
MEPS TO KEEP 27 UK SEATS AFTER BREXIT

24.01.2018

EU Observer (23 January 2018)

Twenty-seven of the total 73 seats currently occupied by British members of the European Parliament will be redistributed among the remaining 27 EU countries, the parliament's constitutional affairs committee decided on Tuesday (23 January).

The redistribution will only apply after the parliament elections of May 2019, two months after the end of the two-year Brexit negotiation period between the UK and the EU.

The number of French MEPs will grow from 74 to 79, while Spanish MEPs will increase in number from 54 to 59.

Italy and the Netherlands each gain three seats, going from 73 to 76 and 26 to 29 respectively.

Ireland will increase its number of MEPs from 11 to 13.

Denmark, Estonia, Croatia, Austria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, and Sweden all have been allocated one additional seat.

Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Portugal, and Slovenia will keep the same number of MEPs as they have today.

Germany was unable to increase its number of MEPs, because it already has the maximum number allowed, 96.

Size matters

The seats were redistributed, rather than just left empty or abolished, because the current distribution was not considered equally fair to all countries, considering their population sizes.

The past months saw several proposals flying around, with several member states wanting to have more seats. The available seats caused by Brexit were seen as an opportunity to cater to those wishes without any country having to give up seats.

The distribution was expected as part of a political deal, with a majority of groups agreeing on Monday to a compromise amendment.

The total number of seats would drop from 751 to 705. The file still needs to be approved by the parliament's plenary.

Vote for any European

The remaining 46 seats will remain empty, but can be used in future for MEPs from new member states.

MEPs on Tuesday also laid the groundwork for pan-European lists, which would allow EU citizens to vote for politicians from other EU countries.

Currently, a French citizen can only vote for a candidate on a French list, and a Greek citizen for someone on a Greek list.

The idea for transnational lists has been around for years, but recently gained momentum again following the support by French president Emmanuel Macron, who rallied the leaders of southern EU countries behind him.

The decision whether to set up such pan-EU lists will be for the national governments of the member states.

Tuesday's adopted parliament text however clarified that the seats which UK MEPs will leave behind, may be used for such transnational lists.

However, if the UK is still a member state when the new parliamentary term begins, those elected on a transnational list will have to wait until the UK MEPs are gone before they can take up their seats in Brussels and Strasbourg.

One likely consequence of Tuesday's vote is that the cost of the European Parliament per country will go up.

Without the budget contribution from the UK, other member states will have to foot the bill for the 27 'new' MEPs, who will earn around a month, and receive a monthly office allowance of around €4,300. This would add up to an additional cost of €345,600 per month.

Another consequence, for those countries with additional MEPs, is that it becomes relatively easier to be elected to the European Parliament than during the last elections.

MEPs, in a separate, non-binding text approved with 20 to 4, said on Tuesday that not only political groups that already exist may set up transnational lists.

Following the vote, a heated, unscheduled debate erupted in the committee meeting about the idea of transnational lists.

Several MEPs warned against the concept, saying that it would only increase the gap between citizens and MEPs.

This article was corrected on 24 January 2018 at 7.30am to correct two calculation errors. The total number of UK seats reallocated is 27, not 28 as previously reported, which puts the total number of MEPs at 705, not 706. The additional cost of the 27 'new' MEPs' would be per

month, not per year.

Kaynak/Source: