidates represents the diversity of political opinions within the Roma community.

Barriers to Roma political participation

- **Structural barriers**

In some countries, institutional barriers limit Roma political participation. In **Romania** for example a political party is required to gather 200 000 signatures in order to participate in elections which makes it very hard for new parties to emerge.

In **Finland**, for the European elections there is only one national voting district, hence being a candidate requires a huge budget or a lot of connections and publicity, making it very hard for Roma to get through.

Barriers to Roma political participation

- **Corruption or intimidation**

In **Romania**, Roma often get paid for their work for traditional parties and sometimes even for their votes.

In addition, Roma are scared that, by not supporting one of the traditional parties, they might face retaliation.

In **Greece**, in the last three days before the elections, Roma voters received threats from other Roma, serving non-Roma political interests.

Barriers to Roma political participation

- **Lack of trust in institutions or in politicians**

In **Bulgaria**, voter turnout for the EP elections was 32% only, interest was even lower among the Roma community. Mainly because of the lack of trust and general disappointment towards politicians.

In **Portugal**, Roma don't really believe in politicians and generally do not have a political conscience.

Same for many Roma and Travellers in **Ireland** where there is a general mistrust in the political system and politicians.

Barriers to Roma political participation

- **Lack of awareness or understanding of the political system**

In **Ireland**, the main barriers would be their lack of awareness or understanding of the political system, not knowing how to register, literacy, language and their lack of knowledge surrounding their right to vote.

In **Greece** as well, one of the main barriers for Roma is literacy and the fact that they're not getting proper assistance.

Conclusion

- Still far from having a proportional representation of the Roma community at EU level.
- There is a need to work on empowering Roma to vote and to stand as candidates through **awareness raising** and **training**.
- Special attention should be brought to empowering **Roma women**, both as voters and as candidates.
- Actions should also be taken to **facilitate Roma participation** and to tackle the obstacles that they face, mainly discrimination and prejudices.