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**The European Elections: Results and
Political and Institutional Prospects after
the June 2024 vote**

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Introduction

In June 2024, the citizens of the Union were called to vote on the composition of the new European Parliament for its tenth term. After the COVID-19 pandemic and the conclusion of Brexit, two years after the start of Russia's war in Ukraine, with an increasingly explosive situation in the Middle East and a growing reshuffling of the global geopolitical balance due to a looming digital revolution driven by AI and with the United States which will also hold presidential elections later this year, struggling to maintain its global economic primacy in favor of emerging powers, the European Union is facing one of the most delicate moments in its history.

In this unpredictable geopolitical climate, the European Parliament election have the potential to transform the political scene in Brussels, where the three traditional parties (People's Party, Socialists and Liberals) are under more pressure than ever due to the undeniable shift of the electorate towards the more right-wing parties of the political spectrum, with a consequent change of direction of the Union in both internal and external policies

The most immediate, practical effect of the election result is a new and mostly different European Commission, the executive body of the Union, far from the previous one that had undertaken several significant legislative initiatives during its term like the Green New Deal, an extensive regulatory agenda, and the NextGenerationEU (NGEU) investment package. A different Commission composition, could set new priorities for the Union in the following years and deviate from the political previously traced.

In the long term, scenarios are more complex to predict. Whichever majority emerges in the European Parliament election will be in charge of carrying on the 70 year old European integration project over the next five years and safeguarding a Union that is called to become more cohesive and decisive in the midst of global challenges.

The purpose of this thesis is to argue how the European Parliament election mechanism shapes the Brussels hemicycle, that within the institutional framework of the Union, it carries out fundamental functions legitimised by the democratic vote of European citizens.

Are provided the legal bases, established by the international treaties, and the rules that regulate the correct conduct of the European Parliament election whose protagonists are the European political parties, bearers of national interests in Europe.

The election of 6-8 June 2024 for the tenth legislature of the European Parliament are then analysed, together with the process that led to the election day, the electoral campaign of the parties, the results and the immediate consequences such as how parties have grouped together and coalesced to form a majority and the appointment of various positions, first and foremost the office of the President of the Parliament.

Finally is described the process that has led to the re-election of Ursula von der Leyen as President of the Commission and all the European Commissioners who should take office on December 1st 2024 after the conclusion of the parliamentary hearings.

Chapter 1

Why do we vote? The role of the European Parliament within the institutional framework of the Union

1.1 The Functions of the European Parliament

The European Parliament carries out its institutional role in the formulation of European policies by performing multiple functions that have their respective legal basis in Articles 223 to 234 and 314 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. (TFEU)¹.

First, being the Parliament an institution representing European citizens, its participation in the legislative process guarantees the democratic legitimacy of the European Union in the implementation of its decisions.

But to ensure the Union's full democratic legitimacy, in addition to its normative function, Parliament also has important control functions over the activities of other bodies and institutions, which are carried out thanks to a wide range of legal instruments that allow it to resort significant finding actions, to have a reasonable sanctioning apparatus at its disposal, to be able to have a significant impact on the Union's budget and to appoint a special body of guarantee for EU citizens such as the European Ombudsman².

In addition, the European Parliament exercises an advisory function through a very thorough evaluation of candidates for the role of European Commissioner, especially thanks the work of the parliamentary committees responsible for the matter. This function should not be seen only in the context of the balance of powers, but also as a valid tool to prevent such an important position from being filled by an unsuitable person. This it is also

¹ The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) is one of two treaties forming the constitutional basis of of the European Union; the other is the Treaty on European Union (TEU). It was originally named as the Treaty Establishing the European Community (TEC) in 1957 with the Treaty of Rome, but it has been amended twice during the European integration process; first by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and then in 2009 by Lisbon Treaty, which established the current version. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:it:PDF>

² Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?*, Il Mulino, 2024, pp.175

a job that ends up benefiting the European Commission itself, whose members will be such not on the basis of a mere designation but also by virtue of passing a careful check by the representatives of European citizens.

However, Parliament does not only interact with the formation of a political body such as the Commission, but also with the influence on two guarantee institutions. In fact, the parliamentary assembly is called upon to express an opinion on the appointment of members of the Court of Auditors³ and appoints one member out of seven of the committee responsible for issuing an opinion on the suitability of candidates to hold the office of judge or advocate general at the Court of Justice and the General Court.

Finally, the European Parliament also enters into the dynamics regarding the common foreign and security policy. Although it cannot exercise any form of power, not even consultative, with respect to decisions as this is the prerogative of the Council and the European Council, the Parliament is generally consulted by all the bodies involved in the preparation of political choices that are crucial for the international relations of the European Union. Its opinion is expressly requested (Art. 218, par. 6, TFEU) for the stipulation of international agreements, with foreign countries or with international organizations.

In the most relevant cases, such as agreements that involve the association of the European Union to some international institution, or have a considerable financial impact, there is not only a consultative activity but the approval of the Parliament is required⁴.

³ The European Court of Auditors (ECA) is the supreme audit institution of the European Union whose primary role is to externally check if the budget of the European Union has been implemented correctly and that EU funds have been spent legally and with sound management

⁴ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?*, Il Mulino, 2024, pp.175

1.2 Participation in the legislative process

In the history of constitutionalism, the legislative function has always been coessential to the existence of the Parliament. However, the history of the European integration process is not entirely superimposable on that of the affirmation of national Constitutions. For decades, in fact, Community law has confined the European Parliament to a supporting role in the production of legislation with respect to the two leading institutions: the Commission, holder of legislative initiative, and the Council, the unique decision-making body.

And that's how looking at the historical context that it is possible understanding the importance of the progressive increase of the Parliament's legislative powers and verifying its overall role exercised today in the European Union system. Not even the introduction of universal suffrage in June 1979 was enough to change the state of affairs; it was necessary to wait until the Single European Act of 1985 to establish the "cooperation procedure"⁵, the first partial example of parliamentary protagonism in the field of legislative production. Since the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), however, significant steps forward have been made and today we can speak of a fully-fledged Parliament as a representative body of European citizens, co-owner with the Council of the legislative production procedures in the European Union legal system (codecision procedure⁶).

A profoundly democratic evolution, certified by the current treaties (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007); Article 14 par.1, TEU, establishes that: "*The European Parliament shall, jointly with the Council, exercise legislative and budgetary functions. It shall exercise functions of political control and*

⁵ The cooperation procedure was established by the Single Act to increase the power of the European Parliament, which could thus make changes to the Council's common positions, although the latter still had the final decision.

⁶ The codecision procedure was an absolute novelty in the legislative field because, for the first time, the European Parliament and the Council found themselves on the same level.

Introduced by the Treaty of Maastricht and then significantly strengthened by the Treaty of Amsterdam, which transferred to this procedure almost all the matters that previously fell under the decision-making process of cooperation.

consultation as laid down in the Treaties. It shall elect the President of the Commission”, rule cross-referenced with Article 16 par.1, TEU⁷.

This establishes the legal basis for the co-production by the Parliament and the Council of rules placed in sources of law, such as regulations, directives or decisions, to which national parliaments are called upon to comply⁸.

1.2.1 The legislative initiative

The legislative initiative phase sees the pre-eminence of the European Commission. According to Article 17 par. 2, of the TEU:

“Union legislative acts may only be adopted on the basis of a Commission proposal, except where the Treaties provide otherwise. Other acts shall be adopted on the basis of a Commission proposal where the Treaties so provide.”

However, by “legislative initiative” it does not only mean the initial phase of a legislative process but it might also be extended to the Commission's power to make changes to the text during the process and even to withdraw it before the procedure has been concluded.

The genesis of the rule on the primacy of the Commission in the legislative field must be sought at the dawn of the European Communities, and then for several decades, when the production of legislation was an internal matter in the relations between the Council and the Commission, while the assembly body (Parliament) found itself in a subordinate and neglected position.

Over time, the institutional structures of the European Union have undergone several significant transformations, not so much through the reduction of the prerogatives of the Commission, but thanks to a power re-balance in favour of the Council and the Parliament.

⁷ Art 16 par.1, TEU: “The Council shall, jointly with the European Parliament, exercise legislative and budgetary functions. It shall carry out policy-making and coordinating functions as laid down in the Treaties”.

⁸ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?*, Il Mulino, 2024, pp.178

Today, the legislative initiative is placed within a system of interinstitutional relations with which a sort of programming of the Union's legislative activity is agreed upon, which takes the name of "agenda power", obviously in relation to the priorities of the moment and political choices. In essence, within the framework of a broad and shared vision developed in the dialogue between the Commission, the Council and the Parliament, the former has the task of initiating each procedure foreseen in the agenda⁹.

Furthermore, Article 225¹⁰ TFEU (similar provision for the Council, Article 241 TFEU) allows the Parliament, with a decision taken by a majority of its members, to ask the Commission to present an adequate legislative response on issues that the Parliament itself deems require regulatory discipline aimed at implementing the Treaties.

The current Treaties recognise the European Parliament as having a direct and exclusive power of initiative only for regulatory procedures relating to its structure, its functioning and its specific powers: regulations regarding to its composition, the appointment of its Members, and the general requirements for the exercise of Member functions, as well as the establishment of interim committees of inquiry or the general conditions for the exercise of the Ombudsman's responsibilities.

1.2.2 Phase of examination, discussion and deliberation of the legislative act

Once the procedure has started with the initiative phase, for the concrete production of a legislative act, we move on to the phase of examination, discussion and deliberation of the legislative project. In the law of the European Union currently in force, the procedural methods with which a legislative act is produced can be classified into two distinct procedures: the

⁹ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?*, Il Mulino, 2024, pp.179

¹⁰ Art 225 par 1, TFEU: "The European Parliament may, acting by a majority of its component Members, request the Commission to submit any appropriate proposal on matters on which it considers that a Union act is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties. If the Commission does not submit a proposal, it shall inform the European Parliament of the reasons."

conventional legislative procedure and the special legislative procedure, which in turn can be divided into "consultation" and "approval".

The ordinary legislative procedure (Articles 289¹¹ TFEU) is the main decision-making procedure used to adopt EU legislation and is the result of the evolution of the codecision procedure, namely the procedure, introduced by Maastricht and then continuously enriched and expanded, with which the role of the Parliament was equated with that of the Council. It applies to 85 legal bases, which include following the Treaty of Lisbon, freedom, security and justice, external trade, environmental policy, and the common agriculture policy (CAP)¹².

The ordinary procedure starts with a simultaneous proposal from the Commission to the Parliament and the Council, pursuant to Article 294, paragraph 2, of the TFEU.

In addition to the ordinary legislative procedure, the European Union legal system provides for special procedures for the production of legislative acts, applicable only in particular conditions. Article 289, par. 2, of the TFEU provides that:” *In the specific cases provided for by the Treaties, the adoption of a regulation, directive or decision by the European Parliament with the participation of the Council, or by the latter with the participation of the European Parliament, shall constitute a special legislative procedure.*”

Special legislative procedures are therefore divided into consultation procedures and approval procedures. In the first case, the beginning of the legislative process is similar to the normal one, with the Commission playing a proposing role. However, in the matters and circumstances provided for by the current treaties, the power to decide on the adoption of the act belongs exclusively to the Council, but only after having obtained the opinion of the Parliament, which has a purely consultative role.

Despite its residual nature compared to the ordinary procedure, this procedure touches on matters that are anything but secondary, such as:

¹¹ Art. 289 par. 1, TFEU:” The ordinary legislative procedure shall consist in the joint adoption by the European Parliament and the Council of a regulation, directive or decision on a proposal from the Commission. This procedure is defined in Article 294”

¹² European Parliament.eu, Fact Sheets on the European Union, The Powers. Eeva Pavy, April 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/19/the-european-parliament-powers>

social security, citizenship, local elections, international issues relating to family law, operational cooperation between police authorities of the Member States, and procedures for the association of third countries¹³.

In the approval procedure, the opinion of the European Parliament is not only mandatory but binding. Even in this case, the matters, although not numerous, are of particular importance and have to do with complex economic and financial balances, such as the procurement of resources by the European Union or the adoption of the multiannual budget, the uniformity of electoral rules, the introduction of many provisions of a criminal nature, etc.

Finally, there are limited areas of the institutional life of the European Union for which a reversal of the balance of power between the institutions described in the special legislative procedures is foreseen. The Parliament is the decision-making body but only after approval of the legislative text by the Council. The areas are essentially three: The Statute of the Members of the European Parliament (Art. 223, par. 2 TFEU), the modalities of exercise of the right of inquiry (Art. 226, TFEU), the Statute of the European Ombudsman (Art. 228, par. 4, TFEU).

1.2.3 Execution phase

Like all legislative acts produced by national legal systems, those of the European Union also require an implementation phase. Article 291¹⁴ of the TFEU provides as a general rule that Member States shall take all necessary measures to implement legally relevant Union acts.

In many cases, the actual implementation of acts may require the production of other EU law; Article 291, par. 2, TFEU, provides that when there are needs for uniform implementation, Parliament and the Council may confer the executive phase of a legislative act to the Commission. Article 290, par.

¹³ The rationale for the special treatment reserved for the Council compared to the Parliament is to be found in the will of the Member States to maintain in the Treaties a primacy for the Council when it comes to legislating on matters that directly affect the Member States.

¹⁴ Art 291, par. 1, TFEU: "Member States shall adopt all measures of national law necessary to implement legally binding Union acts."

1, of the TFEU establishes that the delegation gives the Commission the power to adopt non-legislative acts of general application or to amend certain non-essential elements of the legislative act.

However, conferring the execution phase to the Commission does not imply that the latter acts with full discretion; Article 291, par.3, in fact provides that Parliament and Council, through specific regulations (legislative acts), establish in advance the rules and general principles relating to the methods of control by the Member States of the exercise of the implementing powers attributed to the Commission.

Currently in force is Regulation No. 182 of 2011, which has implemented the new rules of the so-called “comitology”, a term which refers to the set of procedures through which the European Commission exercises the implementing powers conferred upon it by the European Union legislator, with the assistance of committees of representatives of the Member States of the Union¹⁵.

¹⁵ The representatives designated by the Member States form a committee, chaired without the right to vote by the Commission, with which they monitor the specific activity carried out by the latter.

1.3 Supervisory powers

The European Parliament's power of control covers a wide range of aspects that can be traced back to three areas of intervention: controls that respond to eminently cognitive requirements, controls that express a sanctioning power, and economic controls exercised within the scope of budgetary procedures.

COGNITIVE TOOLS

The former allow the European Parliament, in its collective and individual articulations (committees and individual MEPs), to acquire knowledge of concrete facts and political directions in the decisions of other European institutions. Institutions such as parliamentary questioning, monitoring of other institutions' reports, and responding on citizen petitions are examples of cognitive control mechanisms, in addition to the operations of special commissions and commissions of inquiry.

Parliamentary questions are questions that one or more Members of Parliament, a parliamentary group or a standing committee can address to the European Commission or the Council. They are free in content but must obviously respect certain rules of form and substance, such as concerning specific and concrete issues¹⁶.

The sessions of the Plenary Assembly and the competent committees share the ownership of the venue in which to apply another important parliamentary control institute: the monitoring of the annual reports that the institutions and bodies of the Union are required to submit to Parliament¹⁷.

¹⁶ Articles 136 to 138 of the European Parliament rules regulate the matter of parliamentary questions and provide for a distinction into two categories: parliamentary questions with a request for an oral answer and questions with a request for a written answer.

¹⁷ Art. 142 of the Rules of Procedure provides that the annual reports for which the Treaties provide for parliamentary scrutiny or an opinion of the Parliament "for the purposes of the development of the European Union" are discussed and dealt with directly in the Plenary Assembly. Instead, the examination of those reports that do not fall within this scope are deferred to the competent committee which has the possibility of presenting to the Assembly a short motion for a resolution on the content, or drafting a report on the topic itself, so as to allow Parliament to express its opinion on the issues covered by the report presented.

Finally, the European Union legal system also includes an institution that concerns citizens first and only subsequently Parliament: the right to petition¹⁸.

Generally, the right to petition constitutes an important opportunity for citizens to urge the European Parliament to address specific issues that other institutions may seem to neglect, and for the Parliament itself to exercise a form of control, albeit of lesser intensity, over violations of Community law by Member States that cause harm to the rights of individuals.

SANCTIONING CONTROL POWERS

The European Parliament's sanctioning instruments are those institutions that allow the Assembly to enforce the political responsibility of another institution. The main differences compared to the investigative instruments consist in the fact that they are provided for in a smaller number and that they concern only the Commission. In fact, only against the latter can the Parliament decide to apply binding legal sanctions.

Among these, the most relevant is the motion of censure, a decisive instrument of political control over the work of the Commission throughout its legislature¹⁹.

The motion of censure must really be considered as a last resort (also represented by the required quorum, double and rather high, which most of the time is a real obstacle to achieving a broad political convergence between the parliamentary groups), that is, a last and inevitable remedy to be resorted to with prudence and circumspection.

Its approval, in fact, undermines the credibility of the European construction at its roots, deprives Parliament of its main interlocutor and strikes an institution that has in common with the Assembly the expression of the community method, that is, of operating in function of the European framework and not as a sum of national interests, with the consequent

¹⁸ This right is enshrined in three legal sources: Article 227 TFEU, Article 44 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union and Articles 226 and 227 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament.

¹⁹ Article 17, par. 8, TEU establishes the principle that the Commission is collectively accountable to Parliament; therefore, if a motion of censure is passed, all Members of the Commission must resign.

imbalance, albeit temporary, in favor of the intergovernmental method embodied by the Council²⁰.

Therefore, a valuable tool in the hands of Parliament to give substance to its representative strength in the form of government but to be used correctly to avoid it turning into a double-edged sword. This is the reason why of the eight motions of censure presented so far during the legislatures, none has ever been approved²¹.

POWERS OVER THE EU BUDGET

The expression “budgetary power” refers to the set of powers vested in an institution with regard to the procurement and administration of the resources necessary for the functioning of the European Union.

The European Union has established mechanisms to ensure the acquisition of its own resources. These are essentially transfers, made possible by monthly withdrawals of fixed sums, from the budgets of the Member States to the common budget. The main items are customs duties, agricultural levies, shares of VAT revenue and a percentage calculated on the gross domestic product (GDP) of each State.

Over time, the Parliament has assumed decisive functions in the adoption of the budget starting from obtaining the right to express the final word on "non-compulsory" expenditures, that are, those which, not being linked to automatic mechanisms predefined by treaties and regulations, allow a certain political discretion in the decision-making process. However, the Treaty of Lisbon abolished the distinction between obligatory and non-compulsory expenditure, putting the Parliament on an equal footing with the Council in determining the Union's overall fiscal expenditure.

²⁰ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?*, Il Mulino, 2024, pp.203

²¹ The only motion of censure in the history of the European Union that had a very high probability of being approved was the one in 1999 against the European Commission led by the popular Luxembourgish Jacques Santer, in office since 1995. However, shortly before the motion of censure by the Parliament was approved, the Commission as a whole resigned and was replaced by an interim one led by the vice-president of the resigning one, the socialist Manuel Marin. Within a few months, a new Commission was elected chaired by Romano Prodi, who remained in office until the end of his mandate

The budgetary procedure is regulated by Article 314 TFEU, which sets out the stages and deadlines. However, current practice generally requires the institutions to agree on a "pragmatic" timetable each year at the very beginning of the financial procedure, based on guidelines on budgetary priorities²².

The Council does not have the power to impose a budget that is not shared by Parliament, while Parliament, in certain circumstances, can have the final say and impose a budget that is not shared by the Council, although this is highly unlikely. For these reasons, it can be argued that the new budgetary system is primarily based on a genuine codecision procedure in which Parliament and the Council act on equal footing with respect to all Union expenditure²³.

Finally, the annual measures are placed within a longer time frame, the "multiannual financial framework" which currently covers a period of seven years and is intended to ensure a simpler budgetary procedure. Its approval takes place through intense negotiations between the institutions involved (interinstitutional agreement) to prepare a widely shared text, voted unanimously by the Council and by an absolute majority by the Parliament²⁴.

²² In the case of the 2024 budget, Parliament and the Council reached a provisional agreement on 11 November 2023, within the deadline of the conciliation period. The Council adopted the final agreement on the budget on 20 November 2023 and Parliament adopted it in plenary two days later, with the President of Parliament then signing off on the final text. As agreed between Parliament and the Council, the 2024 budget sets an overall level of appropriations of EUR 189.4 billion in commitments and EUR 142.6 billion in payments.

²³ European Parliament.eu, Fact Sheets on the European Union, The budgetary procedure. Eleanor Remo James, April 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/10/1a-procedura-di-bilancio>

²⁴ The Interinstitutional Agreement for the period 2021-2027 entered into force in December 2020. It aims to enforce budgetary discipline, improve the functioning of the annual budgetary procedure and cooperation between the institutions in budgetary matters and ensure sound financial management.

1.4 Appointment of the European Ombudsman

Within the framework of the powers exercised by the Parliament, there is another institution which, although of lesser importance, carries out a significant collaborative function in the exercise of control functions; this is the European Ombudsman.

This body is elected by the Parliament at the beginning of each legislature for a term that coincides with the duration of the legislature itself (5 years). This helps to highlight its function as an auxiliary source of information, within the framework of the controls carried out by the European Parliament.

The European Ombudsman shall be empowered to receive complaints from a citizen of the Union, or from any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in a Member State, concerning cases of maladministration in the operations of the European Union's institutions and bodies²⁵.

The Office of the Ombudsman deals with the reports of the interested parties, carrying out the appropriate investigations with the powers conferred upon it by the Treaties (Articles 20, 24 and 228 TFEU, as well as by Article 43 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union), he then issues the appropriate recommendations and, finally, reports to the European Parliament.

Although the European Ombudsman is completely independent in the exercise of his functions, he carries them out in a very close relationship with the European Parliament, which in fact establishes specific rules for the discipline of the exercise of his functions, assists him in carrying out investigations and receives his reports.

Once the information has been acquired from the Ombudsman, the competent parliamentary committee will in turn draw up a report and present it to the Assembly for the adoption of the appropriate measures.

²⁵ The interested party, within two years from the date on which he/she became aware of facts that he/she believes constitute a case of maladministration and provided that he/she has already attempted to resolve the problem by contacting the administration in question, provided that the matter is not the subject of legal proceedings, can submit a simple online complaint setting out the details of the case and sending the relevant documentation.

The European Ombudsman, therefore, contributes significantly to enhancing the transparency of the Union institutions, promoting democratic accountability in decision-making and administrative processes. It is therefore a significant piece in the framework of the European Parliament's powers of control.

However, it should be noted that this institution, although it is an institution directly available to citizens, does not enjoy adequate media visibility, remaining rather secondary, perhaps due to the lack of direct sanctioning powers²⁶.

Since 2013, the Irish Emily O'Reilly has held the leadership of the office.

²⁶ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?*, Il Mulino, 2024, pp.206

1.5 The role of the European Parliament in shaping the governance of the Union

The Assembly institution has always performed a function of political control over other bodies with decision-making powers, since the dawn of the European communities; This was the case, for instance, with the ECSC Assembly, to which the Commission was required to provide an annual report and it would face a motion of censure if the assembly did not agree.

However, for a long time the Parliament had only rather weak and residual instruments at its disposal. The perspective began to change from the introduction of direct elections in June 1979 until reaching the present day, where, with the treaties currently in force, a system of relationships between political bodies has been designed through which the Parliament is a co-protagonist of all the main crossroads of the form of government.

In 1981, the European Parliament began informally examining the merits of the Commission's programme and expressing its opinion on its composition, but only with the Treaty of Maastricht did its opinion become binding.

In 1994, the Parliament itself introduced the practice of hearing candidates for the role of European Commissioner: a step that at that time was not yet codified by the treaties but was immediately feared because it was particularly in-depth, aimed at clarifying the political opinions of the candidates under scrutiny but also their suitability to cover such an essential role.

The Treaty of Amsterdam then established the practice of the Parliament to approve the designation of the President of the Commission before the Commissioners.

All these advances came to fruition with the Treaty of Lisbon, which provided for a detailed rationalisation of all these methods, underlining in particular the role of Parliament as the place of direct representation of European citizens, which is crucial for the choices relating to the composition of the executive power²⁷.

²⁷ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?*, Il Mulino, 2024, pp.252

Furthermore, in 2010 was stipulated the the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission, an interinstitutional agreement concluded in the context of the collaborative relationship between the two institutions (Parliament and Commission), to introduce measures aimed at strengthening the Commission's accountability and political legitimacy, extending constructive dialogue and improving the exchange of information between the two institutions and cooperation on procedures and planning²⁸.

1.5.1 Election Method of the Commission

As regards the method of electing the President of the Commission, article 17, par.7, TEU, establishes the procedure.

The rule provides that the European Council (formed by the heads of state or government), after having carried out the appropriate consultations and taking into account the *election results*²⁹, acting by qualified majority, chooses a name to propose to the Parliament as a candidate for the presidency of the Commission. The Parliament, after a thorough discussion, elects the proposed candidate by absolute majority. Otherwise, the European Council has one month to propose another candidate to the Parliament, who is voted on with the same procedure.

Once this first phase has been completed, the European Council agrees with the elected President on the list of names, designated on the basis of suggestions from the Member States, of the other members of the Commission and proposes it to Parliament.

The latter will proceed, in accordance with its own procedural rules which provide for the Commissioners-designate to appear before the respective parliamentary committees for their area of competence, to a very thorough scrutiny by subjecting each candidate to a hearing aimed at assessing

²⁸ Cfr. Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the Commission, 2018.

²⁹ Respect for the election result is a necessary and essential requirement for the election of the President of the Commission.

compliance with the provisions of Article 17³⁰, par. 3, sub. 2, of the TEU: «*The members of the Commission shall be chosen on the ground of their general competence and European commitment from persons whose independence is beyond doubt*». A negative evaluation can lead candidates to withdraw from the process.

The President of the Commission, all Commissioners thus selected and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy³¹ will then be subject to a vote of approval by the Plenary Assembly. If the vote is positive, the European Council will proceed to the formal appointment of the Commission by qualified majority vote.

If, during the term of office of the Commission, there is a substantial change in the portfolio of competences of a Commissioner, or if a new Commissioner needs to be appointed in the event of a vacancy or following the accession of a new Member State, the Commissioner concerned shall appear once again for a hearing before the competent parliamentary committees.

³⁰ Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union (TUE), October 2012.

³¹ The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is the chief co-ordinator and representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) within the European Union (EU). He is appointed by the European Council acting by qualified majority. However, in order to take up their role in the Commission, particularly as a vice-president, the High Representative must go before Parliament for questioning and then be subject to Parliament's vote of ratification on the proposed Commission. Such position is currently held by Josep Borrell Fontelles.

Chapter 2

Election methods and European political families

2.1 Legal bases and common principles

The procedures for electing the European Parliament are defined by both specific national provisions that differ from one Member State to another and European legislation that instead establishes uniform guidelines and standards for all Member States³².

EU legal bases for the election of the European Parliament are given by:

The 1976 Electoral Act relating to the election of representatives in the Assembly by direct universal suffrage. While establishing that the European Parliament would initially be made up of deputies designated by national parliaments, the founding treaties had provided for their election by direct universal suffrage.

The Council, however, enforced this provision just before the first direct elections were held in 1979, with the Electoral Act of 1976, which sanctioned the approach towards the election of members of the European Parliament through direct universal suffrage.

This act profoundly changed the institutional position of the European Parliament and it became the document at the basis of a more democratic European Union³³. In fact, some provisions of a general nature were dictated within it, including: the distribution of seats, the duration of the mandate set at five years, the prohibition of imperative mandates³⁴ and the listing of certain hypotheses of incompatibility, to which was added the provision of a substantial concomitance in the holding of elections within the different Member States.

³² European Parliament.eu, Fact Sheets on the European Union, Electoral Procedures, Pablo Abril Marti, Mariusz Maciejewski, July 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/21/the-european-parliament-electoral-procedures>

³³ Claudio Martinelli, Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?, Il Mulino, 2024, pp.112

³⁴ The Imperative mandate is a political system in which representatives are required to enact policies in accordance with orders or instructions received from the voters. Failure to follow these instructions may result in the representative being dismissed or recalled

The Electoral Act of 1976 was subsequently amended by the Council Decision 2002/772/EC³⁵, EURATOM, of 25 June and 23 September 2002, whose rules had been applied for the first time during the 2004 elections. With a view to a progressive consolidation of national electoral regulations, the 2002 decision introduced some relevant changes extremely significant for outlining the representative nature of the European Parliament more clearly.

Above all, national electoral regulations cannot provide for a barrier threshold in the allocation of seats higher than 5 percent of the votes cast, considered as the extreme limit that can be reached without affecting the fundamentals of representation.

Secondarily, the incompatibility between the positions of European Parliamentarian and national parliamentarian was established.

But more than any other aspect, the true cornerstone of the 2002 decision can be found in the adoption of the principle of proportional representation³⁶ in the election of MEPs.

The establishment of this principle corresponds to the logic of maximizing the representative function of the European Parliament. With the proportional option, it was chosen to exalt the European Parliament as a privileged place in which the principle of representative democracy, on which the very functioning of the European Union lies, can be effectively implemented³⁷.

The most current amendments to the 1976 Electoral Act were adopted the 13 July, 2018, by Council Decision³⁸ 2018/994/EU which includes provisions on the possibility of different voting methods (advance voting, electronic, internet, and postal voting); on thresholds; on the protection of personal data; on the punishment of 'double voting' by national legislation;

³⁵Official Journal of the European Union, Council Decision 2002/772/EC, EURATOM, amending the Act concerning the election of the representatives of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage. June and September 2002.

³⁶ The concept of regressive proportionality implies that the total number of seats is distributed according to the size of the population of the Member States, but the more populous Member States accept being under-represented in order to favor greater representation of the less populated countries: the larger is the country, the smaller is the number of seats in proportion to the number of inhabitants. This concept has been further defined in subsequent European Council decisions adopted under Article 14(2) TEU since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon.

³⁷ Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione? Il Mulino*, 2024, pp.112

³⁸Official Journal of the European Union, Council Decision 2018/994/EU, July 2018

on voting in third countries; and on the possibility of European political parties appearing on ballot papers. Member States had been called to meet their commitments under Decision 2018/994 by the 2024 elections³⁹.

Article 14, par. 2, of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) establishing that:

- The European Parliament shall be composed of representatives of the Union's citizens.
- They shall not exceed seven hundred and fifty in number, plus the President.
- Representation of citizens shall be digressively proportional, with a minimum threshold of six members per Member State.
- No Member State shall be allocated more than ninety-six seats.

Such provision follows what is contained in Article 10⁴⁰ of the TEU, according to which the functioning of the Union is based on representative democracy, the essence of which is found, primarily, in the European Parliament⁴¹.

Article 20, par.1 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) establishes that:

- Citizens of the Union shall enjoy the rights and be subject to the duties provided for in the Treaties.
- They shall have, *inter alia*: (a) the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States; (b) the right to vote and to stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament and in

³⁹European Parliament.eu, Fact Sheets on the European Union, Electoral Procedures, Pablo Abril Marti, Mariusz Maciejewski, July 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/21/the-european-parliament-electoral-procedures>.

⁴⁰ Art. 10, par. 1, TEU: «1. The functioning of the Union shall be founded on representative democracy. 2. Citizens are directly represented at Union level in the European Parliament.»

⁴¹ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione? Il Mulino, 2024, pp.110

municipal elections in their Member State of residence, under the same conditions as nationals of that State.

Article 22, par.1, TFUE, establishing that:

- Every citizen of the Union residing in a Member State of which he is not a national shall have the right to vote and to stand as a candidate at municipal elections in the Member State, in which he resides, under the same conditions as nationals of that State.
- This right shall be exercised subject to detailed arrangements adopted by the Council, acting unanimously in accordance with a special legislative procedure and after consulting the European Parliament; these arrangements may provide for derogations where warranted by problems specific to a Member State.

Article 223, par.1, TFUE, establishing that:

- The European Parliament shall draw up a proposal to lay down the provisions necessary for the election of its Members by direct universal suffrage in accordance with a uniform procedure in all Member States or in accordance with principles common to all Member States.
- The Council, acting unanimously in accordance with a special legislative procedure and after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament, which shall act by a majority of its component Members, shall lay down the necessary provisions. These provisions shall enter into force following their approval by the Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.

In terms of standardizing the electoral system for all member states, the Maastricht Treaty stipulated in 1992 that elections must be held in accordance with a uniform procedure, and that the European Parliament would prepare a proposal for unanimous adoption by the Council. However,

because the Council was unable to agree on any of the ideas, the Treaty of Amsterdam included the possibility of adopting ' 'common principles'⁴².

Following the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon and Article 223 of the TFEU, which charged Parliament with developing a project aimed at establishing uniform electoral legislation, the Council was once again unable to reach an agreement on any of the proposals, owing to the complex procedure envisaged and the lack of a shared approach among the various member countries.

Consequently, without prejudice to the provision of certain principles and a few common rules, the identification of the discipline for electing MEPs currently remains at the discretion of each member country. A situation that has given rise, over time, to a fragmentation capable of acting as a brake on the European integration process, for example by discouraging the formation of transnational parties capable of facing each other in a real electoral competition⁴³.

Article 39 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Through the Lisbon Treaty, the right to vote and stand as a candidate has acquired the value of a fundamental right, following the incorporation into the treaties of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Article 39 establishes that:

- Every citizen of the Union has the right to vote and to be eligible for elections of the European Parliament in the Member State in which he resides, to the same conditions of the citizens of that State;
- Members of the European Parliament are elected by direct universal suffrage, free and secret.

⁴² Dossier XIX Legislatura, "La riforma del sistema elettorale europeo", 26 April 2023, Camera dei deputati. Senato della Repubblica.

⁴³ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?* Il Mulino, 2024, pp. 111

2.2 Electoral system

According to the Electoral Act, as amended, MEPs are elected based on national electoral systems that must adhere to certain common rules set by EU legislation, such as proportional representation. Typically, the election of deputies to the European Parliament is permitted through list or single-member voting with proportional carryover of votes. Member States may allow preferential voting.

While in six Member States such as Spain, Germany, France, Portugal, Romania and Hungary, voters can only vote for one list without the possibility of changing the order of candidates (closed list), in others they can express their preference for one or more candidates (preferential vote).

Depending on the degree of freedom enjoyed by voters in preferential voting, a distinction can be made between semi-open lists, in which voters can modify the position of one or all the candidates in the chosen list, and open lists, in which voters can vote for candidates from different lists.

Instead of the list ballot, some Member States use the single transferable vote (STV)⁴⁴. Under this system, the voter has only one vote but can classify candidates as first choice, second choice, third choice, etc. To be elected, candidates must receive a minimum number of votes.

Along with the voluntary threshold for the allocation of seats of up to 5% at national level, Council Decision (EU, Euratom) 2018/994 established an obligatory minimum threshold of between 2 percent and 5 percent for constituencies (including single-constituency Member States) with more than 35 seats.

⁴⁴ The Single Transferable Vote system (STV) allows the voter to assign more than one preference by "numbering" the candidates on the ballot paper. This system combines two advantages: the possibility of indicating the preferred candidate and the ability to minimize the number of unrepresented votes, transferring them from candidates who have a higher number than that required for the election.

Decision (EU, EURATOM) 2018/994 also provides:

- the members of the European Parliament are elected as "representatives of the citizens of the Union" (therefore no longer "representatives of the peoples of the States gathered in the Community");
- the obligation to set a deadline of no less than three weeks prior to the date set by the Member State concerned for the submission of candidatures for election to the European Parliament, where a deadline is provided for by national legislation;
- the right for Member States to allow the name or logo of the European political party to which the national political party or individual candidate is affiliated to be affixed on ballot papers;
- the obligation for Member States to take the necessary measures to ensure that double voting (i.e. the case of a European citizen voting in more than one EU Member State) in European Parliament elections is subject to "effective sanctions, proportionate and dissuasive";
- the right for Member States, in accordance with their respective national electoral procedures, to adopt the necessary measures to allow their citizens resident in third countries to vote in the elections to the European Parliament.

2.3 Right to vote and eligibility for citizens of Member States other than their country of residence

According to Article 22, par. 1, TFUE:

- Every citizen of the Union residing in a Member State of which he is not a national shall have the right to vote and to stand as a candidate at municipal elections in the Member State, in which he resides, under the same conditions as nationals of that State.
- This right shall be exercised subject to detailed arrangements adopted by the Council, acting unanimously in accordance with a special legislative procedure and after consulting the European Parliament; these arrangements may provide for derogations where warranted by problems specific to a Member State.

The modalities for exercising this right have been established by Article 6 of Council Directive 93/109/EC, as last amended by Council Directive 2013/1/EU⁴⁵, which states that every Union citizen residing in a Member State without citizenship and that, as a result of an individual decision in civil or criminal matters, has lost the right to be eligible under the law of the Member State of residence or the law of the Member State of origin, is barred from exercising this right in the Member State of residence in European Parliament elections.

⁴⁵Official Journal of the European Union, Council Directive 2013/1/EU amending Directive 93/109/EC, December 2012.

2.4 Incompatibility

In accordance with Article 7 of the 1976 Electoral Act, as amended, the office of Member of the European Parliament is incompatible with that of: member of the government of a Member State; member of the European Commission; judge, lawyer or registrar of the Court of Justice or the Court of First Instance degree; member of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank; member of the Court of Auditors; member of the Economic and Social Committee; member of the Committee of the Regions; member of the committees or bodies created under or in application of the Treaties to provide for the administration of Union funds or to carry out a permanent and direct administrative management task; member of the Board of Directors, Management Committee or staff of the European Investment Bank; official or agent, in service activities, of the institutions of the European Union or of specialized bodies who are connected to it or the European Central Bank.

Furthermore, since 2004, the position is incompatible with that of a member of a national parliament. Each Member State may extend the incompatibilities applicable at national level under the conditions set out in Article 7.

2.5 Composition of the European Parliament

Decision (EU) 2018/937⁴⁶ of the European Council of 28 June 2018, which establishes the composition of the European Parliament, determines the methods for allocating the seats referred to in Article 14, par. 2, TEU, in application of the principle of digressive proportionality.

The decision defines digressive proportionality as follows:

«the ratio between the population and the number of seats of each Member State, before rounding to whole numbers, varies according to the respective population, so that each Member of the European Parliament of one more populated Member State represents more citizens than each Member of the European Parliament of a less populated Member State and that, at the same time, the more populated a Member State is, the more it is entitled to a high number of seats in the European Parliament.»

Specifically, the decision establishes that:

- The allocation of seats in the European Parliament 'fully' uses the minimum and maximum thresholds set for each Member State by the TEU in order to reflect as much as possible the size of the respective populations of the Member States;
- The allocation of seats in the European Parliament takes into account demographic developments in the Member States.

The total population of the Member States is calculated from Commission (via the Eurostat statistical office) on the basis of the latest data provided by the Member States themselves, in accordance with a method established by Regulation (EU) No. 1260/2013⁴⁷ of the European Parliament and of the Council on European demographic statistics.

⁴⁶ European Council, Decision (EU) 2018/937 establishing the composition of the European Parliament, June 2018.

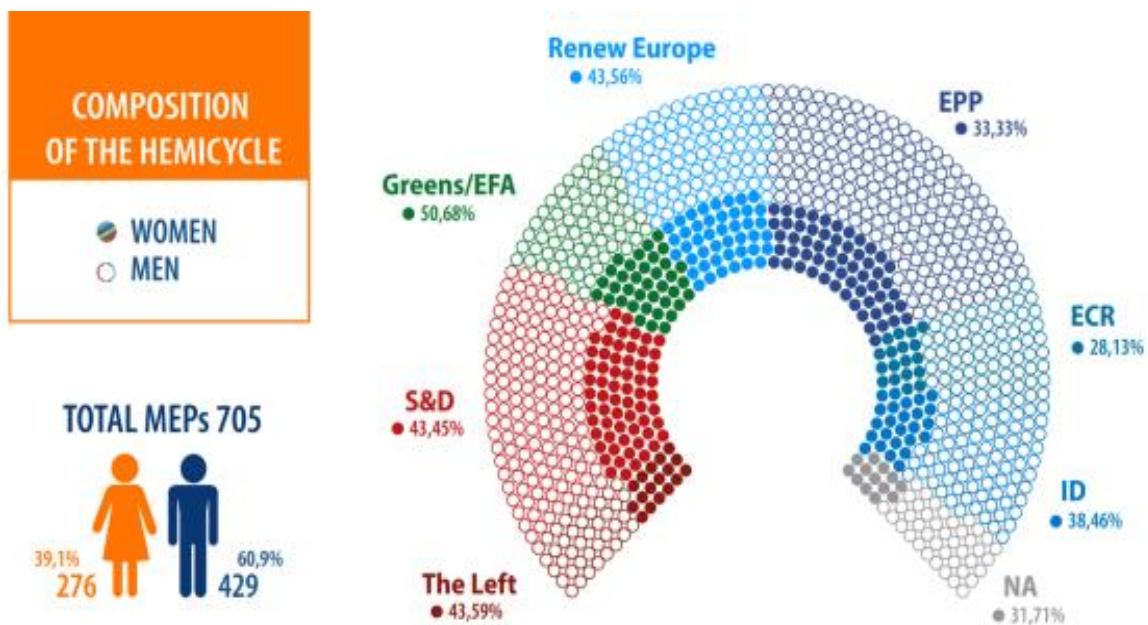
⁴⁷ Official Journal of the European Union, Regulation (EU) No 1260/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council, November 2013

For the 2019-2024 legislature, the number of representatives in the European Parliament elected in each Member State has been defined as follows: Belgium 21, Bulgaria 17, Czech Republic 21, Denmark 14, Germany 96, Estonia 7, Ireland 13, Greece 21, Spain 59, France 79, Croatia 12, Italy 76, Cyprus 6, Latvia 8, Lithuania 11, Luxembourg 6, Hungary 21, Malta 6, Netherlands 29, Austria 19, Poland 52, Portugal 21, Romania 33, Slovenia 8, Slovakia 14, Finland 14 and Sweden 21.

As of 1 February 2020, the number and distribution of seats in the European Parliament have changed following the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Parliament now has 705 seats, compared to 751 (the maximum allowed under EU treaties) before the UK's withdrawal. Of the 73 UK seats, 27 have been redistributed to other countries, while the remaining 46 have been placed in reserve for possible enlargements.

The seats were redistributed to Spain (+5), France (+5), Italy (+3), Netherlands (+3), Ireland (+2), Sweden (+1), Austria (+1), Denmark (+1), Finland (+1), Slovakia (+1), Croatia (+1), Estonia (+1), Poland (+1) and Romania (+1). No member state lost seats.

Figure 1: Composition of the Hemicycle, 2019-2024 legislature.



2.6 Arrangements subject to national provisions

While waiting for a common discipline for the election of MEPs, the margin of maneuver left to individual member countries is partially contained in the identification of some common principles to be followed in the construction of their respective electoral systems. This, however, does not prevent from identifying also some general trend lines capable of providing an insight into the solutions adopted within the twenty-seven countries.

National electoral thresholds

In accordance with the Council decision of 25 June 2002, each national electoral law is based on the principle of proportionality for the purposes of the distribution of seats. Despite this common character, however, tangible differences emerge in the application of this principle, such as that of the electoral thresholds.

Along with the voluntary threshold for the allocation of seats of up to 5 percent at national level, Council Decision (EU, Euratom) 2018/994 established an obligatory minimum threshold of between 2 percent and 5 percent for constituencies (including single-constituency Member States) with more than 35 seats.

Currently, among the twenty-seven Member States of the European Union, nine apply the highest threshold of 5 percent: France, Belgium, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Croatia, Latvia and Hungary. At an immediately lower level, where the choice fell on determining a barrier equal to 4 percent of the valid votes for a list to participate in the distribution of seats, there are Austria, Italy and Sweden. The 3 percent threshold, however, is applied in the electoral system of Greece, while the law in force in Cyprus prescribes a smaller threshold of 1.8 percent.

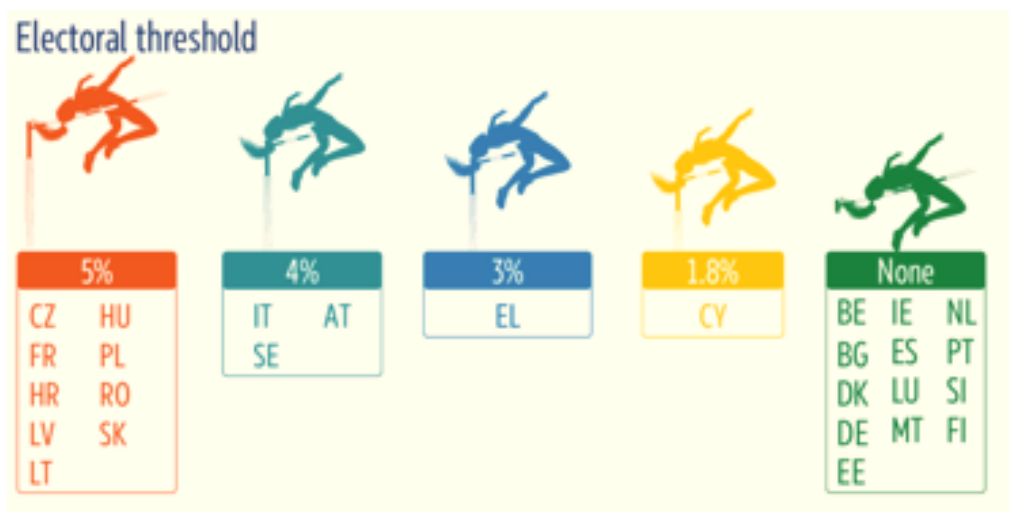
In the thirteen remaining jurisdictions, no barrier is used. Among these, those of Portugal and Germany stand out, as they share a particular situation. In the former, the option of not imposing any limits on the allocation of seats

was favored by a specific prohibition established within the Constitutional Charter⁴⁸.

The German question is different. In this case there was no constitutional provision similar to the Portuguese one aimed at excluding any possibility of placing a threshold. The legislator's dual attempt to set one (initially this was set at 5 percent and subsequently reduced to 3) however had to come up against the negative judgment of the Federal Constitutional Court expressed in two sentences, in 2011 and 2013 respectively.

The provision of a threshold was not in itself illegitimate, as long as it was justified with the aim of contributing to the formation of stable governments, supported by equally solid majorities. This reasoning, valid for the elections to the German parliament, cannot be repeated in the same way for the European Parliament, which does not contribute to the formation of any executive body, including the Commission. For the German Constitutional Court, in fact, the latter cannot be considered an Executive, unlike the governments of national states. A questionable position, but very significant for marking the distinction between the national and national dimensions⁴⁹.

Figure 2: electoral threshold by EU Member States



⁴⁸ Article 152, par.1, of the Portuguese Constitution decrees that limits on the conversion of votes into mandates cannot be established at a legislative level, imposing a minimum percentage of votes in order to access the distribution of seats. Although this rule concerns the national Parliament, it is considered as a general parameter to which all legislation must be aligned as an expression of the democratic concept in the country.

⁴⁹ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?* Il Mulino, 2024, pp. 116

Constituency boundaries

In European elections, the majority of the Member States operate as single constituencies. However, four Member States (Belgium, Ireland, Italy and Poland) have divided their national territory into a number of regional constituencies.

The election of the Italian members of the European Parliament operates on a constituency basis where the entire national territory is divided into five supra-regional electoral constituencies (Northwestern Italy, Northeastern Italy, Central Italy, Southern Italy and Insular Italy) to each of which is assigned a predetermined number of seats based on the population resident in the territory included therein.

Within each constituency, the relevant political parties or groups present their own lists whose number of candidates cannot be less than three or greater than the number of eligible parliamentarians within the constituency. The allocation of seats to the lists takes place based on the votes obtained at a national level and then they are distributed in each of the five constituencies, proportionally to the votes obtained by each of them in the reference area. Only lists that have obtained at least 4 percent of the votes validly expressed at national level are eligible for the allocation of seats⁵⁰.

Figure 3: Constituency boundaries of Italy



⁵⁰ European Parliament.eu, 2024 European elections: National rules
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/754620/EPRS_ATA\(2023\)754620_IT.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/754620/EPRS_ATA(2023)754620_IT.pdf)

Right to vote

In almost all Member States the age for exercising the right to vote is 18, except in Austria, Belgium and Germany and in Malta, where it is 16, and in Greece, where 17 is sufficient.

Voting is only compulsory in four Member States: Belgium, Bulgaria, Luxembourg and Greece⁵¹. The obligation applies both to citizens of the Member State and to citizens of other EU Member States registered in one of them at the time of the elections to the European Parliament.

1. Voting by non-nationals in their host country

Citizens of the Union who live in a Member State but are not nationals have the right to vote in European Parliament election in their country of residence under the same conditions as nationals (Article 22, par.1, TFEU).

However, the definition of residence differs from one Member State to another. Some countries require voters to have a domicile or usual residence within the electoral territory (e.g., Estonia, France, Germany, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia), to be ordinarily resident there (e.g., Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Slovakia, and Sweden), or to be on the population register (e.g., Belgium and Czech). Some nations (such as Cyprus) require EU nationals to have a certain number of years of residence before they can vote. Citizens of other EU nations are required to register to vote in all Member States prior to Election Day. Registration deadlines vary by member state.

⁵¹ In Greece, voting is not compulsory for those over 70, for those living abroad and for voters who, on Election Day, are more than 200 km away from their polling station.

2. Voting by non-resident nationals in their country of origin

Almost all Member States allow the possibility of voting from abroad in European elections. In some Member States, voters are required to register with their national electoral authorities in order to be eligible to vote from abroad by post or at an embassy or consulate. In other Member States, postal votes may take place at embassies or consulates.

In some Member States, the right to vote abroad is only granted to citizens living in another Member State (e.g. Bulgaria and Italy). In addition, most Member States make special arrangements for diplomats and military personnel serving abroad.

Recent amendments to the Electoral Act 1976, adopted by Council Decision (EU, Euratom) 2018/994, establish that Member States may provide for early voting, postal voting and electronic voting for elections to the European Parliament and on the Internet. The fact that some citizens of Member States other than the one of residence can vote both in the country of residence and in the country of origin could give rise to abuses (especially double voting, considered a crime in some Member States).

In this respect, Member States are urged to take adequate steps to ensure, in particular, the credibility of the results, the private nature of the vote, and the protection of personal data in accordance with applicable European Union legislation.

Voting methods for citizens abroad

Belgium			
Bulgaria	★		
Czechia	NOT POSSIBLE		
Denmark			
Germany			
Estonia			
Ireland	NOT POSSIBLE		
Greece			
Spain			
France			
Croatia			
Italy	★		
Cyprus			
Latvia			
Lithuania			
Luxembourg			
Hungary			
Malta	NOT POSSIBLE		
Netherlands			
Austria			
Poland			
Portugal			
Romania			
Slovenia			
Slovakia	NOT POSSIBLE		
Finland			
Sweden			

By post Proxy
 Embassy/consulate E-voting
★ Voting from abroad only possible within another EU country.

Member States must also take the necessary measures to ensure that double voting in European Parliament elections is subject to effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions. Finally, they can implement necessary mechanisms to allow citizens residing in other countries to vote in European Parliament elections.

Right of eligibility

According to Article 3 of Council Directive 93/109/EC, for elections to the European Parliament, any citizen of the Union who, despite not being a citizen of the Member State of residence, meets the requirements to which that State's legislation grants its citizens the right to vote and stand as candidates, has the right to vote and stand as a candidate in the Member State of residence if these rights have not been lost.

The right to run as a candidate in European Parliament elections in any other Member State of residence is also an application of the principle of non-discrimination between nationals and non-nationals, as well as the right to free movement and residence within the territory of the EU, established by the treaties⁵².

Additionally, Article 4 of Council Directive 93/109/EC also states that no one may stand as a candidate in more than one Member State in the same elections.

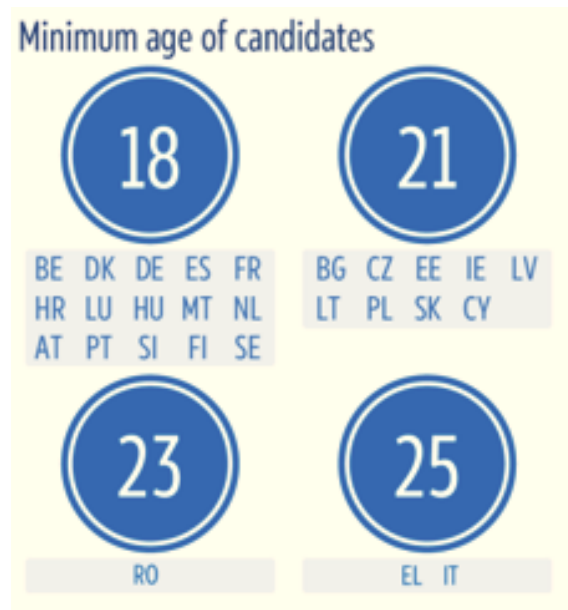
According to the data reported by the EP, regardless of the requirement of citizenship of a Member State, common to all Member States, the eligibility conditions vary from one Member State to another.

The minimum age to stand for election is 18 in most Member States; the exceptions are Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia,

⁵² Dossier XIX Legislatura, “La riforma del sistema elettorale europeo”, 26 April 2023, Camera dei deputati. Senato della Repubblica.

Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia (21 years), Romania (23 years), Italy and Greece (25 years old).

Figure 5: minimum age of candidates by country



As regards the application procedure, in some Member States, only political organizations and parties can submit applications; in other Member States, in order to present candidatures, a certain number of signatures must be collected or a certain number of voters must be gathered together; in some cases, it is payment of a deposit is required.

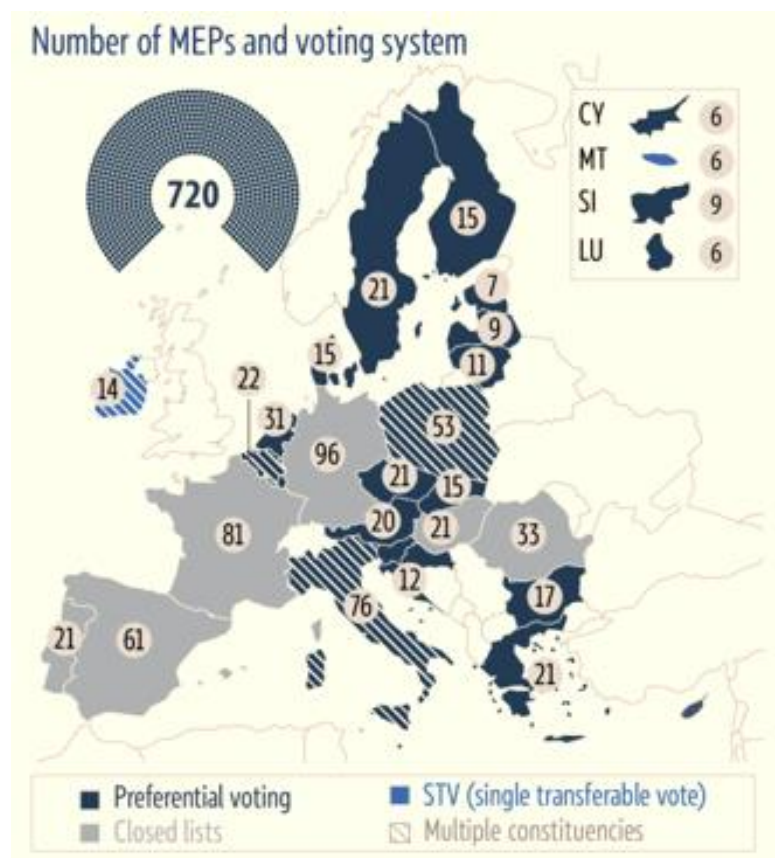
In Italy, article 12 of law no. 18 of 1979 provides that the lists of candidates must be presented, for each constituency, to the registry of the court of appeal where the district electoral office is established, from 8 am on the fortieth day to 8 pm on the thirty-ninth day prior to that of the vote. The lists of candidates they must be signed by no less than 30,000 and no more than 35,000 voters.

Possibility for voters to change the order of the candidate list

In most Member States, voters can assign preferential votes to change the order of candidates' lists. However, in six Member States (Germany, Spain, France, Portugal, Hungary and Romania), the lists are closed (the attribution of preferential votes is not possible). In Malta and Ireland, the voter sorts the candidates on the list by preference (single transferable vote).

Pursuant to article, 14 of law no. 18 of 1979, in Italy the voter can express up to three preferences. In the case of multiple preferences expressed, these must concern candidates of different sex, under penalty of cancellation of the second and third preferences

Figure 6: number of MEPs and voting system



Allocation of seats left vacant during the legislature

In some Member States, the first unelected candidates on the same list fill vacated seats (perhaps after adjustments to reflect the candidates' votes).

In other Member States, vacant seats are filled by substitutes, and if no substitutes are available, the order of the candidates on the lists is the determining factor. MEPs from certain other Member States have the right to return to the European Parliament after their reason for leaving has expired.

In Italy, article 41 of Law No. 18 of 1979 states that if a seat becomes empty for whatever reason during the term of office, it is assigned to the candidate who immediately succeeds the last elected member on the same list and electoral constituency.

Election dates

Elections to the European Parliament are held throughout the same time, beginning on a Thursday morning and finishing on the following Sunday, according to Articles 10 and 11 of the 1976 Electoral Act, as amended; the actual day and timings are determined by each Member State.

In 1976, it was the Council, acting unanimously after consulting the European Parliament, which determined the electoral period for the first elections in 1979. Subsequent elections since 1979 have taken place in the corresponding period during the last year of the five-year period referred to in Article 5 of the Electoral Act

Concerning the 2014 elections, the Council, by its decision of 14 June 2013, moved the dates, originally set for June, to 22-25 May, to avoid a clash with the Whitsun holidays, applying the following provision of Article 11:

‘Should it prove impossible to hold the elections ... during that period, the Council acting unanimously shall, after consulting the European Parliament,

determine, at least one year before the end of the five-year term referred to in Article 5, another electoral period which shall not be more than two months before or one month after the period fixed pursuant to the preceding subparagraph’.

Subsequent elections are to take place in the corresponding period in the final year of the five-year period (Article 11 of the 1976 Act). Accordingly, the 2019 elections took place between 23 and 26 May. The 2024 European Parliament elections took place between 6 and 9 June.

Figure 7: election days across UE



2.7 European Parliament amendments to the election process

Since the 1960s, the European Parliament has frequently expressed its opinions on electoral law questions and presented solutions in accordance with Article 138 of the EC Treaty (now Article 223 TFEU). The lack of a truly consistent method for election to the European Parliament demonstrates how difficult is to reconcile differing national traditions. The Treaty of Amsterdam's provision for the adoption of common principles has only partially alleviated these obstacles⁵³.

The purpose outlined in Article 223 TFEU of establishing a consistent procedure, requiring the approval of the European Parliament, has yet to be achieved.

Parliament's ongoing attempts to update and 'Europeanize' the common election procedure resulted in a proposal for a unified electoral procedure in 1997, which was adopted into the Council resolution in 2002.

On November 11, 2015, the European Parliament adopted a resolution⁵⁴ that amended the European Union's electoral laws. The Constitutional Affairs Committee's legislative effort advocated revisions to the 1976 Electoral Act that would make European elections more democratic and encourage public participation in the electoral process.

Parliament's proposed amendments were partly accepted and incorporated into Council Decision (EU, EURATOM) 2018/994 of 13 July 2018. However, the Council could not agree on Parliament's proposal that a joint constituency be established and lead candidates appointed for the post of Commission President.

Following its resolution⁵⁵ of 7 February 2018 on the composition of the European Parliament, Parliament agreed to reduce the number of its

⁵³ European Parliament.eu, Fact Sheets on the European Union, Electoral Procedures, Pablo Abril Marti, Mariusz Maciejewski, July 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/21/the-european-parliament-electoral-procedures>.

⁵⁴Official Journal of the European Union, Reform of the electoral law of the EU, European Parliament resolution, November 2015.

⁵⁵ European Parliament, resolution on the composition of the European Parliament, February 2018.

representatives from 751 to 705 following the UK's exit from the EU, as well as to re-distribute some of the seats made available by Brexit among EU countries that were slightly underrepresented.

On September 13, 2023, the European Parliament approved the European Council's proposal to increase the number of seats in the European Parliament for the 2024 elections from 705 to 720.

2.7.1 Appointment of the “Spitzenkandidat”

Article 17, par.7, TEU, provides that:

- Taking into account the elections to the European Parliament and after having held the appropriate consultations, the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall propose to the European Parliament a candidate for President of the Commission.
- This candidate shall be elected by the European Parliament by a majority of its component members. If he does not obtain the required majority, the European Council, acting by a qualified majority, shall within one month propose a new candidate who shall be elected by the European Parliament following the same procedure.

On 22 November 2012, the European Parliament adopted a resolution⁵⁶ urging the European political parties to nominate candidates for the position of President of the Commission during the 2014 elections, so as to reinforce the political legitimacy of both Parliament and the Commission. These arrangements were implemented in place prior to the 2014 elections, which saw lead candidates run for the first time.

In this way the European Parliament intended to influence the choices of the European Council in the field of the shape of government through the delimitation of its range of action on the choice of the candidate for President of the Commission, and it did so in the name of a further step

⁵⁶ Official Journal of the European Union, European Parliament resolution of on the elections to the European Parliament in 2014, November 2012.

towards a sort of centrality of Parliament which, ultimately, would reflect the centrality of the electorate.

Finally, as a result of the 2014 elections, the European Parliament elected one of the candidates, Jean-Claude Juncker, as Commission President on 22 October 2014.

2.7.2 Regulation of the financing system of political parties

In 2003, a system for funding European political parties was established, allowing for the formation of political foundations⁵⁷ at the EU level.

Regulation (EC) No. 2004/2003 was abolished and replaced by Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No. 1141/2014 of the European Parliament and Council on the statute and financing of European political parties and foundations, published 22 October 2014.

The 2014 regulation was amended in response to the European Parliament's resolution⁵⁸ on the funding of political parties and foundations on June 15, 2017 .

In the resolution, deficiencies were highlighted regarding the level of co-financing and the possibility of MEPs' multi-party membership, in an effort to ensure that public money will be utilized properly in the funding of European political parties and foundations through Regulation⁵⁹ (EU, Euratom) 2018/673 of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 3, 2018.

⁵⁷ A European political foundation is an organization linked with a European political party that supports and complements the party's aims and is registered with the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations. Such a foundation monitors, assesses, and participates to the debate on European public policy problems. It also conducts activities related to European public policy issues, such as seminars, training, conferences, and research.

⁵⁸Official Journal of the European Union, European Parliament resolution of on the funding of political parties and political foundations at European level, June 2017.

⁵⁹Official Journal of the European Union, Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/673 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations, May 2018.

2.7.3 Latest parliamentary regulations

Recent events have highlighted the potential risks to electoral processes and democracy posed by internet communication (the manipulation of personal data in an electoral environment).

To prevent unlawful use of personal data, new amendments to the 2014 Regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations were subsequently adopted, (Regulation⁶⁰ (EU, Euratom) 2019/493 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 March 2019 amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 as regards a verification procedure related to infringements of rules on the protection of personal data in the context of elections to the European Parliament).

The new regulations approved by the Council and Parliament aim to safeguard the electoral process from online disinformation campaigns that abuse voters' personal information. They allow financial penalties to be applied to European political parties and foundations that intentionally attempt to influence the results of the elections by exploiting violations of data protection laws.

Furthermore, in response to Parliament's resolution on online platforms and the digital single market on June 15, 2017, which asked for that the Commission investigate the possibility of legislative intervention to limit the spread of fake content, the Commission issued a communication titled 'Tackling online disinformation: a European approach' in April 2018 and put forward an EU-wide Code of Practice⁶¹, which three online platforms signed in September 2018.

⁶⁰Official Journal of the European Union, Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2019/493 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, March 2019.

⁶¹European Commission, Code of Practice on Disinformation one year on: online platforms submit self-assessment reports, April 2019. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_19_6166

The Commission's December 2018 action plan against disinformation⁶², encouraged online platforms to quickly and effectively implement the commitments, as well as to focus on actions critical to the European elections, such as deleting fake accounts, labeling messaging activities by 'bots', and collaborating with fact-checkers and researchers to detect disinformation and make fact-checked content more visible.

In the run-up to the May 2019 European elections, the Commission requested that the three platforms that signed the Code of Practice report on a monthly basis on their actions taken to improve ad placement scrutiny, ensure transparency of political and issue-based advertising, and combat fake accounts and the malicious use of bots.

⁶² European Commission, Action Plan on disinformation: Commission contribution to the European Council, December 2018. https://commission.europa.eu/publications/action-plan-disinformation-commission-contribution-european-council-13-14-december-2018_en

2.8 Reform of the electoral law of the European Union

The necessity for a reform of European electoral law stems from the fact that, despite the prospect of adopting a uniform electoral procedure based on direct universal suffrage was enshrined in the founding treaties as early as 1957, European elections are still governed by national legislation.⁶³

The legal basis for the reform of the electoral procedure is contained in the already mentioned Article 223, par.1 The proposal to reform the electoral procedure of the European Parliament was put forward with the aim of increasing the democratic and supranational dimension of European elections and the democratic legitimacy of the Union's decision-making process, as well as to strengthen the concept of Union citizenship, improve the functioning of the European Parliament and the governance of the Union, confer greater legitimacy and greater legislative powers on the work of the European Parliament, strengthen the principles of electoral equality and equal opportunities, enhance the effectiveness of the system for holding European elections and bring Members of the European Parliament closer to their constituents, particularly the younger ones⁶⁴.

In the parliamentary resolution of 26 November 2020⁶⁵ on the balance sheet of the European elections, the European Parliament recommended examining - citing among other things the Conference on the Future of Europe⁶⁶ - the following points in order to improve the European electoral process:

- Development of remote voting methods for citizens during European elections in extraordinary circumstances;
- Common election admission, campaign, and funding rules;

⁶³ Article 138 of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) stated that "the Assembly is made up of delegates whom Parliaments are requested to designate from among their members according to the procedure established by each Member State", establishing at the same time that the Assembly should have developed "projects aimed at allowing elections by direct universal suffrage, according to a uniform procedure in all member states".

⁶⁴ legislative resolution of the European Parliament of 3 May 2022 on the proposal for a Council regulation on the election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision (76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom) and the Act relating to the election of members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage

⁶⁵ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-11-26_IT.html#sdocta4

⁶⁶ The Conference on the Future of Europe was a proposal of the European Commission and the European Parliament, announced at the end of 2019, with the aim of looking at the medium- to long-term future of the EU and what reforms should be made to its policies and institutions.

- Harmonized standards for passive and active voting rights across Member States, including the consideration of lowering the minimum voting age to 16;
- Provisions for Member absences, such as maternity, parental, or serious illness.

Parliament called on the Member States to ensure that all their nationals who enjoy the right to vote, including EU citizens living outside their country of origin, homeless people and prisoners who are granted this right under national law, can exercise it.

Following the report of 15 June 2023 by the Committee of Inquiry to investigate the use of Pegasus and equivalent surveillance spyware (PEGA Committee), Parliament adopted its recommendation calling on the Commission to set up a special task force, involving the national electoral commissions, dedicated to protection of the 2024 European elections across the Union. However, this did not receive a response from the Commission.

In the legislative resolution⁶⁷ of the European Parliament of 3 May 2022 on the reform of the European Union electoral law (2020/2220 INL), presented by the Constitutional Affairs Committee, it is highlighted that, despite some progress in defining common criteria for procedures elections of the European Parliament, European elections currently continue to be governed mainly by national laws.

The resolution therefore underlines the need for 'further improvements' in order to establish a truly uniform procedure for European elections.

The EP proposes the reform of its electoral procedure with the aim of "concretely developing a European public sphere", suggesting common minimum standards and legislative changes, in view of the 2024 European elections.

⁶⁷ Official Journal of the European Union, European Parliament legislative resolution on the proposal for a Council Regulation on the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision (76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom) and the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage annexed to that Decision, May 2022.

In particular, in the proposal for a Council regulation attached to the legislative resolution, the EP calls for the repeal of the Act relating to the election of members of the European Parliament, in order to:

- Improve the transparency and democratic accountability of Parliament by strengthening the European dimension of elections, in particular through the establishment of a constituency at Union level, instead of the sum of 27 separate national elections, as is currently the case;
- Ensure that European political movements and parties play a more effective role in the European electoral process and are clearly visible to voters;
- Establish common minimum standards with a view to a European electoral law which will be able to guarantee the equality of citizens of the Union, including as regards the right to register a party and to stand as a candidate in elections, access to the polls, the presentation of candidates and accessibility to voting;
- Establish a common framework, with benchmarks and minimum criteria for electoral rules applicable across the European Union;
- Make gender equality a fundamental element to improve representation in elections⁶⁸;
- Ensure that European and national political movements and parties adopt democratic, informed and transparent procedures for the selection of candidates for the European Parliament, including the lead candidate, guaranteeing the direct participation of individual citizens registered with the parties. The EP believes that all European voters should be able to indicate their preferred candidate for the position of President of the Commission and that the lead candidates, nominated by a European political party, a movement or a coalition of European parties proposing a common electoral program, should be eligible in all Member States. It therefore invites European political movements and parties to nominate their own candidates (or the common candidates of a coalition of European movements and parties) for the

⁶⁸ The EP calls for the introduction of measures that ensure equal opportunities for women and men to be elected without violating the rights of non-binary people, making use of closed lists or quotas, considering that the procedure for nominating candidates for elections to the European Parliament varies considerably from one Member State to another and from one party to another

position of President of the Commission at least twelve weeks before the start of the electoral period.

The EP believes that the leaders of the European political parties and parliamentary groups should agree on a common direction for the European Council, based on the outcome of the European elections and the availability of a potential majority in the newly elected Parliament, regarding the nomination of a candidate for the presidency of the European Commission. The President of the European Council should also consult the leaders of the European political parties and parliamentary groups, to ensure an informed nomination procedure (this process could be formalized through a political agreement between the European political parties and an interinstitutional agreement between the Parliament and the European Council);

- Improve the visibility of European movements and parties in media campaigns, as well as on ballot papers and in all electoral material;
- Establish the practice of concluding a “legislation agreement” between the parliamentary groups concerned, in order to ensure a political follow-up to the European elections and to obtain a majority in Parliament with a view to appointing the Commission;
- Create a common electoral constituency in which 46 members of the European Parliament are elected and in which the leaders are the candidates of each political family for the position of President of the Commission.

The EP underlines in this regard that the objective of establishing a common constituency can only be achieved if geographical, demographic and gender balance is ensured, and if it is ensured that Member States of limited size do not find themselves in a position of competitive disadvantage compared to larger ones (in this regard, suggests introducing binding demographic representation in the lists for the common constituency, such as maximum thresholds for candidates residing in the same Member State and a mandatory minimum representation of citizens from different Member States). The EP also underlines that the transnational lists will act as a lever that can be used to encourage the formation of real European political movements and parties;

- Insert common provisions to regulate expenses related to the European electoral campaign;
- Introduce a single harmonized voting age for voters in all Member States;
- Inform citizens, twelve weeks before the elections, on the candidates who will stand in the European elections and on the affiliation of national political parties to a European political party;
- Set a common deadline for the establishment and completion of national electoral lists which does not exceed fourteen weeks before election day, in order to make information on registered voters more accurate and to facilitate the prevention of double voting and to ensure that, regardless whether it is due to an administrative error or a violation of electoral law, double voting is subject to "effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions" at national level and corrective measures by member states;
- Establish a European electoral authority responsible for coordinating information on European elections, monitoring the application of the common rules of European electoral law and supervising the exchange of information on the voting of Union citizens outside their country of origin;
- Define common minimum standards with the aim of introducing uniform requirements for the establishment of electoral lists;
- Facilitate access to vote in European elections and ensure that all citizens of the Union, including those residing or working outside their country of origin, homeless people, prisoners (provided that this right is recognized by pursuant to national legislation) and, in particular, persons with disabilities have the right and are able to exercise their right to vote;
- Invite Member States to introduce common requirements that allow all Union citizens living or working in a third country to recognize the right to cast their vote in European Parliament elections;
- Introduce postal voting for voters who are unable to go to polling stations on the Election Day. The EP invites Member States to evaluate the possibility of introducing further complementary tools, such as electronic or internet voting;

- Set 9 May as the European election day, regardless of the day of the week it falls on, with the possibility of establishing a public holiday on that date;
- Ensure that, after each election, an implementation report is drawn up to evaluate the functioning of the European elections.

2.9 The National parties and the European federations

The analysis of electoral legislation clearly highlights the coexistence of two levels in the political structures that make up the European Parliament. Just as there are supranational and national rules that govern the formation of the Assembly, in the same way the political forces present in Parliament correspond to an inter-essence between the national and European dimensions⁶⁹.

Also from this point of view, the turning point for the construction of the political panorama was the introduction of direct suffrage. At the end of the seventies, there were already forms of political and organizational connection between national parties that felt similar on an ideal and programmatic, in particular with respect to a common conception of the European integration.

In fact, the prediction of the popular election of the European Parliament, with the prospect of the first election using this method in 1979, triggered a rapid process of maturation and consolidation of these true European political families.

Over time, parliamentary geography has changed a lot, with groupings appearing on the stage and others dying out; however, it is possible to find notable elements of continuity, in particular with respect to the three agglomerations that have played a decisive role in the construction of a united Europe, from its beginnings to the present day: the popular, the socialists and the liberals.

This could happen both because over the decades the governments of most member states were guided and hegemonized by these political forces. Both because European citizens, consistently with national dynamics, rewarded them electorally, determining their preponderant importance within the Parliament.

The persistence of these political balances has laid the foundations for a certain continuity that has always dominated the framework of political choices at community level, namely the search for compromises and

⁶⁹ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?* Il Mulino, 2024, pp.123

meeting points between the main party federations, the People's Party European Union, the European Socialist Party, the Alliance of European Liberals and Democrats, as the driving force behind the directions of the integration process.

However, the European political framework is not limited to these subjects but essentially covers the entire spectrum of democratic possibilities, each with the full right to find parliamentary representation due to the consensus it enjoys in the various countries of the Union.

Thus, in the Strasbourg hemicycle, the greens, the conservatives, the identitarian sovereigntists and the radical left are currently represented through their parliamentary groups: all transnational political organizations, some of them bearers of options often in contrast with the supranational spirit but still fully inserted in the continental political game and in the dynamics of the European Parliament, regardless of whether or not they support the platform on which the Commission operates and whether or not they contributed to its formation through the parliamentary vote at the beginning of the legislature⁷⁰.

⁷⁰ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?* Il Mulino, 2024, pp.124

2.9.1 Legal bases of European political parties

The range of political perspectives is reflected in two essential and complementary provisions of the current Euro-unitary law.

Article 10, par.4, of the Treaty of European Union states that:

- Political parties at European level contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of citizens of the Union.

Article 12, par.2 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union states that:

- Political parties at Union level contribute to expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union.

To encourage the development, rooting and organization of real political parties, which from a federalist perspective should become the main vehicle for representing the orientations of European citizens, since the beginning of the 21st century the European Union has introduced legal rules designed to provide European parties with statutory rules and allow their financing⁷¹.

Until the end of the twentieth century, the economic sustenance of transnational political formations was ensured by funds coming from parliamentary groups. The Court of Auditors, however, had the opportunity to judge this practice negatively, also because it indirectly ended up allocating to political subjects a part of the emoluments allocated for the groups, or for the correct functioning of Parliament⁷².

At the Nice European Council, the convergence between the Commission, European Parliament and the Presidency of the Council opened to the amendment of Article 191 and of the consequent legal acts, which states:

⁷¹ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?* Il Mulino, 2024, pp.124

⁷² Carmen Ranalli, *I partiti politici a livello europeo: verso una complessa genesi dell'organizzazione democratica interna*, <https://www.dpceonline.it/index.php/dpceonline/article/view/1261/1217>

- The Council, deciding in accordance with the procedure provided for in Article 251 (co-decision with the European Parliament), establishes the statute of political parties at European level and in particular the rules relating to their financing.

After extensive discussions and a long procedure, Regulation (EC) No. 2004/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the statute and financing of political parties at European level.

The salient points consisted first of all in defining the perimeter of what should be meant by the expression "European political party", on the basis of some parameters that testified to its organizational solidity and transnational extension in the consensus⁷³. A procedure was identified for these subjects thanks to which they could request access to public financing, namely from the European Union budget.

The examination of the applications and the final decision, to be taken within the times established by the regulation, fell to the European Parliament. Given this advantage, the party was subject to some statutory rules and specific reporting obligations, which the regulation had defined.

Subsequently the rule underwent further evolutions, up to the regulation⁷⁴ currently in force, n. 663 of 2018, with which the rules on the constitution, statute and financing of parties are also extended to European political foundations⁷⁵, which in this way have become central institutions in the organization of continental political life.

According to the rules currently in force, to be formally registered as a "European political party" a political alliance must satisfy the following conditions:

⁷³ Statuto dei partiti politici, Massimo Palumbo, 2009. <https://www.dizie.eu/dizionario/statuto-dei-partiti-politici-europei/?print=print>

⁷⁴ Official Journal of the European Union, Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/673 of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations, May 2018.

⁷⁵ The foundation is an entity legally linked to a European political party, which, through its activities and in compliance with the objectives and fundamental values of the Union, supports and integrates the objectives of the European political party, carrying out important cultural in-depth tasks on topics of European public debate.

- Always respect (i.e., in the course of daily activity, not only in the statute) the values on which the Union is founded, set out in Article 2 of the TEU, namely respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law, as well as respect for human rights, including those belonging to minorities;
- Have its headquarters in a member state;
- The alliance as a whole, or the individual parties that are members of it, must have participated in previous elections for the European Parliament or have publicly expressed their intention to participate in the next ones, and must be represented in at least a quarter of the states members, from Members of the European Parliament, to national parliamentarians, to regional parliamentarians or to regional assemblies, or they must have received, in at least a quarter of the Member States, at least 3 per cent of the votes cast in each of those Member States at the latest European Parliament elections;
- They must not pursue profit-making purposes.

2.10 The parliamentary groups

The ideal and normative propensity for the construction of transnational political forces finds a precise correspondence within the European Parliament with the parliamentary groups, the main legal entity contemplated by the assembly dynamics.

As happens in all national democratic parliaments, the functioning of the European Parliament is based on the role of the collective entity "group", rather than on the individual "deputy". An evolution fully consistent with the role assumed by political parties, as collectors of the interests and opinions of the masses, since the latter, essentially with the twentieth century and thanks to universal suffrage, fully entered the political arena.

The European Parliament presents this substantial correspondence between the political party and the parliamentary group but with a peculiarity compared to national parliaments consisting in a sort of de-nationalization of the groupings represented in the Parliament⁷⁶.

The crucial role of the parliamentary group, and its preponderance over the individual member, can be found in many procedural areas.

It is thanks to the political groups and on the basis of their weight and the alliances between them that, respectively at the beginning and in the middle of the legislature, the roles and composition of the various elective bodies are identified: from the presidency, to the commissions and delegations, from the quaestors to the members of the presidential office (Bureau). Above all, by creating political blocs, the groups contribute significantly to the operational capacity of the Parliament, avoiding excessive fragmentation and facilitating the decision-making process⁷⁷.

The presidents of the political groups are also formally entrusted by Parliament's Rules of Procedure⁷⁸, through the Conference of Presidents⁷⁹,

⁷⁶ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione? Il Mulino*, 2024, pp.124

⁷⁷ European Parliament, *Regolamentazione relativa ai gruppi politici al Parlamento europeo*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/637956/EPRS_BRI\(2019\)637956_IT.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2019/637956/EPRS_BRI(2019)637956_IT.pdf)

⁷⁸ In accordance with Article 232 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the European Parliament establishes its own Rules of Procedure. This regulation describes all the internal organization and functioning rules of Parliament.

⁷⁹ The Conference of Presidents is a body of the European Parliament. It is made up of the President of the European Parliament and the presidents of the political groups.

with a series of decisions regarding the organization of the work of the European Parliament (agenda of plenary sessions, authorizations of various types for missions and establishment of temporary organs, etc.).

The political groups contribute to shaping the political decisions taken by the EP in the political, legislative and budgetary fields, on the basis of the resolutions and amendments approved throughout the EP procedures, from votes in parliamentary committees to those in the "plenary", which can often differ precisely because of the different weight and composition of the groups within the individual deliberative bodies⁸⁰.

The formation of alliances between groups and the development of compromise solutions between the different positions are usually achieved after the various components have in turn reached a common position within the individual groups. These processes and mechanisms intervene during regular group meetings that precede the corresponding ones of the EP bodies.

The decisions taken by the members of a group as part of the work of a specific parliamentary commission are usually made known in advance of the general meeting of the group, in order to collect and adopt any guidelines. After the vote in the commission, the groups then formally have the possibility to intervene further to present amendments to the text which will reach the chamber for the final vote, as foreseen by the EP rules.

Even the political debates, during the EP plenaries, take place on the basis of the times made available to the political groups by the president of the Parliament, following the order of their numerical strength. The first round of interventions, which are politically more relevant, concerns the presidents of the groups.

Since the first direct elections in 1979, the number of political groups has fluctuated between seven and ten. The centre-right group of the European People's Party (EPP) and the centre-left group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) have traditionally been the largest groups, flanked by smaller groups on the left, right and centre.

⁸⁰ Statuto dei partiti politici, Massimo Palumbo, 2009. <https://www.dizie.eu/dizionario/statuto-dei-partiti-politici-europei/?print=print>

The eight political groups in the outgoing Parliament 2014-2019 were, in order of size:

- The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (EPP), 219 MEPs,
- The Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D), 189 MEPs,
- The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group, 70 MEPs,
- The Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), 68 MEPs,
- The Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Verts/ALE), 52 MEPs,
- The Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), 51 MEPs,
- The Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) Group, 44 MEPs,
- The Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) Group, 36 deputies.

2.10.1 Legal bases for political groups

All these characteristics are reflected in the legal regulation of parliamentary groups provided for in the fourth chapter of the European Parliament's rules of procedure.

Rule 33 (Establishment and dissolution of political groups) of the European Parliament's rules of procedure provides that:

- Members may form themselves into groups according to their political affinities.

Parliament need not normally evaluate the political affinity of members of a group. In forming a group together under this Rule, the Members concerned accept by definition that they have political affinity. Only when this is denied by the Members concerned is it necessary for Parliament to evaluate whether the group has been constituted in accordance with the Rules.

- A political group shall consist of Members elected in at least one-quarter of the Member States ((i.e. seven). The minimum number of Members required to form a political group shall be 23.

During the first legislatures of the European Parliament, the criterion of political affinities was interpreted rather extensively, admitting the formation of groupings even with rather tenuous ideological ties for the sole purpose of enjoying organizational and procedural advantages⁸¹.

Rule 34 (Activities and legal situation of the political groups) of the European Parliament's rules of procedure provides that:

- The political groups shall carry out their duties as part of the activities of the Union, including the tasks allocated to them by these Rules of Procedure. The political groups shall be provided with a secretariat on the basis of the establishment plan of the Parliament's Secretariat, with administrative facilities and with the appropriations entered for that purpose in Parliament's budget.

⁸¹ Carmen Ranalli, I partiti politici a livello europeo: verso una complessa genesi dell'organizzazione democratica interna, <https://www.dpceonline.it/index.php/dpceonline/article/view/1261/1217>

Since 1999, the requirement of political affinity has become an essential condition for establishing the legitimacy of the existence of a Group. The European Parliament has, in fact, taken steps to issue an authentic interpretation according to which the political platform around which a group is formed must describe "*its common political orientation in a substantial, distinctive and truthful way*", thus establishing a direct correlation between those advantages and political affinity".

As regards the deputies who do not belong to any group because they are against the most widespread political lines or for other reasons of expediency, the European Parliament does not contemplate the solution adopted by various national parliaments⁸², such as belonging to the Mixed Group⁸³, and instead opted for the figure of the non-attached deputy, who, pursuant to rule 36 (Non-attached Members) of the parliamentary rules of procedure:

- Members who do not belong to a political group shall be provided with a secretariat. The detailed arrangements concerning such provision of secretariats shall be laid down by the Bureau on a proposal from the Secretary-General.
- The Bureau shall determine the status and parliamentary rights of non-attached Members.
- The Bureau shall lay down the rules relating to the provision, implementation and auditing of appropriations entered in Parliament's budget to cover the secretarial expenses and administrative facilities for non-attached Members.

⁸² European Parliament.eu, "Time for glasnost" says Prodi, 1999.
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/press/sdp/journ/en/1999/n9909141.htm>

⁸³ In 1999 the establishment of the Technical Group of Independent Deputies - Mixed Group (TDI), a formation with all the characteristics of a mixed group and without ideological ties between the members, led the Presidents of the political groups to raise the question of illegitimacy due to violation of the art. 32 of the parliamentary rules of procedure. Following the support of the Constitutional Affairs Commission, the issue was submitted to the chamber for examination, which declared the inadmissibility of a group that openly denies any political character and any political affinity between its members.

The transnational approach so strongly pursued by European legislation, and sometimes so difficult to implement, does not, however, lead to the disappearance of the national dimension, at least on a political level⁸⁴. It is inevitable, in fact, that national delegations can be formed within groups, bearing specific sensitivities deriving from this belonging, which then enter from time to time into the dynamics that lead a group to assume its own position with respect to each issue.

Given the provisions of rule 33, par. 4, of the EP Regulation, which states that:

- A Member may not belong to more than one political group.

The same regulation allows, in rule 35, the formation of so-called intergroups:

- Individual Members may form intergroups for the purpose of holding informal exchanges of views on specific issues across different political groups, drawing on members of different parliamentary committees, and of promoting contact between Members and civil society.

This is the possibility granted to parliamentarians to create forms of informal collaboration between members of different political orientations but who intend to work together, in a transversal way, on a specific topic in relation to which they share the approach, the approach and the methods with which to deal with it.

The aim is essentially to create opportunities for discussion to verify the existence of convergences that go beyond codified belonging and, above all, to interact with civil society, understood in the broadest sense of its possible articulations, often also on issues not necessarily included within the scope of Parliament's activity.

For example, in the 2014-2019 legislature, around thirty were established and they had as their object the most disparate problems: from the fight against corruption to the study of artificial intelligence, from the rights of

⁸⁴Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione? Il Mulino*, 2024, pp.127

minors to the condition of Christians in the Middle East, from the Green Deal⁸⁵ to the Sahara Western, and so on.

The intergroups, despite governed by the regulatory provisions and subject to further regulation approved by the Conference of Presidents of the groups, as well as registration in a specific official list, cannot carry out activities that replace or overlap with those of the parliamentary groups, although the latter can provide them with logistical support.

Finally, the practice of establishing intergroups oscillates between a laudable encouragement for the multiplication of useful opportunities for discussion, inside and outside the parliamentary precincts, to show the institution's propensity to open up to dialogue with society, and a legitimate concern about not giving rise to a structure parallel to the "parliamentary group" subject, whose centrality in the Assembly's activity is considered a guarantee of political representation and transparency in the formation of decisions⁸⁶.

⁸⁵ The European Green Deal, approved in 2020, is a set of policy initiatives by the European Commission with the overarching aim of making the European Union (EU) climate neutral in 2050.

⁸⁶ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?* Il Mulino, 2024, pp.128

2.11 Ursula von der Leyen's Commission

On 22 November 2012, the European Parliament issued a resolution in view of the 2014 elections, with which, among the various topics covered, it urged the European political parties to nominate their candidates for the Presidency of the Commission.

With this act the emergence of a new figure was encouraged, not formally foreseen by the treaties but falling exclusively within the political dynamics, namely what in subsequent years would be called the 'Spitzenkandidat'.

The political-institutional dynamics that occurred in 2014, initially in the electoral campaign and subsequently in the procedures for the formation of the Commission following the elections, reflected the wishes expressed by the European Parliament.

In fact, the European Council proposed for the position of president of the Commission a figure previously indicated as Spitzenkandidat of the European People's Party, the grouping that obtained the most votes and the most seats at continental level: the Luxembourger Jean-Claude Juncker, who in fact then obtained the investiture parliamentarian with a large majority.

Following this previous success, on 7 February 2019, at the end of the legislature and as the electoral campaign began, the European Parliament approved a decision⁸⁷ in which it intended to renew the Spitzenkandidaten convention, which was formally called this time, in order to remind parties and institutions of its systematic value and to reiterate the need for its strict adherence.

The heart of that act was made up of the statements according to which:

“The Spitzenkandidaten system reflects the interinstitutional balance between the Parliament and the European Council as provided for by the treaties; also underlines that this further step forward in strengthening the

⁸⁷ Official Journal of the European Union, European Parliament decision on the revision of the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission (2017/2233(ACI)), February 2018.

parliamentary dimension of the Union is a principle that cannot be revoked".

For this reason, Parliament warned that it would be ready to reject any candidate, in the investiture procedure of the President of the Commission, who was not nominated Spitzenkandidat in view of the European elections.

In the second electoral occasion for the 2019-2024 legislature, however, things did not go as previously; a first reason consisted in the electoral results that saw a weakening of the relative majority party: the European People's Party. In 2019, the reduction of their electoral weight induced the other parties to discard the hypothesis of a nomination for the name chosen by the EPP, the Bavarian Manfred Weber, and to open negotiations on other exponents of the same group.

A negotiation, however, that was far from simple, also because the perimeter of the majority itself turned out to be more uncertain than ever. On the one hand, the electoral results and the continental political balance made it clear that it would still hinge on the axis between popular and socialist-democrats, on the other, however, the same elements required an opening to other forces, such as the greens and the liberals, which would allow the formation of a broad and solid coalition, capable of guiding Europe and counteracting the welding underway between the varied Eurosceptic families, who in the meantime had grown in electoral consensus, despite remaining in the minority.

In this context, both an interpretative question concerning the real contours of the Spitzenkandidaten convention and the internal dynamics of the Council came into play where the specific positions of many national governments emerged which to a large extent completely disregarded the orientations of European political parties and parliamentary balances thus giving rise to alliances based on common contingent interests⁸⁸.

At the end of long and tense negotiations, the qualified majority of the Council reached an agreement on the name of Ursula Von der Layen⁸⁹, an

⁸⁸ Cfr. Claudio Martinelli, *Il Parlamento europeo. Simbolo o motore dell'Unione?*, Il Mulino, 2024, pp.129

⁸⁹ At the time Ursula von der Leyen was the defense minister of the German Government and exponent of the CDU, an integral part of the European People's Party.

extremely authoritative personality but not included among the Spitzenkandidaten indicated before the elections.

The parliamentary vote on his name demonstrated Parliament's unease, with a somewhat larger majority than was required. A discontent that was reinforced at the parliamentary hearing by the rejection of several candidates for the role of commissioners.

Finally, the intertwined dialogue between the leaders of the political forces involved in the legislative majority finally resolved all these discontents and the Von der Layen commission obtained its investiture vote.

A vote which, however, failed to dispel the feeling that this affair had led to a step backwards on the path to parliamentarisation of the form of government, although obviously in full compliance with the provisions of the treaties.

On 22 November 2023, Parliament's plenary voted on proposals⁹⁰ to amend the Treaties, including an overhaul of the way that the Commission is elected asking for:

- Calls for the reversal of the roles of Council and Parliament in the nomination and confirmation of the President of the Commission to more accurately reflect the results of European elections; proposes to enable the Commission President to choose its members based on political preferences, whilst ensuring geographic and demographic balance; calls for the renaming of the European Commission as the European Executive

⁹⁰ European Parliament, resolution of 22 November 2023 on proposals of the European Parliament for the amendment of the Treaties (2022/2051(INL)). https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0427_EN.html#title1

Chapter 3

2024 European election

3.1 The European Parliament election for the tenth legislature

The 2024 European Parliament election was held on June 6 and 9, as decided previously by the Council on 22 March, 2023, in accordance with the application of Article 11⁹¹, par.2, of the Act concerning the election of members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage of 20 September 1976, as amended, and following discussions of the matter in the Council preparatory bodies⁹².

It has been the tenth parliamentary election since the first direct elections in 1979, and the first European Parliament election since the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union. More than 250 million people from 27 member states have been called upon to vote for the 720 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) encharged to represent them in Europe's highest democratic institution.

For the historical period in which it occurs, this European election seemed to be more crucial than ever for the future of the Union itself; rising global tensions, for which the EU's foreign policy is unprepared, along with a growing reaction against climate policy and weakened economic institutions, are creating political fragmentation inside Member States. This dichotomy has already had an impact on many member states' domestic politics.

Electoral instability has increased during the last few decades, and mainstream political forces that once dominated the political scene -

⁹¹ 1976 Electoral Act, Art 11, par.2: Subsequent elections shall take place in the corresponding period in the last year of the five-year period referred to in Article 5. Should it prove impossible to hold the elections in the Community during that period, the Council acting unanimously shall, after consulting the European Parliament, determine, at least one month before the end of the five-year term referred to in Article 5, another electoral period which shall not be more than two months before or one month after the period fixed pursuant to the preceding subparagraph.

⁹² Council of the European Union, Date of elections to the European Parliament in 2024, Brussels, May 2023.

conservatives, liberals, and social democrats - are in decline. At the same time, populist movements criticizing political elites domestically and in Brussels are on the increase.

These developments necessarily will affect the composition of the European Parliament through the election. Indeed, the coalition composed of social democrats (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, S&D), Christian democrats/centre-right (European People's Party, EPP) and liberals (Renew Europe, RE) that made up the outgoing parliamentary majority, had to face the rise of populist and far-right groups, namely the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and Identity and Democracy (ID).

In the short term, the new composition of the Parliament affects the election of the Commission President and of the entire Commission itself. This raised the question of whether former President Ursula von der Leyen would have been able to reaffirm her mandate for a further five years, or who might be the new candidate drawn to be the next president of the commission.

In the long term, the expected shift to the right and the majority coalition may alter the EU's present policy trajectory, ranging from a relaxation of the Green Deal to a decrease in support for Ukraine. Furthermore, developing effective policy measures to address the EU's ongoing issues may be much more challenging. The risk may be not only a reversal in policy, but also a general political impasse and stalemate within and across the EU's institutions.⁹³

However, since the Brexit precedent, many populist and radical right parties no longer want to leave the European Union, but rather they want to change the project from within and move it into a more sovereigntist direction⁹⁴. Moreover, even a fundamental change in the EU position on Russia and Ukraine is unlikely, despite very different positions even within the more right-wing parties, EU support could only be more contested and modest.

⁹³ Bocconi University.com, Opinions European elections: What to Expect from the 2024 European Parliament Elections, May 2024. <https://www.unibocconi.it/en/news/what-expect-2024-european-parliament-elections>

⁹⁴ London.gov.uk, New report reveals UK economy is almost £140billion smaller because of Brexit, January 2024. <https://www.london.gov.uk/new-report-reveals-uk-economy-almost-ps140billion-smaller-because-brexit>

3.2 The institutional chronology for the 2024 election

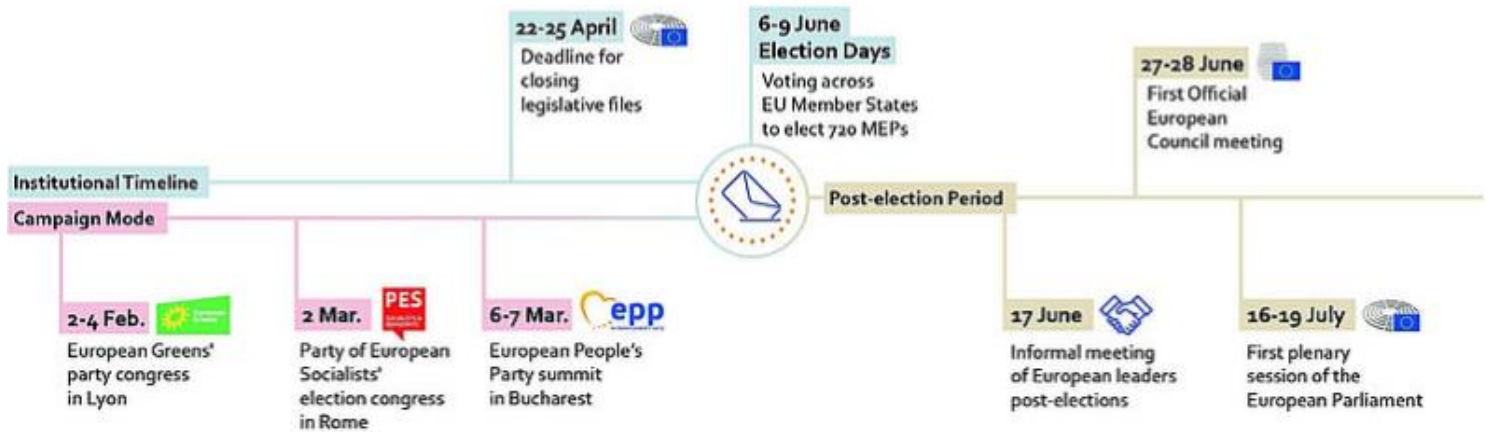


Figure 8: Institutional timeline of the European elections, year 2024.

- I. The last plenary session of the parliament from April 22 to 25 marked the end of the window of opportunity to complete any legislative measures for the 2019-2024 institutional term.
- II. Simultaneously, up until to Election Day, the European political parties have held electoral congresses during which they have not only approved their individual electoral manifestos but also chosen their lead candidates.
- III. The days scheduled for the European elections were from 6 to 9 June, as declared in 2023 by the Council and according to the Electoral Act.
- IV. The post-election period immediately involves the identification of the MEPs who would actually, for each Member State, go to the European Parliament. The following step was the start of negotiations that led to the formation of political groups. Each group had to communicate by 15 July - that is, the day before the first plenary session - its name, internal composition and political declaration, according to the parliamentary regulation.

During this period, the Union leaders met twice in June to discuss the outcome of the European elections and to find an agreement on the candidate for the presidency of the European Commission, to be proposed to the European Parliament. An informal first meeting was scheduled for 17 June, followed by a formal European Council on 27 and 28 June.

- V. The first plenary session of the European Parliament, held from 16 to 19 July, will mark the start of the new legislature. On this occasion, the Parliament was required to elect its internal officers and give itself a new organization: the President, the 14 Vice-Presidents and the 5 Quaestors were elected; the structure of the committees and sub-committees, with their respective presidents and vice-presidents, was also decided⁹⁵.
- VI. On the last day of the plenary session, it has also been elected the new President of the European Commission who, since that moment, has been working to form and approve a college of 26 Commissioners by the autumn, given the start of the Commission's five-year mandate scheduled for 1 December⁹⁶.

⁹⁵ European Parliament, Briefing, July 2014. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/it/agenda/briefing/2024-07-16>

⁹⁶ Eunews, Federico Baccini, July 2024. <https://www.eunews.it/2024/07/19/von-der-leyen-nuovo-collegio-commissari/>

3.3 Closing open files before election

The European Parliament held its final plenary session from April 22 to 25, marking the end of the window of opportunity to complete any legislative measures for the 2019-2024 institutional term. By then, policymakers tried to complete some crucial matters under the direction of the Belgian Council Presidency, for various reasons of urgency:

In order to continue fulfilling its strategic commitments until 2027, the EU budget and Ukraine support had to be adjusted to reflect rising expenses and unexpected emergency demands. Ukraine requires quick assistance. On February 1, leaders of the Union gathered in the European Council to discuss the 'mid-term revision' of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027⁹⁷, as well as a 50 billion Euro financial aid package for Ukraine. Parliament had a short window to ratify the summit agreements.

The EU's fiscal rules were also undergoing revision. After months of difficult negotiations, European finance ministers reached a settlement in December. The final agreement was reached by April 23 when MEPs approved a revamp of EU fiscal rules making them clearer, more investment friendly, better tailored to each country's situation, and more flexible⁹⁸.

A sense of urgency that arises from the uncertainty of how government priorities might change following the election engulfed policymakers in the fields of environmental protection and green transformation in the months before the election. Initiatives that had the backing and momentum to obtain final approval would most likely face fewer chances with a less progressive majority in the European Parliament. Not without difficulty the Net-Zero Industry Act⁹⁹ passed in time on 27 April seeking to boost strategic net-zero technologies in the EU.

⁹⁷ The long-term budget or multiannual financial framework (MFF) provides for the financing of programmes and actions in all policy areas, from agriculture and regional policy, to support to Ukraine, strategic technologies and migration, in line with the EU's long-term priorities

⁹⁸ European Parliament.eu, New EU fiscal rules approved by MEPs. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240419IPR20583/new-eu-fiscal-rules-approved-by-meps>

⁹⁹ The Net-Zero Industry Act aims to enhance European manufacturing capacity for net-zero technologies and their key components, addressing barriers to scaling up production in Europe. https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/industry/sustainability/net-zero-industry-act_en

There was also some concern about a long-awaited reform of the EU's refugee and migration systems. The Council and European Parliament had been working hard to modify it, but getting the pact approved in time for the elections will be challenging. In December, a consensus on the essential elements emerged but only on 14 May, the Council adopted the EU's pact on migration and asylum¹⁰⁰ establishing a set of rules that will help to manage arrivals in an orderly way, including the creation of efficient and uniform procedures and the guarantee of fair burden sharing between UE Member States.

¹⁰⁰ European Council.eu, Council of the Euroean Union, The Council adopts the EU's pact on migration and asylum, May 2024.
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/05/14/the-council-adopts-the-eu-s-pact-on-migration-and-asylum/>

3.4 The election campaign of the European political parties

Since May 2024, the attention of EU politicians has completely turned from politics to election campaigns¹⁰¹.

EU election campaigns are organised by European political parties. These ‘Europarties’ are made up of national, like-minded parties, not individual members. The Europarties generally in this time window decide on common lead candidates (*Spitzenkandidaten*) and adopt their election programme, or ‘manifesto’, at a party congress usually between February and March. Once elected, one or more European political parties form the political groups in Parliament. As of July 2024, there are ten European political parties registered with the Authority for European political Parties and European Political Foundation (APPF)¹⁰²:

- European People’s Party (PPE)
- Party of European Socialist (PES)
- European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR party)
- Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for European party (ALDE party)
- Identity and Democracy Party (ID party)
- European Green Party (EGP)
- Party of the European Left (EL)
- European Democratic Party (EDP)
- European Free Alliance (EFA)
- 10. European Christian Political Movement (ECPM)

¹⁰¹Hertie school, Jacques Delors Center, On the road to the 2024 European elections: Institutional timeline and missed opportunities. February 2024. <https://www.delorscentre.eu/en/publications/detail/publication/on-the-road-to-the-2024-european-elections-institutional-timeline-and-missed-opportunities>

¹⁰²Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations.eu <https://www.appf.europa.eu/appf/en/parties-and-foundations/registered-parties>

European People's Party (PPE)



The EPP is “The political family of the centre and the centre-right in Europe. We put the human being at the centre of our convictions. Our actions are based on the principles of justice and the common good, solidarity and responsibility. We defend a strong European Union based on pluralist democracy, the social market economy and environmental sustainability.”¹⁰³

The European People's Party (EPP) is the pro-European centre-right political family that brings together forces generally classifiable as moderate, Christian democrat and conservative, in the spirit of the liberal conservative tradition¹⁰⁴.

Along with holding the largest share in the European Parliament since 1999 and in the current European Commission, it also retains the highest representation in the Council of Europe. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, and Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament, are both from the EPP.

¹⁰³ European People's Party.eu, <https://www.epp.eu/>

¹⁰⁴ Liberal conservatism is a variant of conservatism that incorporates liberal positions in the economic field but which is combined with the need to preserve a certain institutional, religious, social state, opposing or delaying the progress (and transformation) of political and social ideas, forms and institutions.

Since 2022, the PPE party president has been Manfred Weber of the Bavarian CSU, who has also been named the party's Spitzenkandidaten for the 2019 European Parliament elections.

The EPP brings together 84 member parties from 43 countries, 27 of which are EU members; among these it includes major centre-right parties such as the CDU/CSU of Germany, The Republicans of France, CD&V of Belgium, PNL of Romania, Fine Gael of Ireland, National Coalition Party of Finland, New Democracy of Greece, Forza Italia of Italy, the People's Party (PP) of Spain, the Civic Platform of Poland, the Social Democratic Party of Portugal and the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria.

As regard the 2024 EP election, the EPP held its congress in Bucharest on 6–7 March 2024. In this occasion Ursula von der Leyen¹⁰⁵ was elected presidential candidate with 400 votes in favour, 89 against and 10 blank, out of the 737 EPP delegates at the EPP congress, and it was adopted the PPE's electoral programme¹⁰⁶.

The main points of the PPE part's electoral campaign were:

- ***Ensuring a safe space for all European citizens;*** this point is accompanied by the need for EU to support Ukraine unconditionally and open to his entry as a member. Every European effort in the field of defence has to be embedded and coherent with NATO. All-out war on terrorism. Protecting the Union's space also involves controlling borders against uncontrolled immigration but ever in accordance with international law and in respect of fundamental rights.
- ***Stopping any form of violence with a special focus on women condition;*** the PPE is committed in the fight against any form of violence including fight for the rights of oppressed women, domestic and digital violence.
- ***Ensuring the protection and proper functioning of the social-market economy;*** in a changing economic world, Europe is coming under increasing pressure: Europe's share of world GDP has fallen from 20%

¹⁰⁵ On 19 February 2024, Ursula von der Leyen announced her intention to run again for the Commission's presidency, supported by the CDU.

¹⁰⁶ European People's Party.eu, <https://www.epp.eu/papers/epp-manifesto-2024>

to 15%. There is the need to make European economy fit for new challenges. In response to the COVID pandemic, the NextGenerationEU had been launched, the largest stimulus package ever financed in Europe. Nowadays, the war in Ukraine, the heinous terrorist attacks of Hamas and the growing instability in the Red Sea put new strains on EU growth perspectives. High inflation, energy prices and interest rates are important concerns for our citizens and the EPP will tackle them decisively.

- ***Full commitment of PPE to the Euro, for a deeper single market and enhanced unity;*** economic prosperity, ambitious environmental protection and social peace can succeed in Europe only if European Union economy is successful worldwide. This is why competitiveness is so crucial. It requires sustained economic performance, economic, social and political stability and sufficient freedom for entrepreneurs encouraged by a clear vision and long-term targets.
- ***Making Europe energy independent;*** the consequences of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine and the systemic competition with China require to invest more in the development of electricity and gas network interconnections between EU Member States in order to create a more united and efficient Energy Union but which also looks to the future leading into an increasingly carbon-neutral and environmentally-friendly future.
- ***Paving the way for digitalization and human-centred AI;*** Innovation improves people's lives but against the advances of China and the US, Europe has a globally competitive advantage: common values, the social market economy and political stability. As Christian Democrats and the Centre Right, the PPE put the people at the centre
- ***Preserving democracy, traditions, cultural richness and diversity;*** PPE wants to preserve the cultural heritage, which our community, civilisation and European integration processes are based on, the different characteristics as well as what unites us.

Party of European Socialists (PES)



“Since the beginning of the PES movement, our fundamental values have been democracy, freedom, equality, peace and justice. These values belong together and, combined, they form a moral compass to build progressive societies.”¹⁰⁷

The Party of European Socialists (PES) is a European political party comprising national-level political parties from all the European economic area states (EEA) plus the United Kingdom, which share a social democratic¹⁰⁸ and labour orientation. The precursor of the party was the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the European Community, founded in 1973.

Since the 1999 election, the PES has been the second most represented party in the European Parliament; it founded the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) in 2009, having previously belonged to the Party of

¹⁰⁷Party of European Socialists.eu, <https://pes.eu/about-us/our-values/>

¹⁰⁸ Social democracy is a political, social, and economic philosophy within socialism that supports political and economic democracy and supports a gradualist, reformist and democratic approach towards achieving socialism. In practice, Social democracy takes the form of socially managed welfare capitalism, and emphasizes economic interventionism, partial public ownership, a robust welfare state, policies promoting social equality, and a more equitable distribution of income.

European Socialists group. The party chairman is former Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, who was elected at the party congress in Berlin in 2022.

The PES includes thirty-three full member parties from each of the twenty-seven EU member states; Among these there are the major socialist parties such as the Social Democratic Party of Austria, the Socialist Party of Belgium, Social Democratic Party of Croatia, Danish Social Democrats, the French Socialist Party, Social Democratic Party of Germany, the Italian Democratic Party, The Labour Party of Malta, the Portuguese Socialist Party, the Romanian Social Democrat Party and the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party. Parties from a number of other European countries and from the Mediterranean region are also admitted to the PES as associate or observer parties, even if they do not belong to the European Union.

Regarding the European Parliament election of 2024, on March 2, the PES held its convention in Rome. The PES declared on January 18 that Nicolas Schmit, the Luxembourgish European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, was the only candidate who fulfilled the requirements for nomination as lead candidate of the party. He was then nominated on 2 March during the party congress, along with the adoption of the election programme¹⁰⁹.

The electoral manifesto defines 20 commitments for the common candidate and the parties affiliated to the PES, and above all for a Europe based on:

- **The right to quality jobs with fair wages by guaranteeing workers' rights**, strengthening collective bargaining, democracy at work and supporting the self-employed.
- **A new green and social pact for a just transition**, through clean, safe and affordable energy, new quality jobs in a zero-emission green circular economy, and a liveable planet in a green, carbon-free circular economy; and a liveable planet investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency to become climate neutral by 2050 at the latest, through the achievement of strong EU climate targets for 2040.

¹⁰⁹ Party of European Socialists.eu./ https://pes.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2024_PES_Manifesto_IT.pdf

- **A strong and open European economy;** promoting the European model of social market economy, using public investments at local, regional, national and EU level to develop a resilient, sustainable and fair economy that offers quality jobs.
- **Fiscal justice for social justice;** the commitment to fiscal justice is a commitment to fair societies. A fair tax system strengthens the European social model and supports investments in economies, public services and security.
- **The right to quality and affordable housing;** too many people – often young people, single parents and vulnerable people – struggle to find affordable, quality and energy-efficient housing.
- **Access to health, care and drugs for all.**
- **Public services at the heart of our society.**
- **Protecting the environment and ensuring sustainable agriculture;** Desire to protect the environment, sustainable agriculture, rural development, biodiversity and people's health. The Green Deal is instrumental to this.
- **Ensuring safety of European citizens against any threat.**
- **Solidarity and development in all cities and regions;** to achieve a cohesion policy ambition across Europe to improve the quality of life in cities, rural areas and inland regions and not suffer from brain drain.
- **Defending democracy and rule of law;** defending the rule of law at all levels, reliable judicial systems, effective anti-corruption measures, and media freedom and pluralism.
- **A feminist Europe;** Fighting to ensure that women and girls in all their diversity can reach their full potential.
- **A Europe free from any form of discrimination;** There must be zero tolerance for sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, LGBTI-phobia, and all forms of discrimination.
- **Manage asylum and migration;** Migrant citizens are active participants in the economic and cultural life of our countries. If properly managed, migration is an opportunity and a strength.
- **An Europe for young people;** need a Europe that works for its young people.

- **Promoting intergenerational solidarity;** in aging societies, we fight for the rights and participation, autonomy and well-being of citizens of all ages.
- **Controlling artificial intelligence and strengthening online rights,** the digital transformation of our societies must respect the fundamental values of the EU.
- **Securing Europe's place in the world;** in an increasingly insecure world, the EU must take greater responsibility for its own security and defence.
- **Supporting peace and fundamental values;** promote the Sustainable Development Goals, peace, democracy, human rights, a feminist foreign policy and economic and climate justice
- **A renewed international cooperation;** the first objective of development policies must be to improve the quality of life of people. Europe must support democratic forces, civil society and trade unions in all countries.

European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR party)



The European Conservatives and Reformists Party (ECR Party), formerly known as Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists (AECR, 2009–2016) and Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE, 2016–2019), is a conservative, soft Eurosceptic European political party whose main focus is reforming the European Union on the basis of Eurorealism¹¹⁰, as opposed to total rejection of the EU (anti-EU-ism).

The principles that underpin ECR party were defined in the Reykjavík Declaration, adopted on 21 March 2014 at its Council Meeting, such as individual liberty, national sovereignty, parliamentary democracy, private property, limited government, free trade, family values and the devolution of power¹¹¹.

The political movement was founded immediately after the creation of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) political group of the European Parliament, of which it is a part. Its President, since 2020, is Giorgia Meloni, leader of Brothers of Italy (FdI) and current President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic.

¹¹⁰ Eurorealism addressing the concrete problems associated with the European integration process.

¹¹¹ ECR Party.eu, <https://ecrparty.eu/about/>

Among the national parties that have joined the ECR there are the Italian Brothers of Italy (FdI), the Polish Law and Justice, the Slovakian Freedom and Solidarity, the Swedish Sweden Democrats, the Spanish Vox and the Czech Civic Democratic Party.

As regard the 2024 European Parliament election, after several delays, the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) party endorsed their program¹¹² for June's EU elections the 23 April, but failed to reach an agreement on a Spitzenkandidat because of internal disputes¹¹³.

The main points of the ECR party's election campaign were:

- **Protecting national identities:** modernising the European Union while preserving the sovereignty of the Member States at the expenses of Brussels. The ECR will fight against further centralisation of EU powers and will be at the forefront of the fight for compliance with the treaties.
- **Protecting Union citizens with unity;** ECR aims to strengthen European defence industries, stand by Ukraine in Russia's war of aggression as well as continuing to support EU-NATO cooperation and the fight against terrorism.
- **Ensuring border security:** using a holistic approach to migration management.
- **Supporting Agriculture:** Promoting Sustainable Farming and Fishing Practices for a Better Tomorrow.
- **Revisiting the Green Deal:** Finding the right balance between climate action and economic prosperity.
- **Stimulating economic growth:** harnessing the power of the Single Market and Europe's small and medium-sized enterprises.
- **Ensuring Energy Security and Promoting Innovation:** Towards the Resilience of the Future.

¹¹² ECR Party.eu, https://ecrgroup.eu/files/IT_ECR-Priorities_2024-2029.pdf

¹¹³ Euractive.com, ECR adopts manifesto but snubs lead candidate pick amid rifts, May2024.

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/ecr-adopts-manifesto-but-snubs-lead-candidate-pick-amid-rifts/>

- **Fight for fundamental freedoms and against those who seek to undermine them;** prevent ideologues from taking over the internet, fight anti-Semitism and all forms of extremism.
- **Driving global economic growth with a bold vision for trade;** promote rules-based trade and higher quality free trade agreements, fight against unfair trade practices, and promote a thriving partnership with India.
- **Supporting the enlargement of the Union in an ever-changing geopolitical landscape;** strengthening ties with the United Kingdom, promoting a more diversified approach towards China, improving relations with the Middle East and North Africa, a more assertive EU policy towards Iran.

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for European party (ALDE party)



The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE Party) is a European political party composed of 76 national-level parties from across Europe, mainly active in the European Union which, despite having different political positions (centre, centre-right and centre-left), are united by liberal and liberal-democratic ideals. The party works for a more open, fair, progressive and free Europe, unbound by stale dogmas and rigid ideologies¹¹⁴. The ALDE Party is affiliated with Liberal International¹¹⁵.

It was founded on 26 March 1976 in Stuttgart as a confederation of national political parties under the name "Federation of Liberal and Democrat Parties in Europe". Only in November 2012, the party chose its current name ALDE Party, taken from its then-European Parliament group, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), which had been formed on 20 July 2004 which had been formed on 20 July 2004 in conjunction with the European Democratic Party (EDP).

Prior to the 2004 European election, the European party had been represented through its own group, the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party Group (ELDR) Group. In June 2019, the ALDE group was succeeded by Renew Europe.

¹¹⁴ Alde party.eu, <https://www.aldeparty.eu/vision>

¹¹⁵ The Liberal International is an association of parties, groups, organizations and individuals from all over the world who support liberal principles.

Among the national parties that are actually members of Alde, there are: the French Radical Movement, the Austrian NEOS, the Belgian Reform Movement, the Irish Republican Party, the Italian Action and +Europe and the Slovaks Progressive Slovakia.

The current co-chairs of the party are Irishman Timmy Dooley and Bulgarian Ilhan Kyuchyuk. Furthermore, ALDE currently represents the President of the European Council in the figure of Charles Michel.

As regard the 2024 EP election, the ALDE party held its extraordinary congress in Brussels on 20–21 March 2024. On 11 March, the German FDP nominated Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann to become presidential candidate. She was then elected on March 20 during the party congress, along with the adoption of the election programme¹¹⁶.

The main points of the ALDE’s electoral campaign were:

- **Make Europe a safe place to live;** this includes to build a European Defence Union in close cooperation with European and NATO partners, to pledge military assistance until Ukraine’s victory, and post-war reconstruction support, including identifying a legal mechanism to utilise frozen Russian assets and ensure accountability and ultimately to support Ukraine’s full membership of NATO and the EU.
- **Enhance Europe’s economic security;** this is possible by push for EU trade and investment agreements with open, market-based economies and reducing dependency on regimes that do not share European values.
- **Boost economic growth** through consolidation of EU’s many budgetary programmes, funds, and facilities to simplify spending and clearly prioritise investments and innovation in the sustainable and digital transformation, resilience, and security across Europe. Advancing and modernising European Single Market, backbone of competitiveness and ability to create jobs, back on the EU agenda.

¹¹⁶ Alde party.eu, https://www.aldeparty.eu/the_manifesto

- **Accelerate energy saving and the deployment of renewable and clean energy;** this means investing in all types of renewable, carbon-neutral, low-carbon and waste-based energy sources, including nuclear energy. To effectively manage geopolitical risks, it is imperative to consciously reduce dependence on external resources, especially those from non-democratic countries, notably Russia and China.
- **An innovative, diversified and circular economy** providing businesses with incentives to invest in and adopt sustainable production to decouple economic growth from use of primary resources, including via diversification, reuse, and repair.
- **Guaranteeing individual freedom in an open and tolerant society;** Legalising and recognising same-sex marriage and rainbow families, and ensuring their rights, including free movement within the EU, are enshrined in EU legislation. Securing equal and safe access to sexual and reproductive health and rights

Patriots.eu



Patriots.eu, formerly known as the Identity and Democracy Party (ID party) and the Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom (MENF), is a nationalist, right-wing populist and Eurosceptic European political party.

Patriots.eu's program is focused on constructing a unified Europe, refusing the entire dismantling of the European Union, but is critical of the current policies of the European Union, which it accuses of being ultra-liberal and overly bureaucratic. The party platform especially wishes to *«build a Europe that is composed of nations that maintain their own sovereignty and identity¹¹⁷»*.

Its Members of the European Parliament sat in the Europe of Nations and Freedom group (ENF) from 2015 to 2019, then in the Identity and Democracy group (ID) between 2019 and 2024; following the 2024 European Parliament election, most of its MEPs sit with the Patriots for Europe group (Pfe group).

Among the national parties that are actually members of Patriots.eu, there are the French National Rally (RN), the Italian League, the Dutch Party for Freedom, the Portuguese Enough! and the Austrian Freedom Party of Austria.

¹¹⁷ Patriots.eu. https://id-party.eu/d_claration_du_pr_sident

Following the exit in June 2024 of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), officially joining the ID Party in 2023, to pre-empt its expulsion due to the numerous scandals that had undermined the credibility inside the European party¹¹⁸, ID Party renamed itself to Patriots.eu with a new manifesto¹¹⁹ issued, whose main points were:

- Belief of strong, proud and independent Nations free in their determination to live and cooperate in concord with each other;
- sovereign and unwavering in the pursuit of its interests, free from dependencies that obstruct the fulfilment, at home and abroad, of the will of its national communities;
- A Europe that safeguards and celebrates its European identity, traditions and customs, the fruits of its Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian heritage;
- Nations that refuse all further transfers of national sovereignty to the European institutions;
- A Union of Nations ready to protect their people against any and all potential threats coming from the political, economic, religious and cultural spheres;
- A Europe determined to protect its borders, to stop illegal migration and to preserve its cultural identity, following the will of the vast majority of European citizens;

The new statutes published by the European Parliament revealed that the Belgian Gerolf Annemans would continue as President of the party.

However, in view of the 2024 European Parliament elections, Patriots.eu, formerly Identity and Democracy (ID party), did not nominate any leading candidate.

¹¹⁸ Politico.eu, Far-right ID group expels Alternative for Germany. <https://www.politico.eu/article/far-right-identity-and-democracy-group-expels-alternative-for-germany/>

¹¹⁹ Patriots.eu. <https://www.fpoe.eu/patriots-eu-manifesto/>

European Green Party (EGP)



The European Green Party (EGP), also referred to as European Greens, is a transnational, European political party representing national parties from across Europe who share “Green values”¹²⁰.

The European Greens works closely with the Greens–European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) parliamentary group in the European Parliament which is formed by elected Green party members along with the European Free Alliance, European Pirate Party and Volt Europa¹²¹. Since 2022, the party's co-presidency has been chaired by Thomas Waitz and Mélanie Vogel.

Among the national parties that are members of the Green Party, some are even in the governments of their respective countries; some of the most known are: the Austrian Greens, the Belgians Greens, the German Alliance 90/Greens, the Irish and Spanish Greens, in addition to the Italian and Luxemburgish Green Parties.

¹²⁰ With the term “Green values” it is meant: environmental responsibility, climate action, individual freedom, inclusive democracy, diversity, social justice, gender equality, global sustainable development and non-violence.

¹²¹ The European Pirate Party and Volt Europa are both associations of political parties aspiring to the recognition of European political parties. The former aims to unite pirate parties from European Union countries and other non-EU countries. Volt, on the other hand, presents itself as a pan-European and progressive movement that underlines the importance of creating a united and federal European voice that has greater weight at a global level.

During the 2–4 February 2024 congress in Lyon, the European Green Party elected Terry Reintke and Bas Eickhout as its two presidential candidates and adopted its election programme¹²².

The EGP's priorities for the 2024 European Parliament elections were:

- **The Green and Social Deal for Europe;** the EGP aims to kickstart a massive investment plan worth at least 200 billion euros per year to protect people and the planet. This plan would be financed fairly by taxing workers less and the wealthiest firms and individuals more, eradicating fossil fuel subsidies, and using EU-level funding.
- **Climate Action! 100% Renewable Energy by 2040;** Europe must lead the way to a fossil-free future. Building a 100% renewable energy system by 2040 will protect the climate and create two million new jobs.
- **Good Jobs and Fair Pay for All;** the EGP fights for an EU-wide minimum income sufficient to keep people out of poverty whether they are in or out of work and unemployment insurance permanent to protect workers in times of economic crisis.
- **Restore Nature, Protect Biodiversity;** the EU's actions must go toward the stop the extinction of species and protect at least a third of Europe's land and sea, including wetlands, forests, rivers and lakes. Fight for a zero-pollution European Union.
- **Ensure Affordable Housing for Everyone;** the EGP fights to end the rent explosion, invest in affordable and public housing, and support rent controls where necessary to protect tenants.
- **Healthy, Pesticide-Free Food for Fair Prices;** EU must spend on industrial agriculture and invest in sustainable farming, making healthy food more accessible at fair prices for both consumers and producers.
- **End Animal Cruelty! Stop Mega Farms and Long-Distance Transport;** the EGP fights for animal welfare alongside the millions of Europeans who signed European Citizen Initiatives demanding the end of exploitative practices.

¹²² European Green Party.eu, <https://europeangreens.eu/priorities/>

- **Billionaires and Multinationals Must Also Pay Their Fair Share;** the EGP aims for an economy that puts people and the planet first, not corporations and the ultra-rich. Fair taxation will reduce the tax burden on workers, so they have more money in their wallets at the end of the month.
- **A Strong Europe to Protect Democracy, Fundamental Rights and Freedoms;** EU should continue to tirelessly fight all forms of discrimination and hatred. Welcome people that seek help with humanity and solidarity, not with fear.
- **A Feminist Europe: Your Body, Your Choice;** dismantle patriarchy and build a racially just society is a priority. Everyone has the right to make choices about their own body, decide who they love, and express their identity. Guarantee access to safe and legal abortion and recognise sexual and reproductive rights as fundamental rights. Full equality between men and women in all areas of employment and public life.
- **Europe United for Peace and Security;** Autocrats can no longer be allowed to hold the EU hostage and prevent it from standing with partners for peace, human rights and multilateralism. Ukraine's future is in the European Union and there is the need to keep on supporting it. The EU needs to be ready to welcome new members and help candidate countries prepare for accession. The EU needs to take responsibility as a peace-building actor. This is more crucial than ever in the Middle East.

Party of the European Left (EL)



The Party of European Left (EL), is a European political party that operates as an association of democratic socialist and communist political parties in the European Union and other European countries.

The party of European Left is usually described as a left wing and a far-left political party. Its ideology is based on principles of democratic socialism¹²³, socialism, and communism. It is opposed to capitalism and even though it includes parties with wide range of opinions. Furthermore, the EL is also supportive of progressivism; it takes a soft Eurosceptic approach towards the European Union, and opposes militarization and foreign interventionism

The elected MEPs from member parties of the PEL sit in The Left in the European Parliament – GUE/NGL group in the European Parliament, though not all PEL members are also members of GUE/NGL.

As of June 2024, the Party of the European Left has 25 member parties in 22 countries. Among these, there are the French Socialist and Communist

¹²³ Democratic socialism is a set of left-wing political philosophies that advocate for political democracy and some form of a socially owned economy, with a focus on economic democracy, workplace democracy, and worker self-management within a market socialist, decentralised planned, or democratic centrally planned socialist economy.

parties, the German Left, the Greek SYRIZA, the Spanish Communist party, the Danish Red-Green Alliance.

As regard the 2024 Ep election, during the 24–25 February 2024 congress in Ljubljana, the party EL elected the Austrian Walter Baier, already the president in office of the party since 2022, as its lead candidate and adopted its election programme¹²⁴.

The main points of the EL party's electoral program were:

- **Fighting Neo-Fascism and war;** the EL is committed to a tough opposition to the growing wave of neo-fascism on European countries through a full implementation of the European Parliament Resolution on the increase in neo-fascist violence and a ban on all neo-fascist and neo-Nazi organisations and foundations.
- **Victory for Peace;** the EL totally condemns of Russia's military assault against Ukraine and claims urgent actions to end the crisis including a return to the negotiating table, a cease-fire, and the departure of all Russian soldiers from Ukraine. Sanctions against the US military-industrial complex for backing the Israeli government's violence. In this context, the EL urges for an immediate ceasefire, humanitarian help to Gazans, and Israel's prompt disengagement from all occupied regions. The world can no longer tolerate the systemic violence against Palestinians.
- **Social transformation towards an integral ecology;** the European Left recognises the climate crisis as an emergency and is committed to transforming the economy away from unrestricted growth and reliance on fossil fuels, thereby laying the groundwork for a just green transition that ensures job creation, equitable wealth distribution, sound and universal public services, and public ownership of commons.
- **Fight poverty, not the poor;** EL calls for the implementation of a comprehensive anti-poverty plan that addresses the multifaceted issue of poverty and social exclusion. Decent, affordable, and climate-

¹²⁴ Party of the European Left.eu, <https://www.european-left.org/2024-eu-election/>

friendly housing must become a right rather than a commodity. To eliminate social inequities, advocate for universal and free access to health care, as well as strengthening public health systems.

- **Transforming labour;** The EU must address the cost-of-living crisis by raising wages and pensions above the rate of inflation, with a focus on reducing inequities. The EU needs to raise wages and reduce the gender pay gap. This necessitates robust trade unions. Wage earners, labourers, and the working class must be enabled to take the lead in creating a new socially just and environmentally responsible Europe by establishing new rights.
- **Empowering Democracy in AI and Innovation;** EL supports the European Parliament's attempt to restrict the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and support the prohibition on biometric surveillance, emotion detection, and predictive policing by AI systems. Transparency and accountability (democratic and societal control) are required for technological progress in terms of its social and environmental implications.
- **The feminist perspective. Women's rights are human rights;** According to the Party of the European Left, feminism is essential to creating an egalitarian, autonomous, peaceful, and violence-free Europe that does not target women. The extreme manifestation of patriarchal brutality is seen in war. Thus, the feminist ideal is the obvious opposite of all forms of militarism and weaponry.
- **For an end to discrimination and for the full inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people;** Social campaign for the fundamental rights to marriage and parenthood for all couples, and to ensure that the rights of same-sex couples and their children are recognised across the EU

European Democratic Party (EDP)



The European Democratic Party (EDP) is a centrist European political party fervent supporter of European integration and federalism. The President of the EDP is the French François Bayrou.

Within the European Parliament, its MEPs form the Renew Europe group, together with those of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe party (ALDE party) and the French Renaissance party¹²⁵.

About 24 national parties and movements among 17 different states are affiliated to the European Democratic Party (EDP), among them there are: the Belgian Les Engages, the Czech SEN 21, the French Democratic Movement, the German Free Voters, the Italian Italia Viva and the Basque Nationalist Party. Furthermore, many independent parliamentarians have joined the party.

¹²⁵ Renaissance is a liberal and centrist political party in France. The party was originally known as "En Marche!" and later "La République En Marche!" before adopting its current name in September 2022. The party was established on 6 April 2016 by Emmanuel Macron, president of France, conceiving it as a progressive movement, uniting both left and right. The party has been a founding member of Renew Europe, the political group of the European Parliament representing liberals and centrists, since June 2019

During the 8 March 2024 Convention in Florence, the European Democratic Party nominated Sandro Gozi as its lead candidate and approved its election programme¹²⁶ .

The main points of the EDP's election campaign were:

- **Convergence & Strengthening;** according to EDP, democracy and Governance as fundamental pillars of any prosperous society – Global power Europe (Europe must act as a global power to face the growing global challenges) – Consolidation and autonomy (invest in research and development, creating strategic partnerships between companies and encouraging entrepreneurship) – Funding common public goods (Common public goods, such as environmental protection, public health and scientific research, are essential to the well-being of all European citizens) – Cohesion and equity – Diversity and inclusion – Reforming Eurozone (boost economic growth while providing concrete support to countries in difficulty) .
- **Global Renaissance;** the European Union must face new challenges for a social rebirth: Migration Flows (comprehensive approach based on international cooperation, including creating legal channels for economic migration) – Green and blue leadership (transition to a green and circular economy) - Enhanced healthcare – Food sovereignty – Digital revolution- 450 Million consumers (Consumer rights must be protected in a competitive and sustainable European market).
- **Plural Harmony;** the EDP claims for an equitable growth – The future of youth – Quality education for all – Cultural wealth and diversity – Media and pluralism – Sports and ethics.
- **Vibrant Regions;** Regional progress and prosperity – Thriving outermost regions.

¹²⁶European Democratic Party.eu, https://2024.democrats.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/MANIFESTO-EN_WEB.pdf

European Free Alliance (EFA)



The European Free Alliance (EFA) is a European political party that brings together 43 parties and movements in 19 States, which support policies of regionalism, autonomism, independence or similar forms of federalism or self-government for their own region or for so-called stateless nations¹²⁷. The EFA promotes the concept of a "Europe of the regions".

Among the other founding points, in addition to the right of self-determination of peoples and minorities, are human rights, respect for the environment, sustainable development, attention to social issues to be countered by unbridled liberalization. Since 2019, the president of the EFA is the Basque Lorena López de Lacalle Arizti.

In the European Parliament, the EFA is part of the centre-left group the Greens/European Free Alliance; however, MEPs from the New Flemish Alliance sit in the European Conservatives and Reformists group.

Already in October 2023, the congress of the European Free Alliance elected Maylis Roßberg and Raül Romeva as its presidential candidates for the 2024 European Parliament election, and adopted its election programme¹²⁸ aimed primarily at bringing the voices of national minorities and stateless nations into the EU debate.

¹²⁷ The EFA party has generally limited its membership to centre-left and left-wing parties; therefore, only a fraction of European regionalist parties are members of the EFA.

¹²⁸ Euractive.com, Party pushing 'self-determination' in EU election stint fields two top candidates. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/party-pushing-self-determination-in-eu-election-stint-fields-two-top-candidates/>

European Christian Political Movement (ECPM)



The European Christian Political Movement (ECPM) is a European political party with Christian Democratic and social conservative principles. Indeed, the party brings together national parties and individuals from all over Europe who share Christian-influenced ideas and generally adhere to Christian democratic values. The member parties are mainly socially conservative and Eurosceptic. The Romanian Valeriu Ghilețchi chairs the party presidency office.

The only parties registered in the EPCM that managed to obtain representation in the European Parliament in the 2019 elections were divided between the European Conservatives and Reformists Group ECR (the Dutch Reformed Political Party and the German Families Party) and the European People's Party group EPP (the Dutch Christian Union).

As regard the 2024 European Parliament election, in a meeting held on 24 February 2024, the European Christian Political Movement appointed party president Valeriu Ghilețchi as its lead candidate for the European Commission¹²⁹.

¹²⁹ European Christian Political Movement.eu, <https://www.ecpm.info/news/president-valeriu-ghilechi-is-appointed-ecpms-lead-candidate-for-the-european-elections.html>

3.5 June 6-9: The Election Days

In 2023, the Council declared that June 6–9, 2024, would be the election period. According to the European Electoral Act, elections can be held over a four-day period, from Thursday to Sunday. The legal default, and when elections were held between 1979 and 2009, is the beginning of June.

However, the European Electoral Act allows the Council to choose any date between early April and early July. In 2014 and 2019, elections were held in May. For this reason, in 2022, the European Parliament proposed making May 9th, Europe Day, a fixed election day in all member states.

In addition to the historic significance of the date, an earlier vote would give the European Parliament more time to prepare for, and hence control, the nomination of the new Commission - a process that should be finished by October 31, when the outgoing Commission's mandate officially ends. The Council, however, chose to stick with the text of the European Electoral Act.

In this way, the 720 new MEPs were elected in what are essentially 27 simultaneous national elections, with national parties on the ballots and national voting systems¹³⁰.

Although the polling stations open on 6 June, most of the Member States voted on 9 June with the first results projections coming out in the evening of that day. Indeed, Member States that voted on the preceding days were not allowed to publish results before polls close across the EU.

Despite not being able to publish any official results, the European Parliament gave partial projections around 6.15pm CET and a first projection of the full hemicycle at 8.15pm CET based on the structure of the outgoing Parliament. These data were sourced from aggregated exit polls and pre-election opinion polls.

Delays in the publication of results have been the target of disinformation in countries such as Spain, where social media campaigns have alluded to

¹³⁰ The European Electoral Act only establishes basic regulations, leaving matters such as the minimum voting age (varying from 16 to 18) and threshold (ranging from 0 to 5%) to Member States. The distribution of seats in the European Parliament is 'degressively proportionate' to the population of member states.

"information blackouts" and implied that the government tampered with results before releasing them to the public¹³¹.

Waiting for the final member state to vote before declaring official results has been standard practice in the previous three EU elections.

¹³¹ Euronews.eu, When will we find out the results of the European elections? <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/06/09/when-will-we-find-out-the-results-of-the-european-elections>

3.6 The outcome of the vote count

The elections saw Right wing and far-right parties affiliated to the ECR and ID groups make gains, though they failed to achieve the results polls had predicted. Parties affiliated with the EPP, confirmed the largest party group in the European Parliament with an increased seat share, and with the Left group also made slight gains overall.

Parties affiliated with the Renew Europe group and the Greens/European Free Alliance (EFA) suffered the biggest losses in seats. Losses for the Greens were however concentrated in the largest Member States, Germany and France, and they increased their representation in other Member States. Centre-left parties affiliated with the S&D group also made losses overall.

The biggest loss for Renew Europe came from France, where President Emmanuel Macron's Renaissance-led list garnered just 14.6% of the vote and came second to Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National (RN), which became the leading party in the ID group. The far-right party, which campaigned on an anti-immigration ticket, won 31.3% of the vote. Along with the German Christian Democrat CDU-CDU (the leading party in the EPP), RN returned the highest number of MEPs (30) in the EP¹³².

Although parties in other Member States obtained a higher vote share, the relatively high number of MEPs for these parties reflected the higher number of Parliament seats allocated to France and Germany. The result in France prompted President Macron to call early elections for the French National Assembly¹³³.

Centrist parties in Germany suffered setbacks as well. Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party finished third behind the Alternative for Germany (AfD), a far-right party banned from the ID group prior to the election. Overall, right-wing parties in Germany received more than 45% of the vote.

¹³² UK Parliament.com, EU elections 2024: Results and the new European Parliament, July 2024.
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10068/>

¹³³ Unlike polls before the vote suggested, the National Rally (RN), the hard-right party of Marine Le Pen and wasn't the biggest force in the lower house of parliament. They have won a mere 143 seats, far less than the left-wing alliance of the Nouveau Front Populaire (NFP) which, despite coming first in the French legislative elections (182 seats), failed to obtain the majority of legislators needed to control the National Assembly.

ID parties were also the leading parties in Austria (the Freedom Party) and Belgium (the Flemish Interest), as well as second in the Netherlands (the Party for Freedom).

In Italy, the ruling Brothers of Italy (FDI) took the lead with 28.8% of the vote and 24 MEPs. FDI became the largest party (in terms of MEPs) in the ECR group¹³⁴. The highest vote share for an ECR party was for the Law and Justice party (PiS), the ruling party in Poland from 2015-2023, although this was a fall in vote share to 36.2% and 20 MEPs. It finished behind the governing Civic Coalition in Poland, centred on Civic Platform (part of the EPP group).

Another successful right-wing party was Hungary's ruling Fidesz, which left the EPP in 2021, even though its 44.8% vote share (in cooperation with a minor party) was lower than in 2019.

In addition to Germany, EPP parties were the leading parties in several other countries including Spain, Greece, Croatia, Bulgaria, Slovenia and the Baltic states. S&D parties were the leading parties in Portugal and Denmark, although they won their most seats in Spain and Italy where they came second. A Greens/EFA affiliate (Green Left) was the leading party in Denmark, and a Renew Europe affiliate (Progressive Slovakia) was the leading party in Slovakia. Parties affiliated with the Left group came second in Finland, Greece and Cyprus, and this group was further bolstered following the election when the Italian Five Star Movement joined it.

¹³⁴ World Economic Forum.org, EU elections 2024: Who won and lost – and what happens next?
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/06/european-parliament-elections-eu-brussels-2024/>

Affiliation to the parties at the time of the election on 6-9 June 2024.

Party	Seats	+/-
European People's Party	171	-6
Party of European Socialists	129	-7
European Conservatives and Reformists Party	58	+6
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party	58	-13
Identity and Democracy Party	57	-19
European Green Party	42	-12
Party of European Left	29	+1
European Democratic Party	9	-1
European Free Alliance	7	0
Volt Europa	5	+4
European Christian Political Movement	4	0
European Communist Action	2	0
Animal Politics EU	2	-1
European Pirate Party	1	-3
Others	146	+36
Total	720	+15

Source: <https://europeelects.eu/ep2024/>

3.7 The voter turnout

The election result has been significantly influenced by voter turnout, which typically differs between Member States. In 2019, Slovakia had the lowest participation rate at 23%, while Belgium, where voting is required, had the highest at 88 percent. The EU average was around 50.5%, the highest since 1994.

Voter turnout is influenced by institutional factors such as whether there are other simultaneous elections and the day of the week, as well as the sensitivity of the citizens of the Union towards crucial issues such as climate change, the future of the European Green Deal, post-COVID-19 economic recovery, migration, and the EU's role on the global stage can be a catalyst or a deterrent for people to support the EU¹³⁵.

The 2024 European Parliament election featured the largest voter turnout in 30 years, with 50.97% of 357 million eligible voters voting. This was a slight rise over the previous elections in 2019 (50.66%), indicating that the politically sensitive atmosphere acted as a motivator for participation¹³⁶.

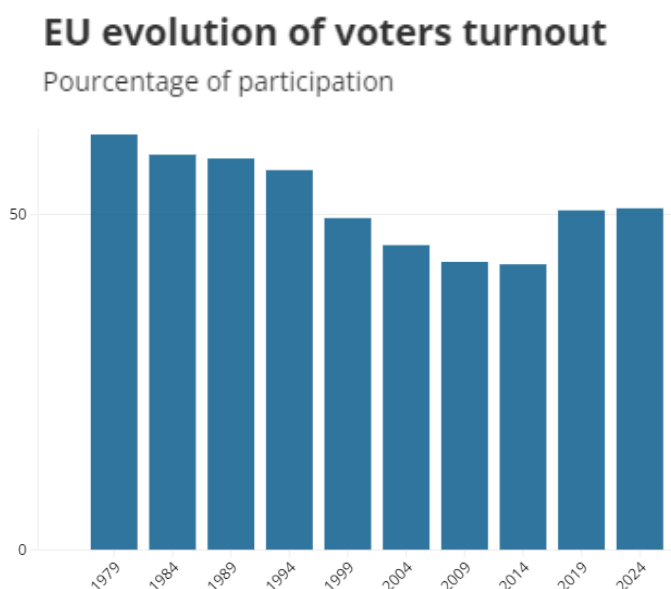


Figure 9: voter turnout. (Source: Euronews.com)

¹³⁵ ScienceDirect.com, Why bother? Determinants of turnout in the European elections
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0261379401000543>

¹³⁶ Euronews.com, Highest turnout for 30 years, but almost half of Europe shuns European elections.
<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/06/12/european-elections-2024-turnout-increased-participation-but-no-major-surge>

On closer examination, not all countries were equally responsive to the European elections. Thirteen countries experienced a surge in voter turnout compared to 2019: Belgium (where voting is compulsory, +1.35 points); Germany (+3.4 points); Ireland (+0.14 points); France (+1.38 points); Netherlands (+4.27 points); Portugal (+5.79 points); Czech Republic (+7.73 points); Cyprus (+14.87 points); Estonia (+0.1 points); Latvia (+0.29 points); Malta (+0.3 points); Romania (+1.22 points).

Hungary experienced the greatest increase in turnout (+15.93 points). Fidesz, the party of Hungary's leader Viktor Orbán, who is opposed to EU policies, came in first place, although the party had its lowest ever European election vote of 45%, losing three seats in Parliament. His opponent, Peter Magyar from TISZA (a possible EPP group member), benefited from the increased participation.

More countries, however, experienced a drop in participation, totalling fourteen: Denmark (-7.84 points); Italy (-6.2 points); Luxembourg (-1.92 points); Greece (-17.3 points); Spain (-11.52 points); Sweden (-4.57 points); Austria (-3.5 points); Finland (-0.4 points); Poland (-5.03 points); Slovenia (-12.56 points); Slovakia (-11.64 points); Croatia (-8.51 points). It is worth mentioning that, despite having required voting legislation that might result in sanctions, Bulgaria, Greece, and Luxembourg witnessed lower voter turnout.

Lithuania saw the worst decrease with turnout falling to 28.35%, a 25-point drop from 2019. This can be due in part to the recent presidential election, which took place on May 12 and 26, with a 59% turnout.

Italy is also notable. Aside from a modest rise in 2004, turnout has steadily decreased from the first election in 1979 (85.65%) to the most recent in 2024 (48.3%), when it went below the 50% mark for the first time.

3.8 Composition of the groups in the new parliament

In the European Parliament, MEPs sit in political groups. Moreover, it is precisely the political groups that were the players of the first post-election phase starting with the Conference of Presidents on June 11 and which lasted until the deadline on July 15. On this phase, they had the spotlight on their constituent meetings and on the ability to create a majority coalition.

In fact, each parliamentary group had to communicate, according to Article 33 of the EU Parliament's rules of procedure, its name, internal composition and political declaration by 15 July, the day before the formal inauguration of the tenth legislature with the first plenary session of the Parliament in Strasbourg.

Given the significant gains in the election of the centre-right and far-right groups, it was plausible to see them get more than half of the seats. Fundamentally changing Parliament's traditionally progressive, pro-European approach and the EU's power balance, with new majority coalitions likely on issues such as climate change and migration¹³⁷.

In the outgoing legislature (2019-2024), there were seven political groups in the European Parliament: the Christian Democratic European People's Party (EPP); the Socialists and Democrats (S&D); the centrist/liberal Renew Europe; the Greens/ European Free Alliance (EFA); the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR); the most right-wing group, the Identity and Democracy Group (ID) and the Left group (GUE/NGL). In addition, there were 'non-attached' MEPs – meaning they did not belong to any political group.

Commentaries before and after the election focused on the challenges posed to the "centrist" and "pro-EU" majority parties by an increasing number of right-wing MEPs. Both RN leader Marine Le Pen and Hungary's Prime

¹³⁷Hertie school, Jacques Delors Center.eu, On the road to the 2024 European elections: Institutional timeline and missed opportunities. February 2024. <https://www.delorscentre.eu/en/publications/detail/publication/on-the-road-to-the-2024-european-elections-institutional-timeline-and-missed-opportunities>.

Minister Viktor Orbán have urged for the formation of a united right group that includes the ID and ECR parties¹³⁸.

In June, Orbán formed a new group called "Patriots for Europe" (PfE) with former Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and Austrian Freedom Party (FPO) head Herbert Kickl. Babiš's ANO 2011 party has quit the Renew Europe group after the election. Nearly all ID parties, including the RN and the Italian League, followed the FPO into the new group and the ID group was dissolved. Spain's Vox, previously a member of ECR, also joined the group, making it the third largest in the EP.

Another smaller right-wing group, "Europe of Sovereign Nations" (ESN), was founded in early July, with the AfD accounting for more than half of its MEPs. ECR remained a separate entity, with FDI and PiS as its primary parties. According to some commentaries, membership of a united group on the right would cause difficulties for Meloni's attempts to develop a broader alliance on the centre-right including the EPP and to influence EU policy-making more broadly.

The first plenary assembly of the new European Parliament was held between 16–19 July 2024 and in this occasion was shown the new composition of the groups. In the new legislature, there are eight political groups within the European Parliament, one more than in the previous legislature.

The largest groups are still the EPP and the Socialists and Democrats (S&D). The EPP can count on 188 MEPs, equal to 26 percent of the entire assembly, an increase compared to the previous legislature, while the Socialists have 136 MEPs, equal to 18 percent of the total and a slight decrease compared to the last five years. In third place with 84 MEPs, or 12 percent of the members of the assembly, is the new group of "Patriots for Europe" (PFE).

The fourth largest group is the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), where 24 of the 78 members are Italian MEPs elected with the Brothers of Italy party. The ECR MEPs correspond to 10 percent of the entire assembly. The liberals of Renew Europe, the third largest

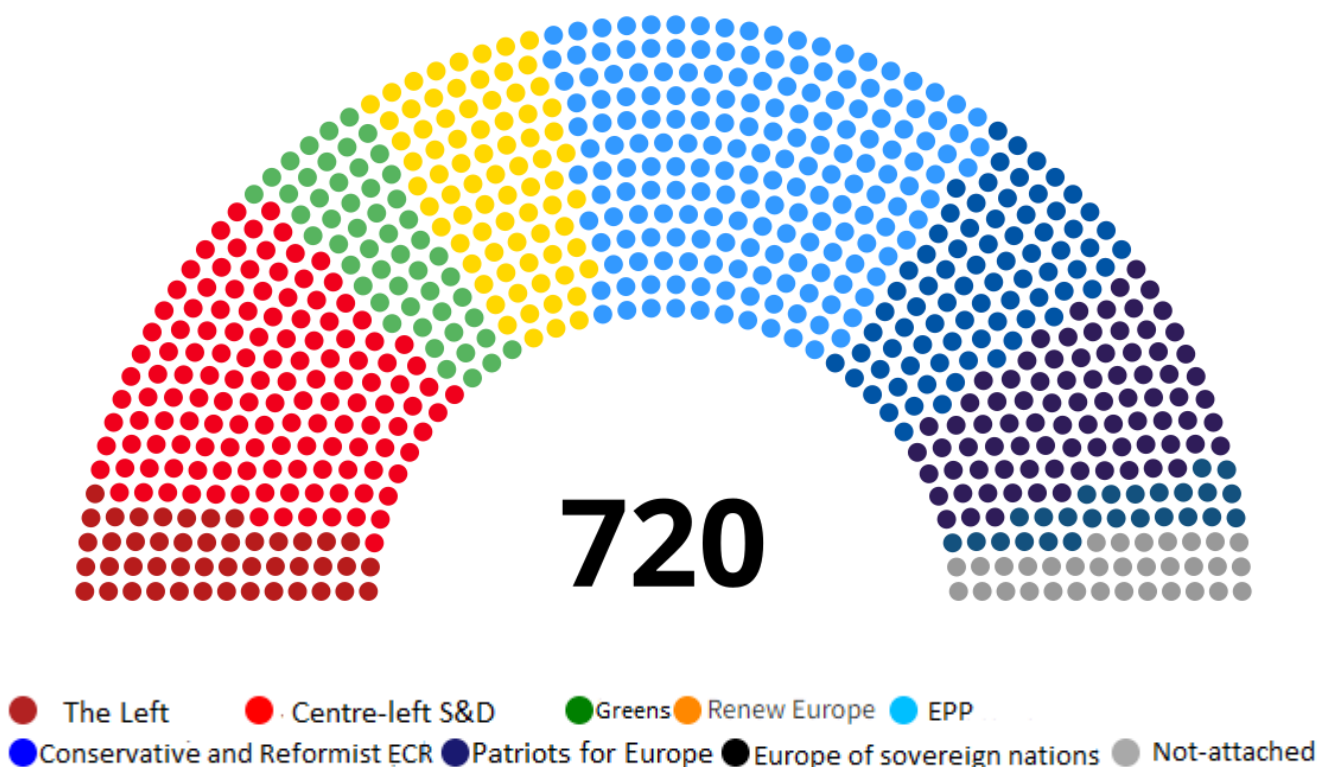
¹³⁸UK Parliament.uk, EU elections 2024: Results and the new European Parliament, July 2024. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-10068/>

parliamentary force in the ninth legislature, moved up to fifth place with 77 MEPs.

The Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) group with 53 MEPs, the Left in the European Parliament with 46 MEPs and the newly formed far-right group “Europe of Sovereign Nations” (ESN) which has 25 MEPs, including 14 elected in Germany with the far-right German party Alternative für Deutschland follow them.

In addition to these groups, there are 33 “non-attached” MEPs, meaning they have not joined any political group. The “non-attached” group mainly includes MEPs from Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht, a far-left German party that splintered from Die Linke while the MEPs of the 5 Star Movement are no longer part of it, having joined the European Left group in this legislature.

Figure 10: the composition of the new European parliament, legislature 2024-2029



	Group	Seats	+/-
	European People's Party Group	188	+1
	Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats	136	-12
	Patriots for Europe	84	+8
	European Conservatives and Reformists	78	+16
	Renew Europe	77	-20
	Greens–European Free Alliance	53	-14
	The Left in the European Parliament – GUE/NGL	46	+6
	Europe of Sovereign Nations	25	New
	Non-Attached	33	-24
	Total	720	+15

Source: <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/>

3.9 The appointment of the highest parliamentary positions

It's factual that the Eurosceptic and far-right political groups emerged strengthened from the European elections; in the overall number of seats there was some movement in favour of the right-wing forces, but this was substantially reflected in an increase from two to three parliamentary groups compared to the previous legislature, but without having the exploit to take the lead of Parliament as expected before the elections.

However, the elections did not drastically change the balance within the European Parliament; the outgoing majority in the European Parliament, although redesigned by an EPP that has been enriched with right-wing content, has held, even if weakened.

The only majority coalition that has ever been possible has been the one that leveraged the alliance between the Populists and the Socialists with the addition of other forces, among which the most natural is that of the Liberals. From this point of view there has not been a radical change compared to the previous legislature

The first sign of continuity between the ninth and tenth legislatures emerged precisely with the election of the leaders of the European Parliament¹³⁹. The outgoing president Roberta Metsola, member of the EPP, was confirmed president of the European Parliament for the next two and a half years with a large majority of 562 votes cast out of 699 by secret paper ballot¹⁴⁰.

Roberta Metsola therefore obtained even more votes than those available to the majority formed by the Popular, Socialists and Liberals, which can count on 401 MEPs. Her only challenger Irene Montero, former Minister of Equality in Spain for Podemos and now a member of the Left group in the European Parliament instead stopped at 61 votes.

¹³⁹ Il Messaggero.it, Roberta Metzola rieletta presidente, July 2024.

https://www.ilmessaggero.it/mondo/roberta_metsola_presidente_parlamento_europeo-8244386.html

¹⁴⁰European Parliament.eu, Roberta Metsola re-elected as President of the European Parliament, July 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240710IPR22805/roberta-metsola-re-elected-as-president-of-the-european-parliament>

"Together, we must defend the politics of hope, the dream of Europe. I want citizens to rediscover the conviction and enthusiasm for our project. The conviction in making our common space safer, fairer and more equitable. The conviction that together we are stronger and better. The conviction that ours is a Europe for all."¹⁴¹ the President of the European Parliament said, concluding her speech in the Chamber in Strasbourg.

Likewise, the election of the vice-presidents¹⁴² confirmed the solidity of the agreement between the Populists, Socialists and Liberals, returning a result almost identical to that of the previous legislature. Three vice-presidencies out of 14 were attributed to the EPP, five went to the Socialists (including the Italian Pina Picierno of the Democratic Party (PD), already vice-president during Metsola's first mandate) and two went to the liberals of Renew Europe.

The European Conservatives and Reformists group, which includes Brothers of Italy, received two more vice-presidencies, the Greens obtained one, as did the Left group. In this legislature, the only change therefore concerned the balance between Renew and ECR, given that in the previous five years the Liberals had three vice-presidents and the Conservatives only one.

As for the appointment of the five quaestors, two has been assigned to the EPP, and one each to S&D, Renew Europe and ECR.

¹⁴¹European Parliament.eu, "A strong Parliament in a strong Europe", July 2024.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240716IPR22878/a-strong-parliament-in-a-strong-europe-ep-president-roberta-metsola>

¹⁴² The 14 Vice-Presidents and the five Quaestors, together with the President, form the Bureau of Parliament. The Bureau lays down the rules for the proper functioning of Parliament. Among other things, it draws up Parliament's preliminary draft budget and takes decisions on administrative, staffing and organisational matters. When electing the members of the Bureau, the political groups aim to ensure that the Vice-Presidents and Quaestors broadly reflect the size of the groups and take into account the results of the votes for the election of the President.

3.10 The “Cordon sanitaire”

The two new right-wing groups, “Patriots for Europe” and “Europe of Sovereign Nations”, have not obtained any top roles within the European Parliament. The absence of these two groups among the top positions is the result of a precise strategy implemented for some time by the majority parties, which aims to exclude Eurosceptic parties from decision-making roles within the European Parliament. This strategy has been defined in political and journalistic jargon as a “cordon sanitaire”¹⁴³.

The “cordon sanitaire” means that these groups do not participate in the distribution of positions as vice-presidents, committee chairs or even as rapporteurs for European laws. The underlying idea is that these groups are clearly against European integration, so it would make no sense to fully involve them in the management of the European Parliament.

In the past, the “cordon sanitaire” also concerned the ECR group, while today are the other two groups (PfE and ESN) that are most penalised. Now, the Conservatives and Reformists are not part of the majority in an organic way, but they are not beyond the cordon sanitaire either, so they participate in the distribution of positions in the European Parliament. At the same time, it is clear that the extreme right group (ESN) has no possibility of participating in the distribution of positions.

The ECR’s particular position within the European balance is the result of a dialogue with the Populists, Socialists and Liberals that has been ongoing for some years. As anticipated, in the last legislature, the Conservatives had already obtained a vice-presidency, and on some occasions, several members of this group voted in favour of measures together with the majority in support of von der Leyen.

This happened for example in April 2024, shortly before the European elections, when the MEPs of Brothers of Italy (FdI) voted in favour of a large part of the new “Pact on Migration and Asylum”, i.e. the ten new European regulations for the management of migratory flows, within the

¹⁴³ Pagellapolitica.it, Il nuovo Parlamento europeo non è troppo diverso dal precedente, July 2024.
<https://pagellapolitica.it/articoli/nuova-composizione-gruppi-parlamento-europeo>

framework of a dialogue established between von der Leyen and Giorgia Meloni since the latter has been head of the Italian government.

3.11 A sign of continuity within groups

The continuity between the new legislature and the one just ended was not limited to the choice of the President and Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament.

Most of the existing political groups have in fact chosen to confirm almost all of their group leaders. This choice is mostly due to the practice whereby the president of a political group is indicated by the largest national delegation¹⁴⁴.

On 19 June, the German Manfred Weber was reconfirmed as president of the EPP group, a position he has held continuously since 2014, as Germany is the most represented nation among the People's Party deputies.

On 25 June, Valérie Hayer, a member of Emmanuel Macron's Renaissance party, was reconfirmed as leader of the Renew Europe group, as the French delegation is the largest within the liberal group.

The situation for the Socialists and Democrats is a bit different. The Socialists have in fact renewed their confidence in the outgoing group leader Iratxe Garcia Perez, of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), even though the latter is not the largest national political force within the S&D group. The PSOE in fact has 20 MEPs, against the 21 elected by the Italian Democratic Party, which however has renounced to nominate one of its members as group leader. The reason behind the reconfirmation is that there is a minimal difference between PD and PSOE and to facilitate internal management, continuity was therefore favoured, with the idea of continuing the work done in the previous legislature.

The changes to the internal organization were also minimal for the groups that indicate two “co-presidents” instead of a single group leader. The Conservatives group confirmed the Italian Nicola Procaccini, while replacing the Polish co-chairman Ryszard Legutko, no longer an MEP, with his compatriot Joachim Brudziński.

¹⁴⁴ Pagellapolitica.it, la nuova composizione dei gruppi nel parlamento europeo, July 2024.
<https://pagellapolitica.it/articoli/nuova-composizione-gruppi-parlamento-europeo>

The Greens kept the German Terry Reintke at the top, replacing the French Philippe Lamberts, also no longer an MEP, with the Dutch Bas Eickhout.

The Left group in the European Parliament instead confirmed the Franco-German couple composed of Manon Aubry and Martin Schirdewan, despite the fact that after the entry of the 5 Star Movement the largest national delegation became the Italian one.

Chapter 4

The establishment of EU Commission

4.1 The re-election of Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission

On 18 July 2024, at the plenary session held in Strasbourg from 14 to 18 July 2024, the European Parliament re-elected Ursula von der Leyen by secret ballot as President of the European Commission. This will be Ursula von der Leyen's second term, lasting for the next five years, until 2029.

The European Parliament currently has 719 MEPs, so the simple majority needed to elect the EPP lead candidate president of the Commission again was 360 votes: 707 votes were cast, with 401 MEPs voting in favour, 284 against, 15 abstentions and 7 invalid votes¹⁴⁵.

The support of the approximately 400 votes to the pro-European coalition composed of the 188 centre-right MEPs of the European People's Party (EPP), the 136 socialists of S&D and the 77 liberals of Renew was fundamental to her re-election. This was joined by the support of the 53 Green MEPs (Greens/EFA), who in the days preceding the plenary session had asked von der Leyen for two main guarantees in exchange for their membership: avoiding the enlargement of the majority to the 78 conservatives of ECR led by Giorgia Meloni, whose party subsequently opposed von der Leyen's re-election, and an investment plan to support the green transition of industry to be implemented in the first 100 days of her mandate¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁵European Parliament.eu, Parliament re-elects Ursula von der Leyen as Commission President, July 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240710IPR22812/parliament-re-elects-ursula-von-der-leyen-as-commission-president>

¹⁴⁶Euronews.com, No support for von der Leyen without invitation to grand coalition, Greens say, August 2024. <https://www.euronews.com/green/2024/06/12/no-support-for-von-der-leyen-without-invitation-to-grand-coalition-greens-say>

Voting decisively against the re-election, there were The European Left (which on the eve of the vote asked for the vote to be postponed to September through a motion, later rejected), the sovereignists of Patriots for Europe (84 seats), the group to which the Lega and Rassemblement National belong, and Europe of Sovereign Nations (far right nationalist, 25 deputies).

Having received re-confirmation from MEPs for a second term, the President of the EU Commission has thus begun the journey that has taken her to the Berlaymont¹⁴⁷ by the end of the year with a new team of 26 commissioners, in addition to herself.

¹⁴⁷ The Berlaymont building is the office building in Brussels which houses the headquarters of the European Commission.

4.2 Von der Leyen's speech before the Parliament



Before the vote, Ursula von der Leyen gave almost an hour of keynote speech at the plenary session of the EU Parliament to seek the confirmation vote for a new mandate at the European Commission, showing a clear indication of choosing support from the Greens, but also an equally clear balancing act with the right of his European People's Party¹⁴⁸.

In her speech, von der Leyen recalled her vision, already outlined in her programmatic guidelines of her electoral manifesto “Europe’s Choice”¹⁴⁹, focused on the objective of *«building a stronger Europe, which guarantees prosperity, which defends democracy, which protects citizens, which*

¹⁴⁸Eunews.it, for a second term, von der Leyen chooses the Greens, but seeks delicate balance with ‘her’ right-wing part of the EPP, July 2024. <https://www.eunews.it/en/2024/07/18/for-a-second-term-von-der-leyen-chooses-the-greens-but-seeks-delicate-balance-with-her-right-wing-part-of-the-epp/>

¹⁴⁹ Ursula von der Leyen, Europe’s choice political guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029. European Commission, Strasbourg, July 2024.

adheres to the objectives of the Green Deal with pragmatism and technological neutrality¹⁵⁰».

It is precisely in these words that von der Leyen's choice not to back down on one of the major priorities of her five-year term now drawing to a close (the European Green Deal) was revealed, not opening up to the upheavals requested by the right-wing European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR).

The reference to the Clean Industrial Deal is significant, a package of measures to support the green transition of the industrial sector and quality jobs to be adopted in the first 100 days of the mandate, to prepare the way for the goal of reducing emissions by 90% by 2040

Von der Leyen has also provided for a specific measure (Industrial Decarbonisation Accelerator Act) to facilitate the decarbonisation of energy-intensive industrial sectors, financing and streamlining procedures to "*facilitate business planning and investment*".

As regards the transition, there was no lack of reference to “pragmatism, technological neutrality and innovation”, but also to the increase in productivity through the diffusion of digital technology (AI above all) and to the strengthening of the single market¹⁵¹.

In her programmatic speech to the EU Parliament, von der Leyen pushed not only for reassurances to industry, but also for those for farmers; in light of climate change, agriculture is in fact a sensitive topic for which *«it is necessary to overcome contrasts and find solutions in the immediate future, in particular through a strategy for agriculture and the food sector based on strategic dialogue¹⁵²».*

¹⁵⁰European Parliament.eu, multimedia center. https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/it/video/statement-by-ursula-von-der-leyen-president-of-the-european-commission-candidate-for-a-second-mandate-2024-2029-speech-by-ursula-von-der-leyen_1258785

¹⁵¹ The completion of the European single market, according to Enrico Letta's report on the European Savings and Investment Union, could unlock further funding, which is necessary for the green, digital and social transition.

¹⁵² While on the one hand von der Leyen said she is committed to ensuring that farmers have a decent and fair income, where no one will be forced to sell agricultural products below cost, on the other hand a plan for agriculture is needed that takes into account the necessary adjustments to climate change and a strategy to manage water resources. Always without forgetting that "whoever wants to contain climate change and protect the environment must take into account the conditions of farmers, because they provide food security".

In addition to references to the future of the Green Deal, as expected there was also a reference to the defense of Europe, the second priority of the future EU Commission.

“We must give Ukraine everything it needs to resist and prevail [...]. Protecting Europe is Europe’s duty. I believe that the time has come to build a real European Defense Union,” von der Leyen said after commenting on Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán’s controversial visit to Russia¹⁵³.

The EU Parliament itself had already reiterated in plenary, through a non-binding resolution, its support for Ukraine until victory, underlining the importance of the country's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. In the common European defense project, von der Leyen added to avoid any misunderstanding, *“member states will retain responsibility for their national security and their armies. And NATO will remain the pillar of collective defense.”*

Confirming a clear change in the narrative on migration and asylum, von der Leyen spoke out on *“strengthening our external borders”* and *“strengthening Frontex, tripling its units to 30,000”* (in addition to proposing a *“doubling of Europol staff, so that it becomes a true EU police agency”*).

Von der Leyen then specified that migration should be managed efficiently and fairly but that migrants *“are human beings like me and like you, we are all protected by human rights”*, for this reason it is necessary to shift towards a *“common approach on repatriations”* and the *“development of partnerships on the southern front”*, a topic that allowed her to propose the appointment of a commissioner for the Mediterranean region¹⁵⁴ and an Agenda for the Mediterranean¹⁵⁵ coordinated with Kaja Kallas, the EU High Representative designated by the European Council.

¹⁵³ Two weeks before von der Leyen's speech to the European Parliament, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán had gone to Moscow to meet Vladimir Putin, but this peace mission was interpreted more as an "appeasement" mission by the international community.

¹⁵⁴ The new Commissioner for the Mediterranean will have to focus, as stated in the guidelines, on partnerships and investments, economic stability, job creation, energy, security and other areas of mutual interest.

¹⁵⁵ The Agenda for the Mediterranean is a document that sets out the priorities and framework for EU policy towards the region in the context of a strengthened partnership. The communication is accompanied by an economic investment plan to stimulate long-term socio-economic recovery in the Southern Neighbourhood.

Von der Leyen also opened up to the enlargement of the Union: *«The Western Balkans, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia have made their free choice. They have chosen freedom over oppression. They have chosen democracy over dependence»*.

She also called for an immediate ceasefire for Gaza and the release of Israeli hostages: *«I will be clear, the bloodshed in Gaza must end now, too many women, children and civilians have died in Israel's response to the Hamas attack, an immediate ceasefire and the release of the hostages are needed¹⁵⁶»*.

Other highlights of von der Leyen's speech include the radical overhaul of the Union's common budget, with a greater focus on reforms, and the reference to social rights, in particular the housing crisis: *«For the first time, I will appoint a Commissioner with direct responsibility for housing¹⁵⁷. We will develop a European plan for affordable housing, to address all the causes of the crisis and help unlock the necessary public and private investments»*.

Still on the subject of social attention, von der Leyen dedicated a passage of her speech to the need to launch the "first European survey on the impact of social media on young people" to combat cyberbullying and the fight for gender equality: *«We need to put an end to violence against women, reconcile care activities and professional careers, and close the wage and pension gap; it is no coincidence that poverty in old age has a female face»*.

Finally, there was the promise of a European Democracy Shield, with targeted interventions to protect the EU from external interference on the information side and guarantee freedom of the press: *«It is urgent to equip the European Union with powerful cyber defense tools, to impose transparency on foreign funding of our public life as a common rule, but also to ensure a reliable information framework. To this end, the EU must*

¹⁵⁶ This position taken by Ursula von der Leyen was not without criticism from the opposition since, after the events of 7 October 2023, she had repeatedly expressed her "unconditional support" for Israel, in the absence of a European embargo on sending weapons to Netanyahu's government.

¹⁵⁷ The President of the European Commission has promised a dedicated figure with a mandate for housing and a European plan for affordable housing. The lack of affordable housing (between 2010 and 2023, average rents in the EU increased by almost 23 percent and house prices by almost 48 percent, prompting protests) and the rising cost of living have been central to national and European election campaigns.

support an independent press, continue to ensure compliance by digital giants and further encourage media literacy programs»».

Figure 11: Von der Leyen’s strategic agenda



4.3 The new European Commission

The 17 September 2024, was the day of the new European Commission in Strasbourg. At the Conference of Group Leaders of the European Parliament, Ursula von der Leyen presented the list of her new team in the Commission, saying: *«Wherever we come from and whatever our title, we must all work together. We will have open debates, take independent decisions and act with determination. Our only guiding star is work for the citizens of Europe»*¹⁵⁸.

The European Commission consists of one Commissioner from each of the 27 Member States of the European Union, including the President and the High Representative for Foreign Policy. Commissioners are chosen by national governments on the basis of their expertise and appointed in an individual capacity. However, once in office, they act independently and impartially, with the task of safeguarding the general interest of the European Union, above national interests.

For the new composition of the executive body of the Union, particular emphasis has been on the team balance, both in terms of gender and geographical representation; there are 20 commissioners, 6 executive vice-presidents and a president, of which 10 are women and 17 are men.

«I have worked intensively with the Member States and we have managed to improve the quota to 40% women and 60% men» said von der Leyen, highlighting the commitment to more equal representation¹⁵⁹.

The President also stressed the importance of collaboration between European Commissioners, as each has a specific portfolio that reflects the Union's priorities. *«All Commissioners must work at their volume, focus on what they will have to work on with other Commissioners, [...], what affects security also affects the economy, what affects the climate or the environment also affects the business community. And vice versa»*.

¹⁵⁸ Wired.it, Commissione europea, come è composta, Riccardo Piccolo, September 2024.

<https://www.wired.it/gallery/commissione-europea-commissari-profilo-ursula-von-der-leyen/>

¹⁵⁹ Von der Leyen highlighted the significant improvement compared to the initial situation she inherited at the beginning of her first term as Commission President, when the female share was only 22%.

The agenda of the new Commission promises to be ambitious and multifaceted. Once again, in her speech to the group leaders, von der Leyen reiterated the objectives of her confirmed presidency, which are prosperity, security, democracy, against the backdrop of competitiveness and the green and digital transitions and the need for greater coordination between policies, as stated in the Draghi's report¹⁶⁰.

¹⁶⁰ Mario Draghi's Report "The future of European competitiveness" on future European innovation and competitiveness is a study to understand the future of the European continent in terms of innovation and competitiveness, it examines the challenges that industry and companies have to face in the market, urging Member States and Community institutions to greater coordination.

4.4. The list of commissioners

In the European Commission, the portfolios assigned to the different commissioners vary in importance and power; generally, those with greater weight in the policies of the European executive are given to the vice-presidents who assist the president and lead the Commission in the absence of the latter.

Ursula von der Leyen has proposed six vice-presidencies for the new Commission. In addition to Estonian Kaja Kallas (Renew Europe), High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Spain's Teresa Ribera (S&D) will be the executive vice-president of the next European Commission responsible for the "just, clean and competitive" transition, while France's Stéphane Séjourné (Renew Europe) will be executive vice-president for Industrial Policy¹⁶¹.

Also getting an executive vice-presidency are Henna Virkkunen (PPE) from Finland, who will lead the EU digitalisation, and Roxana Minzatu (S&D) from Romania, responsible for talents and skills (improving competitiveness and productivity, education).

Among the main issues that the President of the Commission had to deal with was that of the executive vice-presidency to be assigned to Raffaele Fitto, the only one from the conservative ECR group.

The Italian Minister for European Affairs will have the portfolio for reforms and cohesion policies and will manage the PNRR funds of the EU countries together with the Commissioner for Economy and Productivity and will commit to the complete and successful implementation of NextGenerationEU¹⁶².

¹⁶¹ Emmanuel Macron had initially nominated Thierry Breton as France's official candidate for the role of Commissioner, thus confirming him for a second term after having already served as Commissioner for the Internal Market in the five-year period 2019-2024, however he resigned with immediate effect due to disagreements with Ursula von der Leyen due to, so-called "questionable governance" of the President of the European Commission.

¹⁶² NextGenerationEU is a temporary recovery instrument worth over €800 billion, helping to repair the immediate economic and social damage caused by the coronavirus pandemic. to create a greener, more digital, more resilient and fit for the challenges of today and tomorrow post COVID-19. At its heart is the Recovery and Resilience Facility, an instrument that provides grants and loans to support reforms and investments in EU Member States, with a total value of €723.8 billion. To this end, Member States are required to draw up national recovery and resilience plans setting out how they intend to invest the funds. They are also required to respect the agreed milestones and objectives. In fact, before any

The nomination of the Italian commissioner has been greeted with protest from the socialists, liberals and greens given the strong vice-presidency that would have belonged to a member of the conservatives¹⁶³.

However, Ursula von der Leyen expressed her opinion on the issue by saying: «*Italy is a very important country and this must also be reflected in the choice. The EP has 14 vice-presidents, two of which are from ECR. I have drawn the consequences for the composition of the Commission*¹⁶⁴».

In addition to Executive Vice President Teresa Ribera, who will lead the entire EU Green Deal, the next European Commission will have two “green” delegations: Dutch Wopke Hoekstra (PPE) will be the new Commissioner for Climate and Swedish Jessika Roswall (PPE) will be responsible for Environment and Water Resilience. Also related to the EU environmental agenda are the delegation for Fisheries and Oceans assigned to Cypriot Costas Kadis (PPE), the portfolio for Animal Health and Welfare entrusted to Hungarian Oliver Varhelyi (Patriots), Energy to Danish Dan Jorgensen (S&D), and Agriculture to Luxembourg’s Christophe Hansen (PPE).

The supervision of the EU economy and public accounts for the next five years will be entrusted to Latvia and Slovakia. In Ursula von der Leyen's new team, veteran Valdis Dombrovskis (PPE), despite being deprived of the executive vice-presidency that he had in the previous legislature, will continue to have the delegation for Economy and Productivity. At his side will be the Slovakian Maros Sefcovic (non attached), holder of Trade and Economic Security. The person responsible for the EU Budget will then be the Polish Piotr Serafin (PPE). The Portuguese Maria Luís Albuquerque (PPE) has instead been entrusted with the delegation for Financial Services (The package of economic delegations should also include the delegation to Raffaele Fitto, who leads the maxi-portfolio of EU cohesion funds and reforms).

disbursement under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the Commission assesses the satisfactory achievement of each milestone and objective.

¹⁶³ The appointment comes despite the vote against von der Leyen by both Giorgia Meloni within the European Council and by FdI at the July Plenary.

¹⁶⁴ [IlSole24ore.com](https://www.ilsole24ore.com), Nuova commissione UE, tutti i nomi. Fitto vicepresidente e commissario alla coesione, September 2024. <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/ue-fitto-vicepresidente-e-commissario-coesione-tutti-nomi-AFDwKhxD>

Austrian Finance Minister Magnus Brunner (PPE) will be the Commissioner for Home Affairs and Migration. He will of course focus on the implementation of the Pact on Asylum and Migration, but also on strengthening borders and developing a new internal security strategy, von der Leyen announced. Croatian Dubravka Suica (PPE) will be the Commissioner for the Mediterranean, responsible for the wider Southern Neighbourhood, working closely with Kaja Kallas to develop shared interests with the region.

The other names announced for the role of commissioner are: Andrius Kubilius (PPE) from Lithuania, the new commissioner for defence. He will also be responsible for increasing the industrial capacity of the defence sector. Marta Kos (Renew Europe) from Slovenia will be the commissioner for enlargement and the Eastern neighbourhood. She will also be responsible for supporting Ukraine and its reconstruction, and will help candidate countries on their path to joining the EU.

Apostolos Tzitzikostas (PPE) from Greece will be the commissioner for transport and tourism. Jozef Síkela (ECR) from the Czech Republic will be the commissioner for international partnerships. Glenn Micallef (S&D) from Malta will be the commissioner for intergenerational equity, culture, youth and sport. Hadja Lahbib (Renew Europe) from Belgium will be the commissioner for crisis preparedness and management.

Michael McGrath (Renew) from Ireland will be the commissioner for democracy, justice and the rule of law. He is responsible for advancing the *European Democracy Shield*¹⁶⁵. Finally, Bulgarian Ekaterina Zaharieva (PPE) will be Commissioner for Research and Innovation.

In terms of political affiliations, the EPP will be the most represented party in the next EU Commission. In the proposal for designated members presented by Ursula von der Leyen, the EPP commissioners are 14, excluding von der Leyen herself. Instead, there are 5 Liberal members of Renew group, who will express two executive vice-presidencies.

¹⁶⁵ It was part of Von der Leyen's reelection campaign the promise to build up new capabilities and 'structures' at the EU level to battle foreign interference, while EU countries seek to review existing tools to maximise their effectiveness.

The Socialists are also entitled to five designated commissioners - with two executive vice-presidencies - although the S&D group does not consider Maros Sefcovic part of its family, given that the Slovakian party Smer, led by Robert Fico and of which Sefcovic is a member, has been suspended for months. Raffaele Fitto, of the Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and Oliver Varhelyi, Hungarian of Fidesz and member of the Patriots, complete the team¹⁶⁶.

Figure 12: list of appointments to the Commission



¹⁶⁶ IISole24ore.com, Nuova commissione UE, tutti i nomi. Fitto vicepresidente e commissario alla coesione, September 2024. <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/ue-fitto-vicepresidente-e-commissario-coesione-tutti-nomi-AFDwKhxD>

4.5 Parliamentary hearings of EU commissioners-designate

In early October 2024, the EU Parliament stated definitively who and when it will scrutinize the European commissioners-designate. The auditions before the relevant parliamentary committees will take place from November 4 to 12. According to this timeline, Ursula von der Leyen's new Commission is expected to take the office on December 1 after being approved by the European Parliament during its plenary session at the end of November.

The Conference of Presidents (CoP), the body that brings together the leaders of the political groups and the President of the Parliament, Roberta Metsola, was asked to choose between two different timetable options proposed by the office of Bern Lange, chair of the Conference of Committee Chairmen (CCC). Between October 14 and 18, at the rate of four-six hearings per day, or between November 4 and 12. Group leaders opted without much discussion to take time for in-depth scrutiny with less tight ranks.

Only the European People's Party insisted on rapid hearings in mid-October. Group leader Manfred Weber, on the sidelines of the meeting, expressed regret that the faster procedure had not been chosen¹⁶⁷.

In terms of procedure, ahead of the hearings, Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs evaluates the Commissioners-designate's declarations of interest. Commissioners-designate cannot participate in a hearing if they have a conflict of interest.

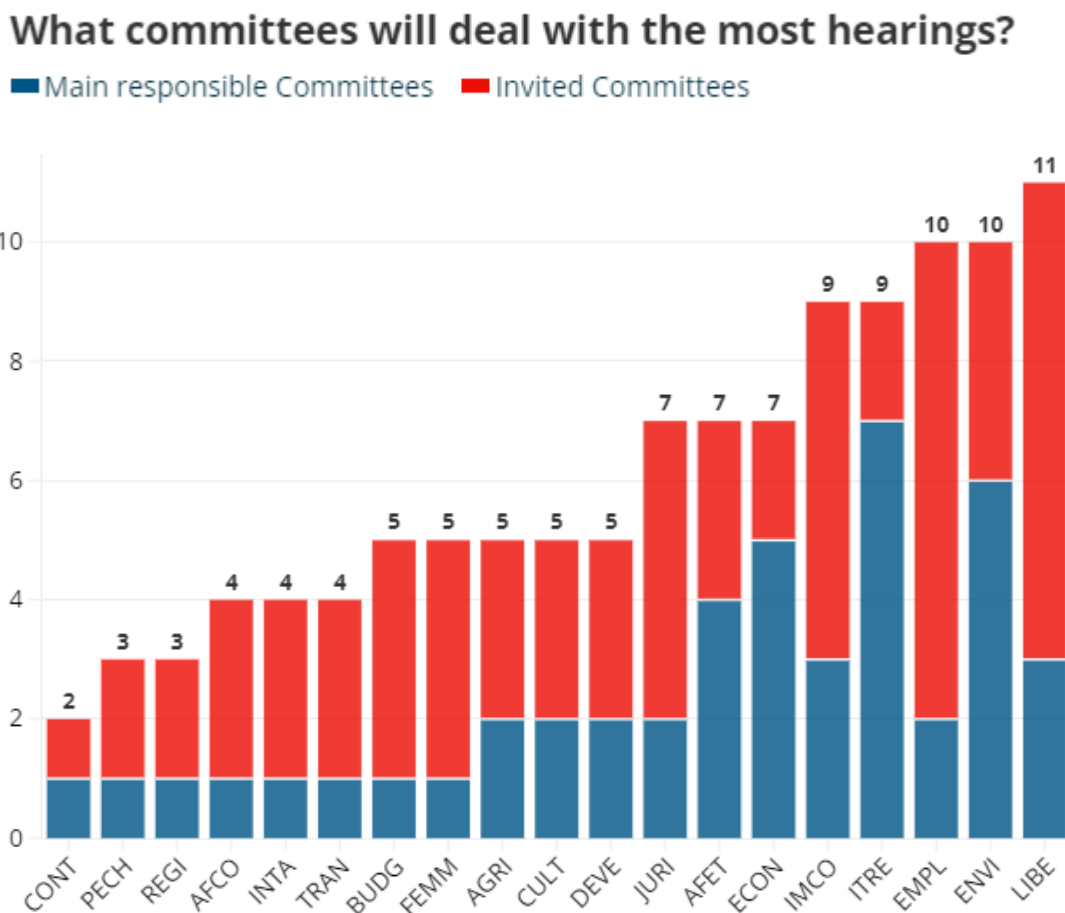
Depending on the portfolio, Commissioner-designate may be examined by a single parliamentary committee (committee responsible) or by multiple committees (joint committees). Other committees may be requested to participate, meaning they may formulate oral questions, but the ultimate

¹⁶⁷ Eunews.it, Parliamentary hearings of EU commissioners-designate will be held Nov. 4–12. October 2024. <https://www.eunews.it/en/2024/10/02/parliamentary-hearings-of-eu-commissioners-designate-will-be-held-nov-4-12/>

evaluation of candidates is up to the coordinators of the respective committee(s).

Environmental and industry committees, both of which are key priorities for the new Commission, will be the most active during the hearings. Meanwhile, the LIBE (Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs) and EMPL (Employment and Social Affairs) committees are among the most crucial invited participants¹⁶⁸.

Figure 13: committees involved in hearings (Source: Euronews.com)



AFET – Foreign Affairs; DEVE – Development; INTA – International Trade; BUDG – Budgets; CONT – Budgetary Control; ECON – Economic and Monetary Affairs; EMPL – Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI – Environment, Public Health and Food Safety; ITRE – Industry, Research and Energy; IMCO – Internal Market and Consumer Protection; TRAN – Transport and Tourism; REGI – Regional Development; AGRI – Agriculture and Rural Development; PECH – Fisheries; CULT – Culture and Education; JURI – Legal Affairs; LIBE – Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; AFCO – Constitutional Affairs; FEMM – Women’s Rights and Gender Equality.

¹⁶⁸ Euronews.com, European Parliament reveals format for Commissioner confirmation hearings, October 2024. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/10/03/european-parliament-reveals-format-for-commissioner-confirmation-hearings>

The hearings will be followed by meetings in which the committee chair and group representatives (coordinators) of the various committees will evaluate whether Commissioner-designate is qualified not just to be a member of the Commission but also to carry out the specific duties they have been assigned¹⁶⁹.

Once all hearings have concluded, the Conference of Committee Chairs will examine results and report to the Conference of Presidents. The latter will complete the final evaluation and choose whether to conclude the hearings.

Following the hearings, Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen will present to the entire College of Commissioners and its agenda in plenary. Her statement will be followed by a debate, during which any political group or at least one-twentieth of Members of Parliament (low threshold) may propose a resolution.

The whole Commission requires Parliament's approval (by a roll-call vote of a majority). Once elected by Parliament, the Commission is formally appointed by the European Council, which acts with a qualified majority.

¹⁶⁹ European Parliament.eu, European Parliament hearings with Commissioners-designate to start on 4 November. October 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240930IPR24372/european-parliament-hearings-with-commissioners-designate-to-start-on-4-november>

Conclusion

The 2024 European elections took place in a context marked by profound changes: the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic aftermath, a wave of farmer protests, a migration crisis, and a digital revolution driven by AI. These crises have shaped political narratives and public opinion, which was ultimately reflected in a rightward shift across Europe. Sentiment witnessed by the election results that led the right-wing European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and the far-right Patriots.eu and Europe of Sovereign Nations (ESN) to increase their number of seats in the European Parliament.

Although Ursula von der Leyen's re-election as President of the European Commission has been made possible by the alliance of the three mainstream pro-EU parties (the center-right European People's Party, the Socialists, and the liberals of Renew) and the votes of the Greens, results in election indicate that the Union is going through a more accentuated political bipolarism which the European institutions will have to deal with over the coming years might slowing the decision-making processes and the European integration path.

In this context, the European Parliament, as the highest democratic representation of European citizens, will have the opportunity to carve out an even more fundamental role in the institutional landscape as it will have the duty to legitimize the objectives set by the Union (NextGenerationEU, financial support to Ukraine, the green transition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the new pact on migration and asylum, the development of a safe and equal digital market for all, the regulation of artificial intelligence and the fight against inequalities and social discrimination) and give a strong signal of European unity in one of the most difficult period since its establishment .

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