The European Parliament (EP) is the only directly-elected EU body and one of the largest democratic assemblies in the world. Its 751 Members represent the EU's 500 million citizens. They are elected once every 5 years by voters from across the 28 EU countries. Its representatives are called Members of the European Parliament - MEPs.

Following the 2014 elections to the European Parliament (EP), with a turnout of only 42.54%, the seats are distributed between 8 different Parliamentary groups the EPP - Group of the European People's Party, the S&D - Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, the ECR - European Conservatives and Reformists, the ALDE - Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, the Greens/EFA - Group of Greens/European Free Alliance, the GUE/NGL - European United Left/Nordic Green Left, the EFDD - Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group and the NI - Non-attached Members - Members not belonging to any political group.


The EP's main functions are as follows:

- **legislative power:** the EP is now a co-legislator. For most legal acts, the legislative power is shared with the Council, through the ordinary legislative procedure.

- **budgetary power:** the EP shares budgetary powers with the Council in voting on the annual budget, rendering it enforceable through the President of Parliament's signature, and overseeing its implementation.

- **power of control over the EU's institutions, in particular the Commission.** The EP can give or withhold approval for the designation of Commissioners and has the power to dismiss the Commission as a body by passing a motion of censure. It also exercises a power of control over the EU's activities through written and oral questions, put to the Commission and the Council. It sets up temporary committees and committees of inquiry, whose remit is not necessarily confined to the activities of EU institutions but can extend to action taken by EU countries in implementing EU policies.

The Lisbon Treaty has strengthened the EP's role by placing it on an equal footing with the Council of Ministers. It has:
- extended the ordinary legislative procedure to 40 new fields including agriculture, energy security, immigration, justice and home affairs, health and structural funds;
- reinforced the EP's role in the adoption of the EU budget. The EP is responsible for the adoption of the entire budget together with the Council;
- enabled MEPs to give their consent on a wide range of international agreements negotiated by the EU such as international trade agreements;
- introduced new rights to be informed on the activities of the European Council, the rotating Council presidency and the EU's external action;
- given the EP the right to propose changes to the Treaty;
- improved EP's power of scrutiny by electing the President of the European Commission, and by approving European Commission's members by a vote of consent.

SEE ALSO
- European institutions
- European political parties
- National parliaments
- Ombudsman
- Ordinary legislative procedure
- Parliamentary committees
- Statute for Members of the European Parliament
- Uniform electoral procedure for the European Parliament
- European Parliament website