

# European Parliament (2024 – 2029) Election Results

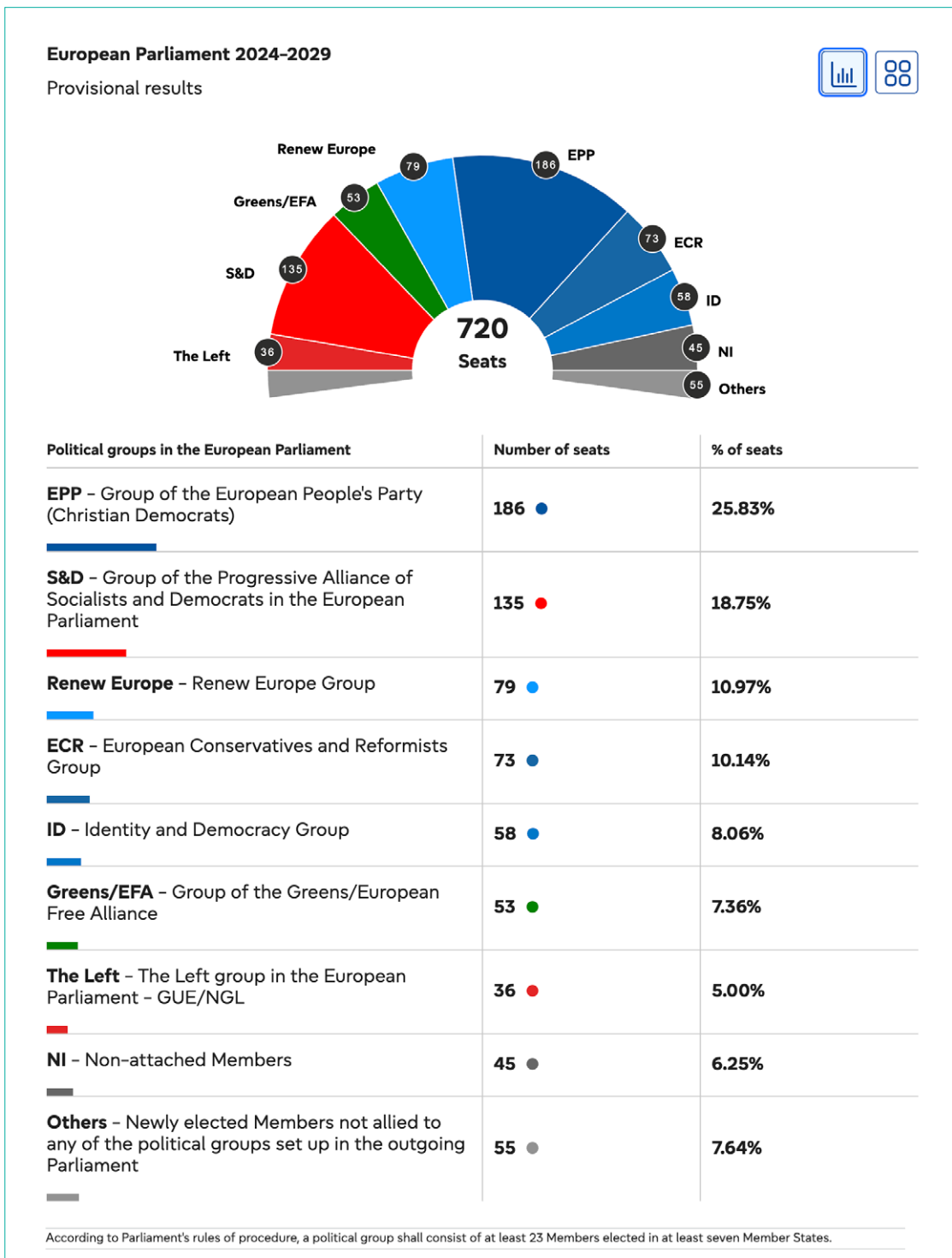
A Brief Assessment  
June 2024

# Introduction

The European Parliament (EP) elections take place every five years to determine the currently 720 directly elected representatives of European citizens constituting the EP.

We provide here a brief assessment of the outcome, implications and next steps. The EP elections are important not only because they define the relative power balance between the main seven political party groups at the EU level for the next five years (2024 – 2029) which has a major impact on the shape of future EU regulation and policy. The outcome of the elections also matters for the selection of new political leaders at the helm of various EU institutions and whose appointments are typically agreed upon in a “package deal”.

The mandates of the following positions expire in autumn 2024: the presidents of the European Commission (currently Ms. von der Leyen) and the European Council (currently Mr. Michel) as well as the High Representative for the Union on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (currently Mr. Borrell Fontelles).



# European Parliament Elections

## What Happened and What Happens Next?

The election of a new European Parliament on 6-9 June 2024 marked the beginning of a new five-year policy cycle in the EU. In parallel to the European elections, several EU countries (e.g. Belgium, Bulgaria, Ireland, Italy and Hungary) conducted regional or national elections.

As expected, right-wing parties in France, Germany, Austria and The Netherlands gained substantially. While the elected parliamentarians and the exact configurations of the political parties will become more widely known in the coming days, the run-up indicated that the existing trend towards the right, as evidenced by the considerable win of the far-right party in France, will continue. It is nevertheless worth noting that despite the power far-right parties will be getting in the new Parliament, they are still not expected to outnumber the largest political parties, as was predicted before the election. It will however impact how coalitions will be built going forward.

The change of dynamics in the European Parliament is expected to influence the way policy agenda is driven and how legislative work is conducted. Notably, 2024 is not just a transition year for the European Parliament: the political leadership in the European Commission is also up for change, in the autumn. We present below a first overview and analysis of the outcome of the elections, first thoughts on the expected outcome of the European Commission leadership changes and what policy priorities can be anticipated in the new policy cycle that is about to begin.

### Outcome

Previously at 705, the new European Parliament will now be represented by 720 members, based on adjustments of seats to reflect the population. The outcome of the elections – based on the preliminary results currently available – indicate a decisive shift to right, that will be benefiting the centre-right and far-right groups, at the expense of the more centre and left-leaning groups, particularly Renew Europe and the Greens.

The European People's Party (EPP) and the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) are set to remain the two largest political groups, with the EPP winning an additional 9 seats compared to the S&D that has lost 2 seats. The EPP therefore consolidates its position as the most influential political group. The European Conservatives and Reforming group and the Left group both maintain similar powers compared to the previous mandate. The biggest blow of the elections is with the liberals at Renew Europe, who are set to lose 23 seats and the Greens, who are set to lose 18 seats. The far-right Identity & Democracy Group, has won 9 seats, less than they were projected to win.

Nonetheless, it remains to be seen if and how the 55 non-affiliated and 45 non-attached members will decide to position themselves in the political families, which can change the composition of the seats by political group. The configuration of parliamentary groups will be subject to interparty negotiations expected in the coming weeks. It is unclear for instance whether a new political party will be created, after the Alternative for Germany (AfD) was expelled from the Identity & Democracy Group, while at the same time Marine Le Pen's National Rally party has been approaching Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy party to form an alliance in a potentially powerful new group in the European Parliament.

### European Parliament Dynamics

Legislative work has historically been built in the European Parliament by the forming of coalitions, where political parties were able to form alliances harnessing enough power to advance on certain compromises. The relationship between the centre-right EPP and centre-left S&D groups has traditionally been at the heart of the European Parliament's policy-making – the outgoing (ninth) Parliament was the first in which these two groupings could not form a majority between them.

With the rise of the far-right political parties, these delicate dynamics have changed, still leading to compromises in the last mandate. The challenge the new European Parliament needs to face is how to deal with the rise of the far-right parties; how centre-right, socialists, left, the weakened liberals and green parties will be able to form coalitions to endorse or block certain policies; and whether the rise of far-right parties will enable the adoption of laws in a more conservative manner. Centre-right parties like EPP in particular are likely to be confronted with difficult choices in some policy areas about whether to compromise with the conservatives or the centrists and the centre-left to support a broad continuity of policy or shift to the right on key issues to prevent further leakage of political support to the far-right.

The months of June and July 2024 will be critical to determining these powers, as behind-the-scenes negotiations will take place among the political parties to achieve this.

This will also be a critical juncture to define the absolute powers of the political parties, as the unaffiliated and non-attached members would be deciding whether they will align with a political family. The first plenary session of the European Parliament, set for 16-19 July 2024, will be decisive in determining the main political roles, such as the president, vice presidents and other key leadership roles.

A change towards more right-wing coalitions will be crucial for policy progress. We may well see a Parliament in which coalitions shift from issue to issue, a move away from the tradition of broad agreement on the overall long-term policy priorities of the Parliament with disagreements visible typically at the level of implementation more than orientation of policy. Issues that give rise to popular concern will require particularly sensitive handling, with supporting coalitions harder to stitch together.

One of the most prominent policy packages, the European Green Deal striving for climate neutrality in 2050, has typically been viewed more skeptically by the far-right. If they manage to form a stable, consolidated coalition, it could be difficult for the European Commission to achieve some of its policy priorities, in particular in the continuation of Green Deal policies. Another element that can prove to be difficult to agree under new coalitions in Parliament would be how to manage EU finances and the economy. The economic crisis stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by the conflict in Ukraine, remains a challenge for many EU countries.

As many national politicians will be focused on dealing with the resulting domestic effects of this crisis, their willingness to provide the EU with more budgetary means will be limited.

Further areas that are expected to dominate discussions in the next Parliament under far-right coalitions include:

- **Environment/sustainability** – Recent farmers’ protests have been politicised ahead of the elections, leading to policy adjustments away from the green agenda. It remains to be seen whether far-right coalitions could significantly water down the Commission’s sustainability and climate goals.
- **Energy** – Green transition in the energy field could also be at risk where such coalitions will be in place, an element that could impact the set climate neutrality targets of 2030 and 2050.
- **Defence** – Defence issues are likely to be prominent in the next Commission and the Parliament. The fact that far-right parties appear divided on this issue does not seem to stand in the way of developing a more robust EU defence policy and industry.
- **Tech** – The tech sector is not likely to be negatively affected. It could benefit from policies to promote competitiveness, for example the easing of regulatory strings and adjustments in competition- and state-aid policies.
- **Trade** – Trade matters will continue having a prominent role in political discussions, but pushback could be anticipated against climate-related chapters in future trade deals.
- **Health** – Despite the emphasis on health policies and financing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, health will most likely not be a high priority, as financing has been cut. It is unclear how far-right coalitions would respond to health policies more broadly.

## What Changes Institutionally?

Every five years, the EU undergoes a major overhaul, with changes both in the European Parliament and in the European Commission. The outcome of the EU elections is somewhat linked to the change of power in the European Commission. In the last political mandates, the lead candidate from the largest political party elected in the European Parliament (usually the centre-right European People’s Party) has been expected to be nominated as the next Commission president. The remaining key political roles, notably, the President of the European Council and the High Representative for the Union on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, typically will be represented by a balanced number of individuals from other political parties. This so-called *Spitzenkandidaten* process (lead-candidate process) was not followed in the first appointment of Ursula von der Leyen as EU Commission President. Her appointment was not anticipated, neither the choice of the European Parliament, but the result of a political agreement between the leaders of France and Germany.

Ursula von der Leyen is campaigning to retain a second term at the helm of the European Commission. The turbulent geopolitical situation, coupled with an unprecedented health crisis of the pandemic were major challenges which President von der Leyen, according to many observers, managed well. Despite this, some EU leaders, who play a key role in determining the next Commission President, are said to be skeptical about a second term. Nevertheless, she remains the most likely candidate, even if she faces a narrow path to a re-nomination. Surprises are not excluded: A prominent figure that could challenge von der Leyen is former European Central Bank president and former Italian prime minister, Mario Draghi.

Any candidate approved by EU leaders will need to carefully balance a policy agenda that continues the main thrust of the outgoing Commission’s mandate, but also responds to the new political realities in EU countries and the European Parliament.

EU heads of state and government are set to decide the next EU political leadership at their summit on 27-28 June. After the announcement of the selected Commission president designate, member states shall propose their candidates for Commissioner, for specific policy portfolio’s. The introduction of a Commissioner for Defence, which would be a *nouveauté* has been debated for some time. The Leaders will also decide on the main policy priorities for the coming years.

The president-designate shall be endorsed by the new European Parliament in September 2024, following one or more hearings. If the Parliament rejects the president-designate, the heads of state and government will have to come up with an alternative candidate.

The candidates for Commissioner will also face hearings, and if these are successful, the Commission will be endorsed by the European Parliament.

President von der Leyen secured a narrow approval in 2019, gaining 383 against a required 374 votes. This time, she or any other candidate nominated by the heads of state and government will need 361 votes to be approved. For the first time since the Parliament was given an effective veto in the Lisbon Treaty (2007), there is some doubt about whether an absolute majority in support will be achievable. Once the president has been approved, the same process will continue for the commissioners-designate, expected in October 2024.

## How Will Policy Priorities Be Set?

Like before, the main political guidelines that will dominate the policy priorities of the new political cycle will be set by the European Council in its coming June summit, immediately after the elections. These will, to a large extent, guide the top-line agenda of the new European Commission. We can expect this agenda to reflect the existing priorities of global competitiveness, climate neutrality (2050) and the green and digital transitions. The geopolitical situation, climate-related risks, the pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have moved EU sovereignty to the top of the list. This means better resilience and a reduction of dependency, ambitious energy and industrial policies – including new emphasis on defence policies – active enablement of key technologies and a robust trade policy aimed at achieving a level playing field. In order to boost the necessary private investment, the creation of an integrated financial market through the capital markets union and banking union will also be high on the agenda.

National priorities of the Member States will add welfare and income, food security, migration policy adjustment and livelihood security to the mix. Further inescapable elements of the five-year agenda are institutional reform to accommodate further enlargement and the evergreen topic of simplification and the reduction of obstacles in the Single Market. We can also expect efforts to reform the multiannual budget, including the introduction of new EU “own resources” and efforts to design new ways of financing EU policies.

Where the previous political cycle saw a high output of new legislation in the green and digital fields, we can expect the coming years to be focused on implementation of and compliance with these laws, coupled with a great amount of secondary legislation that is still outstanding.

Especially regarding green proposals – despite the EU’s climate ambitions – industry and states alike are starting to be more cautious about their ability to comply with the number and complexity of the rules, concerns which reflect the views of many who voted for far-right parties. Similarly, an immigration crisis could well force the EU to address some complex and politically sensitive challenges.

The impact of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), the Artificial Intelligence Act, the Digital Markets Act (DMA) and the Digital Services Act (DSA), as well as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), is already considerable. This is an enormous challenge for businesses and for the Commission, and national competent authorities as well.

While we can expect fewer legislative initiatives, they will likely still be significant. We anticipate that beyond the green and digital transition, there will be initiatives linked to industrial ambitions as well as to defence and security. Further measures are likely to be considered to modernise competition rules and to reduce the administrative burden, corporate insolvency and corporate taxation initiatives, as well as measures related to the functioning of the capital market.

## Conclusion

The preliminary results of the European Parliament elections demonstrate there would undoubtedly be an impact on the power structures in the European Parliament, changing the delicate balances between political parties and their ability to strike compromises. This change could have long-term implications for EU policies on environment, migration, defence and agriculture, which are likely to dominate the policy agenda in the next mandate.

More importantly, the outcome of the European Parliament elections had national implications, particularly with two of the EU’s most influential national leaders, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, both suffering significant rebuff by the electorate.

This is not only weakening their authority, but it also comes at a pivotal moment for the EU’s key leadership positions, to be determined later in the summer. The coming months will therefore be critical to determine the new political balance of the European Parliament and the ability of the EU heads of states and governments to decide and appoint the next President of the European Commission, but also to define the policy priorities for the next political mandate.

## Authors



### **Derk Oldenburg**

International and EU Affairs Advisor,  
Berlin

T +49 152 2381 2065

E [derk.oldenburg@squirepb.com](mailto:derk.oldenburg@squirepb.com)



### **Christina Economides**

Public Policy Advisor, Brussels

T +32 2 627 1105

E [christina.economides@squirepb.com](mailto:christina.economides@squirepb.com)

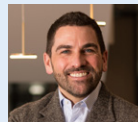


### **Matthew Kirk**

International Affairs Advisor, London

T +44 20 7655 1389

E [matthew.kirk@squirepb.com](mailto:matthew.kirk@squirepb.com)



### **Wolfgang Maschek**

Partner, Chair of European Public Policy  
Practice, Brussels

T +32 2 627 1104

E [wolfgang.maschek@squirepb.com](mailto:wolfgang.maschek@squirepb.com)

SQUIRE   
PATTON BOGGS  
[squirepattonboggs.com](https://squirepattonboggs.com)