



CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

Diversity Trends in the European Parliament

ANOTHER FUTURE
IS POSSIBLE

REPORT



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This report offers insights into the shifting landscape of diversity within the European Parliament (EP). As the only directly elected body in the European Union (EU), the EP shoulders the responsibility of representing a diverse European population across dimensions such as nationality, gender, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. The question of whether the EP authentically mirrors this diverse EU population is crucial for evaluating the legitimacy of EU institutions and the broader state of European democracy.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report offers insights into the shifting landscape of diversity within the European Parliament (EP) over the past ten years. As the only directly elected body in the European Union (EU), the EP shoulders the responsibility of representing a diverse European population across dimensions such as nationality, gender, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, ability, and sexual orientation. The question of whether the EP authentically mirrors this diverse EU population is crucial for evaluating the legitimacy of EU institutions and the broader state of European democracy.

Examining diversity trends within the context of the 2014 and 2019 elections, this report assesses two core dimensions: the evolution of diversity over time and the perspectives of political groups and of MEPs themselves on these trends. Through a comprehensive conceptual framework and methodology, this report sheds light on macro, meso and micro trends based on quantitative as well as qualitative data analysis.

Our analysis shows that over the course of the EP's mandates, two key dimensions have shown a steady evolution. Gender distribution has seen marked improvements towards a more equitable representation, underscored by the EP's proactive stance on gender equality. Additionally, analysis of citizenship data across all nine mandates reveals a notable shift, particularly in the rise of MEPs holding dual citizenship, with a noticeable increase in second citizenships outside the EU. While only a small fraction of these overlap with MEPs from a racialised minority, this development enriches multiculturalism and language diversity in the EP. However, despite these advancements, **disparities persist in reflecting the EU's demographic reality**. The proportion of MEPs identifying as belonging to racialised minorities¹ remains modest, comprising approximately 3.3% in the 8th mandate and 4.5% in the 9th mandate. Moreover, the departure of the United Kingdom, a significant source of minority representation, further challenges efforts towards demographic parity. Disaggregation of MEP data by Political Group unveils additional

insights, highlighting the absence of racialised minority in specific political factions, such as the Europe of Nations and Freedom and Identity and Democracy groups. Similar trends are observed concerning representation of the LGBTIQ community. Individuals with disabilities are also underrepresented, with only 3 in the 8th mandate and 7 MEPs in the 9th mandate who identify as having a disability, while more than 25% of the EU population has a disability. This emphasises ongoing challenges in achieving diverse and inclusive parliamentary representation.

When looking at dimensions of discrimination from an intersectional approach, we see that whereas the number of MEPs from racialised groups has slightly increased between the two studied mandates, currently, most racialised MEPs are women. Moreover, **women of colour represent close to 55% of racialised MEPs in the 9th mandate, up from 39% in the 8th mandate**. Such increase in the proportion of female racialised MEPs might be linked to a number of British MEPs leaving the EP in 2020, since the UK had a comparatively strong representation of racialised men, especially British MEPs of Pakistani heritage. On another note, among the (underrepresented) **LGBTIQ community in the EP, the majority are men, even for parties which have reached gender parity**. The research also delved into the intersection of racial grounds and disability; being racialised and belonging to the LGBTIQ community; as well as belonging to the LGBTIQ community and having disability. The results show that such intersectionality is virtually absent (with only one MEP who is both racialised and has a disability in the 9th mandate, and only one MEP who is both racialised and LGBTIQ, also in the 9th mandate), as we are **far from having a sufficiently diverse EP**.

The establishment of [EP Committees](#) and [EP Intergroups](#) that focus on the promotion of diversity and inclusion reflects ongoing efforts to address specific dimensions of diversity, such as racial diversity, religious diversity, disability rights, and sexual orientation, as well as gender. However, disparities in representation persist, with certain political groups underrepresented in the intergroups' efforts towards the inclusion of racialised minority and LGBTIQ representation. The FEMM Committee, LIBE Committee, the Intergroup on Disability and the Intergroup on Traditional Minorities comprise all political groups, showing that these **dimensions of diversity have some degree of support across the political spectrum**. The situation is however quite different for the ARDI and for the LGBTI Intergroups, and for the Religious Tolerance and

¹ For the purpose of this study we adopt the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)'s understanding of racialisation as "the process of ascribing characteristics and attributes that are presented as innate to a group of concern to it and of constructing false social hierarchies in racial terms and associated exclusion and hostility". ECRI's opinion on the concept of "racialisation", adopted at ECRI's 87th plenary meeting on 8 December 2021, is available at <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-opinion-on-the-concept-of-racialisation/1680a4dcc2>. Accessed on 21 February 2024.

the Christians in the Middle East Intergroups, the latter **showing significant partisan divides**. In fact, the two IGs that stand out are the IG9-07 (IG on Christians in the Middle East), which is composed exclusively by MEPs from the ID, ECR, non inscripts and EPP; and the IG0-14 on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance, which also has no participation from left-wing MEPs. The qualitative analysis mentioned below corroborates those findings: MEPs' personal engagement in diversity work is complemented by European Parliament intergroups, notably the LGBTI Intergroup and the ARDI Intergroup. As an indicator to understand dynamics of representation and solidarity/ally-ships, data on membership show that approximately 50% of racialised MEPs are members of ARDI, and approximately 50% of LGBTIQ MEPs are part of the Intergroup on LGBTI rights. The overlap between these cohorts, however, is minimal: only one MEP belonging to the LGBTIQ community participates in ARDI, and only a few racialised MEPs are involved in the IG on LGBTIQ rights.

The qualitative analysis delves into the perceptions and viewpoints on diversity of eleven interviewees, primarily MEPs. The findings highlight the significant role individual biographies play in shaping MEPs' interests and commitments to specific aspects of diversity and non-discrimination. The interviews also show how respondents' lived experiences can enrich the political debate, enabling MEPs to reach out to external stakeholders and resources, and to foster internal allyships with other MEPs. Personal engagement on diversity issues within the EP spans various initiatives and policy fields, and indicates that diversity discussions are not confined to specific intergroups or committees (i.e. LIBE or FEMM).

Interviewed MEPs and staff's assessment of diversity within the EP is mixed: while several acknowledge positive trends such as greater gender equality compared to previous mandates, there is also a widespread perception that certain groups, such as religious minorities of colour, and individuals with disabilities, are heavily underrepresented. Efforts towards gender equality are most visible at the administrative level. In stark contrast with the mostly homogenous population in both the administrative and political staff of Parliament, respondents have pointed at the (racial and class) diversity of the population of the EP's local contractors and subcontractors (e.g. cleaning firms, catering) - which rather accurately reflects the social make-up of the city of Brussels. In Parliament, interviewees pointed out the challenges faced in implementing gender-inclusive and disability-friendly measures during recruitment. Although complaint mechanisms

and anti-harassment policies exist, current rules lack explicit provisions addressing psychological harassment linked to discrimination. Although interviewees were generally sensitive to diversity and inclusion, their views on the current social composition of Parliament did not always mirror the findings of our diversity mapping. Amongst the discrepancies, we found minimal reference to more heterogeneous minority backgrounds, including those who are racialised, which points at a limited narrative and debate on the topic, as well as to the lack of socio-economic diversity. Political support for diversity issues within the EP generally mirrors the left-right political divide. While LGBTIQ rights and disability issues enjoy broader support, racial diversity initiatives face challenges in garnering even symbolic support, with especially the Greens and the Left political groups emerging as influential backers of racial non-discrimination. However, findings also highlighted the disparity between professed engagement and actual political behaviour, particularly regarding neglected issues such as religion, class and workers' rights, as well as intersectionality.

Looking ahead to the next 5 years, the composition of the 10th mandate of the European Parliament raises concerns about decreases in diversity and representation. These challenges underscore the ongoing need for proactive measures to foster inclusivity within the EP and address the complexities of diversity and discrimination effectively. In conclusion, while progress has been made in recognising and addressing diversity within the EP, significant gaps remain in truly reflecting the EU's diverse population. This report serves as an initial exploration, paving the way for further analysis and action to enhance the EP's role as a representative and inclusive institution.

I. INTRODUCTION AND DISCLAIMERS

This report presents results of a research study on the changing dynamics of diversity within the European Parliament over the past 10 years, between 2014 and 2024.

The European Parliament (EP) is called to represent the European population, which is very diverse and heterogeneous across many dimensions, spanning differences in terms of nationality, gender, age, disability, language, class and social status, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and more. As a result, the question of whether and in what sense the EP is representative of this diverse EU population is highly relevant to assess the legitimacy of EU institutions and the state of European democracy more in general.

Since 1979, European citizens have been voting for the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), making the EP the only directly elected body in the institutional framework of the European Union. It currently represents over 400 million eligible voters, one of the largest democratic elections world-wide. Following a steady decline in electoral turnout from the first EP elections in 1979 until 2014, the latest EP elections (held in 2019) saw an affluence of almost 51%, the highest registered since 1994 (see Figure 1 for voters' turnout to EP elections in the past two decades).

Figure 1. Turnout to the European Parliamentary elections since 2004

YEAR	EUROPEAN UNION
2004	45.47%
2009	42.97%
2014	42.61%
2019	50.66%

Source: The EP official website, data available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/turnout/>

Having grown by 15 MEPs in 2024 (from 705 to 720),² the EP is charged with ever-growing expectations and responsibilities in the face of global and transnational challenges such as climate change, migration and technological developments that cannot be dealt with by national governments alone. Since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (in 2009), the EP's powers in creating and overseeing EU leg-

islation have considerably increased, particularly through the widening of the co-decision procedure to new policy fields. While not yet a legislator with the same prerogatives as national Parliaments, the EP's powers mirror those of the Council of the EU in several policy areas (e.g. single market, employment and social affairs, economic, social and territorial cohesion, agriculture, fisheries, environment, consumer protection, and transport).

With greater powers and political responsibilities, it is all the more important that the composition of the EP broadly reflects the changing European society and its evolving interests and preferences. The social and cultural diversity of elected members is key to ensure that minority interests, particularly those of historically disadvantaged groups (e.g. racialised groups, people experiencing poverty, religious and sexual minorities, individuals made vulnerable by intersectional and structural discrimination) are effectively represented at European level. At a time when the legitimacy of the EU is very much contested, including (but not only) by populist parties in several Member States, it is essential to build a democratic institution that is able to truly live up to the EU's motto of "united in diversity".

In 2021, in recognition of the importance of this ambitious goal, the European Parliament's Bureau³ unanimously approved a roadmap towards a more inclusive administration,⁴ with milestones regarding disability, LGBTIQ matters and anti-racism. In line with this vision, the EP resolution of 10 November 2022 on racial justice, non-discrimination and anti-racism in the EU⁵ emphasises "the urgent need for the Union to develop and employ a robust, inclusive, comprehensive and multifaceted approach for effectively combating all forms of racism and discrimination, including structural and institutional racism, on all grounds and in all areas in the EU" and "insists that the Union and its institutions must lead by example in this fight." This resolution strengthened already existing efforts in related areas, such as the roadmap to

² See <https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-parliament-mep-election-2024/>

³ The Bureau is the body that lays down rules for Parliament, being in charge of all administrative, staff and organizational matters. It is composed by the President of the EP, the 14 Vice-Presidents and the five Quaestors elected by Parliament for a period of two and a half years.

⁴ See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/202111261PR18210/diversity-parliament-sets-milestones-towards-a-more-inclusive-administration>

⁵ See https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0389_EN.html

achieve gender equality in political processes and its administration (unanimously approved in April 2020⁶).

This report examines the changing dynamics of diversity in the European Parliament over the past 10 years. It does so by assessing two interrelated dimensions: 1) diversity trends in the context of the two mandates of 2014-2019 and 2019-2024, with reference to both overall diversity of the MEP population as well as in relevant internal political structures (e.g. Committees and Intergroups); 2) the perspectives of elected officials and administrative staff on such trends, including their own engagement on the topic.

In order to capture the complexity and various dimensions of this diversity, we adopted a combination of three different research methods: 1) a comparative diversity mapping of all MEPs who serve/d during the current or previous Parliamentary legislative term; 2) a survey among all current Members of the European Parliament; 3) semi-structured interviews with selected MEPs, assistants and other relevant EP staff. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data allowed us to better understand the latest trends including party strategies regarding diversity, as well as to apprehend some of the personal experiences, views, and perceptions held by MEPs and other stakeholders regarding diversity in the EP. The collected data led us to conduct a three levels analysis: the **macro-level analysis** explored the composition of the EP across several dimensions: gender, racial background, citizenship, sexual orientation, disability, age, educational achievement, and party affiliation. The **meso-level analysis** focused on the composition of the diversity-related Committees and Intergroups, as well as on the work done at the administrative level by the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Unit of the EP. Lastly, the **micro-level analysis** concentrated on the perceptions and points of view of a select number of interview respondents, who provided us with accounts on their personal experiences with diversity, and generally assessed the various dimensions of diversity in the EP, recruitment practices in the administration and the IGs. A detailed description of our methodological approach can be found in the Methodological Annex.

⁶ See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210430IPRO3214/gender-equality-parliament-strives-to-be-frontrunner-among-eu-institutions>

II. SETTING THE CONTEXT ON DIVERSITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

A. THE LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK ON DIVERSITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Diversity is a relatively new concept in policy discussions at the EU level. In 2008, the Council of Europe published the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue ‘Living together as equals in dignity,’ acknowledging cultural diversity as “an empirical fact” (CoE 2008: 19). Contrary to other approaches such as multiculturalism - which was viewed as fostering communal segregation and as contributing to the undermining of the rights of individuals⁷ - diversity has since become strongly interlinked to the rights and characteristics of individual members of a minority. It may be seen as the visible and invisible differences that exist between people such as disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status, age, race, country of origin, religion and culture.

While the language of diversity has become mainstream, European legislation and policy measures aimed at minority/ disadvantaged groups have traditionally been taken (and continue to be taken) from the perspective of non-discrimination and equal access, rather than promoting diversity per se. As stated on the official webpage of the European Parliament’s High-Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity, “the group promotes equality, non-discrimination and diversity in Parliament so that it more accurately reflects European society as a whole.”⁸

Owing to the origin of the European Union as a single market for people, goods and services, legislators and policy-makers have devoted much attention to the principle of non-discrimination and equal treatment, particularly in the context of freedom of movement of EU citizens in other EU Member States. The **principle of non-discrimination** on the basis of nationality is an explicit right conferred upon EU citizens directly in the EU Treaties (Art. 18 TFEU). The Treaties also empower the EU institutions to “take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation” (Article 19 TFEU). The **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, legally binding since the entry into force of the

Lisbon Treaty in 2009, moreover prohibits discrimination on these six grounds as well as nationality (Article 21).

Most legislative measures to combat discrimination on the basis of Art. 19 TFEU were developed and approved in the early 2000s. These include: the [Directive 2000/43/EC](#) against discrimination on grounds of race and ethnic origin (RED); the [Directive 2000/78/EC](#) against discrimination at work on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (FED); the [Directive 2006/54/EC](#) on equal treatment for men and women in matters of employment and occupation; the [Directive 2004/113/EC](#) on equal treatment for men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services. While discrimination on the basis of nationality for EU nationals is already covered under the Treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights (Art. 21) and Directive 2004/38/EC (Art.24),⁹ differentiations on the basis of nationality and immigration for third country nationals are explicitly allowed in both the RED and FED directives (Arts. 3(2)).

More recently, however, the debate on (non-)discrimination has increasingly overlapped with discussions about structural racism, intersectionality and diversity more broadly. Partly triggered by the Black Lives Matter movement and by international debates on racism and discrimination taking place in the USA and globally, the European Union developed for the first time in 2020 an “EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025”¹⁰, followed by the publication by the European Commission of the “Common guiding principles for national action plans against racism and racial discrimination”¹¹. With

7 Similarly, in 2009 UNESCO issued a World Report in which it dropped the ‘promotion of multiculturalism’ and adopted the concept of ‘cultural diversity’ instead.

8 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20211126IPR18210/diversity-parliament-sets-milestones-towards-a-more-inclusive-administration>

9 Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States amending Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68 and repealing Directives 64/221/EEC, 68/360/EEC, 72/194/EEC, 73/148/EEC, 75/34/EEC, 75/35/EEC, 90/364/EEC, 90/365/EEC and 93/96/EEC

10 See https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en - Communication From The Commission To The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions. A Union of equality : EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025 https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/beb25da4-e6b9-459e-89f7-bc9bd3a8f0c8_en?filename=a_union_of_equality_eu_action_plan_against_racism_2020_-2025_en.pdf

11 See https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1813 - Common guiding principles for national action plans against racism and racial discrimination, https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-05/common_guiding_principles_for_national_action_plans_against_racism_and_racial_discrimination.pdf

the 2020-2030 EU Roma Strategic Framework,⁸ the EU has also updated its existing Roma policies, which have been in place since the early 2010s. On gender equality, the latest initiative comprises of the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025¹², a follow-up to the Commission's 2016-2019 strategic engagement for gender equality. Other important strategic documents on diversity and non-discrimination prepared by the Commission include the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025¹³ and the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.¹⁴

Compared to the 2000 Racial Equality Directive, both the new anti-racism and gender equality plans acknowledge structural racism, gender inequalities, and intersectionality and set out not only a series of principles, but also benchmarks and new bodies to tackle racism and other forms of discrimination. However, 'race' and 'ethnicity' remain fairly undefined in the EU anti-racism action plan, with racism and xenophobia used at times interchangeably, acknowledging that there are many different forms of racism, including anti-black racism, antigypsyism, antisemitism, anti-Asian, or anti-Muslim racism. Despite the flurry of policy activity by the EU institutions, civil society organisation Equinox noted in a recent report¹⁵ that three important challenges remain, especially when it comes to combating structural racial discrimination: 1) existence of a patchwork racial equality framework which fragments and silos issues of structural racism; 2) limited political will and frequent public "backlash" against measures which address the full extent of structural and institutional racism; 3) existence of institutional, political and financial barriers to effective civil society engagement.

The complex interconnections between racial grounds for discrimination (as well as class, gender, sexual orientation, disability and other grounds for intersectional discrimination) remain under-researched. Even more importantly, reliable

empirical data is scarce and difficult to collect¹⁶. Challenges effectively persist in researching and collecting empirical data on discrimination, particularly regarding intersectionality and the complex entanglements between various discrimination factors, especially on grounds of religious and racial discrimination¹⁷. Such concerns regard especially the lack of standardised, harmonised and disaggregated data collection mechanisms across the EU, which also prevents EU policies from effectively addressing intersectional discrimination (Farkas 2017; European Commission 2021; Magazzini 2021; Messing & Pap 2024).

Given that all the above-mentioned strategies stress the importance of intersectionality, we present our intersectionality approach in the next section.

12 See <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en> - EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030, https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/99cc0720-68c2-4300-854f-592bf21dceaf_en?filename=eu_roma_strategic_framework_for_equality_inclusion_and_participation_for_2020_-_2030.pdf

13 Communication From The Commission To The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025, https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/5100c375-87e8-40e3-85b5-1adc5f556d6d_en?filename=lgbtiq_strategy_2020-2025_en.pdf

14 Union of Equality Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3e1e2228-7c97-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

15 Towards Racial Justice: How the EU can create lasting change for racialised people, <https://www.equinox-eu.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/WEB-EQUINOX-Towards-racial-justice-EU-institutions.pdf>

16 <https://www.enar.eu.org/equality-data-collection-151/> and https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-02/guidance_note_on_the_collection_and_use_of_equality_data_based_on_racial_or_ethnic_origin_final.pdf

17 The challenge of data collection was raised by the U.S. Helsinki Commission in September 2019, during the hearing "The State of Diversity and Inclusion in Europe: Race, Rights, and Politics", convened one week ahead the European Union's first ever Anti-Racism and Diversity Week held in the European Parliament. The full transcript of the 2019 hearing is available at <https://www.csce.gov/international-impact/events/state-diversity-and-inclusion-europe>, accessed on 21 February 2024. See also Note 17 and the Methodological Annex to this report.

B. INTERSECTIONALITY

People experience discrimination differently depending on their various identities and social positions. Intersectionality is “the notion that multiple systems of oppression intersect in people’s lives and affect different individuals and groups of people differently and it opens up space for discussion about inter-group differences (e.g. differences between women and men) but also discussion about intragroup differences (e.g. differences in the experiences of discrimination among white women and women of colour)” (Bond 2021). As an idea, Intersectionality¹⁸ was first developed by William Du Bois during the second half of the 1800s (Hancock 2005), in the context of abolitionism and as a recognition of the multiple vulnerabilities of black/female slaves.¹⁹ While the concept in sociological and political terms re-emerged in the 1970s with the Black feminist movements, intersectionality as a legal term was developed by Black feminist thinker and US lawyer Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. In her view, the inequality experienced by certain groups cannot be understood only as discrimination based on race or gender alone (Crenshaw 1989; Center for Intersectional Justice 2020: 2). She advocated for an understanding of inequality arising from the intersectionality of the experiences depending on both race and gender as interrelated elements, addressing gaps in legal and institutional frameworks to account for the interplay of multiple layers of oppression (Crenshaw 1989; ENAR 2008: 1). Very briefly, intersectionality can thus be described as “the ways in which different inequalities intersect leading to unique forms of discrimination” (Kantola and Nousiainen 2009: 460).

Intersectionality may be applied in multiple ways to policymaking, in order to have more effective inclusive and better-quality policies (Lombardo and Verloo 2009). An intersectional approach calls for the recognition of multiple identities, avoids single-issue approaches (having a holistic perspective towards inequality and anti-discrimination), aims to address systemic and structural inequities, and strives to build inclusive political environments.

In the past, the EU has been criticised for its approach to inequality. It has been suggested that the EU merely juxtaposes inequalities (cultural, economic, social, moral, sexual orien-

tation, religion and gender-related) rather than considering intersectionality across different dimensions such as race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion and disability (Lombardo and Verloo 2009). Similarly, some research also suggested that the EU focused on “multiple discrimination” rather than “intersectionality”, narrowing down the debate to “anti-discrimination” instead of improving and furthering equality (Kantola and Nousiainen 2009). Such criticism also stressed that the EU has so far only enacted soft law instruments (e.g. action plans, recommendations, policy documents) rather than hard law (e.g. directives, regulations, treaties) to combat intersectional discrimination (Kantola and Nousiainen 2012).

In recent documents, the EU has defined intersectionality as an “analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities [cross-cutting any form of discrimination], and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination.”⁽²⁾²⁰ Somewhat problematically, this definition is based on how sex/gender intersect with other characteristics and identities, while discrimination on the grounds of religion, race or ethnicity, or socioeconomic background, is not mentioned.

For the purposes of this research, we use the definition of Bond (2021) and Kantola and Nousiainen (2009) as indicated above.

¹⁸ See Mohammed et al. (2020)

¹⁹ Center for Intersectional Justice commissioned by ENAR (2020) Intersectional discrimination in Europe: Relevance, challenges and ways forward.

²⁰ Anti-Racism Action Plan (2020-2025). Retrieved from https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en accessed on the 26th of February 2024. See also see: <https://www.enar-eu.org/comments-by-the-european-network-against-racism-on-common-guiding-principles-for-national-action-plans-against-racism/>

C. THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON INTERSECTIONALITY AND DIVERSITY

Discussions on diversity and intersectionality are relatively new in the EP. However, those debates have increasingly intersected with the existing work of the EP on non-discrimination. For example, in a recent own-initiative non-legislative resolution, the Parliament has stressed that EU policies have so far not integrated an intersectional approach, rather only focused on individual dimensions of discrimination and downplayed discrimination's institutional, structural and historical dimensions.²¹ On this basis, Parliament called for “the policies and actions under the Union of Equality to be strengthened, enhanced and adapted if necessary and for an EU framework on intersectional discrimination with cross-cutting objectives and measures to be promoted.” Elsewhere, in a resolution touching upon racial justice, non-discrimination and anti-racism in the EU, the Parliament called on EU institutions “to address intersectional discrimination in EU anti-discrimination legislation and policies and to promote an EU framework on the subject, ... [moreover emphasising] the need to ensure meaningful participation of all groups affected by intersectional discrimination in policymaking at EU, national and local levels, especially minority groups.”²²

In its most recent official statements and Reports, the EP has therefore presented itself as a strongly pro-diversity body with a robust anti-discrimination and inclusive agenda. This pro-diversity approach is often framed in opposition to the Council of the EU, which has at times blocked the EP's proposals (for instance, regarding mandatory measures on gender quotas). Some dimensions of diversity, in particular gender, have received (well deserved) attention in the EP and seen important progress over the years, while others (racial/ ethnic diversity, LGBTIQ, disability) are more recent.²³ This is reflected in the fact that while issues regarding gender-based discrimination are addressed in an ad hoc commit-

tee (the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, FEMM),²⁴ created in 1979, all other forms of discrimination fall under the responsibility of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs (LIBE).²⁵

Moreover, a number of ad hoc EP Intergroups were created in the early 2000s to address specific dimensions of diversity, including inside the European Parliament: the Anti-Racism & Diversity Intergroup (which in 2014 'anglicised' its name to the Anti-Racism & Diversity Intergroup), the Intergroup on Disability, the LGBTI Intergroup (initially named 'Lesbian and gay intergroup' in 2004-2009, 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Rights – LGBT' in 2009-2014, 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex rights – LGBTI' since 2014), and the Intergroup on Traditional minorities, national communities and languages. It was however not until fairly recently that the topic of religious/ faith diversity entered the EP, with the creation of the Intergroup Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance in 2014 (and the IG named 'Christians in the Middle East' founded in 2019). In particular, the European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI) addresses intersectionality by referring to the definition Sandra Fredman gives in her study on intersectionality in the European Union²⁶: “Intersectional discrimination happens when two or multiple grounds operate simultaneously and interact in an inseparable manner, producing distinct and specific forms of discrimination”.

21 European Parliament resolution of 6 July 2022 on intersectional discrimination in the European Union: the socio-economic situation of women of African, Middle-Eastern, Latin-American and Asian descent (2021/2243(INI)), para B and C, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0289_EN.pdf

22 European Parliament resolution of 10 November 2022 on racial justice, non-discrimination and anti-racism in the EU (2022/2005(INI)) (2023/C 161/02, Para 21 and 22. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022IP0389>

23 An overview on the difference between the structure, scope and mandate of EP Committees and Intergroups can be found at Section 4b.

24 Among others, FEMM is responsible for: 3. equal opportunities policy, including the promotion of equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work; the removal of all forms of violence and discrimination based on sex; 5. the implementation and further development of gender mainstreaming in all policy sectors

25 Among other, LIBE is responsible for the protection within the territory of the Union of citizens' rights, human rights and fundamental rights, including the protection of minorities [...]; the measures needed to combat all forms of discrimination other than those based on sex or those occurring at the workplace and in the labour market

26 See <https://www.ardi-ep.eu/about/>, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/intersectionality-and-multiple-discrimination>.

III. FINDINGS

A. MACRO - THE BIG PICTURE (TRENDS OVER TIME FOR THE WHOLE EP)

In this section we provide a comparative macro picture of diversity in the European Parliament. Based on the quantitative data collected for the 8th mandate (2014-2019) and 9th mandate (2019-2024), we analysed the socio-demographic composition of the Parliament in relation to the following dimensions: gender, belonging to a racialised minority, citizenship, sexual orientation, disability, and education. This analysis primarily focuses on diversity trends in the context of the two elections of 2014 and 2019. However, the availability of data for all legislative mandates on the gender and citizenship(s) of MEPs allowed us to analyse the longer-term trends for these two dimensions, while a few brief mentions to the results of the last elections of 2024 are also made. In light of the broader temporal scope of our data on gender, and of the fact that the EP has a strong trajectory of efforts focused on bolstering a more gender-equal representation, we begin our analysis with the data on gender. We then continue with data related to racialised individuals, dual citizenship, sexual orientation, disability and class/educational attainment, and conclude this section with an intersectional analysis of specific overlaps of those traits and identities.

Gender

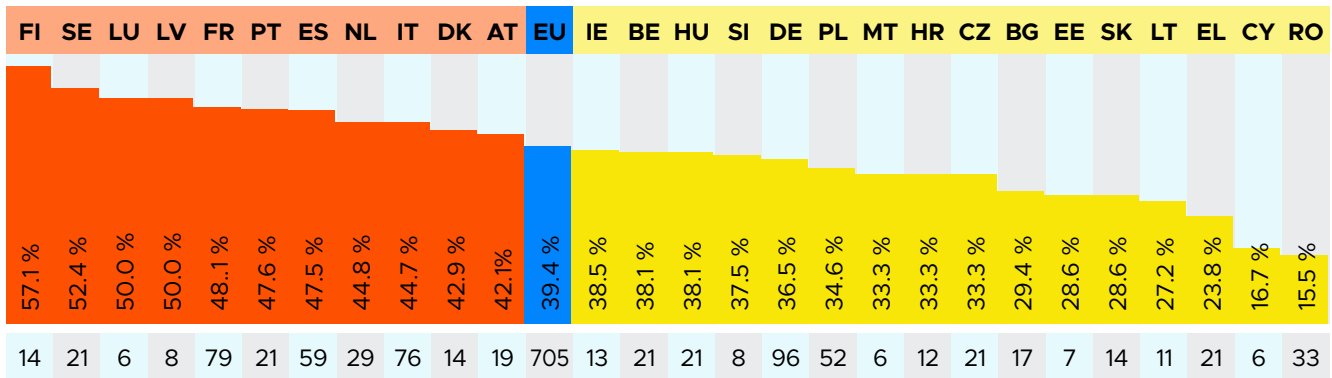
The analysis of the **gender distribution** in Parliament shows an overall clear improvement over time. The shift toward a more equal gender representation since the EP’s first man-

date is evident, as shown in Figure 3²⁷. As noted in the recently published EP brief “Towards gender balance in the European elections” (Zamfir 2023), however, and as shown in Figure 2, the gender disparities diverge widely on national grounds. Of the 22 racialised women MEPs elected in the 9th mandate, France elected 6; Germany, Sweden and the UK 3 each; Spain 2; Belgium, Hungary, Luxembourg, Portugal and the Netherlands 1 each. As for racialised men MEPs, which are 17 in total, the UK elected 6; France elected 4; Germany and the Netherlands 2 each; Bulgaria, Slovakia and Sweden 1 each. This dimension will be analysed more in detail below.

As Figure 3 indicates, the gender gap in representation has gradually but steadily shrunk between the EP’s 1st mandate (1979-1984) and the current mandate (2019-2024). There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon. Some have pointed at the importance of cultural change in European societies (Inglehart and Norris 2003) which has normalised the presence of women in political roles and at various levels of governance, particularly over the last decade. According to the Gender Equality Index, there has been a significant increase in most of the EU countries in terms of representation of women in political power from 2013 to 2022 (EIGE 2022). Others have underscored the importance of gender quotas, with 11 EU countries currently applying

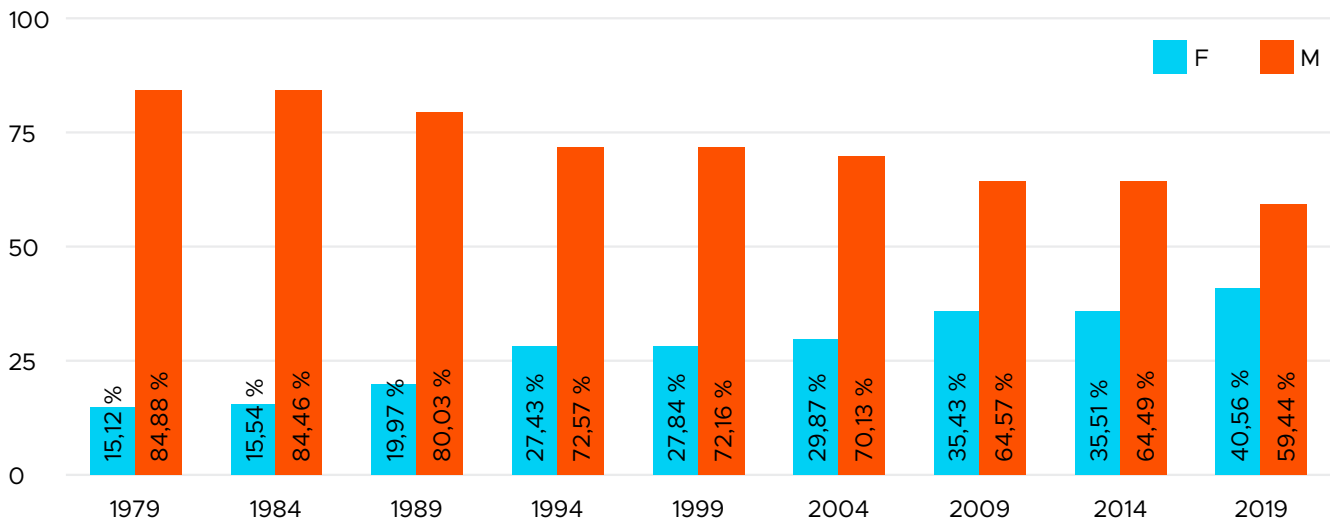
27 For more infographics and details regarding the representation of women in the European Parliament, see <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20190226STO28804/women-in-the-european-parliament-infographics>

Figure 2. % of women MEPs in the 9th mandate (2019-2024) by country



Source: European Parliamentary Research Service, available at [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/739383/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)739383_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/739383/EPRS_BRI(2023)739383_EN.pdf)

Figure 3. Share of women and men in the European Parliament in all 9 mandates, from the first mandate (1979) to the latest one (2019)



Source: see methodological annex.

quotas in European elections.²⁸ Although quotas can be highly effective in increasing gender equality in elected assemblies, research has found that in order to maximise their impact they should be accompanied by further measures such as specific training and targeted support (EPRS 2023).

On gender equality and representation, the EP has been extremely proactive especially in the past decade. In 2015, based on a legislative report by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO), the Parliament adopted a resolution requiring Member States to ensure that the lists of candidates for European elections are gender-equal,²⁹ either by means of zipped lists or other equivalent methods. However, the resulting 2018 Council decision deleted the provision concerning gender equality in the composition of the lists for European elections.³⁰ More recently, in 2022, the European Parliament expressed once again the ambition to achieve gender equality in representation through zipped lists or quo-

tas.³¹ However, as of 2024, changes have not yet entered into force due to the reservations of several Member States within the Council of the EU.³²

Belonging to a racialised minority group

In this subsection we present our findings about the number of MEPs belonging to a racialised minority. In comparing the last two mandates, we note a slight increase in the presence of racialised individuals as elected representatives: whereas during the 8th mandate (2014-2019) racialised MEPs comprised approximately 3.3% of all MEPs (28 MEPs out of 860), their share grew to roughly 4.5% during the 9th mandate (39 MEPs out of 874). While this can be seen as an improvement, racialised individuals remain severely underrepresented according to proportion of population, with previous ENAR

²⁸ The types of quotas vary from country to country, ranging from legislated quotas, which require all parties to nominate a certain proportion of women candidates on their lists, to voluntary party quotas.

²⁹ See European Parliament resolution of 11 November 2015 on the reform of the electoral law of the European Union (2015/2035(INL)), para 20, article 3(d), available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2015-0395_EN.html

³⁰ Proposal for a Council Decision adopting the provisions amending the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage (the 'Electoral Act'), 7597/18, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7597-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

³¹ European Parliament legislative resolution of 3 May 2022 on the proposal for a Council Regulation on the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision (76/787/EEC, Euratom) and the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage annexed to that Decision (2020/2220(INL) – 2022/0902(APP)), available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0129_EN.html

³² <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-constitutional-affairs-afco/file-reform-of-the-electoral-law-of-the-european-union>

studies estimating that racial and ethnic minorities make up at least 10% of the European Union population³³.

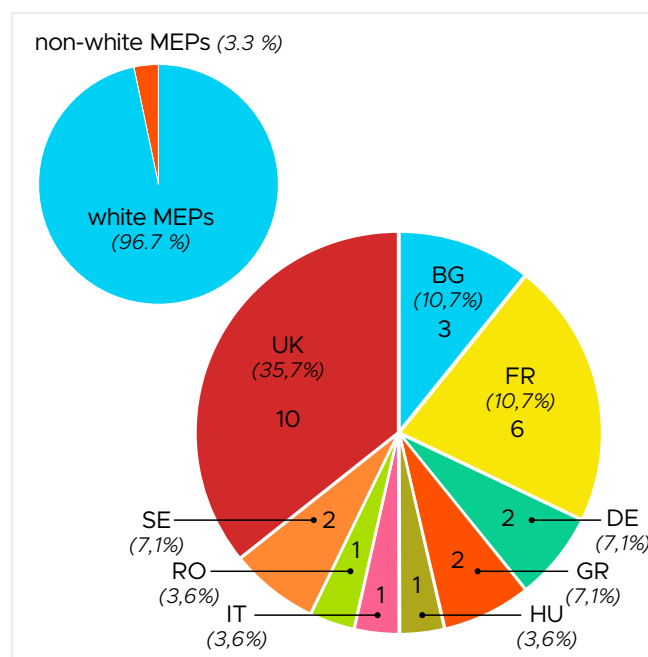
A major obstacle to conducting research on racialised communities and individuals, and to developing anti-racist policies more broadly, is that contemporary understandings of race in Europe view and still refer to race's scientifically incorrect biological basis without acknowledging its social or legal dimensions, as elaborated in the methodological section. In particular, anti-racist discourses stemming from the UNESCO tradition that oppose the understanding of race as a category of inequality make it extremely difficult to employ race as a ground for discrimination and/ or for affirmative action for racialised groups (Centre for Intersectional Justice 2021: 14). This, in turn, risks running into what has been called the 'Murphy law of data protection': where discriminators have no difficulties identifying their victims, but when it comes to remedial action or social inclusion measures, action is paralysed by ethno-racial data processing-phobia (Messing and Pap 2024). While acknowledging that "races" are purely based on socially constructed ideas, not personal biological characteristics, this report adopts ECRI's view that the concept of "racialisation", if properly explained and used, can help to understand better, expose further and address in a proactive manner the very conditions that allow racist thinking, discourse and practices to take root and spread in today's Europe and beyond (ECRI 2021).

Data from our mapping, as the figures below show, indicate that a significant number of racialised MEPs were elected by the United Kingdom (10 out of 28 in 2014, in the 8th mandate, and 9 out of 39 in 2019, in the 9th mandate). As a consequence of Brexit, the exit of the UK MEPs from the EP in January 2020 has therefore effectively led to less diversity in the EP.³⁴ The comparative disaggregation of the number of MEPs belonging to a racialised minority across countries clearly shows this development, which also means that it is likely to contribute to a backpedalling in the number of racialised MEPs in the 10th mandate.

The next two figures draw a comparison between absolute and relative figures of racialised MEPs in the EP. We first show, side by side, the share of racialised MEPs compared to the total MEPs and the absolute number of racialised MEPs by country (for the 8th mandate in Figure 4a, for the 9th mandate in Figure 5a). We then apply a weighted measure, to put into proportion the absolute number of MEPs with

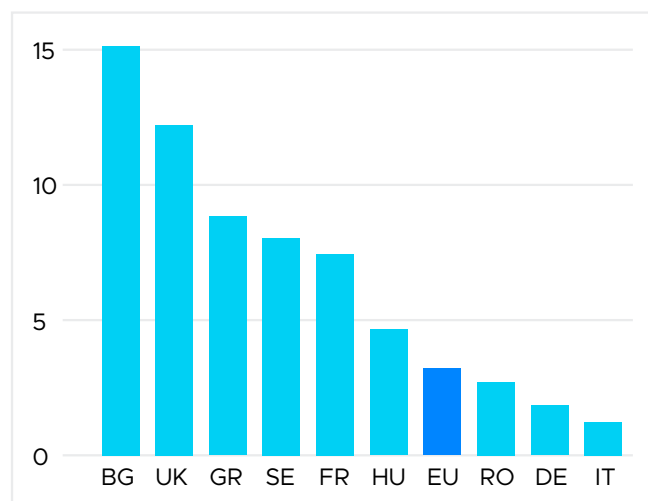
the number of MEPs that each country elects: for instance, in 2014 Bulgaria elected three MEPs belonging to racialised groups, while the UK elected ten; however, when considering the relative number of MEPs that the two countries elected to the EP, the proportional results are roughly the same (since the UK elected more than three times the number of MEPs that Bulgaria elected in 2014).

Figure 4a. MEPs belonging to a racialised minority, overall and by country, in the 8th mandate (2014-2019) in absolute numbers.



Source: see methodological annex

Figure 4b. Percentage of racialised MEPs elected by each country in the 8th mandate (2014-2019), weighted by the size/ number of MEPs per country.

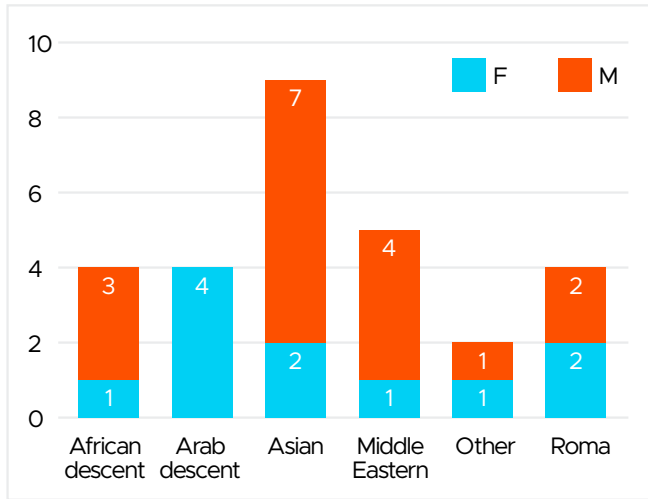


Source: see methodological annex

33 <https://www.enar.eu.org/enar-s-election-analysis-ethnic-minorities-in-the-new-european-parliament-2019/>

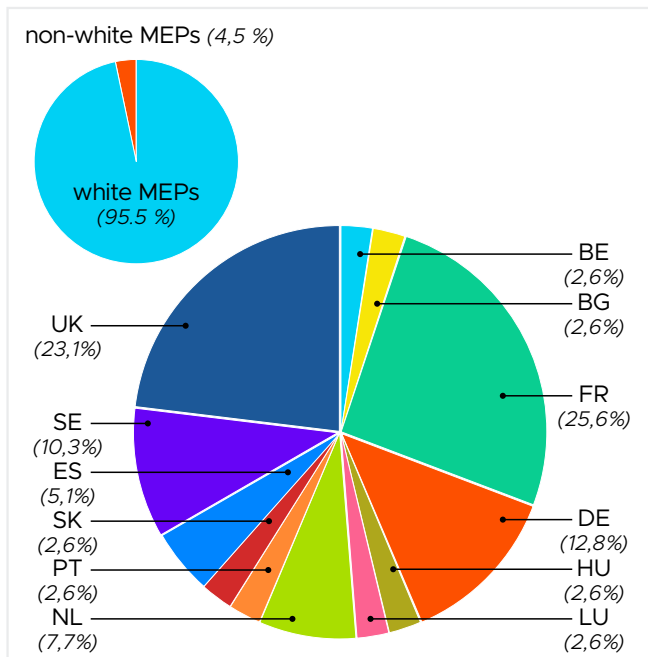
34 This development has been a cause of concern among different intergroups and parliamentarians. See A sad day for racial diversity in the EU (2020). Retrieved from <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/news/article/a-sad-day-for-racial-diversity-in-the-eu> or <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/podcasts/podcast-borders-belonging/brexit-migration-white-uk-european-union/>

Figure 4c. Disaggregated data by gender of racialised MEPs in the 8th mandate.



Source: see methodological annex

Figure 5a. MEPs belonging to a racialised minority, overall and by country, in the 9th mandate (2019-2024) in absolute numbers

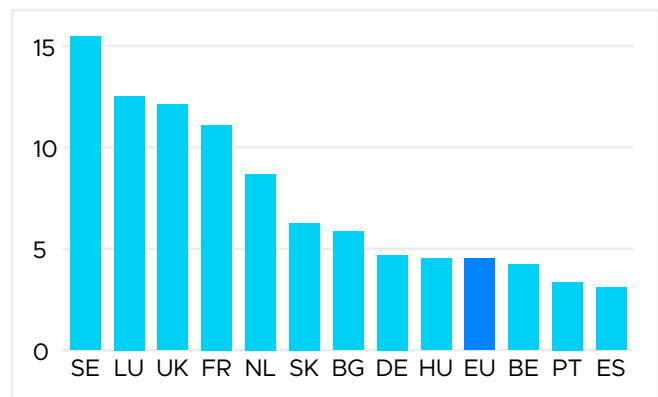


Source: see methodological annex

What emerges from the analysis is that, beyond the United Kingdom, the countries that have elected MEPs who belong to a racialised minority in both the 8th and 9th mandate are France (6 in 2016, 10 in 2019), Germany (2 in 2014, 5 in 2019), Sweden (2 in 2014, 4 in 2019), Bulgaria (3 in 2014, 1 in 2019) and Hungary (1 in both 2014 and 2019).

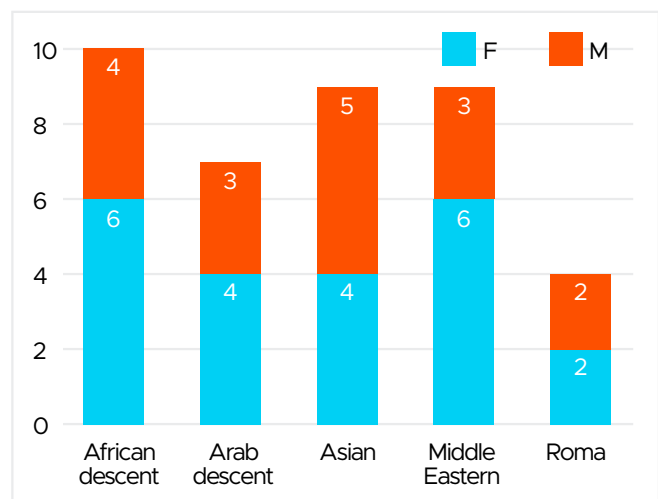
A correlation, even though a loose one given the small numbers, seems to exist between the presence of specific minorities in a country and their representation at the EU level: for instance, the racialised MEP elected by Hungary in both 2014 and 2019 is Roma, while all racialised MEPs elected by France in both mandates are of Middle Eastern, Arab or African descent. Of the racialised MEPs elected by the UK in both mandates, the vast majority is of South Asian descent (mostly of Pakistan or Indian origin).

Figure 5b. MEPs belonging to a racialised minority by country in the 9th mandate (2019-2024) weighted taking into account the size/ number of MEPs per country



Source: see methodological annex

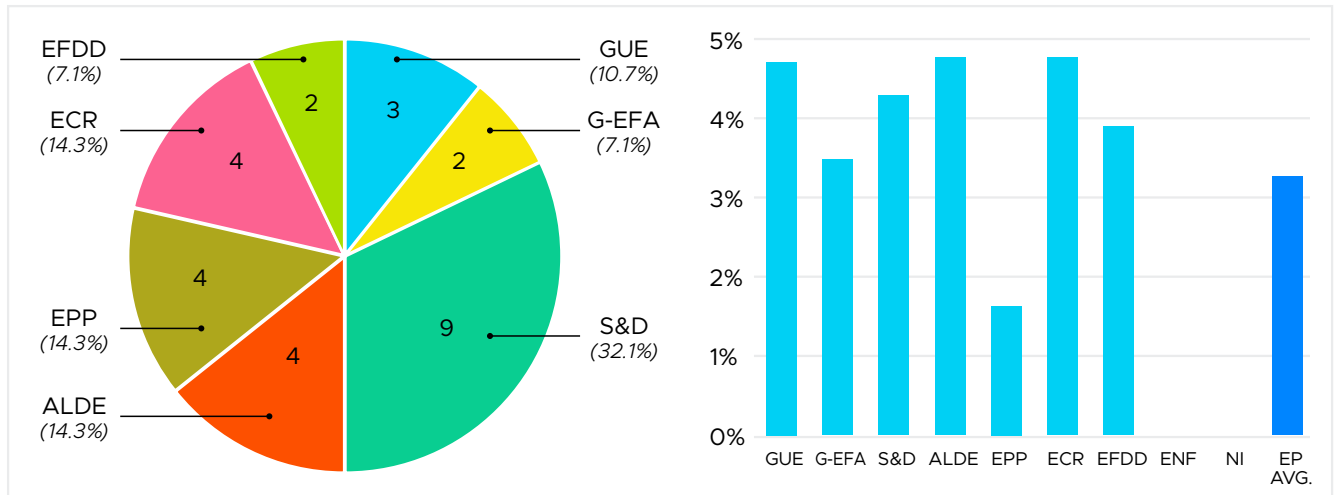
Figure 5c. Disaggregated data by gender of racialised MEPs in the 9th mandate



Source: see methodological annex

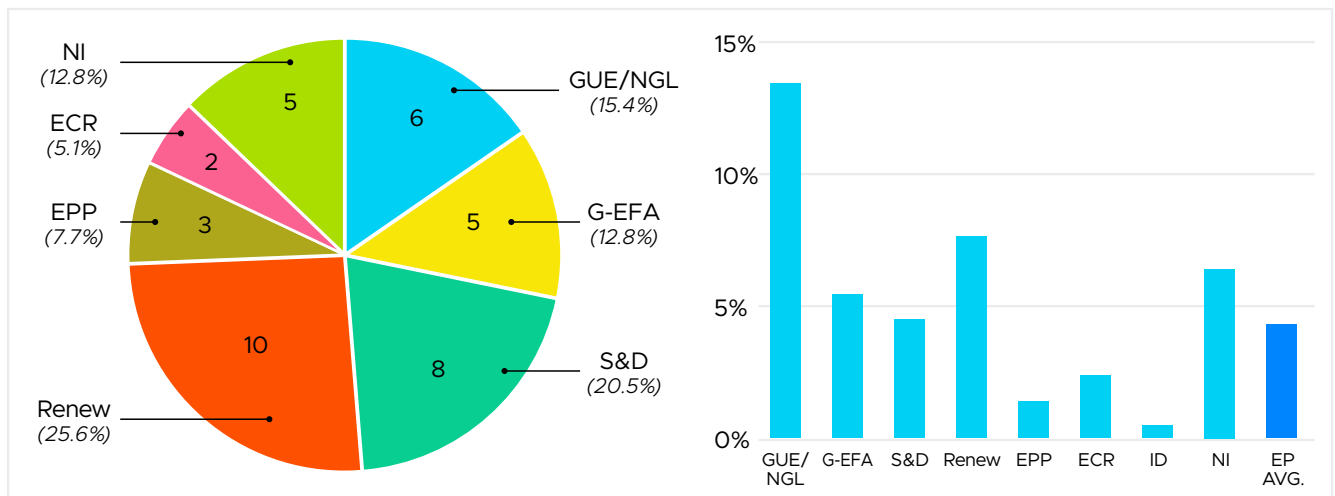
Finally, disaggregating the data by Political Group on the presence of racialised MEPs offers interesting insights about the value attached to this type of diversity by political parties across the ideological spectrum.

Figure 6. Racialised MEPs by EU Political Group (2014-2019) in absolute numbers and weighted by the size of the political group



Source: see methodological annex

Figure 7. Racialised MEPs by EU Political Group (2019-2024) in absolute numbers and weighed by size of political group.



Source: see methodological annex

As shown by Figures 6 and 7, the analysis of the current (9th) mandate reveals a marked difference between left-wing and centre parties - that have some degree of representativity of racialised minorities - and right-wing parties, in which such representation is low if not absent.

This polarisation becomes even more evident when compared with the more balanced distribution during the 8th mandate. As shown in Figure 6 and 7, our findings also indicate that far-right political groups such as the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) (8th mandate) or Identity and Democracy (ID) (9th mandate) had no racialised MEPs in their membership.

Should this trend be confirmed in the current mandate, it could also be read as a sign that ethnic/racial diversity has become an entrenched feature of culture wars across the ideological spectrum, in line with similar trends in North America. While testing this assumption would require a comprehensive mapping of the current 10th mandate of the recently elected EP, indications already exist that the composition of the new EP has moved in this direction, with representation of Roma MEPs going from 4 (in both the 8th mandate and 9th mandate) to none³⁵.

35 See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/16/rights-groups-decry-lack-of-roma-meps-amid-far-right-gains>

Citizenship

A category of data available across all 9 mandates is **citizenship**, including dual citizenship amongst MEPs. Despite not being directly linked to social diversity characteristics, citizenship - and namely dual citizenship - may often act as an important proxy for both linguistic and cultural diversity, especially as dual citizenship reveals origins outside the European Union. While no reliable data exists regarding the percentage of dual citizens in Europe, according to Eurostat (2022), non-EU citizens currently make up 5.3 percent of the whole EU population - this share going up to 8.3 percent if we also consider the foreign-born and the stateless population³⁶.

Beyond looking at how the share of dual citizenship holders among MEPs has changed over time, in this section we briefly look into whether, and how, this relates to the share of racialised representatives in the EP: is there a correlation between those MEPs that are racialised and those that hold a second citizenship from a non EU country, especially from a non EU country from the Global South? And what can this tell us about multiple layers of diversity across migratory and/ or racialised categories?

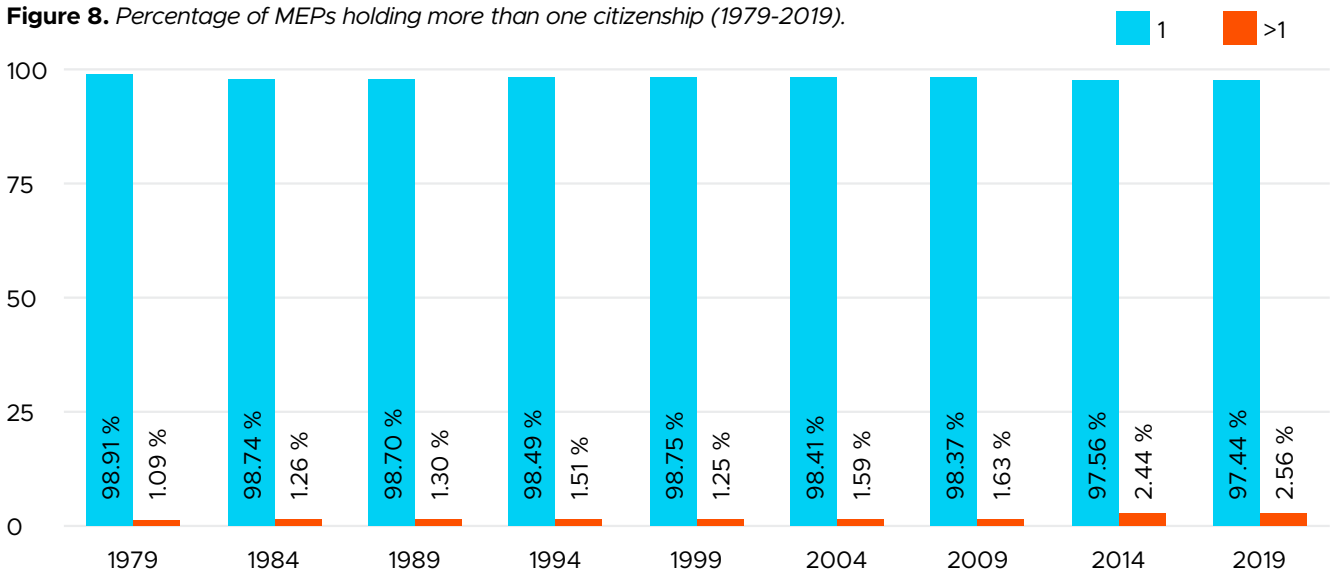
Regarding the number of MEPs who are dual citizenship holders, the figures below show a slight increase over time of the share of MEPs with dual citizenship, from around 1% of MEPs who had dual citizenship in 1979, to around 2.5% of current MEPs who are dual citizens. Amongst dual citizenship holders, we also recorded a growing share of MEPs who hold a second citizenship of a non-EU country.

As the figures show, the number of MEPs holding more than one citizenship has slowly but steadily increased, shifting from six MEPs elected for the first EP mandate in 1979 to twenty-two in 2019. Most of this increase is due to MEPs who hold a second citizenship from a non-EU country - their absolute number having more than quadrupled since 1979.

In the vast majority of cases, the dual citizenships held by MEPs are 'traditional' ones that involve holding the nationality of two neighbouring countries: for instance between Hungary and Ukraine; Hungary and Romania; Hungary and Austria; Romania and Moldova; Romania and Ukraine; Ireland and the UK; Cyprus and Greece; Estonia and Russia; Poland and Germany; Lithuania and Poland; Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; France and Italy; Germany, France and Switzerland; Austria and Germany. Other 'combinations' of citizenship can be seen within the framework of historical ties linked to European colonialism and emigration: Spain and Argentina; Spain and Venezuela; France and Algeria and/or Morocco; Ireland and the United States. Other cases of dual citizenship reflect

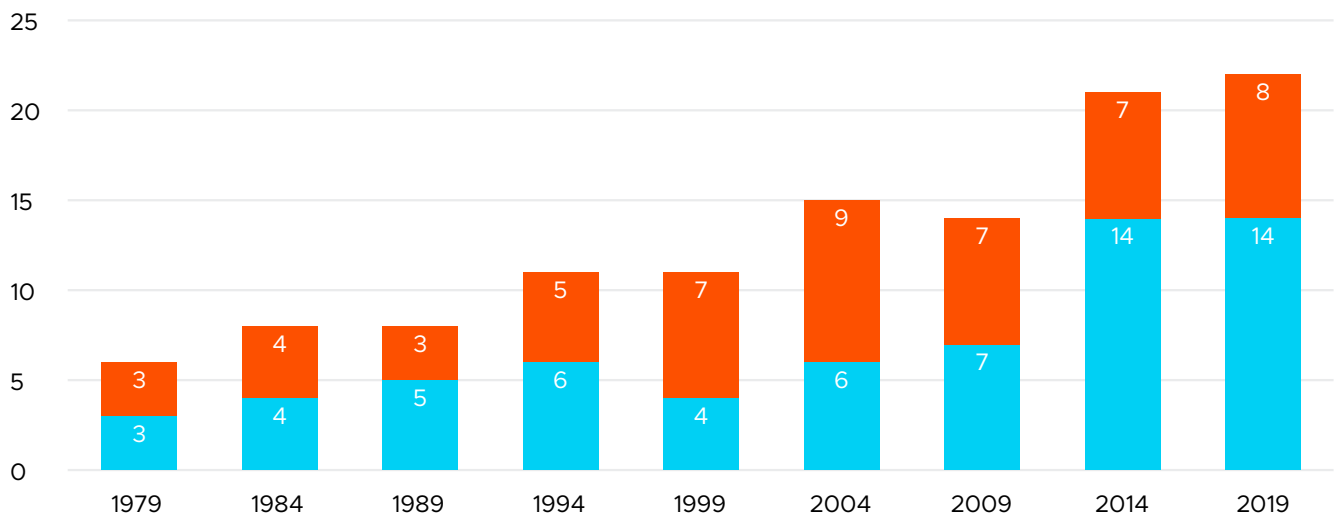
³⁶ Eurostat (2022). Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00157/default/bar?lang=en&category=t_demo.t_demo_pop accessed on the 2nd of February 2024.

Figure 8. Percentage of MEPs holding more than one citizenship (1979-2019).



Source: see methodological annex.

Figure 9. Number of MEPs holding more than one citizenship, either multiple EU citizenships or a EU citizenship and a non-EU citizenship.



Source: see methodological annex.

immigration to European countries from non-EU countries: Netherlands and Morocco; Belgium and Burkina Faso; Germany and Turkey. Others yet are most likely the product of intra EU-migration: Romania and France; Portugal and Luxembourg; Poland and the UK; Italy and France.

If we look at how many racialised MEPs hold dual citizenship, we see only a very small overlap between the two categories, even among those with an extra-EU citizenship. On the one hand, no racialised MEP from Asian descent holds dual citizenship, likely because many Asian countries have restrictive policies in this respect (for instance, India does not allow for dual citizenship). None of the Roma MEPs hold dual citizenship either, and on the whole, only 3 MEPs that belong to racialised minority groups held dual citizenship in the 8th mandate, the same being true for the 9th mandate.

In the previous mandate (2014) these were the following: MEP Cécile Kashetu Kyenge from Italy (who also holds the citizenship of the DCR, having moved to Italy at the age of 19); MEP Rachida Dati from France (who also holds Algerian and Moroccan citizenships, since she was born and raised in France by a Moroccan father and Algerian mother); Tokia Afféda Saifi from France (who also hold Algerian citizenship, since she was born and raised in France by Algerian parents). In these few cases, racialised dual national MEPs with a citizenship from a non-EU country all held a passport of a country in the Global South, specifically Africa or the Middle East. Conversely, none of the (few) MEPs that hold dual citizenship between Spain and Latin American countries belong

to racialised groups. Regarding racialised MEPs representing the Netherlands, Germany or Sweden, the strict nationality laws in these countries have most likely played a role in preventing individuals of migrant descent from retaining or acquiring a second citizenship.

On the whole, we cannot compare the percentage of dual citizen MEPs to the overall number and relative share of dual citizens at European level, since, to our knowledge, such data is not available.³⁷ However, we can speculate that this data is likely to be on the rise, reflecting a clear global trend towards increasing recognition of dual citizenship (e.g. Vink et al. 2019).

Sexual orientation

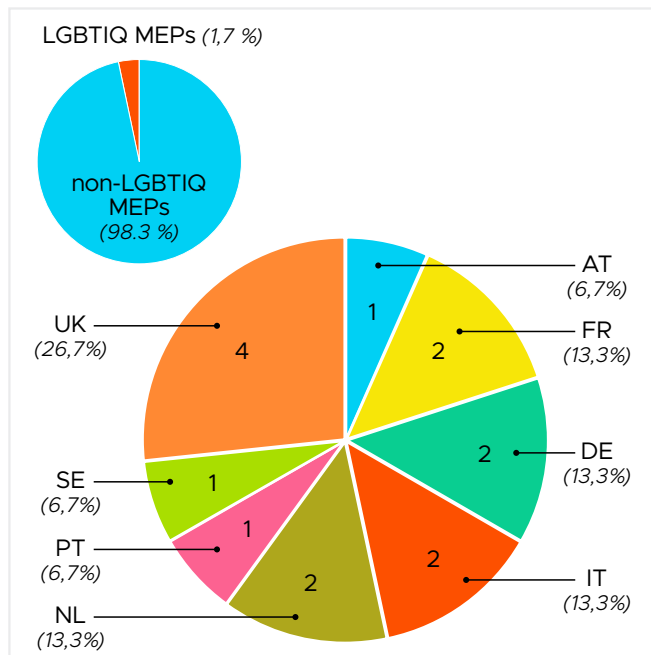
In this subsection we analyse the presence of MEPs who identify as belonging to the LGBTIQ community. Overall, we recorded 15 LGBTIQ MEPs in the 8th mandate and 16 in the 9th. Similarly to the trend described for racialised MEPs, the United Kingdom disproportionately contributed to the diversity of the European Parliament in terms of sexual orientation.

From the available mapped data, which can only account for those MEPs who self-identify as belonging to the LGBTIQ community (and might therefore be an under representa-

³⁷ See <https://www.ifo.de/DocDL/dice-report-2017-3-gallagher-gjesing-october.pdf>

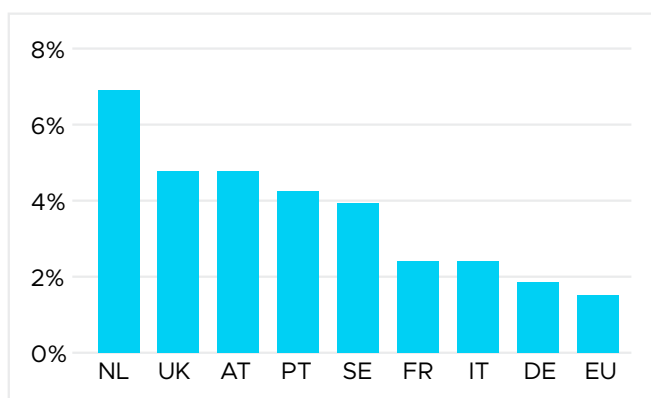
tion of reality), what emerges is that LGBTIQ individuals are severely underrepresented in the EP, representing only 1.7% and 1.8% respectively of total MEPs in the 8th and 9th mandate³⁸.

Figure 10a. Percentage of LGBTIQ MEPs in the 8th mandate (2014-2019), overall and by country, by absolute numbers.



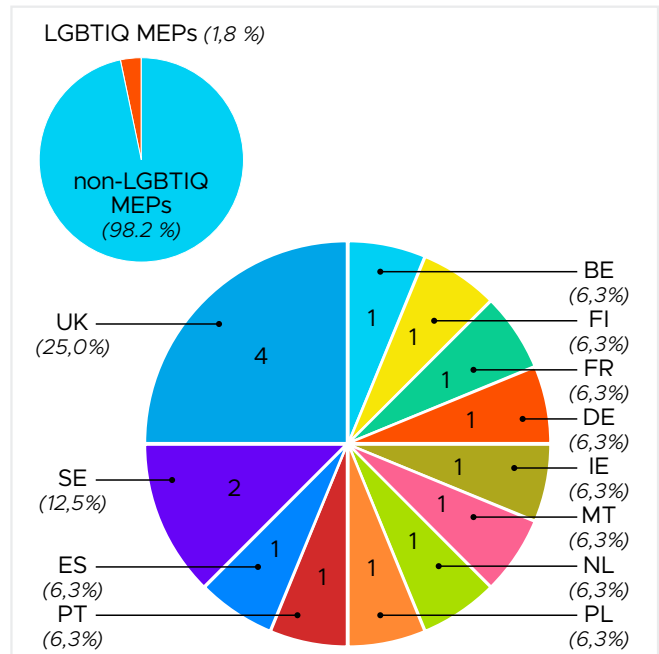
Source: see methodological annex

Figure 10b. Percentage of LGBTIQ MEPs in the 8th mandate (2014-2019), by country, weighted by size.



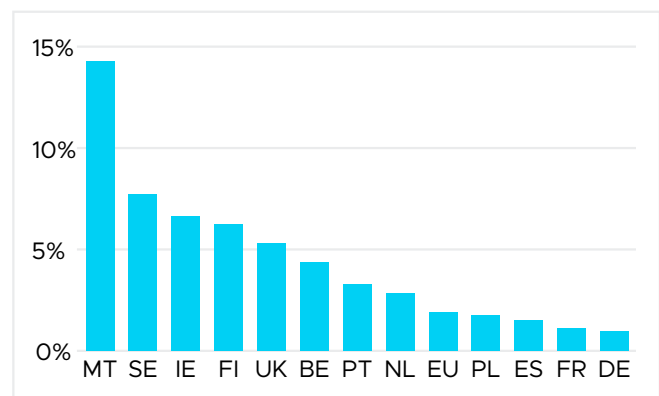
Source: see methodological annex

Figure 11a. Percentage of LGBTIQ MEPs in the 9th mandate (2019-2024), overall and by country, by absolute numbers.



Source: see methodological annex

Figure 11b. Percentage of LGBTIQ MEPs in the 9th mandate (2019-2024), by country, weighted by country size.

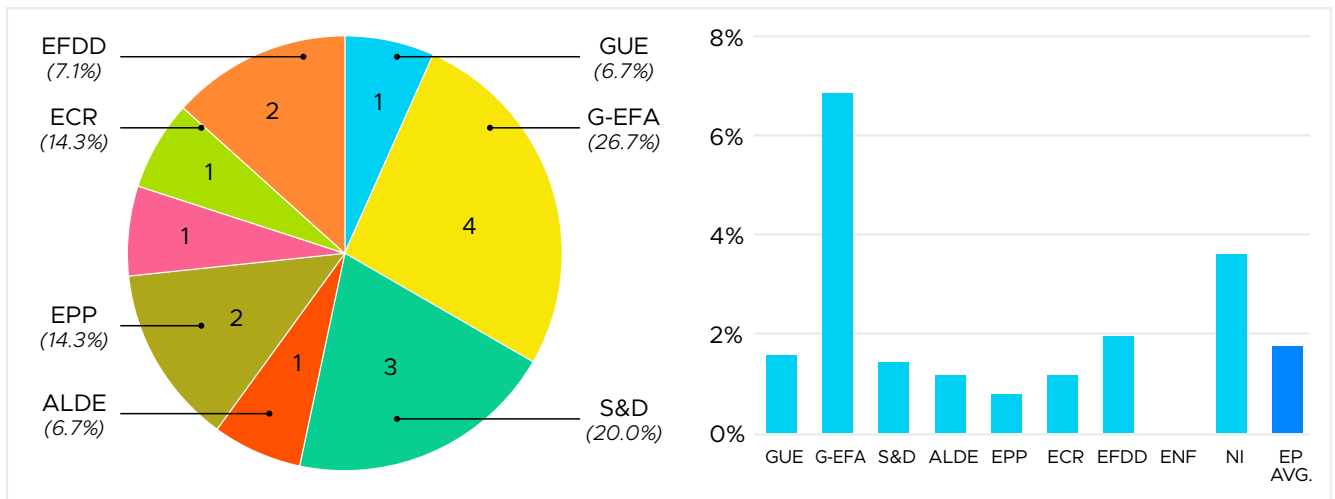


Source: see methodological annex

While there is no persuasive evidence that the demographics of sexual orientation vary much across time or place, it is noticeable that, with the exception of one MEP from Poland in the current mandate (2014-2019), there are no MEPs belonging to the LGBTIQ community from Central or Eastern European countries. This suggests that the stigma associated with this group affects the chances for candidates of being selected by parties, or elected by voters, in some countries more than others. It also suggests that specific pro-diversity legislation or proposals in matters of LGBTIQ rights risk

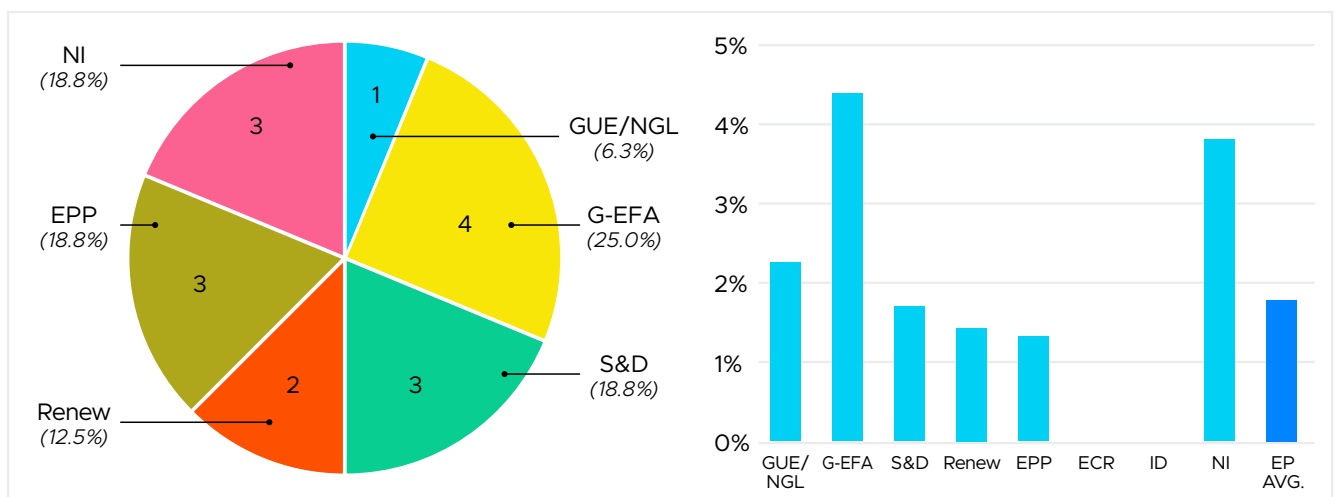
³⁸ Despite estimates of the percentage of LGBTIQ population being complex to gather and assess because of the stigma and discrimination still associated to it in many countries, a 2021 IPSOS survey estimated LGBTIQ population in Europe to be between 10% and 20%: https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2021-06/LGBT%20Pride%202021%20Global%20Survey%20Report_3.pdf

Figure 12. Percentage of LGBTIQ MEPs (2014-2019), by political group, in absolute numbers, and weighted by group size



Source: see methodological annex

Figure 13. Percentage of LGBTIQ MEPs (2019-2024), by political group, in absolute numbers, and weighted by size



Source: see methodological annex

becoming divisive topics across lines, as the findings from the qualitative data shows (see below).

If we look at the distribution of MEPs who belong to the LGBTIQ community across political groups, we find instead a fairly scattered distribution, with MEPs who belong to the LGBTIQ community being represented in all political groups, with the exception of the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) in the 8th mandate, and of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and the Identity and Democracy group (ID) in the 9th mandate.

What these findings suggest is that, while belonging to the LGBTIQ community seems to remain an underrepresented

characteristic in the EP overall, and one that constitutes a barrier to belonging to far-right political groups, in recent years there has been a degree of mainstreaming and normalisation (at least in some EU countries) for which LGBTIQ individuals are currently present in the European People's Party, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), Renew Europe, Greens–European Free Alliance, The Left in the European Parliament – GUE/NGL, and Non Inscrits.

What we can see in Figures 12 and 13 is that, in proportion to the number of MEPs per political group, in the 8th mandate the Greens - EFA group had the strongest representation of LGBTIQ MEPs.

While in the 8th mandate both the European Conservatives and Reformists, as well as the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (of which most former members became part of the Identity and Democracy political group in the 9th mandate) had one LGBTIQ MEP, this is no longer true in the current mandate. The numbers are, on the whole, too small to draw any strong conclusion in terms of trends, but the shift between the 8th and the 9th mandate in terms of representation of LGBTIQ individuals across political groups, combined with the parliamentary debates, and the qualitative data exposed in section 3c, suggest that LGBTIQ rights are gaining visibility within the EP, but are at the same time also becoming a target for the extreme right, in line with broader culture wars that we see taking place beyond Europe.

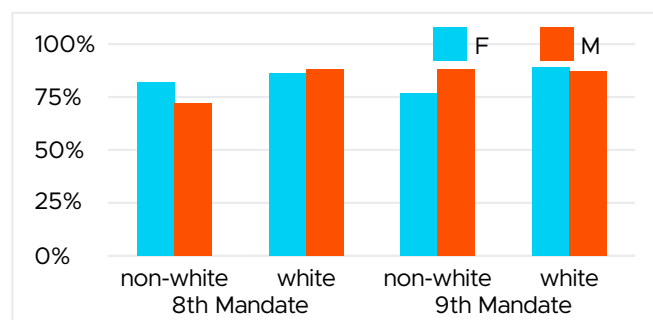
Disability

In addition to the grounds of gender, racialisation, and sexual orientation we analysed the number of MEPs who identified as having a disability. Overall, we recorded 3 MEPs in the 8th mandate and 7 in the 9th mandate. This very limited number makes it impossible to draw general conclusions regarding country or political group distributions. Nevertheless, in comparing these numbers to EU demographics, we can still get a sense of the stark level of underrepresentation of people with disabilities.³⁹ According to statistics from 2022, 27 percent of the EU population over the age of 16 has some form of disability. From a gender perspective, there are more women with disability (29.5 percent of the total EU female population) in comparison to men (24.4 percent of the total EU male population).²³ In the current mandate, Sweden has elected two MEPs with a disability, while Germany, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg and Poland elected one each.

Class / social background and educational attainment

We now turn to analyse the composition of the European Parliament from the perspective of class and socio-economic status, namely through educational attainment. While education is a very imperfect proxy for social class, it may be more accurate than income for this population (since all MEPs have above-average salaries). One of the components of our study - the survey - aimed at capturing MEPs' socioeconomic background, with questions related to parents' university attendance, class upbringing (low income to working class, middle, upper middle, upper class), and past applications for means-tested social protection. This information would have allowed us to understand the socioeconomic status of the MEPs not only in its current form but historically as well - including the privileges that are partially inherited. However, as explained in the methodological annex, the survey did not yield a sufficient number of responses to draw any generalisable conclusions. As a result, we here rely uniquely on our mapping of educational attainments. Across the board, MEPs have high educational attainment. In comparison with the average of EU citizens (30.2% according to Eurostat), over 86% of MEPs from the 8th mandate and 88% from the 9th mandate hold a university degree. Amongst those without a university degree, only some had a working class background, while others became involved in politics early on or worked as journalists from an early age.

Figure 14. *Disaggregated data by gender and racialisation of MEPs who hold a university degree*



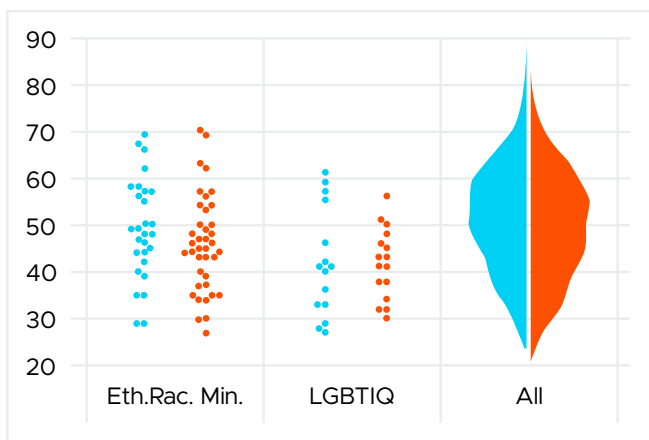
Source: see methodological annex

³⁹ European Council (2022). Infographic -Disability in the EU: facts and figures. Retrieved from <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/disability-eu-facts-figures/> accessed on the 2nd of February 2024.

Age

Here we analyse the composition of MEPs according to age, assessed for each MEP at the start of the mandate in which they served. When comparing the last two mandates, the average age of MEPs has slightly decreased in the 9th mandate. While the age distribution of racialised MEPs is roughly in line with that of the EP as a whole, the MEPs who belong to the LGBTIQ community represent a slightly younger cohort, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 15. Disaggregated data of MEPs' age at the beginning of each mandate



Source: see methodological annex

Intersectional dimensions

In this subsection, we employed an intersectional approach to examine whether two or more dimensions of discrimination overlap amongst the MEP population in the Parliament, and provide a bit of context for how the EP composition shift caused by Brexit has played out.

Looking at the data by gender and to the disaggregated composition of racialised MEPs in a comparative approach⁴⁰ allows us to make some considerations on the intersection of racialisation and gender in minority MEPs across both the 8th and 9th mandates.

Between the 8th and the 9th mandate, the number of MEPs belonging to a racialised group has slightly increased (from 3.3% to 4.5%).

⁴⁰ The categories employed to capture subgroups across the ethnic/racialised groups are the same included in the survey in close exchange with ENAR. We are aware of the limitation of such broad categories and that they risk flattening certain specific cases.

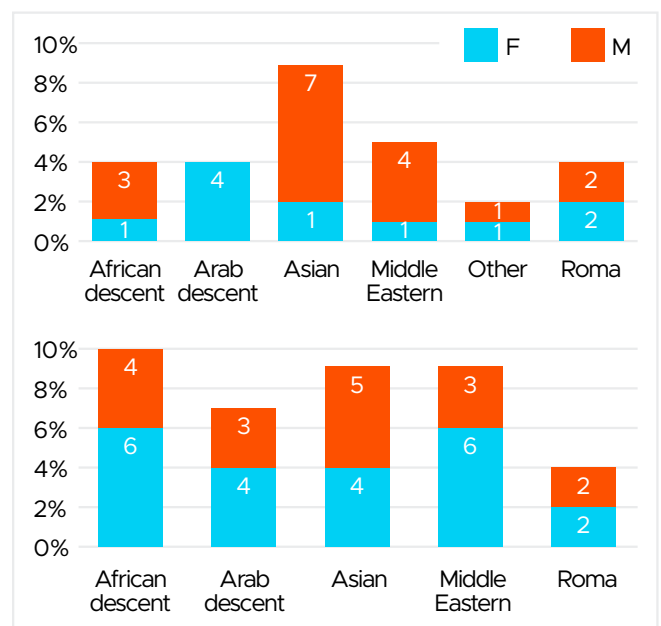
This comes with an important caveat tied to British MEPs being counted as part of the 9th mandate –since the UK joined the EP with 73 representatives in 2019–, but of them leaving in 2020 because of Brexit.

In practice, on the 1 February 2020, with the UK officially out of the EU, the number of total MEPs in the Parliament went down from 751 to 705. The downsizing in the EP did not however exactly match the number of UK seats (73): 27 of formerly UK seats were redistributed among other member states (and therefore 27 new MEPs came in). Therefore, if we were to take a snapshot of the total MEPs previous to the UK's exit, of the 751 MEPs that were in office in 2019, we would see that 33 belonged to a racialised minority.

On the 1 February 2020, once the UK MEPs left, we would see that out of the 705 MEPs that were in office, there were 25 MEPs belonging to a racialized group (around 3.5% of the total). However, as time went by, the number of normal turn-arounds, resignations and replacements continued, and this slightly changed the overall composition of the EP between February 2020 and 2024, bringing the percentage of racialized MEPs to 3.7% by end of mandate.

The gender distribution, however, has changed significantly: while in the 8th mandate the gender ratio of ethnic minority MEPs was roughly the same as the Parliament's overall average (40% female MEPs and 60% male MEPs), in the 9th mandate most racialised minority MEPs are women (22 out of a total 39, which accounts for all racialized MEPs that have been in office at any point in time, including UK MEPs).

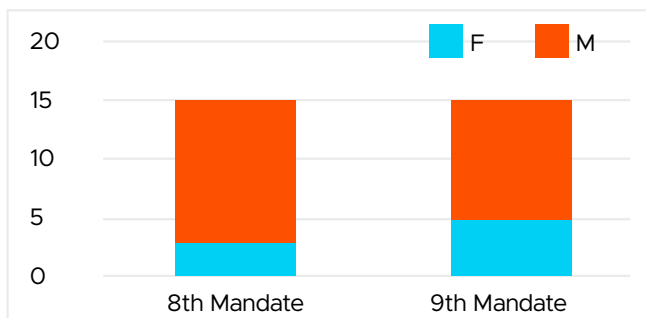
Figure 16. Disaggregated data by gender and racialised MEPs in both the 8th and 9th mandates



In the 9th mandate, women of colour therefore represent close to 57% of ethnic minority MEPs. The change in gender distribution of racialised MEPs also reflects the presence of different racialised groups: whereas in the 8th mandate a number of MEPs were of South Asian origin or heritage, in the current term there is a larger number of MEPs of African, Arab and Middle Eastern heritage. This has an impact on the kind of diversity represented, since most South Asian MEPs in the 8th mandate were male, while most MEPs of African, Arab and Middle Eastern descent are women (in both the 8th and 9th mandates). Roma MEPs are represented equally in gender terms in both mandates.

Additionally, we analysed the gender distribution among the MEPs who identify as belonging to the LGBTIQ community (for which the findings are illustrated in the Figure below); and among MEPs with a disability.

Figure 17. *Disaggregated data by gender of LGBTIQ MEPs in both the 8th and 9th mandates*



Source: see methodological annex

Among the LGBTIQ community in the EP, we see that the vast majority are men. On the one hand, this finding is in line with the general trend of more men being elected than women; on the other hand, somewhat counterintuitively, most of these MEPs are representatives of countries that perform well in terms of gender equality in the EP (see Figure 2).

Besides the intersection of gender and racialised MEPs, and of gender and sexual orientation, we also looked at the existence of the following overlapping identities: whether racialised MEPs have a disability; whether racialised MEPs also identify as belonging to the LGBTIQ community; whether LGBTIQ MEPs also have a disability.

In the 8th mandate (2014-2019), there were no racialised MEP with a disability or who identified as LGBTIQ. In the 9th mandate (2019-2024), we identified only two MEPs, one person for each category (one MEP who is racialised and has a disability; one MEP who is racialised and LGBTIQ). Similarly, while no LGBTIQ MEPs reported a disability in the 8th mandate, one person did in the current mandate.

Finally, looking at educational attainment across minority groups, we see that racialised MEPs have a slightly lower percentage of university degree holders - this, however, still being much higher than the EU average. Of the MEPs who identify as belonging to the LGBTIQ community, all hold a university degree with the exception of one MEP from the 8th mandate.

B. MESO - DYNAMICS AND TRENDS OF CORE DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY ACROSS EP POLITICAL GROUPS, COMMITTEES & IGS AND PARLIAMENT ADMINISTRATION

In this section we focused our analysis on how political and administrative institutions inside the European Parliament deal with different dimensions of diversity. First, we analysed the composition of the different, diversity-related Committees and Intergroups. Second, we explored the role of Parliament administration, namely the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Unit of the EP, in implementing diversity policy in administrative practice.

Political Composition of EP Committees and Intergroups

Within the European Parliament, the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) and the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) have an explicit mandate on advancing diversity and equality (FEMM regarding gender equality, LIBE regarding all other forms of discrimination).⁴¹

Beyond these two Committees, we identified the following EP Intergroups under the current mandate that are working on different dimensions of diversity (racialisation, disability, LGBTIQ, religion, language and culture): the Intergroup on Anti-Racism and Diversity, often shortened to ARDI (IG9-02); the Intergroup on Christians in the Middle East (IG9-07); the Intergroup on Disability (IG9-11); the Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance (IG9-14); the Intergroup on LGBTI (IG9-16); and the Intergroup on Traditional Minorities, national communities and languages (IG9-23).

It is worth clarifying the main distinctions between Committees and Intergroups, as per the official definitions provided by the EP website. Unlike Committees, Intergroups are not official bodies of the EP, but they are recognised by it. Serving as fora for informal exchanges of views on specific issues across political groups, and as a point of contact between

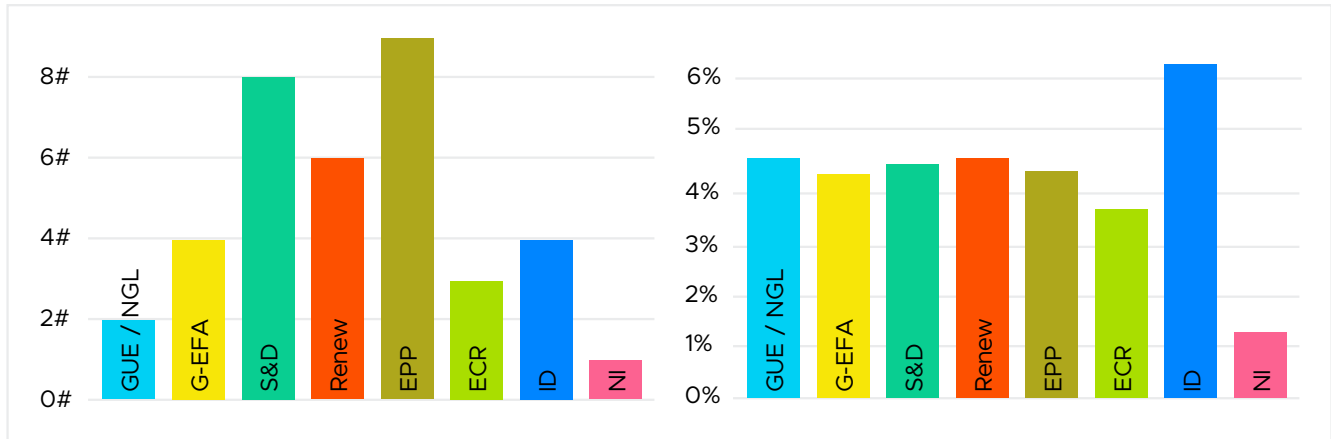
MEPs and civil society, they are established at the beginning of each legislative term as a result of an agreement among the chairs of the various political groups⁴². Committees, instead - which meet monthly, and whose debates are held in public - are mostly permanent bodies tasked with drawing up, amending, and adopting legislative proposals and reports to be presented to the Plenary.

Upon a closer inspection of the composition of Committees and IGs by political group, we found that the FEMM Committee, the LIBE Committee, the Intergroup on Disability (IG9-11) and the Intergroup on Traditional Minorities (IG9-23) all comprise members from all political groups. This finding may indicate that such issues are not perceived to be especially partisan or politically polarised. As shown by the figures below, the remaining intergroups - ARDI (IG9-02), the IG on LGBTI (IG9-16), the IG on Religious Tolerance (IG9-14) and the IG on Christians in the Middle East (IG9-07) - show however a much more unbalanced composition.

⁴¹ This does not mean, of course, that diversity-related topics may not be discussed in other Committees. As shown in the qualitative section, themes that are relevant for minority groups can emerge in more or less any policy field, spanning for example environment, education, employment, culture or welfare. Because of their focus respectively on gender equality and civil liberties, FEMM and LIBE however represent focal communities for the broader discussion around diversity and non-discrimination.

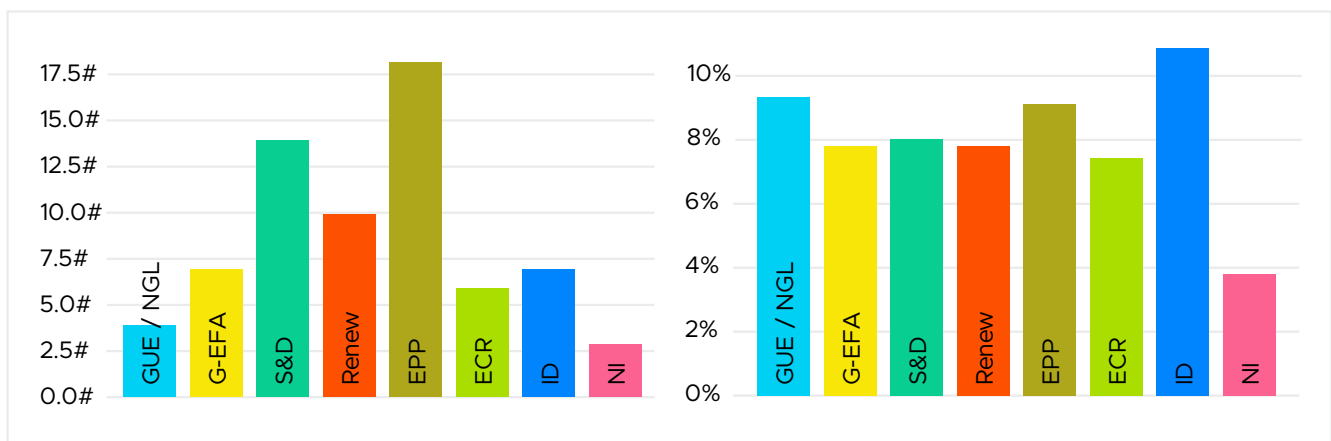
⁴² The establishment of intergroups needs to follow some rules. More information available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/files/organisation-and-rules/organisation/intergroups/en-rules-governing-the-establishment-of-intergroups.pdf>

Figure 18. Composition of the FEMM Committee, by political group, first in absolute numbers (composition) and then weighted according to group size (representation).



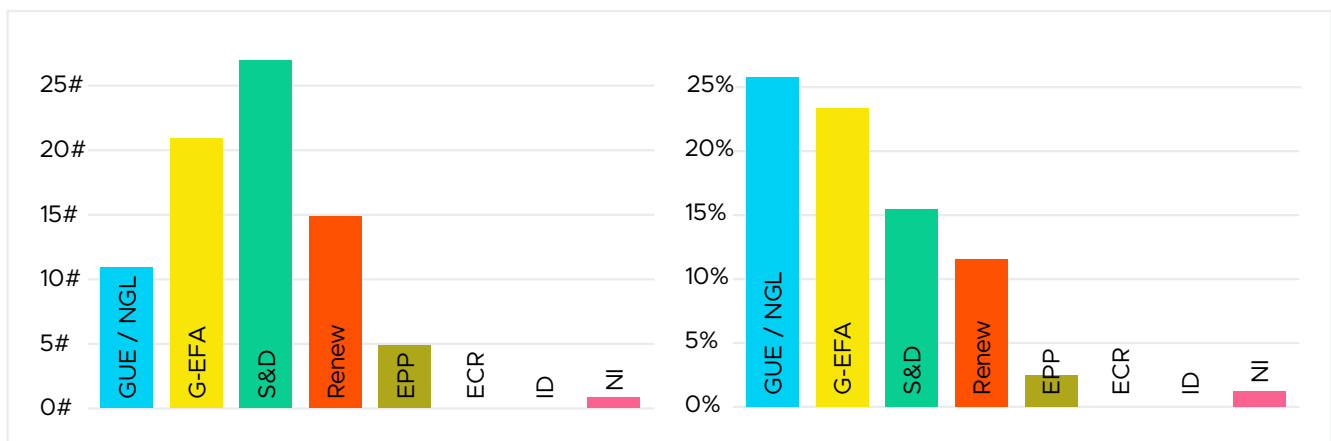
Source: see methodological annex

Figure 19. Composition of the LIBE Committee, by political group, first in absolute numbers (composition) and then weighted according to group size (representation).



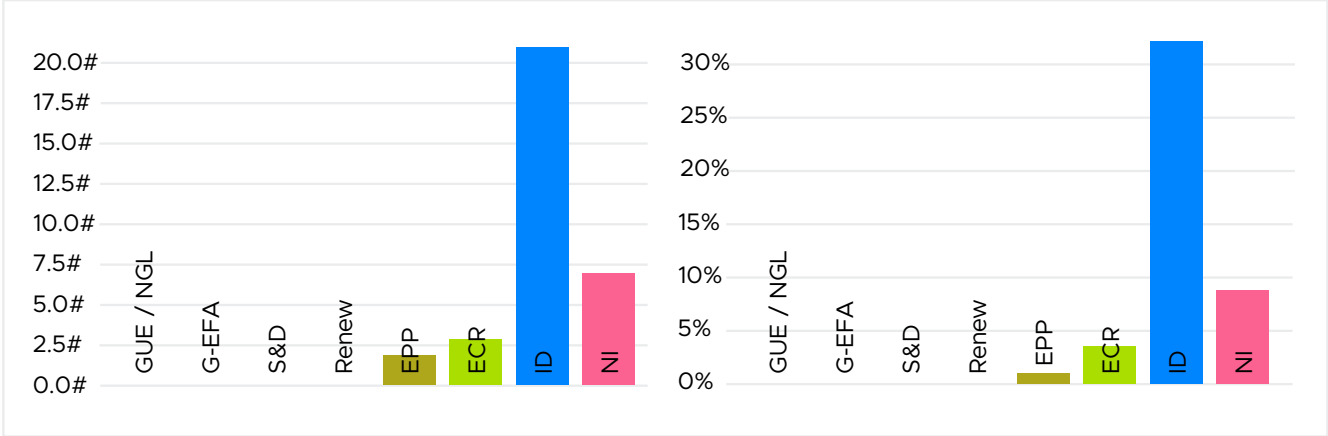
Source: see methodological annex

Figure 20. Composition of the Intergroup on Anti-Racism and Diversity (ARDI, IG9-02), by political group, first in absolute numbers (composition) and then weighted according to group size (representation).



Source: see methodological annex

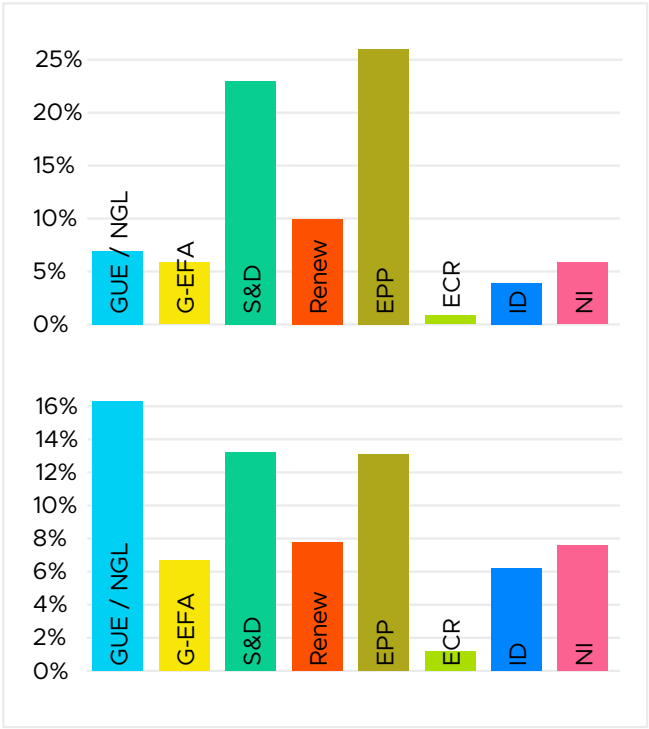
Figure 21. Composition of the Intergroup on IG on Christians in the Middle East (IG9-07) by political group, first in absolute numbers (composition) and then weighted according to group size (representation).



Source: see methodological annex

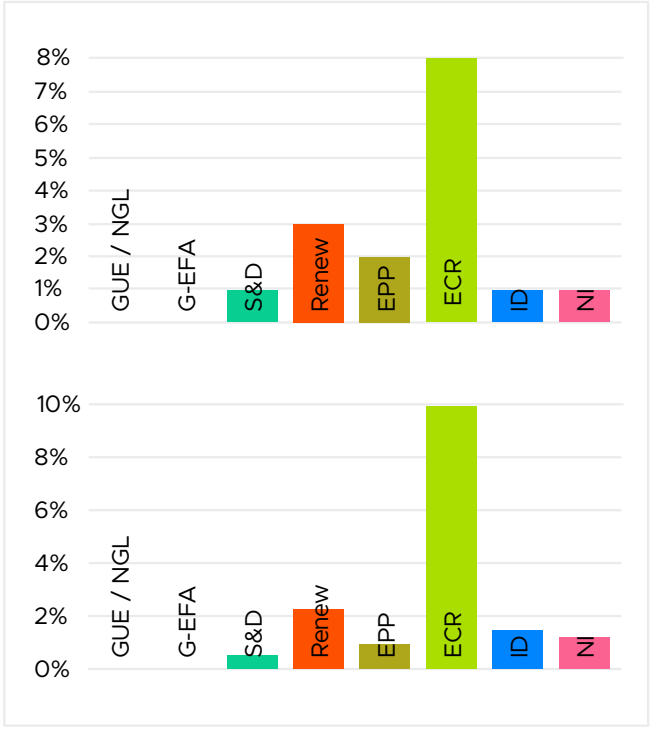
The difference in composition between IG9-02 (the Intergroup on Anti-Racism and Diversity) and IG9-07 (on Christians in the Middle East) is especially stark, with left and centre-wing political groups participating in one, and right-wing political groups participating in the other.

Figure 22. Composition of the Intergroup on IG on Disability (IG9-11) by political group, first in absolute numbers (composition) and then weighted according to group size (representation).



Source: see methodological annex

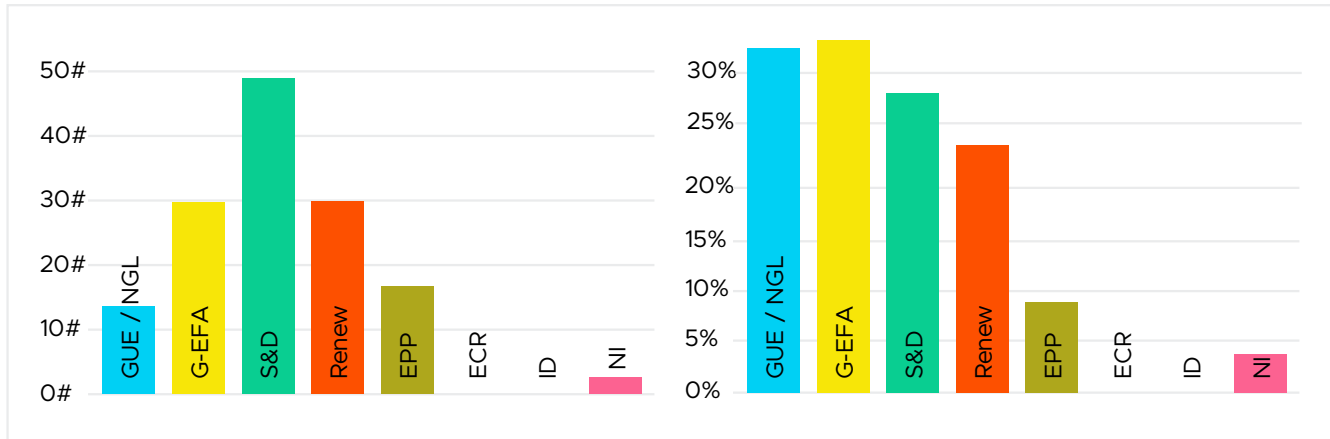
Figure 23. Composition of the Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance (IG9-14), by political group, first in absolute numbers (composition) and then weighted according to group size (representation).



Source: see methodological annex

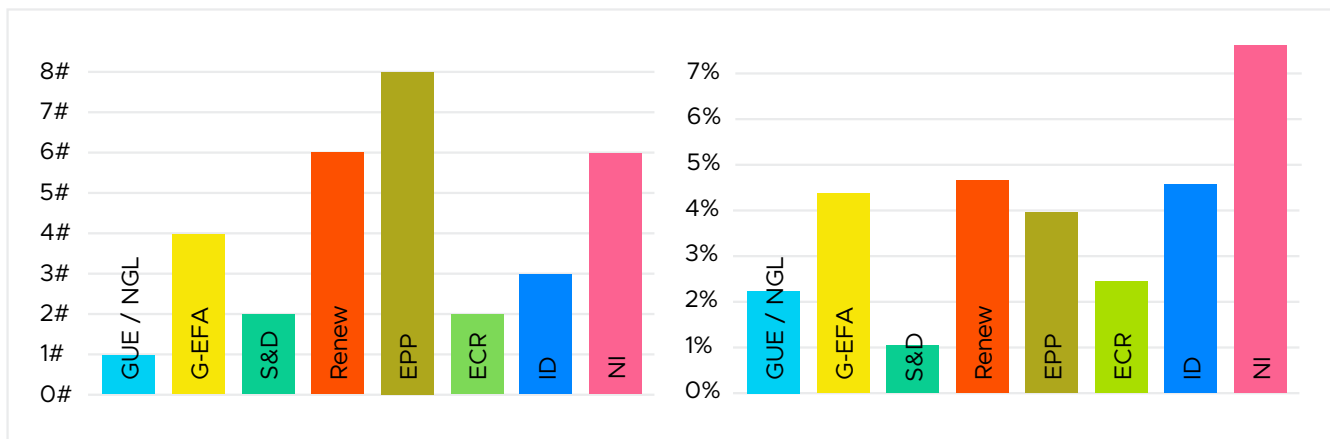
What we see in the composition of the Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance is that, while not as extreme as the Intergroup on Christians in the Middle East, it is very skewed to the right of the political spectrum.

Figure 24. Composition of the Intergroup on LGBTI (IG9-16), by political group, first in absolute numbers (composition) and then weighted according to group size (representation).



Source: see methodological annex

Figure 25. Composition of the Intergroup on Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages (IG9-23), by political group, first in absolute numbers (composition) and then weighted according to group size (representation).



Source: see methodological section

In this analysis, two intergroups stand out: as figure 18 illustrates, the Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance Intergroup has no membership of left-wing MEPs. Similarly, as shown in figure 19, the Intergroup on Christians in the Middle East is composed exclusively by MEPs from the ID, ECR, non-attached and EPP groups. These data, combined with those on ARDI and the LGBTI IG membership clearly show that different political groups embrace (only) specific types of diversity and (possibly) antagonise others

Diversity and Representation within EP Committees and IGs

In this subsection we examined how many MEPs who belong to a specific minority group are actively involved in an Intergroup that has a mandate for a specific dimension of diversity. In light of the ongoing debates regarding active involvement in policymaking of those most affected by a particular set of policies, we consider it important to assess the level

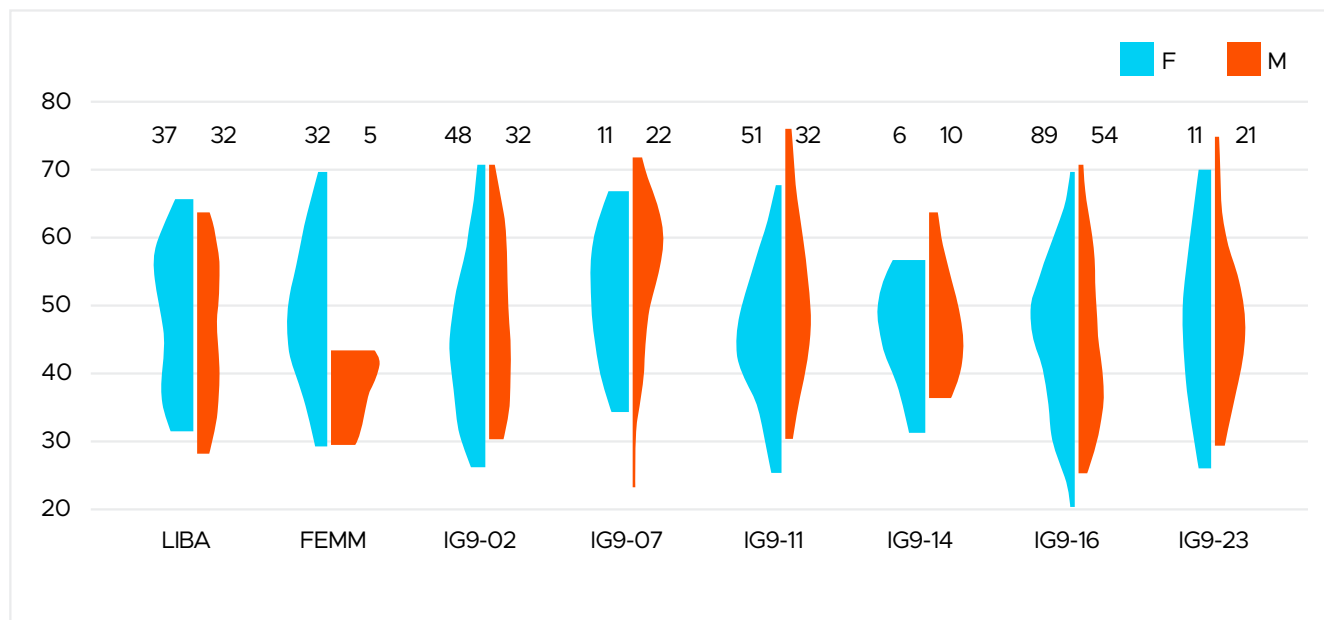
of 'direct representation' of minority groups within those structures. Those data are also useful to evaluate dynamics of majority-minority support and 'allyship' between different minority groups, both within and across intergroups. For instance, how many racialised MEPs are involved in ARDI, and what is their overall share within the intergroup? What weight do MEPs with a disability carry in the Intergroup on Disability, or what is the share of LGBTIQ MEPs within the intergroup on that topic?

We found that approximately 50% of MEPs who belong to a racialised group are members of ARDI. Likewise, roughly 50% of LGBTIQ MEPs are members of the Intergroup on LGBTIQ rights. The overlap between these cohorts is however minimal, with only one MEP belonging to the LGBTIQ

community participating in ARDI, and only a few racialised minority MEPs participating in the IG on LGBTIQ rights. This finding indicates that - at least as far as participation in the intergroup is concerned - there is limited potential for support and allyship between LGBTIQ and racialised MEPs.

Finally, we also looked at age distribution and gender distribution in the Committees and IGs. The IG on religious freedom has the oldest cohort, the highest male representation and no members belonging to either a racialised, LGBTIQ or disability groups. Overall, however, the differences across intergroups in terms of age and gender were not so significant. The numbers that appear in figure 20 (see below) represent the total number of M or F members of that specific Committee or Intergroup.

Figure 26. Age and gender distribution by Committee and Intergroup



- LIBE: the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs
- FEMM: the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
- IG9-02: Intergroup on Anti-Racism and Diversity
- IG9-07: Intergroup on Christians in the Middle East
- IG9-11: Intergroup on Disability
- IG9-14: Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance
- IG9-16: Intergroup on LGBTIQ
- IG9-23: Intergroup on Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages

EP as a diverse workplace and employer: How does the administration of the EP work on diversity and its various dimensions?

In this subsection we focus on the administrative practice of the European Parliament in the realm of diversity policy. The analysis presented is based upon information collected through desk research and informal discussions with EP staff. Over the last few years, parliamentary services have expanded and streamlined their work on diversity. This has primarily taken place through the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Unit, within the Directorate General for HR Support and Social Services of the Directorate General for Personnel (DG PERS). This Unit works to strengthen inclusion and gender equality in the administrative practice of the EP; when dealing with gender equality, the Unit also collaborates with the political level of the EP. More concretely, the Unit is active on multiple fronts: it conducts activities to raise awareness on diversity, for example by organising events on key international days on a yearly base; it may propose measures for the prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination; it provides related information to all relevant staff through presentations, information sessions, workshops and trainings; it drafts reports and conducts internal surveys on all areas of diversity policy; it collects and analyses statistics to monitor the state of affairs on gender representation (Tamburini 2023).

Under the current mandate, the Unit has grown in size and expanded its scope. At its present state, it works on diversity in relation to gender, sexual orientation, racialisation, and disability.⁴³ The latter, in particular, has only recently been added to the mandate of the Unit and is now being approached from a diversity and rights-based perspective, instead of a purely medical one.

While the Diversity Unit supports policy implementation, the overall policy vision is developed by the Parliament Bureau and formulated in specific roadmaps aimed at promoting gender equality and diversity in the Secretariat of the EP and published on the intranet of the EP. The Unit's work is therefore guided by the Gender Roadmap, adopted in March 2021 on the basis of the Gender Action Plan of July 2020, and the Diversity Roadmap, adopted in November 2021. Importantly, as far as gender equality, Rule 239 of the EP Rules of Procedure also states that “the Bureau shall adopt a gender action plan aimed at incorporating a gender perspective in all Parliament's activities, at all levels and all stages”; conversely, for other dimensions of diversity, EP Rules of Procedure

have not asked for similar action plans yet. The Diversity Roadmap has an overall intersectional approach. It includes a series of measures on human resources policies related to several diversity groups of employees, with a primary focus on racial background, gender identity and sexual orientation, and disability. Within the roadmap, there is a strong focus on disability: more than half of the measures refer to boosting and accommodating employment of people living with one or more forms of disability (Tamburini 2023).

The Unit tries to address diversity in an intersectional and horizontal way. It does so by collaborating with all the relevant directorates-general of the Parliament, as well as with Diversity & Inclusion advisors, with the offices of all other EU institutions and agencies, with intergroups and committees of the relevant diversities, and with other staff stakeholders, such as informal and independent staff associations (Égalité, People of Colour support group and Disability Support Group).

From a more practical perspective, our interviews also revealed the introduction of several measures designed to make the Parliament a more inclusive workplace and new employment practices. For example, Parliament recently updated the human resource software handling all personnel files and added the possibility of ticking a third box ‘other’ besides ‘male’ and ‘female’. The administration also introduced a corresponding title difference (Mr., Ms. and Mx., including in French). Thus, the person's selected title and choice of gender have been officially institutionalised and integrated across Parliamentary systems. Pronouns are not compulsory, leaving everyone the liberty to choose whichever they like, including in their signatures. However, the ‘they/them’ pronouns cannot yet be integrated in official communication and contracts.

On religion, the Parliament prescribes no specific rules on dress code, leaving anyone free to dress however they prefer. Moreover, the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Unit has approached the topic of religion and its expression only from the sidelines, for example with the establishment of a yearly “interfaith calendar”. As far as places of worship are concerned, Parliament provides for several “well-being/relaxation rooms” that may be booked and used for such purposes, but religious furniture is not present anywhere on Parliament premises. Some MEPs may sometimes organise a Catholic Mass or other types of religious events, but they do so on their own personal initiative. In sum, the Unit does not proactively engage on the religious theme.

⁴³ Accordingly, age may also be considered in the future in the implementation of diversity policies.

C. MICRO - PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, VIEWS, AND PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY IN THE EP

In this part of the report, we focus our attention on the perceptions and points of view of a select number of interview respondents. People interviewed for this section include eight Members of the European Parliament, two Parliamentary Assistants, and one administrative staff. Here, the attention will move from personal experiences that interviewees have with diversity, towards a general assessment of the various dimensions of diversity in the EP, and finally to the functioning of various EP political and administrative bodies which institutionalised the fight against discrimination in all its forms.

Personal background and motivation to work on diversity: How important are lived experience and representation?

Our interviews have highlighted that, unsurprisingly, individual biographies play an important role in shaping MEP's interest and commitment to specific aspects of diversity and of non-discrimination.⁴⁴ For example, an MEP recalls growing up in a liberal family where cultural and social diversity were prized and valued above conformity; as openly homosexual, the contrast between the sense of freedom growing up and the first experiences of discrimination on the job when his sexual orientation became public, motivated him to focus his career towards improving the rights of LGBTIQ people (MEP1). A black MEP highlighted her personal motivation to contribute to a society without racism and also to a new image of migrants: daughter of a university professor, not of unprivileged background, she was keen to highlight that she did not come to Europe to claim asylum but to study, and that after completing her studies she ended up staying. Part of the reason why she wanted to become an MEP was to "show that someone born on a different continent... who has their own cultural background, and who fights for topics like gender-equality and anti-racism, can become an MEP and thus represent these issues at the highest level" (MEP6). One respondent recalled the traumatic experience

of discrimination suffered by her parents, who fled Russia to Western Europe and later to North America. She suggests that their [experience] has made her particularly sensitive to discrimination, and to "naming or labelling people because of their background" (MEP7). Similarly, another respondent highlighted how having an invisible disability herself, and having been in contact with people with disabilities since her young age, have increased her sensitivity and attention on the topic (MEP8).

Another MEP, not part of a minority group, emphasised the importance of his role as a researcher in international law and his experience in domestic politics dealing with Roma and migration issues as a motivator to become involved in diversity issues in the European Parliament (MEP2). An assistant working for a racialised MEP highlighted his MEP's direct links to the ethnic/racialised community he represents, and the improvement of this group's social and economic standing as a key element underpinning the MEP's political work (APA1).

Personal background is closely connected to the contribution and sensitivity that single individuals may bring to the debate because of their lived experience. Our respondents generally agreed that greater diversity means bringing neglected stakeholders to the table, and many have stressed the importance of including people who themselves are specifically affected by certain forms of discrimination, whether on the basis of their sexual orientation, racial background, gender or social and economic status. As a MEP clearly stated, coming from an unprivileged background may give a unique perspective which is not always understood by colleagues (MEP8):

During negotiations on various files, if I talk about the least privileged, the colleagues don't understand, (...) they look at you differently. But I stand and I am proud of coming from such a background because it gives me another perspective on certain files: I have to defend that, that this should be part of that certain file, [because for others] it is nonsense! (...) [This is why] you need more people not being lawyers, doctors, people from private sectors, but workers' families and so on, to add to the diversity.

⁴⁴ This is in line with previous research on Frankfurt's former mayor and MEP Daniel Cohn Bendit (see Friedmann and Lehrer 1907), on Philadelphia's mayor (Sanders 2018) or other politicians with a migrant background (see in Israel, Desille 2023).

One assistant remarked that minority MEPs can bring a key added value when discussing issues related to part of their own social background, and they can also bring the required resources and knowledge:

I think it makes sense that each MEP has a priority on one or two communities. I am not saying one is more important than another, but if the MEP is a part of the community he knows the difficulties, he has a big network, he knows the stakeholders and issues so it makes sense that he has a stronger priority fighting for this community than the others (APA1).

One MEP, who does not identify as part of a minority group, stressed the importance of having minority groups represent themselves. But he also suggested that people like him have a moral duty to be on their side as allies, particularly as Parliamentary majorities are needed to pass any policy or legislative initiative (MEP2). This point was also made by an MEP identifying as part of the LGBTIQ community, who stressed that, together with allies, they have so far been able to secure a majority in Parliament to pass LGBTIQ-friendly resolutions (MEP1). However, the same MEP underscored that we should not underestimate the importance of direct representation and of the empathic connection that voters may feel towards particular candidates. In this context, he narrated the story of an encounter he had with a 13-year old transgender person, who told him he considered him the only person to truly represent him - being him the only person openly identifying as part of the LGBTIQ community in his national delegation, even though others publicly supported LGBTIQ rights (MEP1). Another respondent with a migrant background stressed that all types of minorities should find representation in the Parliament, so that we also have “more interesting politics” (MEP6). Identification with political representatives is key, she continues:

Why should they [otherwise] be interested in something they will never be a part of? If I know I will never be part of something, I don't go; and that's why so many migrants in my member state Germany don't vote. When I was campaigning, many people told me they would vote just because of me (MEP6).

Another interviewee argued that it is often people directly affected by an issue - such as, for example, disability - that ensure certain topics are kept on the political agenda of the Parliament; and that the absence of directly affected MEPs in the next mandate would have important consequences on the visibility of the issue (MEP5). Another respondent argued that lived experience of certain issues is crucial in Parliament not only to forge an emotional connection to specific underprivileged constituencies, but also to ensure that policy measures not only seriously take into account, but also effectively address, their concerns:

I come from a party who wants to be the voice of the working class. [...] It's a different thing, because someone who's been cleaning aeroplanes, she knows what flexibility means, someone who's been a cashier in a big supermarket, she knows what it means to have a more flexible labour market. And the way they express it is different, once you've lived through it it's different. I can speak about racism but since I've never been confronted with racism myself - apart from witnessing it on my friends - so when you experience it yourself is completely different. The energy crisis is an interesting example, it took the institutions almost two years to decide and I believe this is because the majority of the people involved in this never really felt the impact of the crisis because they have a comfortable salary and don't really feel it (MEP4).

For the same reason, and particularly when MEPs are not part of or do not know enough about specific constituencies, they crucially depend on input from external stakeholders and listen to what representatives of different communities have to say. A respondent recalled the surreal situation of being in a Parliamentary meeting about the rights of sex workers and realising the whole room included just ‘ten middle-aged men’; so, together with a colleague from another party, he decided to organise a large event in Parliament with the participation of over 200 sex workers to listen to their needs and evaluate the need for targeted legislation (MEP1). At the same time, as shown in other research, it is important to note that such efforts do not always lead to concrete legislative or policy outputs, and that the risk of simply ‘tokenizing’ external stakeholders and communities for political expediency is rather high.⁴⁵

45 See Desille et al. (2023).

Assessment of current situation and trends regarding diversity in the European Parliament

In our interviews, our respondents overwhelmingly affirmed that diversity in Parliament is lacking or very limited at best. There is a general perception that, although they hail from different European countries, most MEPs come from a similar social, cultural, economic and racial background. Two MEPs summarised it in the following terms:

I don't remember which file it was, we were discussing minorities, but I remember sitting in LIBE [Committee] and saying "look at us, we are all white", and I think there are three MEPs out of 705 who are black, which definitely does not reflect our societies' (MEP1).

I think the EP and the European Commission are the least diverse working places, especially in Brussels. They're by and large totally dominated by very classical non-diverse populations (MEP4).

What I notice is that the parliament does not reflect the European society we are living in. The share of blacks should be 10 percent in the EP but it is instead one percent. I think we are now seven which you can call black colour MEPs... In general the EP does not reflect the society also in terms of economic and societal status, with less privileged workers, non workers... I don't think it reflects any of that (MEP8).

While all interviewees agreed that the EP is the opposite of a diverse institution, some have identified certain positive trends or developments. On the one hand, regarding at least certain aspects of diversity, some MEPs have noted a remarkable change over the latest legislative terms. One MEP noted the clear evolution in terms of increase of female MEPs and the greater attention within the EP (and the EU institutions more in general) to issues of gender equality, including because of the growing prominence of women in position of leadership at the higher echelons of the Union – e.g. Ursula von der Leyen at the Commission, Christine Lagarde at the European Central Bank and Roberta Metsola at the European Parliament (MEP3). This trend towards a more equitable gender representation in the European Parliament is indeed confirmed by our quantitative mapping presented in previous sections. Other respondents have similarly noted that, over the last years, the representation of MEPs who identify as LGBTIQ has increased substantially (MEP4), with the result that there is now 'quite a big number

of people who refer [to] themselves as gay, lesbian or bi-sexual' (MEP1). However, the same MEP also pointed out that regrettably, and unlike the previous legislative term, there are no trans or intersex MEPs in the current composition of Parliament (MEP1).⁴⁶

On the other hand, several respondents highlighted that other types of diversity are still neglected if not simply not on the agenda. For example, there was a widespread perception that black people, people who identify as belonging to religious minorities and people with (visible) disabilities are heavily underrepresented⁴⁷ (MEP1, MEP3, MEP4, MEP8). At a recent public debate entitled Afropolitan Women and Black Europe at the European Parliament, an MEP recalled starting as an MEP and realising that nobody looked like her. She also recounted the episode of an EP security guard asking her several times to identify herself as a member of staff, because he did not expect a woman of colour to be an MEP.⁴⁸ She drew a lesson from that:

As someone who is not part of the norm yet and not the usual face of power, you need to be very creative and very well-focussed on building coalitions and making sure that you get information ... because there are people – unfortunately – still, in this parliament, trying to exclude you on purpose from very important decision-making.

In our interviews, we also discussed with respondents how they perceive the level of diversity among the administrative staff of the EP. Interviewees remarked that the same lack of diversity they note among politicians characterises the staff of the Parliament. Some noted that the greater sensitivity towards gender has resulted in greater attention to staff recruitment of women by MEPs; much less regarding other types of diversity (e.g. disability, people of colour, Roma) (MEP4). At the gender level, even if this shift may have been more reputational than heartfelt, it has been enough to compel even reluctant MEPs to deal with this issue (MEP3). Respondents have found it difficult to evaluate diversity of staff more specifically. Some argued that they considered

46 This was not the case for the entire current legislative mandate. Petra de Sutter was a transgender MEP elected with the Belgian Green party and active in the European Parliament between 2019 and 2020. She moved back to Belgian politics in the fall of 2020 to become one of the deputy prime ministers in the current coalition government in Belgium. <https://www.brusselstimes.com/134112/non-issue-belgiums-petra-de-sutter-is-first-openly-transgender-minister-in-europe-de-croo-politician-mep-groen-deputy-prime-minister-pm>

47 Note that others have however qualified the reflection on people with physical, motor and sensorial disabilities, arguing that their representation is often much higher than in national Parliaments of EU Member States (MEP3).

48 See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKsJQ6E2KTg>

EP staff just as homogeneous as the MEPs since throughout their mandate they had never seen a single person wearing a hijab,⁴⁹ for instance (MEP1). One MEP suggested instead that you could find a lot of (racial and class) diversity in the EP workforce as long as you looked at subcontractors, cleaners, caterers and security personnel (MEP4).

It is important to note that perceptions of respondents on diversity do not necessarily correspond to the reality of the analysis we presented in the previous sections. To an extent, those differences are also dependent on how interviewees assess and define belonging to racialised minorities and other groups. For example, when asked about ethnic/racial diversity, respondents tended to emphasise the very limited presence of black and Roma/Sinti MEPs (MEP1, MEP2), stating that amongst MEPs there are just a few who do not fall under the label 'White Caucasian' (MEP4). Overall, we realised that hardly anyone referred to people of other minority backgrounds, who are often also racialised (e.g. North African, Middle Eastern, Latin American, Asian, etc.). It is difficult to assess the reasons behind this finding, let alone its implications: while it may signal either more acceptance or rather more hostility towards those racialised identities, it is worth noting that, de facto, such identities seem to be much less visible in the public debate on diversity in the Parliament than the Roma and black people.

In terms of other types of diversity, another MEP pointed out instead that it is not always easy or even possible to identify somebody with a disability (MEP3). This is a point that has been echoed by other non-political sources of the EP, too, who have also stressed the difficulty in finding objective criteria or harmonised percentages to define various disability-related statutes, also due to the fact that Member States employ different recognition systems. Moreover, with the exception of one respondent, nobody raised the issue that the Parliament seems to lack diversity in terms of socio-economic status – as our macro analysis suggested with data on educational attainments. A left-leaning MEP noted the huge under-representation of people of working-class background in Parliament. He found it ironic that the 'Brussels-bubble' of the institution would pay so little attention to this kind of diversity, particularly in the context of a super-diverse city like Brussels where class very often intersects with racialisation (MEP4).

49 This state of affairs has been criticised by activists and commentators since at least 2017, namely in the context of the online social movement #BrusselsSoWhite. See for example: the special report by Politico in 2017, <https://www.politico.eu/special-report/diversity/> (last accessed on 11 March 2024); and more recent work by columnist Shadia Islam, available at <https://www.shadaislam.com/articles>

While our interviews are certainly not representative of all viewpoints inside Parliament, they also may suggest that the debate on diversity and inclusion is more commonly framed around certain dimensions - sexual orientation, race, gender, disability - than others (class, socio-economic status, nationality, legal status, education).

Personal approach to, engagement and efforts on diversity

Several of the MEPs we interviewed are engaged on diversity issues inside the Parliament in different ways. At the policy level, diversity issues emerge in a wide variety of policy fields.

One MEP, for example, highlighted his work on the AI regulation⁵⁰ to minimise the risk of gender and racial discrimination as linked to algorithms' bias; and to ensure equal accessibility to AI products for people with disabilities (MEP3). Another MEP referred instead to his work in the LIBE committee on LGBTIQ rights (MEP1): a motion for a resolution on LGBTIQ freedom zones,⁵¹ countering the infamous LGBTIQ-free zones promoted by the Polish government;⁵² reports on the state of the rule of law in European Member States, which included reference to treatment of LGBTIQ people, for example in countries such as Poland, Hungary or Slovakia.⁵³ Another MEP, active in the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), has suggested that there is next to no attention for diversity in economic and industrial policy (MEP4). Nonetheless, from a diversity perspective that includes attention to low socio-economic status, there is room to bring up the issue of workers' discrimination within the single market.⁵⁴ One parliamentary assistant highlighted the importance of the work carried out by her MEP both in the EMPL committee and the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) (APA1). In her words, those committees are strategic from a diversity perspective because they "are always pushing for the [rights of] minorities or more inclusion." In the EMPL committee, she brought the example of the negotiations for the revision of the directive on standards

50 REPORT on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on laying down harmonised rules on Artificial Intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) and amending certain Union Legislative Acts, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0188_EN.html

51 European Parliament resolution of 11 March 2021 on the declaration of the EU as an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone (2021/2557(RSP)), https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0089_EN.html

52 <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-54191344>

53 Report on the Commission's 2023 Rule of Law report, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2024-0025_EN.html; see also REPORT on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union in 2020 and 2021, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2022-0224_EN.html

54 https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/EMPL-AD-647038_EN.pdf

for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment between women and men in employment.⁵⁵ An MEP also highlighted her work on equality bodies, noting that while not perfect the text constituted a “very good start,” particularly to support protection of human rights and equality in more difficult contexts such as Hungary (MEP7). In this context, Parliament was partially successful in pushing for more progressive language about gender equality (APA1). In CULT, for example when discussing programs such as Erasmus+, there is considerable scope for Parliament to make those schemes more inclusive towards people of colour, people with disabilities, the LBTQIT community and other minority groups (APA1).

Some MEPs are members of the committees and groups that they feel more familiar with in terms of their background or problems they encountered in their lived experiences or the context that they are familiar with. MEP8 revealed in the interview that she participates in specific Intergroups because they are of direct interest and relevance to her:

I am in the Intergroup on Social Economy because that is my family background [...], a house for the kids in this ghetto part of Luxembourg city, where Portuguese and Cape Verdeans were together, not a good idea to put them together, former colonisers and slaves. There was a lot of violence in this neighbourhood. So I think the idea of social economy is very important, it is about entrepreneurship and innovation but it is also to improve society, to foster inclusion and integration. And for the disability group, I have a disability. As a child I was in contact with disabled people and for me, it is important that they are treated well. When I became visually impaired during the mandate, I now also have another perspective on the intergroup, as I can raise awareness about non-visible disabilities like mine.

When asked about internal dynamics of political support and opposition in relation to diversity issues within the EP, respondents suggested that this generally mirrors the left-right divide. However, there are significant differences when it comes to more specific issues. For example, some MEPs suggested that LGBTIQ rights enjoy the broadest

cross-spectrum political support when it comes to minority groups, including the (near) totality of MEPs belonging to the Left/GUE, Greens/EFA, S&D groups, the majority of Renew and even segments of the EPP group (MEP1, MEP2, MEP4, MEP5, MEP7). Only right- and far-right groups including a broad section of the EPP, the ECR and ID have generally opposed LGBTIQ-friendly (non)legislative resolutions and other measures. Respondents argued that such broad support can sometimes go further than on gender-related issues, since some national strands of the S&D group are sometimes uncomfortable on topics such as sexual and reproductive rights (e.g. abortion) (MEP1, MEP2). A respondent belonging to the EPP has painted a somewhat more progressive stance of her political group on minority rights, stressing that she could count at least 45 MEPs inside the group supporting gender and LGBTIQ issues (MEP7). At the same time, she also noted that at least half of the group is much more lukewarm on these issues, sometimes due to the pressure from the Catholic Church; moreover, for many MEPs from the EPP, including herself, LGBTIQ rights are important but not necessarily a priority in their political agenda (MEP7).

Disability is another topic that seems to enjoy wide support across the political spectrum, potentially even wider than LGBTIQ rights since it is often more successful in rallying the political support of broader areas of the EPP and of the far-right ECR group.⁵⁶ While respondents not identifying as having a disability have suggested that such issues enjoy widespread support across political groups (MEP1, MEP2), an MEP belonging to the group cautioned against this reading, noting that although “officially we all love people with disabilities”, there is still much ignorance and indifference on this topic, for example when it comes to addressing related acts of violence and hate speech (MEP5). The same interviewee also remarked that there is little attention and support towards accommodating MEPs and staff with disabilities when it comes to enhancing accessibility both inside the Parliament and elsewhere, such as at private homes at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic when MEPs were compelled to work from home (MEP5). In a sense, cross-aisle Parliamentary support for disability rights therefore often appears more symbolic than grounded in concrete actions. She voiced concerns about being tokenized as a ‘diversity puppet candidate’, and stressed the importance that political parties and groups really take diversity seriously and not just pay lip service to it (MEP5). At the same time, she realised that if she wanted things to change inside the Parliament she had to take action herself and mobilise her political group and other allies:

⁵⁵ See commission proposal, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022PC0688> and the report produced by the EMPL committee - https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0354_EN.html as of end of February 2024, the negotiations on this legislative file are still not concluded, see [https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2022/0400\(COD\)](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2022/0400(COD)). For more information about the equality bodies, see https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/tackling-discrimination/equality-bodies_en

⁵⁶ As an example of the support enjoyed by LGBTIQ rights on the right political spectrum, please see ‘The European Centre-Right LGBT+ Alliance’, a network including 11 EPP-affiliated national parties out of 10 EU Member States. More information is available at <https://lgbtalliance.eu/>.

During COVID I could not connect my voting machine so I could not vote. They didn't take us seriously then, but then there must be a moment, I said "now". That is my character, I make a point of order in the house [Parliament], I bring you in front of the camera and everyone will see it, now 700 people will see it and so things now are finally working. With help from my group and with support, I talked to [President] Metsola, then wrote a letter, informed the secretariat, then knocked again on the door of Metsola to ask her to solve things, and now it is working. But the problem is that when I leave Parliament and I am not there anymore, another person will have to restart. But I am just fighting for my own rights, I don't ask for anything more. I want to vote. It is my basic right, I am not here for vacation, and I am here to work. And my team has better things to do than writing emails: "could you please help us?" After so many years, I am in a position to make people listen to me and I am super privileged (MEP5).

In contrast, when it comes to ethnic and racial diversity and anti-discrimination, several respondents expressed the perception that Parliament is struggling with mustering even symbolic support (MEP1, MEP2, MEP3, MEP4, MEP6). The topic appears to be most strongly supported by the Greens and the Left groups, with milder and more conditional support coming from the S&D and sometimes by individual MEPs in Renew (MEP1, MEP2, APA2). The Greens political group, because of their greater numbers of elected MEPs and allocated Parliamentary resources that come with it, appear to have been the most influential backers of racial non-discrimination and especially the works of the ARDI IG (APA2). A respondent remembers that, as far as her own experience in Parliament during the current mandate goes, the murder of George Floyd represented an important catalyst to discuss structural racism of Black people at European level and spur the European Parliament into action.⁵⁷ However, like in the case of LGBTIQ and disability rights, there appears to be a clash between professed engagement and the actual reality of MEPs' political behaviour, even amongst professed supporters. For example, a black MEP expressed her disappointment for the very low turnout at an exhibition she had co-organized within Parliament's premises in Strasbourg, and which centred on Black and other minority people during the Nazi era (MEP6). A respondent active in ARDI noted

that while the intergroup covers anti-black racism as much as Islamophobia, anti-Muslim hatred and anti-Semitism, "it is easier to talk about certain themes than others..." (APA2). She added: "It is also about trying to respond to what is going on in the world. Now for instance, there is much more talk about anti-Muslim hatred and anti-Semitism although it is still much easier for politicians to talk about other forms of racism [based on skin colour]" (APA2). Nevertheless, others have stressed that religion, particularly when associated with Islam, is generally neglected in Parliament engagement (MEP2, MEP4).

Besides the challenges in garnering political support for racial discrimination issues, MEPs of colour also struggled themselves to feel accepted inside Parliament. During a public debate entitled Afropolitan Women and Black Europe at the European Parliament an MEP explained that as one of very few MEPs of colour it is still very difficult to be fully accepted and taken seriously. While she thus immediately focussed her political work on Anti-Racism and took a leading role in ARDI, it became clear to her from the start that she would have to put up with a lot of criticism and racist comments, particularly on social media. Even within the EP, she often felt underestimated as a young woman of colour - the "toxic cocktail" - as she called it. Following these same lines, another MEP, also a woman of colour, denounced the fact that people working in the EP often confuse her with another colleague with a racialised background, calling her with the wrong name (MEP8). The same MEP also noted that she realised she is black when she entered the EU parliament (MEP8), as she felt her behaviour was scrutinised much more than others and that she had to work very hard to prove she belonged and deserved to be there:

I feel that you always have to show that you deserve to be here, that you belong here, that you are just a person who comes from the European society, who wants to engage, who is active in order to improve the lives of all people and especially of the outcasts of society or where other difficulties lie (MEP8).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that several respondents mentioned the importance of intersectionality in how they approach diversity and non-discrimination, at least in theoretical terms. For example, one MEP remarked that it "doesn't matter where you start but intersectionality is crucial because you see different discriminations and some of them just go together, and some discriminations are most explosive" (MEP1). Another explained intersectionality by arguing that rights of all minority groups are interconnected, so if you try to push an agenda on LGBTIQ rights you cannot decline to support those MEPs fighting for the rights of undocumented

57 See for example "European Parliament resolution of 19 June 2020 on the anti-racism protests following the death of George Floyd (2020/2685(RSP))", https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0173_EN.html

migrants and racialised minorities or for gender equality (MEP1). An MEP also expressed her views of intersectionality in terms of solidarity, stressing the importance of backing each other's causes also when it's about support for different racialised groups, such as for example Romani and people of colour (MEP6). A respondent supported the same reasoning, but also cautioned against the perception that there is a natural convergence between causes and all MEPs and political groups support an intersectional approach (MEP5). The same MEP caustically noted that some MEPs may be strong supporters of disability rights, but they are also deeply conservative at heart, so they will not embrace other progressive causes (MEP5). Another respondent stressed instead that it is important to consider discrimination from an equality perspective, mindful of the fact that several factors - e.g. ethnic background, but also poverty, age, gender, religious beliefs - can have a disproportionate impact on certain individuals rather than others (MEP7). She also recognised that particularly in the economic sphere it is the interests of "middle-aged Caucasian, educated well-off men" which generally prevail (MEP7). She stressed that intersectionality is slowly spreading as a concept inside Parliament, primarily because of the work done by women within the FEMM Committee (MEP7). Another respondent explained intersectionality by referring to her own experience as a racialised woman, brought up in an economically disadvantaged family and with an invisible disability in her youth (MEP8).

EP Intergroups dealing with diversity: A focus on their work, functioning and objectives

The MEPs' personal engagement and efforts on diversity are echoed and reinforced by the work of various European Parliament intergroups, which represent important institutional avenues to channel discussions regarding diversity and anti-discrimination within Parliament and its political action. Adding to the information gathered through our desk research and quantitative mapping, further insights on the work, functioning and objectives of Intergroups was gathered through interviews.

According to respondents, intergroups vary greatly in their function, role and influence. As a general rule, intergroups are loose networks bringing together MEPs from across the political spectrum working on and interested in a specific topic. They are spaces of attention on specific themes on which MEPs think about initiatives and collective actions (MEP3). Re-established at the beginning of each legislative term, intergroups need the support of at least three different political groups. Intergroups usually meet two or three times a year (MEP5), and they also collaborate among them (APA2, MEP3).

Intergroups can be helpful to help prepare questions for written and oral answers to other institutions, to help develop motions for resolutions and, most importantly, to coordinate policy and legislative positions amongst MEPs of different groups (MEP1, MEP2, AST2). As pointed out by an MEP, Intergroups are useful in providing MEPs with the opportunity to build relationships and transnational networks, to create occasions of discussions and of sharing ideas, as well as to increase the sensitivity on a topic and influence certain decisions, even though they rarely succeed in strongly affecting legislative dynamics and voting procedures, where divisions among political groups tend to prevail (MEP3). One MEP stressed a similar dynamic, highlighting also the importance of the IGs - defined as "effective and important organisational settings - to foster connections and exchanges with civil society and other outside stakeholders:

When they are at their best they [the IGs] are very efficient. The point is that this is a network of like-minded people, they don't agree on all of technical issues but they all agree about the [importance of] gender rights, or [of] the LGBTQI rights, and they will push for those ideas in the committees. As members [of the IGs] we meet the Commission, civil servants, so that we are aware of what is coming from the Commission... and we try to have an impact on it. Sometimes without NGOs this would not happen [to sway the Commission], such as for instance on the Istanbul Convention or the directive on violence against women, without NGOs it never would have happened. So the IGs are often an avenue to link up with the NGO community. This exchange creates a political understanding and an opportunity for us to learn and form better opinions. IGs are also a good venue to link up with researchers on certain topics. (MEP7)

In terms of participation to an intergroup, as a MEP explained, adhering to it is open, whereas having a role in it depends on informal political agreements aimed at reaching a political pluralism within the specific intergroup (MEP3). Moreover, several inter-groups have a coordinator, who is hired as Parliamentary staff, paid by the co-chairs of the inter-group; and tasked with liaising with all the political groups as well as, where relevant, with related outside stakeholders who may be concerned and or affected by the issue (AST2).

If we look more closely at the intergroups of our interest, the largest intergroup is currently the LGBTI Intergroup, with 162 members.⁵⁸ This also makes it the largest intergroup overall in the European Parliament. Accordingly, it is also the most active and dynamic (MEP1, MEP7). One MEP belonging to the LGBTIQ community recognized that it has become somewhat ‘fashionable’ to join this inter-group, particularly for MEPs belonging to the Left, S&D, Greens and Renew political groups (MEP1). This may also be a sign, in line with what has been said in previous sections, that LGBTIQ issues have become much less controversial than they used to be in the past. However, it is also important to recall that such a high level of participation does not exclude the risk that certain parties and political groups may simply be paying lip service to diversity or only symbolically supporting specific causes, rather than contributing to concrete legislative and policy changes.

The ARDI inter-group deals primarily with issues of racial discrimination (AST2). Speaking at a public debate⁵⁹, an MEP of colour who has held a leading role in ARDI for several years said she is very proud of the IGs work, and for putting the topic of racial discrimination front and centre on the EU’s agenda (following the murder of George Floyd). She also remembers being positively surprised by the substance and honest language used in the resulting EU Anti-Racism Action Plan (2020-2025), and clearly sees this as the result of ARDI pushing hard to give this topic the necessary visibility and urgency. While for her, this clearly shows the impact that ARDI is having, she also acknowledged that ‘the tricky part’ will be to enforce the Plan’s implementation, and promised that ARDI will continue to be involved in EC efforts to monitor implementation in the MS.

Some MEPs we interviewed, on the other hand, argued that the group has struggled to find internal consensus when it comes to groups where certain racialised and religious affiliations intersect. For example, ARDI has struggled on how to deal with anti-semitism and hate speech towards Muslims (MEP2, AST2). Respondents have also suggested that, depending on the future composition of the European Parliament, this intergroup may be one most at risk of not being re-established (MEP2).

Some MEPs also noted the risk that some intergroups may be hijacked for other purposes or effectively prevented from doing any meaningful work. For example, a MEP made the example of the intergroup on demography, which was supposedly taken over by far-right priorities to promote less state support and more market investment (MEP2). Others

have similarly voiced the concern that other IGs, such as ARDI, may in the future be used to voice concerns other than racial discrimination depending on its political composition (APA2). The intergroup on disability, in contrast, seems to enjoy broader and more stable cross-group political support (MEP2), although it appears to be less able to agree on common positions than for example the LGBTI intergroup (MEP5).

Assessment of current situation and trends on diversity in the administrative practices: recruitment of staff and non-discrimination policies

Respondents have also voiced some criticism in relation to diversity in the administrative practices and recruitment policies of the EP. For example, one MEP called out Parliament’s hypocritical behaviour in urging Member States to make their own policies more inclusive and respectful of diversity and then failing to do so within its own premises on several issues:

When you’re filling in the form to hire someone new you only have the option of male or female, there is no x marker.⁶⁰ We have a resolution calling on EUMS to do that but then the EP itself has only a binary system. For external attendants, I am organising an event with people from LGBTQ community in Brussels, and there will be people coming who don’t identify as male or female and the EP will force them to choose. What should I do? But you find this kind of thing not only in gender. And there’s another example I really hate as a socialist, we have trainees and I myself have a good salary, my APAs have a good salary, and we can get free bikes but our trainees, who have a miserable pay, cannot get those bikes. So we have reports, resolutions, all such things against discrimination, but then the Parliament itself discriminates. We opened a new entrance very recently and it was not entirely accessible for disabled people, that should really not be the case in 2023! (MEP1).

⁵⁸ <https://lgbti-ep.eu/>

⁵⁹ Afropolitan Women and Black Europe at the European Parliament, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKsjQ6E2KTg>.

⁶⁰ Note that this has however recently changed, see section of the report titled ‘EP as a diverse workplace and employer’.

These institutional changes appear to be rather difficult to implement, as they are also dependent on the political leadership of the European Parliament which may or may not favour a particular issue (MEP1). For the same reason, the leadership has recently been more open to other changes, such as the institution of maternal and paternal leave for MEPs (MEP1).

Another MEP criticised the obstacles placed on her by the Parliament's administration when it comes to fostering inclusive recruitment practices. For example, she mentioned that the Parliament's website is not easily accessible for job-seekers with disabilities (MEP5). She moreover stated that it is really complicated to organise job interviews with such candidates in view of the difficulties in making the offices accessible, providing interpreters and personal assistants - with the result that candidates with disability feel discouraged and not welcome to apply (MEP5). Some have tried to be mindful of this in their recruitment practices about their work in the Parliament. A respondent mentioned that for specific vacancies he tries to reach outside of the usual pool of Brussels-bubble professionals to ensure that more people from his direct constituencies, and particularly people with a low socio-economic status, can apply (MEP4). To do so, he has adjusted the wording of vacancy announcements and removed the requirement of a university degree for certain assistant positions. He also disseminated those vacancies outside of traditional channels by sharing them more amongst his followers on social media and on his personal website. When asked about the potential risk that people who do not have a university degree would find it difficult to navigate the legislative process and draft documents, he rebutted this point:

I think you don't need to have a PhD in racism to speak about racism. But I also think there's not one ethnic/cultural group that cannot read a legal text. And for those who say you need a university degree, then they've never worked with trade unions, because they negotiate with the CEOs, with the management, and they do this on the basis of facts not rhetoric, so they're very good at that. Sometimes people who study, they lack the lived experience to understand what a text really means for the people on the ground. So I am not saying you should not hire lawyers, but if you don't have people who have an actual experience of certain situations you will miss something. And same for amendments, do you want something in legalese or do you want something that people outside will understand? (MEP4).

Another MEP, not belonging to any minority group himself, stressed that it is important to pay more attention to recruitment practices to ensure more representation. But he also made it clear that, "regardless of the social background of your assistants, what you want is the 'best team possible' on the basis of a fair assessment of people's talents and skills" (MEP2). A respondent similarly stressed that who they hire is also strongly dependent on the type of people who apply for those jobs - who often conform to the stereotypical middle-class, "White Caucasian male" - as well as on their competences - once again, an element on which the former tend to have an advantage in terms of access to educational opportunities (MEP7). She elaborated further expressing the importance of competence, highlighting at the same time the importance of giving everyone a fair chance:

I do have, and have had people from LGBTIQ background [working for me] but that was not the reason to recruit them, and it should not be a reason not to recruit them. They were just good people in their work. But then if you get different ethnic and nationality backgrounds, I have had some interns from Afghanistan, some Kurds. And I would have recruited them for a permanent position but you know, there was such a huge gap with the language, with the capabilities. If I could have them as interns for a longer period then it would be a good opportunity for them, but then I need an extra assistant because these people can only do, let's say 20-30-50 percent of what the other people do. [...] This doesn't mean that all people with a diverse ethnic background would be less competent, but for some reason, those who contact my office are often like that. How do we then get the well-educated, good, competent, diverse background people to apply? (MEP7).

An interviewee has also noted that Parliament is making some effort to tackle anti-discrimination and sanction unacceptable behaviour inside Parliament. While conceding he was unsure if those remedies were effective, he pointed at the existence of complaint mechanisms as a positive sign (MEP4). An anti-harassment policy, including a code of conduct for MEPs, has indeed been in place since at least the beginning of the previous term⁶¹ and relies on an Advisory Committee for the handling of complaints. Complaints can be lodged on grounds of "psychological harassment" and "sexual harassment," the former referring to "repetitive or systematic and involves physical behaviour, spoken or writ-

61 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/transparency/appropriate-behaviour>

ten language, gestures or other acts that are intentional and that may undermine the personality, dignity or physical or psychological integrity of any person” (Art 3(1)).⁶² Besides the measures’ effectiveness in handling those situations - which has been recently questioned⁶³ - it is however worth noting that current rules do not seem to explicitly address issues of psychological harassment linked to particular discriminatory grounds (e.g. racism, islamophobia, anti-semitism, sexism, ableism, etc.). As a result, the complaint mechanism and anti-harassment policy do not seem per se to support the goal of making the Parliament a more inclusive workplace. As a matter of fact, a respondent expressed her discomfort when, after experiencing an uncomfortable episode of racist micro-aggression, found no avenues to report the incident (APA2). In practice, while the Parliament has taken some measures in recent years to strengthen its anti-harassment policy in response to numerous complaints on behalf of EP staff, reporting episodes of racialisation and discriminatory language remains extremely difficult, to say the least.

A look into the future: personal prospects for diversity resulting from the 2024 elections

Several MEPs expressed their concerns at how the next Parliament will look in terms of diversity. For example, one of the currently very few MEPs of colour noted with disappointment that she was not going to be nominated again by her party (Greens) for the 2024 European elections (MEP6). She also mentioned that her party recently established a special “Diversity Council”, but had not nominated any candidates with a minority background for the upcoming elections. Also her request to establish a quota for non-white candidates – like it is currently done for women – was denied. While she sees the creation of the “Diversity Council” as a very positive development that sets the Greens apart from other parties in Germany, she also noted that she would like to see the Council’s resolutions implemented in reality. She

also expressed the fear that there would be no one else to take up her role in the next legislative term; and when asked whether she saw this decision as related to the expected rise of the far-right, the MEP rather related it to internal party competition but also noted that such a move undermined the credibility of the party as a champion of minorities in politics (MEP6). An assistant of another minority MEP remarked that the Green party had made the same decision concerning her MEP, effectively reducing the chances of representation of the Roma minority by a quarter (APA1).

An MEP belonging to the Left group stressed that his national party was highly committed to making its delegation to the European Parliament more diverse in the next term; and stressed that the main goal for the next elections would be to elect a person of working class background – and that as a result a person with such characteristics would lead their list (MEP4). He also mentioned that the only way to create a more diverse population of MEPs is by pro-actively pursuing a strategy that makes minority groups feel welcome in the Parliament. This is still not the case:

The way of speaking for example, the language used is done to shut people out, the way in which the drafting is done, the way in which translation of documents is done which always come late so in practice you need to be able to work in English since it makes no sense to wait two weeks for the translated documents, and you enter into an environment that is very homogeneous, almost like a form of symbolic violence where you have to prove your worth at least twice or three times before being accepted. So all of these... I don't think it's being done on purpose but a general lack of attention to diversity, understood as diversity beyond that of traditional European countries and class diversity. You of course have some right-wing racist and sexist and homophobic parties, but in practice it's more of a structural issue - so if you don't have active diversity policies you will not be able to break through (MEP4).

62 INTERNAL RULES ON HARASSMENT AND ITS PREVENTION AT THE WORKPLACE AND ON HARASSMENT COMPLAINTS INVOLVING ACCREDITED PARLIAMENTARY ASSISTANTS AND MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT BUREAU DECISION OF 14 APRIL 2014, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/publications/reg/2014/0004/EP-PEREG\(2014\)422616_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/publications/reg/2014/0004/EP-PEREG(2014)422616_EN.pdf). See also an updated decision expanding the complaint procedure, DECISION ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE DEALING WITH HARASSMENT COMPLAINTS CONCERNING MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND ITS PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS BUREAU DECISION OF 2 JULY 2018, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20181003RES14909/20181003RES14909.pdf>

63 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230424IPR82016/metoo-meps-call-for-more-to-be-done-to-tackle-sexual-harassment-in-the-eu> Measures have been strengthened in July 2023, and foresee mandatory training for MEPs on ‘how to have a good and well-functioning team’, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230710IPRO2607/parliament-strengthens-its-anti-harassment-policy>

An MEP of the Green political group suggested that her national party is working on intersectionality and diversity not just symbolically, but by trying to actively recruit a set of people which reflect the plurality of identities in the country. She also underlined that she took very concrete steps herself to ensure her presence on the candidates’ list again: “I did something very unfemale like. I said yes, when they offered me a job, or position or candidacy, supported by men, I had no clue and I said ‘yes, I can do it’” (MEP5). The same MEP underlined that a minority MEP must fight to stay

in Parliament, not only as a symbol of European diversity but also to contribute to actual policy change.

The prospect that certain racialised MEPs may not be re-listed, as mentioned above, has raised concern among several MEPs (MEP5, APA1), who are worried about the future of diversity in the upcoming legislative mandate:

Yes, I ask of course colleagues, what about you? I know you are working on relevant topics. Will you come back? They say probably not. For different reasons, for party reasons, when it comes to power games, [diversity] is not so relevant. It is seen as a nice topic but when it comes to really getting down to it, then nothing is guaranteed.

Another respondent acknowledged that there is a real prospect that next elections will result in a much less diverse and much 'whiter' parliament, and expressed her dismay at this state of affairs:

I really see that this is an issue and, well, how can it be that so many white people are all sitting here while we have had a big migration, and [how can it be that] people with a different appearance, but who have had a citizenship of a European country for years, are not sitting here [inside the Parliament]? (APA1).

CONCLUSIONS

This report traces the evolution of the social composition of the European Parliament over the two legislative terms that have marked the last decade (2014-2019, 2019-2024) and overall institutional efforts on increasing internal diversity. As shown by our findings, there has been considerable progress on gender and (to a lesser extent) on LGBTIQ diversity.

The 2024 showed however that such progress is far being consolidated: the newly elected 10th mandate of the European Parliament is the first in its history to see a backsliding in a more gender equal representation, with women accounting for 38.75% of the current MEPs (down from 40.5%).

Disability and especially ethnic/racial and religious diversity, while registering some progress over the 8th and 9th mandates, are lagging far behind, and are unlikely to improve in the near future considering the current political climate.

In the face of global and transnational challenges such as climate change, migration and technological developments - which cannot be dealt with by national governments alone - the EP is charged with ever-growing expectations and political responsibilities. It is therefore all the more important that its composition broadly reflects the changing diverse European society with its evolving interests and preferences.

The 2024 elections saw a worrying trend that certain MEPs belonging to ethnic/racial minorities were not be able to stand as candidates again. This is also linked to Brexit, since a significant number of MEPs belonging to racialised groups had been elected in the United Kingdom.

While only a comprehensive mapping of the newly elected EP can show the extent of diversity losses suffered in the latest elections, the absence of any Roma representatives (which had been present, albeit in small numbers, in the 8th and 9th mandates) offers a worrisome indication of a broader backsliding. More generally, the gains of (far) right parties may translate into not only a composition of the European Parliament that is less (socially) diverse, but also pays less attention to diversity issues inside and outside the European Parliament.

This research is a first attempt to try and map diversity in the European Parliament through a triangulation of sources, including a quantitative mapping, a large scale survey and semi-structured interviews. To our knowledge, and with the exception of some preliminary work conducted by ENAR in the context of the previous elections, this is the first study of its kind to systematically study social diversity in the EP.

Yet due to the limited time frame and resources, we had to limit data collection, especially regarding the number of interviews we could conduct. We however believe our findings will provide a starting point for discussing the future of diversity policies in the European Parliament.

Our findings can also provide a starting point for future research on this topic. We believe that much remains to be done and could be further explored, including:

- In-depth understanding of the social composition of elected officials and administrative staff of the European Parliament, following a truly intersectional approach;
- Approaching recruitment policies and practices from an intersectional perspective;
- Innovative ways to conduct diversity studies, including new ways to map populations of political representatives (with particular attention to self-identification);
- How individuals and EU institutions deal with micro-racism and microaggressions in general;
- How diversity politics shape asymmetric power relations in the Parliamentary context, for example between assistants and MEPs;
- How MEPs and Parliament staff understand diversity, namely how they perceive and define categories related to social diversity;
- How particularly parties from the right and far right understand, define and apply diversity and engage with it.

**POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the extensive research into diversity trends, ENAR has developed a set of recommendations to ensure meaningful representation and enhance diversity within the European Parliament. These measures are essential for creating an inclusive political environment where all segments of society feel valued and respected, starting with the European Parliament's crucial role as a reflection of our broader society.

ENAR calls on the European Parliament, MEPs and political groups to:

1. Incorporate an intersectional approach in legislative and policy files, where non-discrimination on all intersecting grounds serves as a foundational principle rather than a mere sectorial or partisan agenda.
2. Implement voluntary data collection on various dimensions of diversity within the European Parliament and other EU institutions. Data can provide insights into the representation and experiences of different groups, informing targeted interventions and policy development.
3. Consider the introduction of quotas or alternative systems to ensure greater diversity in the composition of the Parliament. Quotas can serve as a proactive measure to counteract systemic barriers and promote the inclusion of underrepresented groups in decision-making processes.
4. Strengthen the complaint mechanisms and modify the definition of psychological harassment to include racial discrimination as an aggravating circumstance.
5. Develop and implement diversity training programs for MEPs and parliamentary staff to raise awareness about structural racism, unconscious biases, meaningful representation, promote cultural competency and foster a more inclusive working environment.
6. Implement measures to ensure that recruitment processes for parliamentary staff and MEPs are inclusive, for example through diversity targets and anonymised recruitment practices.
7. Ensure that parliamentary Committees and Intergroups focused on diversity and inclusion encompass a wide range of political affiliations and actively engage with MEPs from diverse backgrounds.
8. Increase resources for Intergroups focused on diversity to broaden their scope, including via the hiring of dedicated staff, particularly addressing migration from a non-securitised perspective.
9. Create more opportunities for Intergroups to cooperate in order to enhance an intersectional approach. For example, a specific working group/task force on intersectionality could be set up to bridge the efforts of individual Intergroups.
10. Enhance recruitment outreach efforts to attract a more diverse pool of candidates.
11. Upgrade the EP's physical infrastructure and improve regulations to ensure accessibility. For example, providing accommodations for religious practices and for people with disabilities are essential for an inclusive working environment.
12. While diversity in political representation is vital, it's imperative to recognise that representation alone does not guarantee progress in combating racism as racialised individuals can also espouse far-right ideologies. This only contributed to the "diversity washing" to legitimise racism and anti-democratic policies by exploiting diversity rhetoric for their own agenda. Therefore, alongside improved representation, there must be a clear commitment to equality and anti-racist policies to combat discrimination and promote inclusion effectively.
13. In the absence of concrete representation, it is imperative to establish robust participatory mechanisms that empower racialised groups to engage in policymaking processes. By ensuring their meaningful involvement, democratic deficits can be addressed, allowing marginalised communities to have a voice in shaping policies that affect them directly.

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METHODOLOGICAL ANNEX

In order to capture the complexity and various dimensions of diversity in relation to the European Parliament, we adopted a combination of three different research methods:

- a comparative diversity mapping of all MEPs who serve/d during the current or previous Parliamentary legislative term;
- a survey among all current Members of the European Parliament;
- semi-structured interviews with selected MEPs, assistants and other relevant EP staff.

A. Diversity mapping

The diversity mapping aims to provide an overview and comparison of the population of MEPs for the current (2019-2024) and previous (2014-2019) legislative terms. Accounting for both outgoing and incoming MEPs during both terms, we collected information on a total of 860 MEPs for the 8th mandate and 859 MEPs for the 9th mandate.

For the European Parliament's 8th mandate, which followed the elections held in May 2014, the number of elected MEPs was 751 (up from the 736 MEPs elected in 2009, and including Croatia that joined in 2013). However, taking into account MEPs who resigned before the end of their mandate or who died while in office, and who had to be replaced, the total number of MEPs – meaning the total of all members who served even if for a brief period in the European Parliament's 8th mandate (2014-2019) – is 860.

During the 9th mandate, the number of MEPs was reduced to 705 members after the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union in January 2020. However, considering the number of incoming MEPs who replaced the outgoing ones (since part of the seats of the UK were redistributed among other member states, which raised the number of replacements necessary on top of those who resigned or died), the total number of MEPs who served in the 9th mandate (2019-2024) is 859. In the 10th mandate, from the 2024 elections, 720 members will be elected.

For each MEP, we collected the following characteristics:

- year of birth;
- country of birth;
- citizenship(s);
- country represented;
- gender;
- national political party;
- EU political group;
- educational level (whether a MEP holds a university degree);
- whether a MEP identifies as belonging to a **racialised minority** (and if so, which);
- whether a MEP identifies as belonging to the **LGBTIQ community**;
- whether a MEP identifies as belonging to a **national/ linguistic minority**;
- whether a MEP identifies as **having a disability**.

After careful consideration, we decided not to include MEPs who self-identify as **belonging to a religious minority** as a separate category in this mapping. Minority religious characteristics (both visible, such as wearing certain garments, and not visible, such as dietary faith-based requirements or resting/praying days) represent an increasingly important aspect of diversity in Europe (Sealy et al. 2021). However, since this is both a very personal issue and often highly politicised topic, there are serious ethical and practical challenges in gathering such data in the EU, where most countries do not include religion in their census, and some explicitly ban the collection of data on faith or religion (Triandafyllidou and Magazzini 2021).

With a number of EU countries having passed either full or partial bans on the burqa since 2010, with heated debates on minority religion dominating national political campaigns, and with levels of Antisemitism and Islamophobia on the rise⁶⁴, it is also understandable that racialised individuals may choose to maintain a low profile regarding their faith.

There also seems to be comparatively little debate on how to incorporate a religiously diverse workforce or representation in the EP: while the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Unit of the HR Support of the European Parliament (within the DG for Personnel) carries out important work on the LGBTIQ community, anti-racism and disability, and is considering on broadening its work in the coming years to include the dimension of age, there is currently only the interfaith calendar tackling religious diversity, nor is there any plan to include religion as a dimension of diversity in the coming years (AST1)⁶⁵. Additionally, and as shown in section 3c of this report, from the interviews conducted with MEPs and other EP employees, it appears that religion is one of the most neglected dimensions of diversity within the EP also in what concerns the lack of explicit measures on religious accommodation, regarding practicalities such as canteen options. So while the impossibility of unambiguously capturing religious identifications within the EP is a significant limitation, it can also be seen as a finding in its own right, which tells us something about a neglected area of diversity in the EP (and arguably in EU institutions more broadly).

To make up for this lack of data, we researched the composition of the only two IGs that explicitly deal with religious groups: **the Intergroup on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance** [IG9-14], and **the Intergroup on Christians in the Middle East** [IG9-07]. It is noteworthy that these are the only two existing IGs that address faith or religion, and that they are mainly focused on dominant Christian groups. The Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force in December 2009, provided for the first time, in its Article 17, a legal basis for a regular dialogue between the EU institutions and churches, religious associations, and philosophical and non-confessional organisations. Such dialogue has so far however consisted of periodical high-level meetings with religious leaders on international geopolitical issues such as the impact of the war in Ukraine on the European way of life, rather than addressing the rights of religious minorities in the EU⁶⁶.

64 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/18/interview-antisemitism-and-islamophobia-spike-europe>

65 For a more extensive reflection on the work carried out by the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Unit of the HR Support of the European Parliament, see section 3b of the report.

66 See <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/50189/en> and <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/religious-and-non-confessional-dialogue>

We also mapped the membership to **the Intergroup on Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages**.

For our data collection we relied primarily on the following sources: official pages of all MEPs on the website of the European Parliament; personal websites of MEPs, including social media accounts; published official interviews in recognised media, as well as other public statements and declarations; relevant Wikipedia pages backed by reputable sources. To ensure reliability of the data, we made our best efforts to triangulate as many of these sources as possible.⁶⁷

Since political parties do not publish information on the diversity of their election lists, our mapping of the more sensitive characteristics - ethnic/racial identification, LGBTIQ identification, national/linguistic identification, and disability - primarily relied on other secondary sources and tried to pay particular attention to self-identification.⁶⁸ As regards the racial categorisation, we considered all those MEPs to belong to an racialised minority who either identify as **non-white or identify as belonging (also) to a non-EU country that is not in the Global North, or both** (the two conditions are not mutually exclusive). This decision reflects the understanding that the report aims at capturing structural discrimination of particularly disadvantaged groups within the largest representational EU body, the European Parliament, and that

67 For a detailed overview of Data Collection on Racial and Ethnic Origin in Europe, see European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Farkas, L., Analysis and comparative review of equality data collection practices in the European Union – Data collection in the field of ethnicity, Publications Office, 2017, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/447194> See also the 2021 Guidance Note on the collection and use of equality data based on racial or ethnic origin issues by the European Commission: <https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/equality-data-collection-en#guidance-note-on-the-collection-and-use-of-equality-data-based-on-racial-or-ethnic-origin---2021>

68 See ENAR's Election Analysis: Ethnic Minorities in the new EP 2019-2025, footnote 1: https://www.enar-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019_06-Racial-diversity-EU-Parliament-elected-MEPs.pdf

people of colour - or all those racialised as 'non-white', with origins outside of Europe - are amongst such groups.⁶⁹

Beyond the social characteristics of MEPs, we analysed their political activity on diversity themes. First, we mapped their participation in the three Parliamentary Intergroups who are

⁶⁹ For the purpose of this study, we have therefore not labelled as belonging to a racialised minority those MEPs who hold two EU citizenships (such as a MEP who self-identifies as a member of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, or of the Italian minority in Germany) while we have labelled as ethnic/ racial minority those MEPs who identify (also) as Congolese, Turkish or Kurdish, for instance. Also, we have so far not labelled as belonging to an ethnic/ racial minority those MEPs who identify as members of a national minority within the state that they represent (such as Catalans or Scottish MEPs). We believe that this constitutes an important dimension of diversity, but one that should analytically not be conflated with the ethnic/ racial dimension of diversity, and have therefore captured this element as "linguistic/ national diversity" (as a separate dimension in the mapping of diversity). This also means that, in the mapping, we have so far regarded those MEPs who hold dual citizenship from countries that are in the Global North as not belonging to an ethnic/ racial minority solely on those grounds (for instance, a MEP who identifies as white, was born in the US/ Canada and holds dual citizenship). We are fully aware that capturing the full complexity of ethnic identity and external identification (and of the intersectional discriminations tied to it) is heavily dependent upon the context, and have made assessments on a case- to-case basis to reflect as accurately as possible the individual circumstances of each case. We have, for instance, considered as belonging to an ethnic/racial minority a Greek Bulgarian MEP who was the victim of an acid attack.

explicitly involved in protecting and promoting diversity in Europe: the Intergroup on **Anti-Racism and Diversity**; the Intergroup on **LGBTI Rights**; the Intergroup on **Disability**. Second, we mapped MEPs' involvement in one or more of the two Committees that have an explicitly pro-equality mandate in the EP: the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice & Home Affairs (**LIBE**) and the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (**FEMM**).

The data was collected and processed using the Python programming language for those information that are openly available on the official MEPs page on the European Parliament's website, such as year of birth, political membership, gender, country represented and citizenship. This data was cross-referenced with the same set available on Wiki data (a free secondary database focused on items, which represent any kind of topic, concept, or object). We do not foresee any issues in treating this openly available data, as MEPs private data is subject to specific rules and obligations of accountability (see [here](#)). The cleaning of the data was then done manually (for example, the country of citizenship of Italian MEPs born before 1946 appeared as 'Kingdom of Italy' rather than 'Italy'). The complete data set was then organised in excel sheets from which several pivot tables were developed.

B. Online survey among current MEPs

The diversity mapping relied on various data sources to provide an overview of the social characteristics of the MEPs of the current and previous legislative term. While we paid attention to self-identification, particularly regarding the more sensitive social characteristics, we were constrained by the limited (publicly available) information for several of the MEPs. To address this potential shortcoming and give MEPs the possibility to describe themselves on the basis of their perceived social characteristics, we also designed a short online survey.

Integrim LAB, in collaboration with ENAR, prepared a survey questionnaire on diversity including 19 multiple-choice questions. The questions were divided into the following subgroups: gender, age, ethnicity and racial background, religion/system of belief, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disability/chronic disease, belonging to a political party, and membership to other political activist groups (e.g. committees, subgroups, organisations, associations). All questions included "prefer not to answer" and "other" among the

answer options, in order to allow respondents to opt out or self-describe in a way other than the proposed (standard) categories.

The survey was conducted online (via a Google form) and respondents remained completely anonymous: no email addresses were collected⁷⁰ and/or associated with the answer sheet. The survey questions were sent by Integrim LAB to all active MEPs under the current (9th) mandate, accompanied by an explanation on how and for which purpose the data will be used and how the privacy and anonymity of respondents is being protected. The survey was launched on 23 January 2024 and data collection has been finalised after three reminders (sent weekly) to the MEPs to fill in the survey. The response rate, however, has been extremely low totaling only 23 responses as of 26 February

⁷⁰ Only in the cases when respondents explicitly agreed to be interviewed, and provided an email address to the research team.

2024.⁷¹ The tally moreover included two respondents who were not MEPs (but assistants), and three of them who did not provide their consent, therefore effectively lowering the valid response numbers to 18. As a result, it will not be possible to make any reasonable assumptions, let alone statistical analysis, on the basis of this data.

The possible answers to why the survey did not work out well can be summarised in a few points. First of all, the timing

⁷¹ The answers to the survey are being stored on the Integrim Lab's Google Drive, to which only members of the Lab have access, and (like all other data collected for this project) will be deleted in March 2034, at the latest.

of the survey, right at the busy end of the legislative cycle and ahead of the European elections, likely did not encourage MEPs to respond. Secondly, the data we aimed to collect includes potentially sensitive information like sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic background and reports of discrimination in personal life. While we were careful to ensure no personal information would be collected - and could be associated with any of the responses - we cannot exclude that MEPs may have found such disclosure of information too sensitive and private. The sensitivity of such information, and the methodological difficulties of collecting such information in the EU has been noted in the sociological literature in this field (Farkas 2017).

C. In-depth semi-structured interviews

In order to complement the information of the mapping and the survey with a focus on personal biographies and insights, Integrim LAB conducted a total of 11 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with selected respondents. Those included eight MEPs and three respondents amongst Parliamentary assistants and other relevant EP staff. The interviews shed light on additional subjects that were not captured by the other two research methods, and in particular: specific experiences of discrimination and political activism by individual MEPs; challenges and opportunities of diversity-related political work in the European Parliament; the work of diversity-related inter-groups, including achievements and limitations; the work of the EP administration, in particular of the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Unit; recruitment practices; any other insights and relevant feedback by respondents knowledgeable about the topic.

Interviews with MEPs and various EP sources were conducted by members of the Integrim LAB research team (either in person or online) between 31 January 2024 and 23 February. Selected potential interviewees received an invitation email - either by ENAR or Integrim LAB - explaining the objectives of the study and of the interview. Respondents were initially selected on the basis of their social characteristics and political views as identified in the diversity mapping and/or their participation in one of the relevant inter-groups linked to diversity and/or their daily activities on the theme of diversity. In identifying our sample, we tried to ensure as much as possible a plurality of political views on diversity and non-discrimination. While we identified a larger number of relevant potential respondents as belonging to the Left,

S&D and Greens groups (52 in total), we also ensured adequate representation of the views of Renew (15) as well as of the EPP, ECR and ID (27 in total). Overall, including political and administrative staff, we contacted 96 respondents. The response rate to our interview requests was overall very low, especially from respondents belonging to the Renew, EPP, ECR and ID political groups. This was to an extent due to the very limited time available for contacting potential interviewees and conducting the interviews. Whenever possible, we followed up to our interview requests with several reminders, enlisting in some cases the help of ENAR or Parliamentary staff. As a result, the final sampling was partially driven by convenience (e.g. pre-existing relation with certain contacts). For this reason, we are also aware of a certain (self-)selection bias, i.e. the fact that interview participants are much more likely to have a personal and/or professional interest in the topic of diversity and in supporting the broader objectives of increasing diversity and strengthening anti-discrimination in Europe and within the EP. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour.

Respondents were asked to sign an informed consent form. The interview was recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis. Audio recordings and transcriptions/notes were stored on the Integrim Lab's google drive.⁷² All interview records and notes were assigned an identifying code (e.g. MEP1); name and any other personal identifying data or information was removed. All records will be deleted by March 2034, at the latest.

⁷² Only members of the Lab have access to this drive. Access is enabled through a double security check with a Belgium cell phone. Lab members access the shared drive from within the European Union.

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