

(English version)

Question for written answer E-005046/25
to the Council
Elena Kountoura (The Left)
(22 December 2025)

Subject: Amendment of the European Electoral Act, allowing Members to vote in plenary by proxy voting during pregnancy and after giving birth

The lack of institutional arrangements to ensure that female Members of the European Parliament can perform their duties during pregnancy and in the postnatal period may run counter to the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination as enshrined in the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. It also falls short of ensuring unhindered parliamentary participation. The ongoing reform of the European Electoral Act ⁽¹⁾ is a crucial opportunity to remedy the existing gaps in the current institutional framework ⁽²⁾.

Given that:

- existing practices within Member States vary considerably as regards the possibility of proxy voting or temporary replacement ⁽³⁾;
- work-life balance policies must help achieve gender equality by promoting the participation of women in politics when they become mothers.

In view of the above, can the Council answer the following:

1. How does it intend to ensure that the reform of the European Electoral Act fully complies with the principles of gender equality and equal participation?
2. Does it intend to adopt a legislative provision allowing women MEPs to use proxy voting during pregnancy and in the postnatal period?
3. Is it considering extending the right to temporary replacement beyond maternity leave to cover cases of paternity leave, parental leave or leave due to serious illness, on an equal basis, with a view to ensuring coherent and non-discriminatory arrangements for all Members of the European Parliament?

Submitted: 22.12.2025

Reply
(20 April 2026)

On 17 March 2026, the Council agreed in principle on the decision amending the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage and decided to forward the agreed text to the European Parliament for its consent, in accordance with the second subparagraph of Article 223(1) TFEU.

As proposed by the European Parliament, the text agreed in principle by the Council introduces the possibility for a member of the European Parliament who is pregnant or who has given birth to have her vote cast by another member of the European Parliament acting as proxy for a maximum period of three months before the estimated date of birth of the child and for a maximum period of six months after the birth.

The Council introduced amendments aimed at ensuring that proxy voting arrangements follow the principles of transparency and accountability and are subject to clear safeguards.

¹ The proposal to reform the European Electoral Act has now been sent to the Council. See: Amendment of the European Electoral Act allowing Members to vote in plenary by proxy voting during pregnancy and after giving birth (https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-10-2025-0257_EN.html).

² The European Electoral Act needs to be amended because Article 6(1) provides that ‘representatives shall vote on an individual and personal basis. They shall not be bound by any instructions and shall not receive a binding mandate.’ Therefore, voting on behalf of a fellow Member would violate this provision, even if the aim pursued is legitimate.

³ Currently, only three EU countries (Spain, Greece and Luxembourg) have formal provisions providing for alternative ways of voting for Members who are on maternity leave.