



# EMY Pre-election Mapping Results

According to the Eurobarometer survey, the record turnout in the **2019 European Parliament (EP)** elections was mainly driven by the younger generation across the EU. Especially young citizens in under 25 and 25-39 age groups had a major impact<sup>1</sup>.

Before the 2019 EP elections, our project - **“Empowerment of mobile youth in the EU” (EMY)** – investigated young citizens as well. We conducted pre-election online survey and focus groups with European Mobile Youth – mobile students from other EU Member States aged 18-29 and studying in Estonia and Austria. We assessed their

interest and attitudes towards the 2019 EP elections with a particular focus on the barriers of their political engagement.

Altogether we had **379 survey respondents and 22 focus group participants** in two countries. More than half of the responses for our Estonian survey came from Finland (19%), Germany (14%), Italy (11%) and Latvia (8%) and for the Austrian survey – from Germany (45%) and Italy (13%). Check out our survey results for **ESTONIA** [here](#) and for **AUSTRIA** [here](#).



Estonia



Austria

## What did we learn?

- 1 Mobile students mainly perceive **EU citizenship** through the prism of its practical benefits (such as traveling and studying abroad) and stressed the complexity of the European politics.

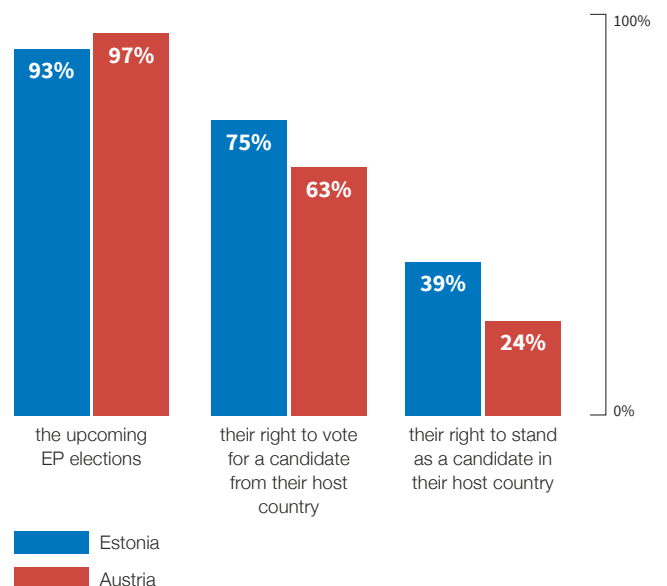
*“If one doesn’t have an education about it, it is hard to understand it. That is probably why people rather leave it then. That’s why campaigns should be easy to understand and funny.” (Focus Group Austria)*

*“The EU has the same sort of influence as our national governments have, but I think there is lack of engagement because... it is hard for us to relate to this other entity. It is similar to climate change, we know it is going on, but we cannot get the grasp of it... how it does influence our lives.” (Focus Group Estonia)*

*“For me to be a European citizen means to be free... to be free to walk across borders... [...] to travel, to learn from other cultures, other people, try to understand each other more.” (Focus group Estonia)*

- 2 They were generally aware of the 2019 EP elections and of their **right to vote for a candidate from Estonia or Austria**, but much less aware about their **right to stand as candidates** themselves in these countries.

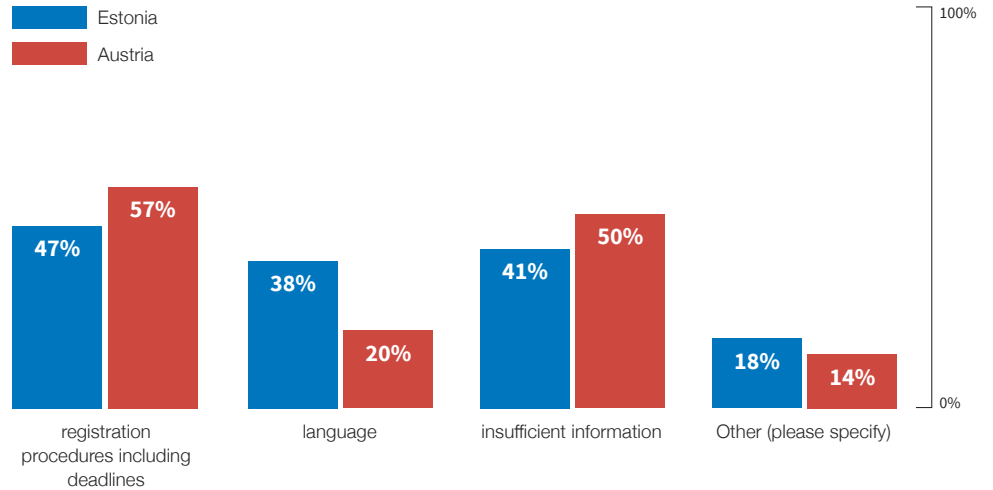
EMYs are aware of...



<sup>1</sup>2019 European elections: Record turnout driven by young people. Press Release of the European Parliament. Accessible at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20190923IPR61602/2019-european-elections-record-turnout-driven-by-young-people> 4.10.2019  
 A full report about the post-electoral survey accessible at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/eurobarometer/2019-european-elections-entered-a-new-dimension> 4.10.2019

3 Political engagement in Estonia and Austria is strongly affected by **language barriers**. **Administrative** issues such as insufficient information about registration and voting procedures in Estonia and Austria - and in the home country for eligible voters living abroad - constitute major barriers to participation in EP elections.

**Do you think that there are barriers that make it difficult, or even prevent you from participating in the European elections in Estonia / Austria?**



*“There is a lot of campaigning going on, but it is all in Estonian. When somehow, I managed to keep my interest on YouTube and I went to their website, I lost all interest, because it was all in Estonian still.”*  
(Focus Group Estonia)

*“I already received a letter of information about the registration process in March from my district. I got it very close to the deadline and not any information was given in English.”* (Focus Group Austria)

*“Recently, when I wanted to vote [i.e. for Spanish local elections], I couldn’t, because I was supposed to ask for documentation to vote during 5 days after the announcement of the elections... so I was too late I could not even vote...I was really disappointed.”*  
(Focus Group Estonia)

*“I have to register very early on in Austria, so that’s why I don’t vote.”*  
(Focus Group Austria)

4 Mobile students **are not yet prepared** to vote for the candidates of their host country, nor, more generally, to follow or engage in political life of the host country. Interest in engaging in the host country’s political life appears to be strongly related to two factors - **language knowledge and duration of stay**. About **3/4** of our respondents both in Estonia and Austria said they would have voted for their **home country candidate**, if they decided to vote in EP elections.

*“For me personally... I am in Estonia for very short time, so I feel I do not have moral right to decide about Estonian public matters. I do not feel that this almost half a year is enough to know about those politicians, background, political parties. I only have so superficial information and I do not think this is enough to vote, at least for me.”*  
(Focus Group Estonia)

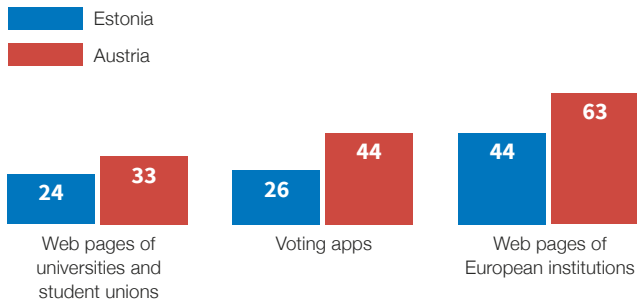
*“I think if I’d live for a longer period of time in Austria, I would consider it more. Because now I think I know more about Dutch politics.”*  
(Focus Group Austria)

*“Regarding Estonian media...no, I do not follow them...the information is mostly from Facebook, [...] just advertisements. I can understand they are politics related, but it is completely in Estonian, so I just skip.”*  
(Focus Group Estonia)

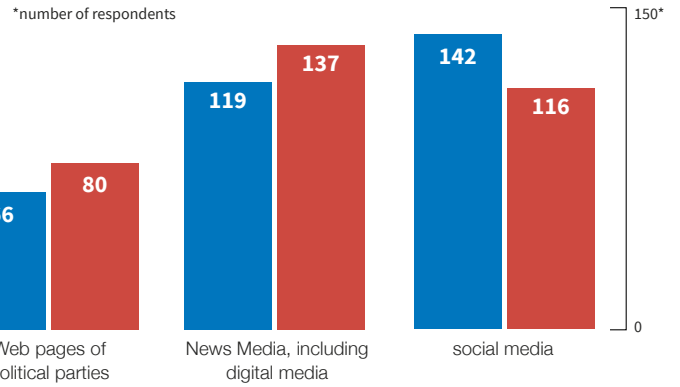
5 They have a strong attachment to their home countries’ political agenda: in both countries **2/3 follow their home news daily and weekly**. The mobile students living in Estonia are far more interested in the news coming from their home countries – almost half of them **47%** are doing that on a daily basis, compared with **36%** in Austria.

6 Student unions and mobility/international offices of the universities do not play any major role in the political engagement of mobile students. There is also considerable room for improvement in the field of social integration – getting out of Erasmus/international “bubble” is difficult.

7 There is a strong indication that mobile youth are heavy digital media users. According to our respondents **social and online media** are important sources of information but not generally considered as a preferred forum for (political) discussion with peers.

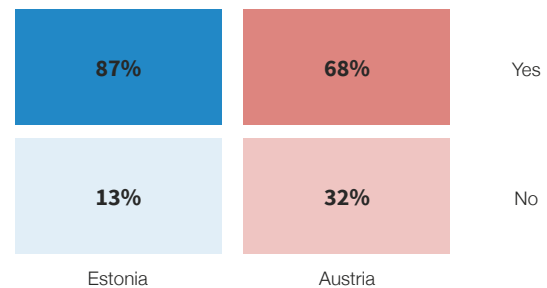


### Preferred communication media channels to be informed about European elections



8 Most mobile students are very interested in **internet voting**. **85%** of mobile students in Estonia and **69%** in Austria indicated their **preference for i-voting** instead of other conventional voting method in case they had the opportunity to try this voting method<sup>2</sup>. However, concerns about security and secrecy were also voiced in both countries.

### Would you prefer to use Internet voting (i-voting) instead of conventional voting methods (polling station, postal voting)?



"For me there is also something about going to the polling station that makes it special. You have to think about it and...it is a certain...maybe sacrifice is the wrong word, but a certain thing that you do. It takes a lot of time and I want the choice I make to be conscious, so maybe it just feels more conscious, that's why." (Focus Group Estonia)

"I think for me i-voting would be something cool. [...] Ok, you can vote also by mail, but it takes time...a lot of time. You need to go to post office. But with i-voting [...] it takes some minutes and that's it. That would be really really cool." (Focus Group Estonia)

"I trust in elections. But I don't know that much about technology." (Focus Group Austria)

"I would like that. It would make me feel like I have more tools, I think." (Focus Group Estonia)

"As long as it's safe. I don't know if I could trust it. Because of transparency issues and attack from the inside and outside. I think data security is also an issue." (Focus Group Austria)

## Who we are (Project Partners)

**AIT** - Austrian Institute of Technology (lead partner)  
**CEPA** - Centre for Economics and Public Administration Ltd. UK  
**eGA** - e-Governance Academy, Estonia  
**Politikos** - Wir müssen reden ! (NGO), Austria

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<sup>2</sup>While in Estonia i-voting has been in use in municipal, national and European elections since 2005 and the mobile students residing in Estonia have the real opportunity to try it, the question for mobile students in Austria was hypothetical.