

THE 2024 EU ELECTIONS: EUROPE'S POLITICAL LANDSCAPE TRANSFORMED

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(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



The recent European Union Parliament elections, held from 6-9 June, 2024¹, have attracted significant global attention. These elections, the world's only directly elected transnational governing body, are pivotal as they determine the composition of the European Parliament, influencing the direction of EU policies and legislation for the next five years. This was the 10th parliamentary election since the first direct election in 1979 and was notable as the first European Parliament election post-Brexit. It saw voters across the 27 EU member states electing 720 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to represent over 450 million people.

Election Results

The 2024 European Union Parliament elections concluded with significant shifts in the political landscape of the EU. Here are the key results and outcomes:

Overall Results:

- European People's Party (EPP): led by Ursula von der Leyen, secured the most seats in the European Parliament. However, the EPP's dominance was challenged by substantial gains

¹ "European elections 2024", European Union, accessed on June 20, 2024.
https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/european-elections-2024_en

made by right-wing populist parties and notable losses for centrist, liberal, and environmentalist groups.

- Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D): Maintained its position as the largest party but with a reduced majority.
- Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D): Continued to be the second-largest group but also experienced a decline in seats.
- European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR): Surpassed the centrist Renew Europe group to become the third-largest group in the Parliament.
- Renew Europe: Suffered losses but remains a significant centrist force.
- Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL: Both groups saw reduced representation.

Notable Winners and Losers:

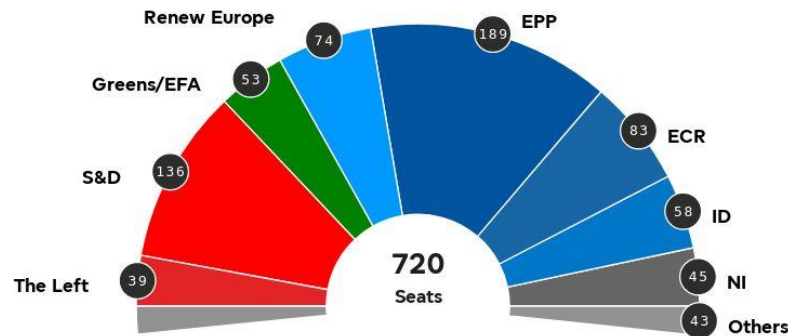
- Winners: Right-wing populist parties such as the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group, which saw substantial gains, capitalizing on rising nationalist sentiments across Europe.
- Losers: Centrist and liberal parties, particularly the Renew Europe group, as well as the Greens/EFA, faced significant setbacks.

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All times are GMT+2

European Parliament 2024 - 2029

Provisional results



Provisional

Composition of the European Parliament based on available provisional or final national results published after voting has finished in all Member States, based on the structure of the outgoing Parliament.

According to Parliament's rules of procedure, a political group shall consist of at least 23 Members elected in at least seven Member States.

Source: Provided by Verian for the European Parliament



Figure 1²

Country-Specific Highlights:

- Italy: The Brothers of Italy (party of the incumbent Prime Minister of Italy Giorgia Meloni), a right-wing party, performed strongly, reflecting broader European trends.
- France: The National Rally, led by Marine Le Pen, gained additional seats, underscoring the shift towards nationalist and populist ideologies.
- Germany: The Alternative for Germany (AfD) saw increased support, though traditional parties like the EPP and S&D retained a majority of the German seats.

Changes in Parliamentary Composition:

The new composition of the European Parliament indicates a more fragmented political environment with increased polarization. The rise of right-wing populist groups suggests a shift

² "2024 European election results", European Parliament, accessed on June 20, 2024. <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/index.html>

towards more nationalistic and Eurosceptic policies, potentially impacting future EU legislation and integration efforts.

Voter Turnout

The 2024 European Union Parliament elections saw a significant increase in voter turnout, reaching 54%, up from 50.7% in 2019 and 42.5% in 2014, marking the highest since the first direct elections in 1979.

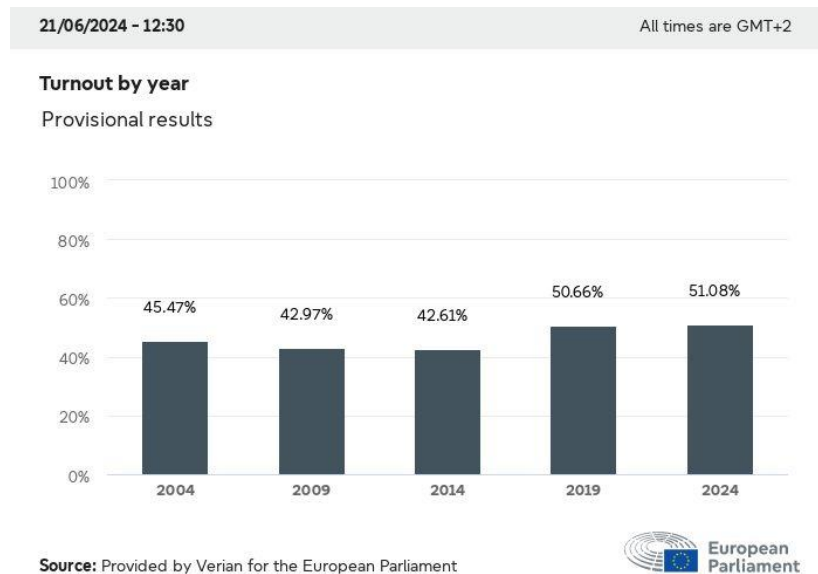


Figure 2³

In country-specific trends, Belgium and Luxembourg maintained high turnout due to compulsory voting laws. Germany's turnout rose to 64.8% from 61.4% in 2019, while France's increased to 53% from 50.1%. Eastern European countries like Poland and Hungary also saw higher turnout rates, contributing to the overall increase.

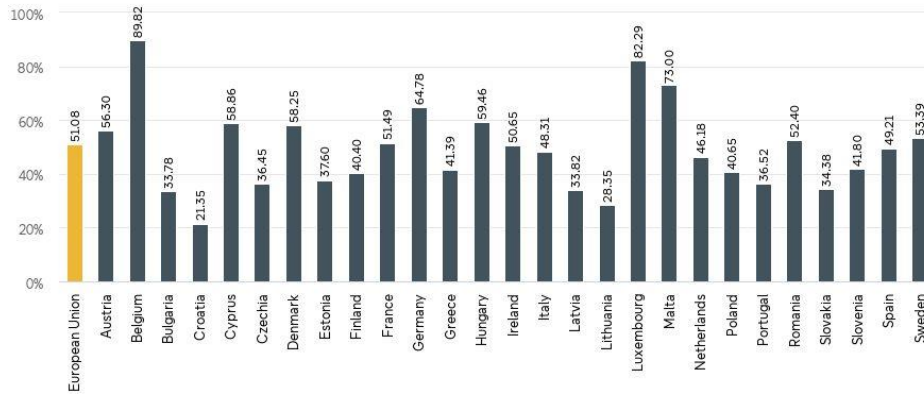
³ "European results", European Parliament, Election results, accessed on June 20, 2024. <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/turnout/>

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Turnout by country (%)

Provisional results



Source: Provided by Verian for the European Parliament



Figure 3⁴

The rise of populist and nationalist movements spurred greater political engagement, especially among younger voters. Issues such as climate change, economic recovery post-COVID-19, migration, and geopolitical tensions galvanized voters. The European Parliament's campaign, 'Use your vote or others will decide for you,' effectively raised awareness about voting.

The higher voter turnout indicates a more engaged electorate, leading to greater scrutiny of MEPs and their policies. It suggests a proactive European public in shaping EU policies, enhancing the legitimacy of Parliament's decisions, and encouraging MEPs to be more responsive to constituents.

These elections demonstrated a significant shift towards greater public involvement in EU governance, driven by new political movements and pressing issues. This trend towards higher voter engagement is likely to have profound implications for future EU policies and legislation.

Reactions to the election results

The 2024 European Union Parliament elections have elicited a variety of reactions, highlighting the implications of the outcomes and the EU's future direction.

⁴ "2024 European election results", European Parliament, accessed on June 20, 2024. <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/index.html>

Political Leaders:

- Ursula von der Leyen (EPP):** Satisfied with the EPP's status as the largest party, von der Leyen emphasized the need for coalition-building and cooperation across the political spectrum to address Europe's challenges.⁵ Following the EU parliament elections, von der Leyen has secured a new term as the President of the European Commission, reinforcing her commitment to these goals.
- Frans Timmermans (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats):** Despite losses, Timmermans highlighted the S&D's commitment to social justice and climate action, calling for renewed focus on progressive policies to address economic inequality and environmental sustainability.⁶
- Marine Le Pen (National Rally, France):** Le Pen celebrated gains by right-wing populist parties as a mandate for stronger national sovereignty and conservative policies, calling for a re-evaluation of EU integration and prioritization of national interests. Her party dealt a decisive loss to the incumbent French President Macron's Renaissance Party. (See Figure 4)

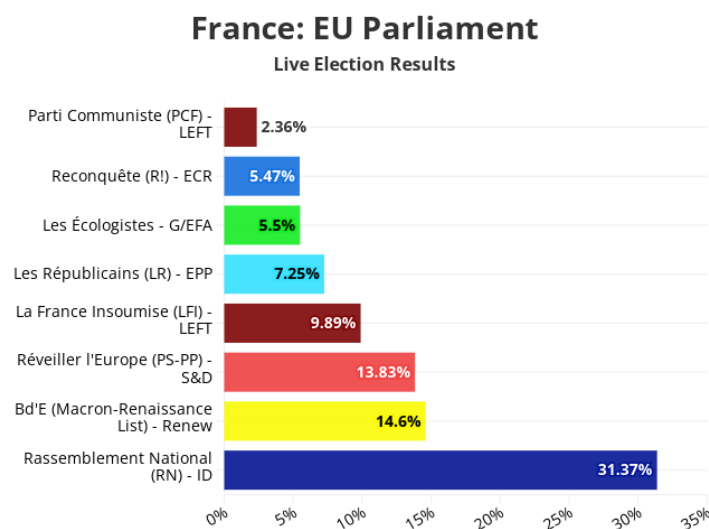


Figure 4⁷

⁵ Federico Baccini, "EU voters push EPP and pro-European majority. Von der Leyen toward a second term", EUNews, published on June 10, 2024.

<https://www.eunews.it/en/2024/06/10/eu-voters-push-populars-and-pro-european-majority-von-der-leyen-toward-a-second-term/>

⁶ "Timmermans & Wilders pleased with EU election results; NSC lost voters over PVV deal", NL Times, published on June 7, 2024.

<https://nltimes.nl/2024/06/07/timmermans-wilders-pleased-eu-election-results-nsc-lost-voters-pvv-deal>

⁷ Clara Preve, "France: Marine Le Pen's far-right party makes historic gains in EU elections", Euronews, published on June 09, 2024.

- **Giorgia Meloni (Brothers of Italy):** Meloni's party won around 29% of the vote in Italy, reflecting a desire for a stronger, more sovereign Europe. She expressed her intention to work with pro-Ukraine factions and emphasized her commitment to European unity and security.⁸

Analysts noted the increasing political fragmentation within the European Parliament, which is expected to complicate legislative processes and require extensive coalition-building and compromises. The significant gains by right-wing populist parties indicate a broader shift towards nationalism and Euroscepticism, posing challenges to EU cohesion and its ability to implement unified policies.

The increase in voter turnout was seen as a positive development, reflecting greater public engagement and interest in EU governance. Media coverage highlighted polarized views among the electorate, with strong support for both progressive and conservative agendas, underscoring the diverse priorities and concerns of European citizens. The new Parliament will need to navigate these dynamics to effectively address pressing issues and shape the future of the EU.

Key Issues, Campaigns, and Their Implications for EU Policy

The 2024 European Union Parliament elections were marked by intense campaigns and debates over a range of critical issues, which have significant implications for the future of EU policy. Here are some of the major issues that dominated the election landscape:

Climate Change: Right-wing populists may slow down stringent climate regulations due to economic concerns. However, strong public support for climate action could maintain progress toward carbon neutrality.

Economic Recovery Post-COVID-19: Centrist and left-leaning parties will push for economic stimulus and social spending, while right-leaning parties may advocate for reduced public spending and debt control.

<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/06/09/france-marine-le-pens-far-right-party-makes-historic-gains-in-eu-elections>

⁸ Clara Preve, "Italy: PM Meloni established as kingmaker as party secures win in elections", Euronews, published on June 09, 2024.

<https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/06/10/italy-pm-meloni-established-as-kingmaker-as-party-secures-win-in-elections>

Geopolitical Tensions and Security: Centrist and left-leaning parties will likely continue financial aid and sanctions against Russia, whereas right-wing parties may prioritize national defense and sovereignty over broader EU foreign policies.

Migration and Asylum Policies: Left-leaning parties will advocate for refugee protection and streamlined asylum processes, while right-wing populists will push for stricter border controls and reduced migration.

Social Issues and Civil Rights: Progressive parties will push for social protections, equal pay, and labor rights. In contrast, conservative parties will prioritize traditional family values and oppose progressive reforms.

In summary, these key issues not only shaped the electoral campaigns but also influenced voter turnout and preferences, reflecting the diverse concerns and priorities of the European electorate. The results of the 2024 European Union Parliament elections are expected to significantly influence future EU policies in various areas, including climate policy, economic and fiscal policies, foreign policy and security, migration and asylum policies, and social and civil rights. The election outcomes will undoubtedly shape the trajectory of the European Union, underscoring the importance of understanding the complex dynamics at play.

Conclusion

The 2024 European Union Parliament elections marked a notable shift in the EU's political landscape, with increased voter turnout indicating heightened public engagement. The results revealed a fragmented Parliament requiring coalition-building, as right-wing populist parties gained ground, challenging centrist and environmentalist groups. Key issues such as climate change, economic recovery post-COVID-19, geopolitical tensions, migration, and social rights dominated the campaigns and will influence future EU policies. Reactions from leaders like Ursula von der Leyen and Marine Le Pen underscored the diverse priorities and challenges ahead, highlighting the need for unity and strategic negotiation to navigate this complex political environment.

As the European Union navigates this new political landscape, the focus will be on balancing diverse interests and addressing the pressing issues that concern European citizens. The next five years will be crucial in determining the EU's strategic direction and its role on the global stage.