



Spotlight on Parliaments in Europe

Drafted by the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments - Institutional Cooperation Unit
Source: European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation

N° 25 - November 2019

Constituencies in national parliamentary elections

On 1 August 2019, the German Bundestag submitted a request (4151) to the ECPRD concerning the constituencies in national parliamentary elections. The request tackled questions on the number of constituencies, the classification rules, and data on the average number of citizens; eligible voters; total resident population; and the area per constituency. In total 30 Parliaments/Chambers from 24 Member States (MS) replied. Due to the variety of each national situation, the replies do not provide a significant synthesis. It is their “panoramic” representation that may be of interest. For that purpose, the information shared by the NPs is compiled in a table to give an overview.

The number of constituencies in national parliamentary elections vary widely from MS to MS ranging from 1 constituency in Slovakia, to 299 in Germany, 577 in France, and 650 in the UK. On average, there are 82 constituencies per MS. Most of the MSs use a multi-member system. However, four MSs have single-member constituencies and five combine the two.

For the number of citizens, the eligible voters and the total resident population per constituency, there is no sufficient data to make general remarks. In MSs with a high number of constituencies, the amount of citizens represented per constituency is still similar. An exception has to be made for Slovakia with their 1 constituency policy. When it comes to the area coverage per constituency, there was also insufficient data to make a general comparison. The smallest constituencies range from 7 to 196 km² and the largest from 6.500 to 109.456 km².

In the creation of constituencies, many MSs used different approaches. Based on the data given, the methods can be divided into three categories: territorial, demographic or a combined method. The Polish Senate and the Finish Eduskunta apply a demographic approach. The Polish Senate determines the constituencies “by the norm of representation – quotient of the population of Poland by 100 [...] The number of inhabitants in the constituency cannot be higher than or equal to twice the norm of representation, and cannot be lower than half of the norm.” Whereas the Finish Eduskunta says that, “The number of Finnish citizens is decisive, except in the electoral district of Åland, which by law elects one representative due to its autonomous status.”

The territorial method is used by 15 MSs. In most cases, they follow the administrative entities such as provincial structure, division in counties or districts, following borders of cities and other higher self-governing units. In some cases, exceptions are made for some counties or cities. In Belgium, the Brussels-capital administrative district is added as a constituency on top of the 10 provinces. Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece and Sweden divide their capital (and sometimes other counties) into several constituencies.

Some MSs introduce both demographic and territorial elements in their classification system for constituencies. This means in almost all of the cases that the boundaries of counties, districts or provinces are taken into account, and the average number of voters or citizens per constituency is also taken into account.

France has redistributed its constituencies based on the evolution of the population. In Sweden, the division is based on the division of the realm, as stated above, but there is a call for taking the population and geographic size into account. Irish legislation provides a revision every 12 years. Lastly, Slovakia with a remarkable single constituency has also had a call to amend this and create multiple constituencies.

Many NPs included the electoral procedure in their responses. The main method mentioned is proportional representation. Germany and Hungary also mentioned a system of Relative Majority voting, while Italy and UK noted that they use a first-past-the-post system.

	HOW MANY CONSTITUENCIES	NUMBER OF MPS PER CHAMBER	SINGLE- OR MULTI-MEMBER	AVERAGE NUMBER OF CITIZENS PER CONSTITUENCY	AVERAGE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS PER CONSTITUENCY	AVERAGE NUMBER OF RESIDENTS PER CONSTITUENCY	AVERAGE AREA PER CONSTITUENCY (KM ²)	SMALLEST/LARGEST CONSTITUENCY (KM ²)	DECISIVE FOR CONSTITUENCY CLASSIFICATION
AUSTRIA NATIONALRAT	48 (9 provincial 39 regional)	183	Multi-member 1 Single-member	826.000 provinces 191.000 regional	711.000 provinces 164.000 regional	975.000 provinces 225.000 regional	9.300 provincial 2.150 regional	400/19.000	Territorial
BELGIUM HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	11	150	Multi-member	-	742.519	1.039.219	3.039 provinces 161 Brussels capital	-	Territorial
BULGARIA NATIONAL ASSEMBLY	31	240	Multi-member	-	-	-	-	-	Territorial
CROATIA HRVATSKI SABOR	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Territorial
CZECH REPUBLIC CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES	14	200	-	765.842*	598.181*	-	-	496/10.929	Territorial
DENMARK FOLKETINGET	10	-	Multi-member	565.971*	407.991*	-	4.292,17*	179/8.777*	Demographic and Territorial
ESTONIA RIIGIKOGU	12	101	Multi-member	94.000	74.000	110.000	3.773	-	Territorial
FINLAND EDUSKUNTA	13	200	-	177.000- 1.020.000**	-	-	28.000	215/99.000	Demographic
FRANCE ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE	577	577	Single-member	6.000-155.000**	-	-	-	-	Demographic and Territorial
GERMANY BUNDESTAG	299	299	Single-member	250.000	210.000	275.000	1.200	27/6.250	Demographic and Territorial
GREECE VOULI TON ELLINON	59	300	7 Single-member 52 Multi-member	184.421	167.535	168.353	2.315	39/5.422	Territorial
HUNGARY NATIONAL ASSEMBLY	106	199***	Single-member	-	74.689	-	-	-	Demographic and Territorial
IRELAND HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS	39	160	Multi-member	29.762	-	-	1.757*	14/5.234	Demographic and Territorial
ITALY CAMERA DEI DEPUTATI	28	630	232 Single-member 28 Multi-member	256.180 Single-member 941.380 Multi-member	-	-	1.302 Single-member 4.720 Multi-member	14/6.958 Single-member 119/15.237 Multi-member	Demographic and Territorial
ITALY SENATO DELLA REPUBBLICA	20	321	116 Single-member 20 Multi-member	500.000	-	-	-	-	Demographic and Territorial
LATVIA REPUBLIKAS SAEIMA	5	100	Multi-member	-	309.620*	456.716*	-	-	Territorial

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LITHUANIA SEIMAS	72	141***	71 Single-member 1 Multi-member	-	35.000	-	-	-	Demographic and Territorial
LUXEMBOURG CHAMBRE DES DÉPUTÉS	4	60	Multi-member	-	64.971	153.473	647	-	Territorial
POLAND SEJM	41	460	Multi-member	920.690	750.331	-	-	-	Demographic and Territorial
POLAND SENAT	100	100	Single-member	377.813	307.629	-	3.127	-	Demographic
PORTUGAL ASSEMBLEIA DA REPUBLICA	22	230	Multi-member	-	-	-	-	-	Territorial
SLOVAKIA NATIONAL COUNCIL	1	150	Multi-member	5.427.917	4.419.883	-	49.035	-	Territorial
SLOVENIA DRZAVNI ZBOR	10	90	Multi-member*	-	212.933 (electoral district: 19.358)	-	-	-	Territorial and common cultural and other characteristics
SPAIN CONGRESO DE LOS DIPUTADOS	52	350	Multi-member	809.348,4	509.195	902.589	9.700	14/21.750	Territorial
SPAIN SENADO	59	265	-	-	-	-	-	-	Territorial
SWEDEN RIKSDAG	29	349	-	351.968	258.481	320.618	16.009	161/109.456	Territorial
UNITED KINGDOM HOUSE OF COMMONS	650	650	Single-member	-	70.400	102.200	373	7/12.000	Demographic and Territorial

Remarks: *Derived from the given information **No average was given ***Some MPs are elected via national lists

Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments - Institutional Cooperation Unit
www.europarl.europa.eu/relnatparl
 Author, contact: Paolo Atzori, paolo.atzori@ep.europa.eu

