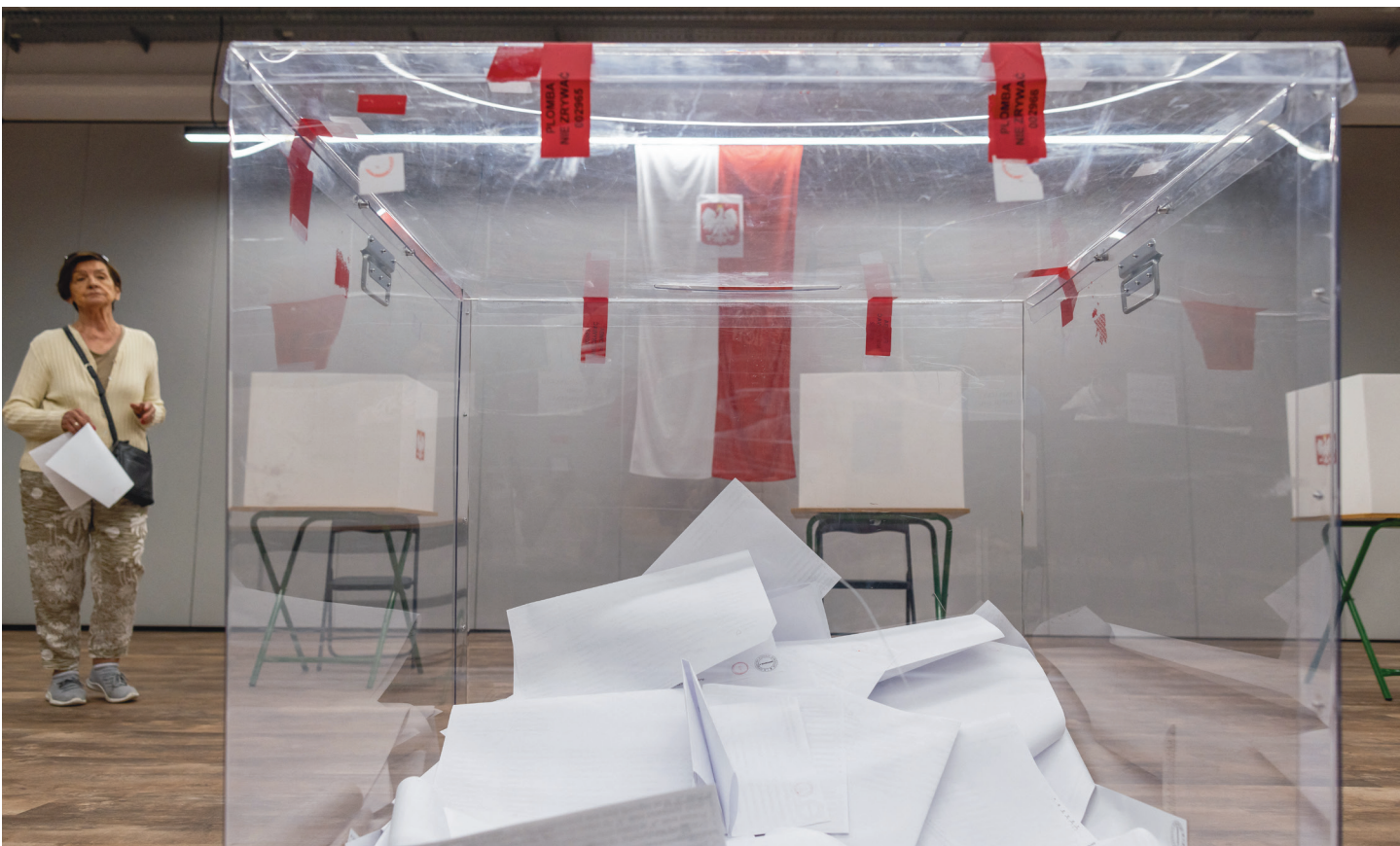


2024 EU elections results: Limited change, great challenges

Curated by Eric Maurice



Introduction

The European elections on 6-9 June have brought [mixed results](#). In the European Parliament, the populist, nationalist and far-right parties won seats but not as many as predicted. The pro-EU groups – European Popular Party (EPP), the Socialists and Democrats (S&D), the liberals and centrists in Renew Europe and the Greens – still hold the majority but will find it challenging to steer the political direction of the EU because of their differences on a number of issues like climate, migration or social policy.

In a twist that demonstrates that all levels of European politics are increasingly interconnected, the consequences of the EU vote are felt more vividly in some member states. This is the case in Hungary, where Prime Minister Viktor Orbán is seriously challenged for the first time in years, or in the Netherlands, where the coalition being put in place failed the electoral test.

It is also the case in spectacular fashion in France, where the crushing victory of the far-right led President Emmanuel Macron to call for snap elections in the coming weeks. As well as in Germany, where the three parties of the governing coalition lag behind the conservatives and the far-right, further weakened Chancellor Olaf Scholz. In turn, the situation in the EU's two largest and most influential countries will likely impact the functioning of the Union.

How will the political developments in the European Parliament and in the member states influence policy-making in the new political-institutional cycle? In the wake of the EU citizens' vote, EPC experts analyse the results and look at the lessons that can be learned. They also examine the future of key issues, like the Green Deal, enlargement and migration. This compendium will help in better understanding the short and long-term trends and challenges, as the institution's leadership is renewed and the next policy agenda is formed.

This is not a time to underestimate the challenges to come



Fabian Zuleeg, Chief Executive and Chief Economist

Almost inevitably, after an election, there will be a focus on comparing the outcome to the preceding election, in this case, to 2019. In that light, the 2024 European Parliament (EP) election is worrying from a European perspective, particularly given the strengthening of the far-right in some parts of the EU. Yet, some are claiming that this overdramatises the outcome. Turnout seems broadly to have held up, and the pro-European majority in the EP is still sizeable, albeit reduced. However, this is underestimating the challenge to come.

Firstly, the election results have been disastrous for President Macron in France and the ruling coalition in Berlin, which already has domestic repercussions. The most likely outcome is that the Franco-German motor of the EU will not function in the foreseeable future.

Secondly, it will be even harder to construct majorities within the EP, especially concerning contentious issues. This is likely to focus particularly on foreign policy, support for Ukraine and green policies, as well as the traditional topics of the populists around migration and identity.

Thirdly, it needs to be seen in a more challenging and contested global environment, where we need the EU more than ever to deliver on cross-border objectives, so any deterioration in effectiveness can have catastrophic effects, i.e. the fragmented nature of the EU matters more than ever.

And, finally, the election shows the challenge for democracy: more populists, more angry citizens, more fragmentation, more polarisation, more nativism, the continuing decline in political principles and practices, and the lack of leadership. In combination with the permopolycrisis and challenges to democracy from Russia, but also from across the Atlantic, these results should concern those who seek to defend Europe's values and interests for the next generations.

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The more things change, the more they stay the same



Corina Stratulat, Associate Director and Head of European Politics and Institutions Programme

For all the fuss about the potential outcome of the 2024 European elections, the results suggest that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

The voting marathon that unfolded over the past few days in all 27 member states, in which European citizens chose their representatives for the next European Parliament (EP) – and in many cases simultaneously cast local, regional and/or national ballots – has brought about change.

The centre-right (EPP) has strengthened its top position, snatching 15 additional seats, mostly from Germany but also from Southern and Eastern countries like Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, and Croatia.

Far-right parties have done well, particularly in France and Germany, the two member states that incidentally are also responsible for the Greens' main losses (now 20 seats shorter than in 2019).

Rather than swelling the ranks of ECR or ID, many important far-right players, including Fidesz, Italy's Five Star Movement and AfD (recently ousted from ID), now populate the 'Non-attached' and 'others'. This underscores the far-right's fragmentation and feeds speculation about group formation on this side of the spectrum in the next period.

The snap vote called in France and the major weakening of the governing coalition in Germany, after the humiliating defeats of French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, further ensured that there would be no dull moments in these elections.

But for all their affixed risks and potentially negative policy impact, these changes are neither new nor exactly surprising.

If anything, it is the political centre's resilience – rather than Europe's general rightward turn – that's the real shocker.

The far-right gains had been predicted and only cement an enduring trend in national and EU politics. If anything, it is the political centre's resilience – rather than Europe's general rightward turn – that's the real shocker.

The growing dissatisfaction of (especially young) voters with the mainstream's performance, including in recent crises, could have dealt an even stronger blow to the electoral showing of socialists or liberals, and possibly boost mobilisation to a larger extent than has transpired.

Regarding the implementation of the EU's climate ambitions, the Greens took a hit (except in the Nordic countries), which was also anticipated by tensions in the run-up to the elections. Environmental policy remains vulnerable to stagnation in the new politico-institutional cycle. The same fate also haunts agricultural policy, EU institutional reform, enlargement, common foreign and security affairs, social issues, and budgetary negotiations.

Much depends on whether the far-right parties overcome their still palpable divisions and if the EPP [joins their ranks or stands firm](#) on its liberal democratic policy, rhetoric, and values.

As for the political upheavals in France and Germany, they too speak of continuity in an already dysfunctional relationship of the duo – once the 'engine' of European integration. Their domestic troubles will likely sustain the EU's leadership crisis, denting the bloc's much-needed future unity and ambition.

Overall, these elections did not break the mould; their relevance is to re-call attention to structural problems with the functioning of democracy and the EU system, and to highlight the lack of political vision and courage to recognise and tackle the Union's piling and exponential challenges. Responsible and responsive European political leaders have arguably never been in higher demand than at present.

Will the European Parliament continue to pursue EU democratic reform?



Johannes Greubel, Head of the Transnationalisation Programme & Connecting Europe Project Leader

In an era characterised by permacrisis, internal fragmentation, and growing polarisation, the European Union is in dire need of reform to bolster its capacity to navigate these tumultuous times. The urgency of such transformation is accentuated by the rising far-right and the prospect of future enlargements, where the EU finds itself in need of reform to accommodate new members.

The previous European Parliament (2019-2024) adopted a series of reports advocating for the democratic reform of the Union. This task should be at the forefront of the new Parliament's agenda.

But the 2024 election results risk stalling this momentum; EU reform has been largely overlooked in nationally focused campaigns, and a more fragmented Parliament with a stronger far-right will struggle to drive the necessary changes. Especially as the parties that were most vocal about EU reform [in their manifestos](#), Renew Europe and the Greens suffered significant losses, further weakening the push for transformation.

To ensure EU reform is not yet sidelined, the new Parliament must swiftly establish itself as a staunch advocate for overhauling the Union's operations. Re-endorsing the reform report from the previous mandate and making a well-conceived reform agenda a precondition for any new Commission President is crucial. Without the Parliament's proactive stance, member states are likely to support only limited policy reforms rather than a comprehensive institutional makeover.

Reforming EU democracy needs to be front and centre in these initiatives. The Parliament must keep the debate on EU electoral law and the Spitzenkandidat principle alive, while also continuing the promising path of greater citizen participation in policymaking, initiated in the previous legislature.

The Conference on the Future of Europe and the European Citizens' Panels on key legislative proposals are commendable initiatives but remain informal mechanisms. They should act as a foundation for more profound citizen engagement in EU politics. The new Parliament and Commission must push for the formalisation of these participation channels, including the European Citizens' Panels introduced by the previous leadership.

However, they must go further: citizen participation should become a regular feature of EU decision-making. Citizens should be consulted on the new strategic priorities and be more closely involved in upcoming enlargement discussions. This deeper integration of participatory elements would enhance policy outcomes and ensure that EU citizens are actively engaged in addressing the most critical issues of our time.

All this won't be an easy task. The results of the 2024 elections certainly did not simplify the path to reforming the Union. But if pro-European forces continue to push constructively towards this shared goal, it still has the potential to feature prominently in the priorities for the next five years.

The parties that were most vocal about EU reform in their manifestos suffered significant losses, further weakening the push for transformation.

Mixed outlook for Ukraine



Amanda Paul, Deputy Head of Europe in the World Programme and Senior Policy Analyst

Lev Zinchenko, Programme Assistant, Europe in the World Programme



Although far-right parties' advance in the European Parliament elections is worrying, the outcome could have been far worse – particularly if you are Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy. As it stands, the far-right will not be able to block crucial legislation related to support for Ukraine. This includes the extension of Ukraine's trade benefits, approval of financial assistance, and calls for more substantial support from the EU for Ukraine.

Nevertheless, other dangers lurk that could potentially undermine Ukraine's war effort. First, is Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's re-election. A staunch and dependable partner since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, a second term would reassure Kyiv, bringing important continuity. Yet, her re-election hangs in the balance. While she only needs 361 votes in Parliament to secure a second mandate, the likelihood of defections in the groups that supported her in 2019 means her victory is not a done deal. She is scrambling to find a deal with other alliances to keep her at the helm.

Still, Kyiv's biggest headache is France. President Emmanuel Macron's decision to call snap parliamentary elections, after his Renaissance Party was trounced by Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National(RN) party is a high-stake move. While Macron is counting on a substantial victory to shore up his credibility, it is a huge gamble. An RN victory, not least due to Le Pens' ties to the Kremlin, would underline Ukraine's war effort, at a time when Kyiv is struggling on the battlefield and unpredictable US elections loom. Furthermore, it also risks derailing efforts to reinvigorate EU Enlargement Policy. With the EU's role in the world weakening, getting it right on Ukraine remains crucial for Ukraine's very survival as a state, and the EU's security.

Le Pens' ties to the Kremlin, would underline Ukraine's war effort, at a time when Kyiv is struggling on the battlefield and unpredictable US elections loom.

Green Deal - Navigating populist resistance in the EU



Stefan Sipka, Head of Sustainable Prosperity for Europe and Senior Policy Analyst



Brooke Moore, Policy Analyst, Sustainable Prosperity for Europe

The European Green Deal faces significant challenges following the EU elections, primarily due to the stronger populist voices emerging in the European Parliament, across member states, and eventually in the Council itself. The increased presence of far-right MEPs and radical narratives in mainstream parties will likely fuel a divisive discourse on the immediate costs of the green transition for citizens, consumers, farmers and businesses, positioning these stakeholders against the Green Deal. Such a narrative poses a substantial risk given the existential threat posed by global warming and environmental degradation, while downplaying the overall [cost savings and economic co-benefits](#) associated with the green transition.

The upcoming political disputes are poised to centre around the greening of EU agriculture, the introduction of nature restoration targets, and keeping the commitment to phase out internal combustion engines in vehicles. These debates will likely impact the crucial discussions on setting binding 2040 targets to reduce greenhouse gases by 90% and developing concrete pathways to achieve this goal. Populist narratives suggest a likely preference for softer laws, such as guidelines, in EU policymaking, which alone lack the teeth to meet the EU's sustainability goals. For legally binding 2030 and 2050 climate targets and related legislation under the Fit for 55 package, the challenge will be to implement these rules and to do so in a timely manner.

The populist underplaying of the green transition exacerbates a difficult situation for the Green Deal, in light of rising geopolitical tensions, which fuel the EU's competitiveness, economic security and defense agendas. Looking ahead, while sustainability would remain on the EU's agenda, it will hardly be the priority. Consequently, with the [expiration](#) of the Recovery and Resilience Facility and upcoming discussion on the next Multiannual Financial Framework, securing funds for the Green Deal will be increasingly uncertain.

Despite such dire circumstances, the EU must face existing challenges head-on and remain committed to the green transition. Aligning new priorities with the long-term objectives of the Green Deal and securing sufficient funding from both public and private sources is crucial. Furthermore, an ongoing dialogue about the importance of the Green Deal and the transition's trade-offs, alongside sufficient financial support, especially for the transition's most vulnerable stakeholders is required. In doing so, the EU can work to ensure that people and businesses stay on board reducing the populists' grip on European politics. A persistent and prudent approach to finalising and implementing the Green Deal may, therefore, prove to be crucial in ensuring that the EU meets its commitments towards preserving our planet for generations to come.

A persistent and prudent approach to the Green Deal may prove to be crucial in ensuring the green transition.

EU's enlargement: Will the rise of the far-right change its direction?



Berta López Domènech, Junior Policy Analyst, European Politics and Institutions

As polls predicted and following trends of the past years, there was a marked surge to the far-right in the elections. Despite EPP, socialists and liberals still having a majority in the Parliament, which will allow them to keep control of the key decisions, this shift towards the right will inevitably have implications for the overall direction of certain dossiers.

These voices will presumably push for the process to be driven by individual interests and strategic questions that have little to do with conditionality.

The growth at the EU and member states' level of the reactionary right-wing forces that reject democracy as the cornerstone of the EU accession process can shift its direction. These voices will presumably push for the process to be driven by individual interests and strategic questions that have little to do with conditionality.

Despite being misguided, this dynamic is not new; Greece and Bulgaria have instrumentalised North Macedonia's path towards the EU to solve their historical bilateral disputes with it. Albania recently signed a controversial migration deal with Italy hoping to get Rome's support for its EU membership aspiration in exchange, and the current Hungarian Commissioner for Enlargement has been accused of prioritising Serbia despite the country's democratic backsliding.

Since the war in Ukraine, enlargement has been increasingly seen through the lens of security, and illiberal actors have used this to dilute the centrality of the rule of law and fundamental rights from the narrative about enlargement. In fact, Viktor Orbán has often justified his support for Balkan autocrats with this argument of enhancing the continent's security.

During the current mandate, the European Parliament, political groups, and MEPs have voiced their concerns about these illiberal behaviours. Following this rightward trend, the EP's ability to advocate for democracy at the heart of the EU accession process will be weakened.

Furthermore, the weakening of national governments in member states such as Germany and France will presumably affect the dynamics at the Council. Orbán has already expressed his interest in keeping the enlargement portfolio for Hungary, and despite the lack of enthusiasm among the rest of the EU leaders about this idea, no option can be ruled out.

Without a forward-looking strategy for restoring the credibility of the membership perspective and the merit-based character of the process that can counter the far-right's approach to the expansion of the Union, candidates will presumably lose the incentive to implement key democratic and rule of law reforms.

A limited role for the Parliament to advance a stabilised migration and asylum system



Anastasia Karatzas, Policy Analyst, European Migration and Diversity

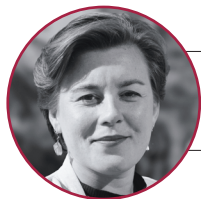
Following the EU elections, an increasingly fragmented political landscape across member states will limit the European Parliament's ability to constructively advance a stabilised migration and asylum system in the new political cycle. In the lead up to the elections, the need for stricter measures dominated [political campaigns](#) and media discussions. However, [voters](#) ahead of time ranked [migration](#) alongside security, climate and economic downturn as chief among their primary concerns, decreasing its salience relative to other key issues. Instead of a vote primarily in favour of more restrictive migration policy, the success of the right should rather be seen as a broader expression of [dissatisfaction](#) with the EU and national governments' overall response to [poly-crisis](#). Even so, a political tone favouring more restrictive migration policy has been set.

Those advocating for greater protection of fundamental rights, including at the EU's borders, may find it difficult to make their voices heard.

As a democratically elected EU body, the Parliament has a role in rebuilding public trust. However, its influence in shaping the migration and asylum agenda will be limited. For one, its role in implementing the recently adopted New Pact on Migration and Asylum will be marginal. Its role in overseeing EU agencies at external borders (notably Frontex) is also limited primarily to budgetary oversight, with both identified as [priorities](#) ahead of the election. In addition, it may prove difficult to exercise any meaningful influence over [member states' ambitions](#) to [externalise migration control](#), also identified as a [priority](#) in particular among centre-right and right-wing parties.

Faced with an increasing number of national governments across Europe whose restrictive agendas are now better represented in the hemicycle, even if not all far-right, those advocating for greater protection of fundamental rights, including at the EU's borders, may find it difficult to make their voices heard. Thus, while the rise of the right should be situated in the broader context of the poly-crisis, the shift could prove problematic, not just because of the political objectives being promoted, but also because it undermines ongoing and long-needed efforts to stabilise the EU's migration and asylum system.

The European Parliament: Guardian of the rule of law and liberal democracy?



Liza Saris, Project Manager, Connecting Europe

The European Parliament has been crucial in putting pressure on the Council and the Commission to implement sanctions and new mechanisms to protect the rule of law in Europe. It has been using [strongly formulated resolutions](#), and in addition to triggering Article 7 against Hungary in 2018, and [took the Commission to the European Court of Justice](#) because it was not using the rule of law conditionality mechanism.

The EPP, S&D, Renew and Greens, which have been the leading forces on the issue, seem to keep their majority in the EP. They all mentioned in their election manifestos the need to strengthen the rule of law toolbox. The PES and the EPP, still the two largest families, seem to align on their positions to protect EU funds from autocratic regimes, and both commit to standing up against autocrats and protecting the rule of law.

However, the influence of the far-right will increase not only because of their share of seats in the EP, but also because of coalitions and influences outside of it. First, on the national level, EPP and Renew parties formed governing coalitions with far-right parties. The clearest example is the Netherlands, which has a coalition of parties divided over the ID, EPP and Renew. It will make those groups more hesitant to put pressure on the Commission or Council to act, as it might have consequences for their parties at the national level. Secondly, over the past years and very clearly during

this campaign, the EPP and ECR have become closer. Some of their party members are already collaborating in national coalitions (Italy and the Netherlands). This convergence and right turn on the EPP's policy positions could also become the case regarding the protection of the rule of law.

These new power dynamics will influence and weaken the role of the European Parliament as the promoter and protector of liberal democracies and the rule of law in the EU. The political role it has played by setting the stage, pushing the Commission and the Council to act, in the future could be undermined from within. It will now be important to see how the alliances between the EPP and the ECR will further crystalise and how effectively the S&D, Renew and the Greens will shape the European Parliament positions to defend the rule of law.

These new power dynamics will influence and weaken the role of the European Parliament as the promoter and protector of liberal democracies and the rule of law in the EU.

A weakened coalition in Germany means less EU leadership



Philipp Lausberg, Policy Analyst, Europe's Political Economy

The election results in Germany represent a significant weakening of the ruling so-called traffic light coalition of the SPD, the Greens and the FDP. The Greens, which have been most heavily targeted by right-wing campaigners as a scapegoat for all perceived ills in the country, were worst hit. With nine seats lost they represent half of the 25 percent losses of the Green group in the European Parliament, which could further erode support for the Green Deal. But also the SPD, as the party of Chancellor Olaf Scholz, performed abysmally with only 13,9% - its weakest result on the federal level since the foundation of the German Federal Republic. The FDP, as the smallest coalition member, lost only a marginal 0,2% and kept their five seats.

The conflict-prone three-way ruling coalition has already displayed unusually inconsistent and unpredictable voting behaviour in the Council of the EU, slowing and watering down laws such as the Corporate sustainability due diligence directive or the ban on combustion engine cars. Given the German government's weak electoral performance, this pattern could become more pronounced, as the ruling parties, keen not to alienate their core electorate, will likely be even less inclined to compromise. This would translate into even less German leadership in the EU, which does not bode well for the strategic, long-term policymaking urgently needed to address rising international security, economic, and climate challenges.

The CDU/CSU as main opposition party grouping performed rather well with 30% of the vote and has already called for new elections. But considering the current results, even a conservative Chancellor would have to resort to a three-party coalition, promising little more stability than the current setup.

Most worrying is the rise of the radical right AfD, which came out second with 16% of the total vote and finished joint first among 16–24-year-olds with 17% despite a string of scandals in the run-up to the election. With an additional six seats compared to the last elections, compounding the gains of the far-right in other countries, the AfD could help to shift the discourse in the parliament further to the right and complicate majority formation for Commission proposals.

While the fledging pan-European Volt party's impressive result (2,6%/3 seats) will not have much political impact, its 9% among young voters suggests that there is potential for more outright pro-EU parties in the future.

Less German leadership in the EU does not bode well for the strategic, long-term policymaking urgently needed to address rising international security, economic, and climate challenges.

A risky gamble for France and the EU



Eric Maurice, Policy Analyst, European Politics and Institutions

The call for an election by French President Emmanuel Macron in the wake of the far-right's victory opens up a period of uncertainty for France, with potential consequences for the European Union.

French voters on 9 June awarded the list of the Rassemblement National (RN), led by Jordan Bardella, 31.5% of the vote, far ahead of Macron's Renaissance party with 14.6%. Combined with other, smaller lists, the far-right reaches 39%. Although the turnout was only 51.5%, it was the highest since 1994 in an EU election.

The campaign was waged mainly on domestic issues, with purchasing power and immigration being the [voters' main concerns](#). An [opinion survey](#) published before the vote showed that 68% of RN supporters, and 38% of all respondents, would vote above all to express their opposition to Emmanuel Macron. Macron himself publicly said that he was ready to hold a debate with RN leader Marine Le Pen.

All this made it very difficult for the President to brush off the results of the vote. Calling new elections is nevertheless a risky gamble, as neither Renaissance nor the left- and right-wing oppositions seem to be ready to fight an election. The far-right has political momentum and it will be difficult to contain it.

Whatever the outcome of this snap election, French influence in the EU will likely further decrease. In the European Parliament (EP), the RN will be the largest national delegation with 30 MEPs. Renaissance will have 13 seats (10 less than in the outgoing EP) in the Renew group and may not be in a position to hold its presidency anymore. The EPP and the S&D, the two biggest groups in the EP, will count 6 and 13 French members.

In the short-term, Macron, purportedly the leader with the most ambition for the EU, is likely to have less traction in the coming weeks when choosing the institutions leaders and finalising the Strategic Agenda. In the long-term, a far-right government in France would send the Union into uncharted territory, with a [programme](#) that pledges to challenge EU tenets such as freedom of movement or the primacy of EU law.

Another possible outcome is a hung Parliament and the nomination of a government supported by a circumstantial coalition of centrists, centre-right and centre-left, which would not reduce political uncertainty in the country.

Macron will remain a member of the European Council, but with limited capacity to prevent a hostile government from destabilising the Union. His weakened position, combined with that of the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, will create a vacuum that others, good or bad for the EU, will try to fill.

Calling new elections is nevertheless a risky gamble, as neither Renaissance nor the left- and right-wing oppositions seem to be ready to fight an election.

Georgia Meloni's ambiguous 'charm offensive'



Matteo Gorgoni, Programme Assistant, European Politics and Institutions

While many were expecting Italy's ruling majority to be severely tested after a campaign that covered anything but the future of Europe itself, things have turned out quite differently. The far-right party Fratelli d'Italia secured first place in the elections by obtaining 28% of the votes, hence bolstering Giorgia Meloni's leadership as Prime Minister and the dominant position of her party.

This result is no surprise, considering Meloni's ability to sell her own vision of a protective Union. She made strategic use of ambiguous messaging, balancing between ideological claims and pragmatic positions. Her speeches have been tinted with typical sovereigntist rhetoric, characterising the EU as a "bureaucratic Leviathan" and favouring a Europe of sovereign nations. At the same time, Meloni successfully shaped a more credible image of herself and her political family to the domestic audience and external stakeholders, by showcasing some openness to constructive cooperation on European defence, foreign policy and economic security. This political strategy also consisted of reversing the blame of "radicality", blaming the EU for its "extreme" environmental policies or institutional reforms, which she said threaten the legitimate interests of farmers, industries, or nation states. The ultimate goal of this strategy is to normalise the far-right into being progressively recognised as a necessary and constructive policymaker both in Italy and the EU, and to embody the interests of those who might feel most affected by a perceived acceleration of EU integration in most policy areas.

On the other side of the spectrum, the elections have demonstrated the resilience of the centre-left party Partito Democratico, which obtained almost 24% of the votes. With the remaining parties suffering losses or moderate wins, some sort of bipartisanship seems to be back on track in Italian politics. The centre-left's determination to keep depicting Meloni as an unreliable leader of an anti-EU political force might cause some concern within the ruling majority, tempting Meloni into taking advantage of the European election results to accelerate her "charm offensive" with liberals and Christian democrats in the European Parliament. But it hardly seems realistic to build a right-wing coalition, which does not have a majority in the EP. Meloni might need to understand that pragmatism has limits.

The ultimate goal of this strategy is to normalise the far-right into being progressively recognised as a necessary and constructive policymaker both in Italy and the EU.

Dutch election results leave future coalition weakened



Elizabeth Kuiper, Associate Director and Head of the Social Europe and Well-being programme

The European elections seem first and foremost a referendum on Dutch national politics. Turnout of the elections were higher than expected, with 46.8% compared to 41.97% in 2019, which is perceived by most as Dutch voters' stance on the future government rather than the EU.

The country is still struggling to form a government after the November 2023 national elections, and the only real debate of substance about the future direction of the European Union was held on the eve of the elections.

The election results show a battle between progressives of the GreenLeft-Labour combination and Geert Wilders' radical right. Whereas his Freedom Party (PVV) gained six seats, the GreenLeft-Labour alliance won with eight seats. Overall, two-thirds of the electorate voted for pro-European centrist or liberal parties. The future coalition made up of the Freedom Party, the liberal VVD, centrist NSC and Farmer–Citizen Movement BBB, already lost its majority in these elections, with around 56% seats in the Dutch Parliament compared to approximately 38% share of votes in the European elections.

A divided coalition at home will reflect on the Dutch ability to form coalitions in the European Parliament. Many of the MEPs from the incoming coalition are without experience in the European Parliament and the Farmer-Citizen Movement and the centrist NSC are not yet aligned with a political party at EU level. On top of this, the liberal VVD, which got four seats, might face a vote on 10 June about their membership of the Renew Europe group considering their support for the radical right at home.

The fact that the Dutch future Prime Minister Dick Schoof is without European political affiliation will not help either in acquiring support in Brussels for the coalition agreement, which promised to negotiate opt outs on key areas such as immigration, asylum and climate EU policies. The implementation of this wish list will depend on how the future government positions itself in the currently fragmented EU political landscape.

The Dutch have a lot to lose in the coming months in terms of influence in the European institutions and securing an important Commissioner portfolio. Conversely, the EU's biggest challenge after the elections will be to address populism and deal with the power struggles between progressives and the radical right.

The Dutch have a lot to lose in the coming months in terms of influence in the European institutions.

Magyar's Hungarian earthquake



Garvan Walshe, Head of communications

Though Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's ruling Fidesz-KDNP alliance came first in the election with 44% of the vote and ten seats, the main story of the European elections in Hungary has been the breakthrough by Péter Magyar's Tisza party, which won seven seats. Magyar, ex-husband of former justice minister Judit Varga, and himself a former Fidesz insider, headed the party's list. Magyar's MEPs, who co-opted the pre-existing Tisza party, will sit in the centre-right EPP group, where they will be used to make the argument that one can be a Hungarian conservative, but still have access to EU money (access to much of which has been suspended because of Orbán's attacks on the rule of law).

Tisza took votes from Fidesz, whose 44% was the worst record in the EP elections since Orbán returned to power in 2010, but also from the opposition. Jobbik, which had rebranded as centre-right in recent years, and Momentum (liberal centre, vote concentrated in urban areas) both received no seats. The centre-left Demokratikus Koalíció (DK) lost two of its four. The extreme right Mi Hazánk picked up one seat.

Magyar appealed to the sizeable portion of Hungarians who are tired of Fidesz, but still dissatisfied with the traditional opposition, whom they see either as "too left-wing" and who strongly dislike DK's leader, former Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány.

Because Magyar is listened to by a proportion of Fidesz voters and holds enough weight in the Fidesz patronage machine, he can extract concessions denied to other opposition parties: he was able, for example, to force the government to acquiesce in a multi-candidate debate on state TV.

Orbán's priority will now be to discredit and discredit him. Magyar, in contrast, will try and recruit more defectors from Orbán's inner circle. Allegations of corruption will be a weapon of choice on both sides. The official trigger for Magyar's entry into politics was his disgust at a scandal, involving a pardon for a well-connected individual who had protected a paedophile, that had engulfed Fidesz earlier in the year, and he has made Fidesz's corruption a central element of his case. Yet Magyar was sufficiently involved in Fidesz for long enough that it would be difficult for him to escape unscathed from scandals that the government would seek to unearth in retaliation.

So far, Magyar has led a successful insurgency against Orbán. It remains to be seen whether he can keep his coalition together and challenge him for the top job.

Allegations of corruption will be a weapon of choice on both sides.

The **European Policy Centre** is an independent, not-for-profit think tank dedicated to fostering European integration through analysis and debate, supporting and challenging European decision-makers at all levels to make informed decisions based on sound evidence and analysis, and providing a platform for engaging partners, stakeholders and citizens in EU policymaking and in the debate about the future of Europe.

The **European Politics and Institutions** programme covers the EU's institutional architecture, governance and policymaking to ensure that it can move forward and respond to the challenges of the 21st century democratically and effectively. It also monitors and analyses political developments at the EU level and in the member states, discussing the key questions of how to involve European citizens in the discussions over the Union's future and how to win their support for European integration. The programme has a special focus on enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans, questions of EU institutional reform and illiberal trends in European democracies.

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