

Motions

Motion number	5
Name of the person introducing the Motion to the GA	Alfonso Nobile, Tsigdem Asafoglou
Member party	Siciliani Liberi, Patto per l'Autonomia, DEB-Partisi
Title [of the Motion]	The EU should remove barriers in electoral laws, especially for the autonomous Regions and Islands and for minorities

Motion:

In compliance with the norms regulating the power of member states re: electoral law, the EU should forbid placing state-based percentage barriers in their electoral laws that prevent political formations present in autonomous regions, islands, or historical/national minorities from being represented in the European Parliament independently of 'national' parties.

The EU should also pressure its member states to remove such barriers for national elections. The identity, problems and rights violations of minorities and citizens of autonomous regions should be freely represented by MPs and MEPs.

Reasoning:

Since 1979 Europe has legislated for direct elections to grant the EP a truly democratic representation of the European peoples. Europe did not, however, consider the merits of individual electoral laws, since each individual state has its own political culture and equally specific traditions in that respect.

For example, Italy has a rigidly proportional law, following the tradition of the so-called First Republic. In the run-up to the 2009 European elections, a 'national' 4% barrier was introduced, which has been in force ever since.

In Greece, a nationwide 3% threshold was established in the 1990s to block direct representation for the Turkish minority of Western Thrace. This means that the political representation of the minority in Athens has been carried out only by minority members elected from mainstream parties, not by a dedicated minority party like the FEP Party [DEB-Partisi]. However, minority MPs elected from major parties are unable to freely express their identities, the ethnic identity of the minority, or the discrimination, problems or rights violations the minority faces in daily life. Minority MPs, who are compelled to follow the party's national framework, have always been very limited in reflecting on the wishes and rights of the minority in the parliament.

Thresholds [e.g., the one in the German electoral law at 5%] have the declared function of enabling the governability of a country, avoiding political dispersion. However, the electoral

bar sadly denies, even with proportionally allocated representatives, a high percentage of voters the parliamentary representation they are entitled to pro rata: a sacrifice of democracy made in the name of governability.

This logic has another disadvantage. Not only does it eliminate the political representation of minor formations spread equally over the whole country; it also eliminates forces deeply rooted in just one part of the country, such as autonomist, regionalist or local nationalist formations and national, ethnic or linguistic minorities. This inflicts a severe blow on democracy, since while to smaller forces the exclusion can be presented as temporary, awaiting greater consensus, for regional forces to demolish the national bar a disproportionate percentage of voters is required.

For example, a Sicilian autonomist party attempting to gain representation by running in the European elections would need to reach 4% on a 'national' scale; thus, while unable to find voters outside Sicily, it would need to get around 45%, a quota unachievable by any political force whatsoever. In the case of minorities, too, it is often numerically impossible to overcome the threshold, especially if it is set deliberately to target the minority and deny it a voice as in the case of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace.

The initiative of the FEP Party to run for the elections in alliance with parties that share the same values and aims, in order to represent the Turkish minority in the most effective way, has been targeted by the entire national system. As a consequence, the FEP Party's attempts to open channels for dialogue to solve the problems have been blocked. Thus, lifting the threshold and allowing the minority to express its identity and represent itself directly is the only appropriate solution.

The representative of an autonomous Sicilian party or Turkish minority party would not 'complicate' the European political framework (though not a problem *per se*): it would join the ideal group the party belongs to, e.g., EFA, which already has its own representation.

Hence, the national electoral law reduces its democratic representation for no good reason.

Besides, when applied to autonomist or regional parties, this restriction outlaws them by denying them in principle all rights to representation, which appears to us UNJUSTIFIABLE in a Europe of the Peoples.

The 3% electoral bar in Greece is meant to prevent the Turkish minority from having its own representation. Italy and other member states cannot follow this model.

Until 2020, an important party in the European Parliament was the Scottish Nationalist Party, elected on the basis of a proportional law. If the UK had set the bar, the SNP would have been excluded from the European Parliament. This is just one example. Italy cannot deny the right to vote to its autonomous regions, and Greece cannot deny the right to vote for its Turkish minority.

For this reason, we advocate a European regulation to define a minimum democratic framework for European elections, where 'national' barriers are prohibited by adopting a proportional system or, at the very least, barriers should be prohibited for all island or otherwise autonomous regions and for all national minorities.