

Bulgarians living in another EU country to vote in the European elections: how, when, where?

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Our editor's office received a lot of questions from Bulgarians who are temporary or permanent residents of other member states of the European Union and who are interested in how they could take part in the European Parliament Elections in June 2009.

A Europe Gateway team researched the matter and the information collected is presented below. We are available for opinions, comments and questions via [our email](#).

The Voting Date

European Parliament elections will take place between Thursday, June 4th and Sunday, June 7th, 2009. Each member state will select the exact date for the vote on national level. Yet the results from the ballot would not be announced earlier than the evening of June, 7th.

The vote will take place on the last possible date (June, 7th) for the citizens of Austria

<http://www.bmi.gv.at/Wahlen/>, Belgium, Germany, Greece

<http://www.ypes.gr/ekloges/content/gr/default.htm>, Denmark, Estonia, Spain, Lithuania, Luxemburg

www.europaforum.public.lu/fr/dossiers-thematiques/2009/elections/index.html, Portugal

<http://www.dgai.mai.gov.pt>, Slovenia, Finland <http://www.vaalit.fi>, France and Sweden.

The European Elections will take place on June, 6th in Latvia <http://web.cvk.lv/pub/public/28333.html>, Cyprus, Malta www.electoral.gov.mt and Slovakia.

The 5th of June is the voting date in Ireland

<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/LocalGovernment/Voting/FileDownload,1877,en.pdf>

The elections in Great Britain and <http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/> and in the Netherlands will take place on June, 4th.

Some member states have decided on a two-day ballot. The election dates in the Czech Republic www.mvcr.cz are 5th and 6th of June (Friday afternoon and Saturday morning). In Italy the ballot will take place on 6th and 7th of June.

On March, 24th, 2009 four of the member states still have not announced the dates for the vote. The first one is Poland. In the other three countries – Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary – elections are usually held on a Sunday.

How does one vote in a foreign country?

Our team researched how a national of a member state can use his/her right to vote in a EU state of residence, different to the state of origin.

Every citizen of the European Union has the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections in the Member State in which they reside. Such a person must:

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- » be a citizen of one the 27 EU member states;
 - » legally reside in the member state in which he/she proposes to vote or to stand as a candidate;
 - » satisfy the same conditions as a national of that Member State who wishes to vote or to stand as a candidate (the principle of equality between domestic and other Community voters).

Nationals of an EU member state, residing in another member state, different to their country of citizenship have the right to vote or stand as a candidate in elections in the country they reside in. Of course, no one has the right to vote more than once or to stand as a candidate in more than one member state in the same election. Thus any person who chose to vote in the member state he/she resides in (i.e. the country they are in on the day of the vote) has no right to vote in his/her country of citizenship in the same elections.

How does it work?

If you are a Bulgarian citizen living in another EU member state and you wish to take part in the EP elections in June, you have two options:

- » to vote for the local candidates in your country of residence
- » to vote for Bulgarian candidates

How can Bulgarians living abroad vote for Bulgarian candidates?

Here are the provisions in Bulgarian legislation regarding the EU elections which took place in 2007: Bulgarian citizens in other member states, who wish to vote for Bulgarian MEPs, submit a written and personally signed application at least 20 days before the day of the vote. The application is personal and it has to be sent by post or via email to the Bulgarian embassy in the country of residence. The application has to specify the names of the voter, his/her personal identification number, his/her address in the country of residence and the person's permanent address in Bulgaria. The application needs to fulfill the requirements of article 4, paragraph 1. A voter who is not included in the electoral roll can be registered if he/she presents his/her identification papers and a written declaration to the electoral committee. The declaration has to state that the citizen has resided in Bulgaria or in another EU member state for the last three months and that he/she has not yet voted in these elections. The heads of the embassies of Republic of Bulgaria form electoral sections on the territory of the embassy or the consulate, provided that at least 20 voters have personally declared their intention to vote.

Bulgarian National Assembly is to adopt a new act for the coming European Parliament elections.

How do Bulgarians in another member state vote for the candidates in the country of residence?

If you are a Bulgarian citizen or a citizen of any other EU member state and you live in another EU member state, you have the right to vote for the candidates in the EU member state of residence in the European Parliament elections in June 2009.

In order to do that you need to be entered in the electoral roll of the member state of residence. A Community voter needs to declare his/her decision to vote in the member state of residence in advance.

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He/she needs to submit a form, together with a set of documents. A Community voter shall fulfill the same conditions as a voter who is a national.

It is possible that you live in a EU member state with compulsory voting system (Belgium, Luxemburg, Greece, Cyprus). In this case, once you are entered in the electoral roll, you are obliged to vote! If you do not, the same sanctions will be imposed to you as to the other citizens of the country who breached the law.

Deadlines for registration in electoral rolls in member states

There are two key requirements for a citizen of a member state to be able to vote in his/her country of residence, different from his/her country of origin. The first one is a minimum period in which that person has lived in the country prior to the elections, proved by the registration of residence. The second condition is for the foreign national to notify the local authorities in the country of residence that he/she wishes to be entered in the electoral rolls in order to vote in the day of the ballot. Of course there is the condition for the voters to be of voting age.

Sweden – to vote for EP candidates in Sweden, nationals of other member states, including Bulgarians, need to notify the local Swedish prefecture by May, 8, 2009. All citizens who are at the age of 18 and older have and have registered for residence in Sweden at least 30 days prior to the elections have the right to vote in the ballot.

Finland – in European Parliamentary elections, a citizen of another European Union Member State is entitled to vote in our elections provided the person has reached the age of 18 not later than on the day of the election and his/hers municipality of residence referred to in the Municipality of Residence Act (201/1994) is in Finland on 17 April 2009 and provided the person has not lost the right to vote in European elections in the country of which he/she is a citizen (home state). The notification and the withdrawal of the notification shall be notified to the local register office by 4 p.m. at least 80 days prior to the polling day, that is 19 of March, 2009 before 4.00 p.m. local time. The notification has to be made in writing to the Local Register Office.

Malta – non-Maltese persons having citizenship of an EU member state and who are residing or working in the Maltese Islands have the option to be registered as voters in the European Union Electoral Register before 31st of March, 2009. This is the deadline for updating the register which is to be published in April. The names listed in this register would eventually be served with a voting document for the purpose. Similarly, such persons may also stand as candidates, but they have to apply during nomination days. For the vote, they must apply on a specific form which is also found online (see the link above). They must have a Maltese identity card (since all residents are obliged to hold an ID card) and must have the basic qualifications of being aged 18 and over, **be of sound mind to vote** (note that is one of the requirements!), be citizens of an EU country, must not be serving a sentence in prison of over one year and must not have been deprived of the right to vote in their home country. Once applying, a person is signing a declaration knowing that he or she would be voting solely in Malta for candidates running in Malta and that he or she may not vote in his/her home country. In fact the Electoral Commission would be communicating the list of such persons to the various electoral bodies of all EU member states such that the individual names are removed from their electoral roll for this particular election. Note that in Malta voting is not compulsory and although one may have his name on the electoral register and once he or she is even supplied with a voting document he or she may still not go to cast the vote.

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Elections calendar

EUROPE Gateway summarized the deadlines for registration in the electoral rolls of EU member states:

- December 31, 2008** – deadline for registration in **France** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - February 28, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Greece** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - March 9, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Italy** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - March 13, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Luxemburg** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - March 24, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Slovenia** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - March 31, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Austria** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - March 31, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Malta** (the ballot is on June 6)
 - April 1, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Belgium** (the ballot is on June 7, between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m.)
 - April 2, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Cypris** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - April 3, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Lithuania** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - April 8, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Portugal** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - April 17, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Finland** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - April 19, 2009** – deadline for registration in **UK** (the ballot is on June 4)
 - April 22, 2009** – deadline for registration in the **Netherlands** (the ballot is on June 4)
 - April 26, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Czech Republic** (the ballot is on June 5 and 6)
 - April 27, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Slovakia** (the ballot is on June 6)
 - April 27, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Spain** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - April 30, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Hungary** (no date has been set by March 25, 2009)

 - May 4, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Denmark** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - May 7, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Latvia** (the ballot is on June 6)
 - May 8, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Estonia** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - May 8, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Sweden** (the ballot is on June 7)
 - May 17, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Germany** ((the ballot is on June 7)
 - May 18, 2009** – deadline for registration in **Ireland** (the ballot is on June 5)
- Poland, Bulgaria and Romania have not announced deadlines for registration by March 25, 2009.*