

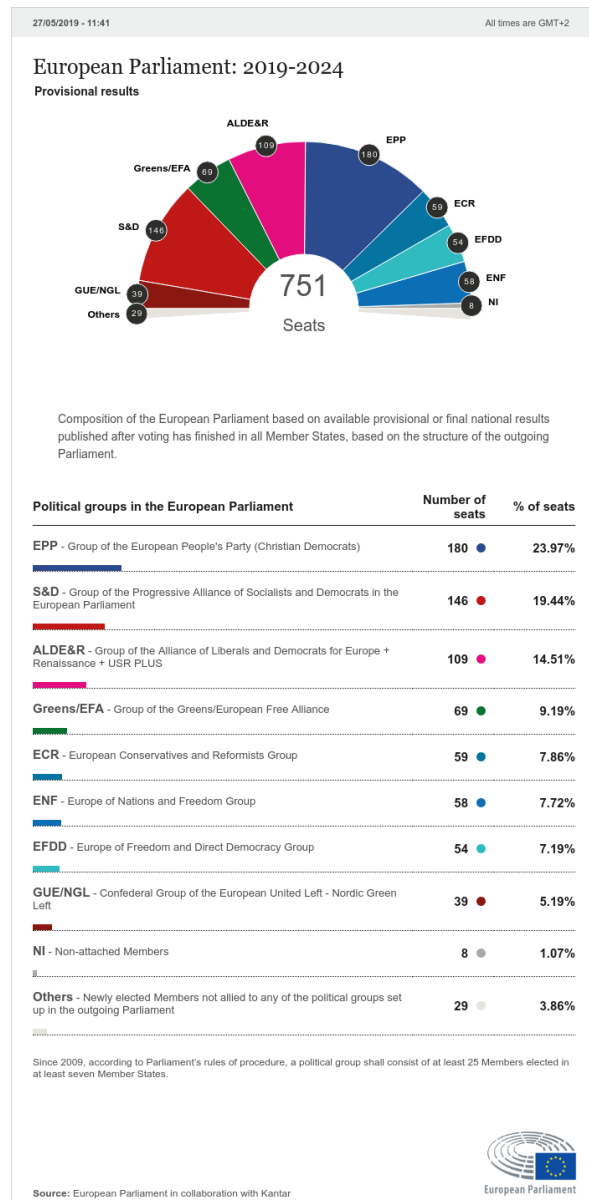
Assessment of the European Parliament elections

1. Introduction and provisional results

From 23 – 26 May 2019, European Parliament elections were held in the 28 EU Member States. The United Kingdom, which aims to leave the European Union, participated in the elections as the withdrawal agreement ending its EU Membership was not ratified prior to the elections.

Members of the European Parliament are elected based on their affiliation to national parties. The elected Members of the European Parliament will form transnational party groups in the European Parliament. A new party group will most certainly be formed for the Eurosceptics in the far-right political spectrum, which has gained significantly in the number of seats. This new party group is not yet reflected in the official chart of the European Parliament as shown above. The electoral turnout was 50.93 percent, compared to 42,54 percent in 2014.

Party group	Seats 2014-2019	Seats 2019-2024
EPP	216	180
S&D	185	146
ALDE&R	69	109
Greens	52	69
ECR	77	59
ENF	36	58
EFDD	42	54
GUE/NGL	52	39
NI	20	8



2. WEC-Europe assessment of the election results: A more fragmented and polarised European Parliament

- **End of the grand coalition in the European Parliament:** The grand coalition of the centre-right European Peoples Party (EPP) and the centre-left European People's Party has lost its majority. To reach compromises in the European Parliament on legislation or the election of a new European Commission President, a compromise between at least three party groups (EPP, S&D and ALDE or EPP, S&D and Greens) make the compromise building more complex.
- **The share of Eurosceptic and extremist parties in the European Parliament has further increased,** reflecting corresponding trends at the national level in many countries. This is particularly true for Poland, where the PiS party got 43.10 percent; Italy, where the Lega of Salvini got 33.84 percent; France, where the Rassemblement Nationale is in the lead with 23.53 percent; Poland, Hungary and Belgium. In the UK, the newly formed Brexit party has gained 31.71 percent. At the same time, the rise of populist and Eurosceptic parties was not as large as predicted by some commentators prior to the EP elections, especially due to lower results in some other countries, such as Germany. For the future work of the European Parliament, it should also be considered that the extremist parties are by far a united, transnational movement and that their fragmentation might limit their political impact.
- **The green parties in many European countries have significantly increased their number of votes, moving from 50 to 69 seats in the new European Parliament.**
- **More challenging decision making on social affairs in the EP:** The increased diversity and fragmentation in the European Parliament, especially due to the end of the grand coalition, also means that reaching compromises on employment and social affairs will become more challenging. At present, there are two scenarios which are likely: The centre-right European People's Party (EPP) and the centre-left S&D could try to gain the support from the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe (ALDE group) or the Greens. Alternatively, compromises and coalitions could be formed based on changing coalition patterns looking at the topic under discussion.
- **The higher turnout for the elections is the most positive sign of the elections,** reversing a downwards trend that could be observed in the past years. Commentators underlined that the political controversy around Brexit have certainly increased the turnout for the European Parliament elections.

3. The United Kingdom in the new European Parliament

- **The United Kingdom is sending 73 Members of Parliament to the EP,** 29 in the EFDD, 4 in the ECR, 16 in the ALDE, 11 Greens, 11 S&D and 1 GUE.
- These MEPs will be leaving the EP at the moment when the UK is leaving the EU. The European Parliament will shrink from 751 to 705 MEPs when the United Kingdom leaves the EU, leaving room for new countries that may join in the future. Besides reducing the European Parliament's size from 751 to 705 elected representatives, a proposed re-distribution of seats, approved by the EP in June, will also place 46 of the 73 seats, to be freed up by the departure of the UK, in a reserve. Some or all of the 46 seats in the reserve can then be allocated to new countries joining the EU or remain empty, thus reducing the size of Parliament. The remaining 27 seats will be re-distributed among the 14 EU countries that are slightly under-represented.

4. Next steps in the political process

The selection and election of the next European Commission President will be the topic dominating the EU political agendas in the coming weeks. While the Commission President shall be selected taking account of the European Parliament elections, there is no automatism that the leading candidate of the largest party group will get the position. Manfred Weber from the EPP is claiming the position, but he does not (yet) have a stable majority supporting him. Also at European Council level sufficient support for his candidacy is not yet secured. The same is certainly true for the S&D leading candidate Frans Timmermans. Other candidates mentioned in the debate have been Michel Barnier (current chief negotiator for the Brexit) and Margrethe Vestager (currently EU Commissioner for competition policy).

It should also be taken into account that at the time of the nomination and election of the next European Commission President, several other top EU positions will have to be filled, namely the President of the European Council, the President of the European Parliament, the President of the European Central Bank and the EU high representative for foreign and security policy.

Formation of the next European Commission

- **Informal dinner of the heads of state and government:** On Tuesday, 28 May, the EU heads of state and government will hold an informal dinner in Brussels to discuss the results of the European Parliament elections and to start the selection process for the next EU Commission President. Three candidates are currently in the centre of discussion, the German, EPP candidate Manfred Weber, the Dutch S&D candidate Frans Timmermans and the Danish ALDE candidate Margrethe Vestager. The discussion will be continued at the European Council meeting on 20-21 June.

European Parliament

- **Transnational party group formation:** Following the European Parliament elections, the European Parliament will first have a series of weeks to form the transnational political groups reflecting the electoral results. These will take place from 27th of May to 24th of June 2019 and by 24th of June, the political groups shall notify their composition. Discussions will focus on the regrouping of far-right parties, which have gained more seats, and which have so far been divided between different groups. Furthermore, the fairly young party "En marche" from France will seek affiliation with a party group, most certainly with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats.
- **First plenary sessions of the European Parliament:** The first plenary session of the newly elected European Parliament will take place from 1st to 4th of July 2019. During this session, the party groups will be formally set up the EP President and its Vice-Presidents will be elected. The EU Commission President will be elected either in or the first plenary or during the second plenary session, to be held from 15th to 18th of July 2019.
- **The hearings of the Commissioners-designate** in the respective committees of the European Parliament will take place in September and October 2019 after the nomination of candidates for EU Commissioners by the Member States and the allocation of portfolios.
- **The new European Commission shall be elected by the European Parliament during a plenary session from 21st to 24th of October**, followed by an inaugural speech of the European Commission President, typically outlining already main priorities of the new European Commission.

The first, annual work programme of the European Commission will be presented in December 2019.