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Parliamentary Debate on the Oral Question

- Reform of the electoral law of the European Union

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Since this morning a lot has been said in this house on elections as the main instrument of democratic participation. Democratic participation is the *raison d'être* of any Parliament.

This European Parliament, was for the first time elected based on a direct universal suffrage in 1979, the legal basis was provided by Electoral Act of 20 September 1976. It was a European Parliament composed of 410 directly elected representatives. It was a European Parliament for a European Union of 9 Member States.

Today, we live in a different world, the European Union comprises 28 Member States and the European Parliament is composed of 751 Members. Its role as co-legislator skyrocketed. And still, the rules governing the conduct of European Elections are those established 42 years ago.

It is our fundamental duty, as European Parliament to enable participatory democracy. It is our role as Members of the European Parliament to facilitate building of a bottom up Europe and connect citizens with Europe.

Connecting Europe with citizens starts with the European Elections, and we need to update the Electoral Act of 1976. This is what we did in November 2015 by adopting and transmitting to the Council a proposal for amendment of the 1976 Electoral Act in line with provisions of the treaty.

According to the Article 223 TFEU, it is the duty and right of the European Parliament to draw up a proposal to lay down the provisions on its electoral law.

Our utmost goal was to enhance the democratic dimension of the European elections, to reinforce the Union citizenship, to improve the functioning of the European Parliament and the governance of the European Union, to make the work of the European Parliament more legitimate and efficient, to enhance the effectiveness of the European elections' conduct, and to provide for more electoral equality of the Union citizens.

More than two years have passed since Parliament submitted its proposal to the Council.

Six Council Presidencies have worked on our proposal without delivering any formal reply to Parliament's resolution and thereby not only jeopardising the principles of good interinstitutional cooperation but also de facto blocking Parliament's attempt to reinforce the European dimension of elections.

The next European elections of 2019 are around the corner and yet the Council has wasted the last 2.5 years of precious time, which otherwise would have allowed us to have new and better rules in force for the next electoral period.

So here is our question.

This is why we are asking the Council once again, however this time formally, to inform us of its intended timetable for the finalisation of this file and for the reasons for the delays.