



2024 European elections

What now?

The results are in following the 6-9 June 2024 European Parliamentary elections, held separately across the EU's 27 Member States to elect 720 (up from 705) Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

Summary

Parties on the right gained seats. For forming the next European Commission, another narrow majority in the centre seems tenable — but may depend on nuanced programmatic and personnel-related compromises struck on the margins, with either the Greens or Conservatives. Each contentious legislative file throughout the coming five-year mandate will likely involve similar dynamics, on a case-by-case basis.

Security and growth are the watchwords. This will likely mean, e.g., a major push to boost defence spending, deepen the Single Market and invest more in R&D. Efforts to further protect European industry or other critical sectors vis-à-vis external forces will likely intensify — with additional pressure also brought to bear to qualify ambitious Green-Deal goals, make real progress on enlargement and further control irregular migration.

The who

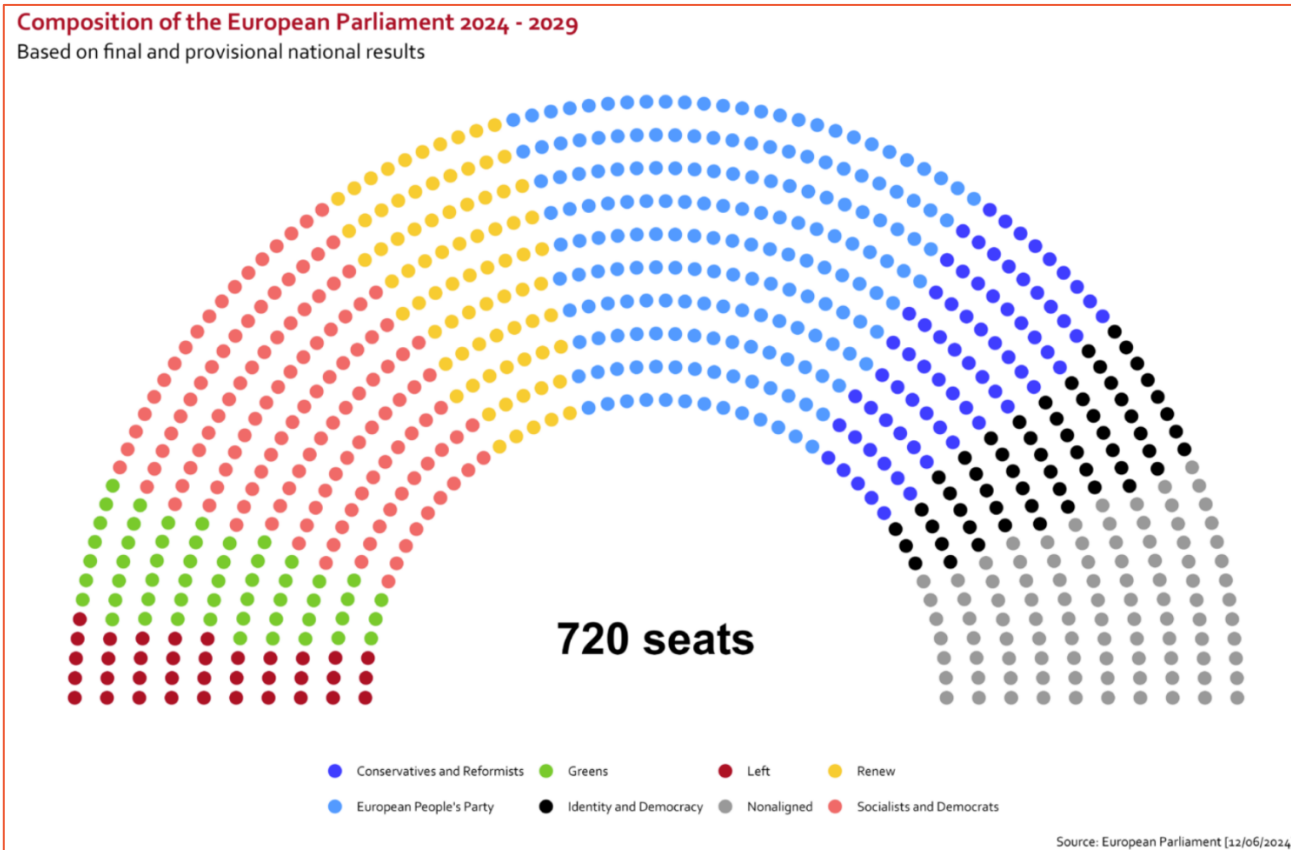
Parties on the right gained seats, though groupings beyond the centre-right remain in flux. The centre-right **European People's Party (EPP)** — comprised foremost of Christian democratic parties but also parties with conservative and liberal traditions, and the EU's biggest party since the 1999 European Parliamentary elections — won again: adding (as of 20 June) twelve mandates and coming first in thirteen Member States, for a total 188 seats. The further-right **European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)**, led by Italian PM Meloni's governing *Fratelli d'Italia* (Fdi), added seven new seats on election night, for a total 76; on 19 June, the ECR group announced a further seven — putting them in third place with 83 MEPs (and potentially counting). The farthest-right **Identity and Democracy (ID)** group gained nine new seats for a total 58. ID's biggest party, France's *Rassemblement National* (RN) was the biggest winner of all — in the entire European Parliament, in fact — winning 31.5% (from 23% in 2019), for a total of 30 MEPs. Also notable was the performance — from eight to fifteen seats — by Germany's *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD). AfD, kicked out of ID in May 2024, just weeks before the election, for now remains without a political group; the same remains true, since leaving the EPP in March 2021, for the ten incoming MEPs (down from twelve) from Hungary's ruling Fidesz party. ECR has its official constitutive meeting on 26 June; ID on 3 July.

On the left, the **Socialists and Democrats (S&D)** lost three seats but remain the second political group in the European Parliament, with 136 MEPs. They came first in Sweden and Portugal, second in Spain and Italy and third in France and Germany. The **Greens** lost nineteen seats compared to 2019 — a drop of 25% — to 52 MEPs in total, due mainly to big defeats in Germany and France. The **Left** won 39 seats, up two from 2019. One development to watch is Germany's new far-left populist party, *Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht* (BSW), which won six seats and could

try to join with other non-aligned members to form a new left-wing group.

Pivotaly, the centrist group **Renew Europe (RE)** — formed mostly of parties from the longstanding Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) but driven by the *Renaissance* (formerly *République en Marche*) party created by French President Macron — lost 21 seats, for 81 in total, and per ECR's 19 June announcement fell to fourth place in the incoming European Parliament. (RE has its constitutive meeting on 26 June.) Renaissance alone lost ten seats. One implication of these developments has been tension within the Liberal/RE family itself. Renaissance's Valérie Hayer, for example, one of the EU liberals' team-of-three lead candidates for European Commission president, faces an uncertain future as leader of RE¹, a post she has held since January 2024 since Stéphane Séjourné left to become France's minister for Europe and foreign affairs. More fundamentally still, the Liberal/RE family remains divided over the strategic question: how closely to cooperate with far-right parties, at either Member-State or EU level? Sweden's Liberal party has faced intense criticism (including from the Centre party, Sweden's other RE member) for joining in October 2022 a government supported tacitly by ECR's Swedish Democrats. The Netherlands' People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), leading the government under Mark Rutte since 2010, has even faced calls of expulsion from RE for its decision to enter a pending national coalition with Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom (PVV), part of the ID group. Many RE members, similarly, insist no cooperation is possible with ECR or ID parties at EU level: ie, no deal should be made with these forces in deciding the next European Commission programme, and no European Commission president's mandate should depend on votes from these parties in the European Parliament.

¹ Eddy Wax, "Macron's Top MEP May Face EU Parliament Leadership Challenge," *Politico*, 11 June 2024, <https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-france-mep-eu-parliament-valerie-hayer-renew-group-elections/>



Regarding influential MEPs, the most powerful group chairs were re-elected: including the EPP’s **Manfred Weber** (CSU/Germany), S&D’s **Iratxe García Pérez** (PSOE/Spain), RE’s **Valérie Hayer** (Renaissance/France), the Greens’ **Terry Reintke** (Greens/Germany) and ECR’s **Nicola Procaccini** (Fdi/Italy)². **Roberta Metsola** (PN/Malta) won a record number of votes in Malta and will likely return for another two-and-a-half-year mandate as European Parliament president.

RE’s **Pascal Canfin** (Renaissance/France), the powerful Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee chair, has also been re-elected — as have been, for the EPP, Foreign Affairs Committee Chair **David McAllister** (CDU/Germany), Development Committee Chair **Tomas Tobé** (Moderates/Sweden), Budgetary Control Committee Chair **Monika Hohlmeier** (CSU/Germany) and Agriculture and Rural Development Chair **Norbert Lins** (CDU/Germany); for the S&D, International Trade Committee Chair **Bernd Lange** (SPD/Germany), Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee **Irene Tinagli** (PD/Italy); and for the Greens, Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee Chair **Anna Cavazzini** (Greens/Germany).

On tech, influential returnees are the EPP’s **Axel Voss** (CDU/Germany), author of the report on AI in the digital age, **Andreas Schwab** (CDU/Germany), rapporteur for the Digital Markets Act (DMA), and **Eva Maydell** (GERB/Bulgaria), shadow rapporteur on the Chips Act and on the European Strategy for Data; the S&D’s **Brando Benifei** (PD/Italy), co-rapporteur of the AI Act, and **Christel Schaldemose** (Socialdemokratiet/Denmark), rapporteur for the Digital Service Act (DSA); and the Greens’ **Kim Van Sparrentak** (Green Left/Netherlands), rapporteur for the regulation on data collection and sharing relating to short-term accommodation rental services. These MEPs are positioned for leadership over ongoing files such as the Digital Euro or the Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) proposal.

European Commissioner for Transport **Adina Vălean** has won a seat as an MEP and will likely return for a fifth mandate in the European Parliament, representing Romania’s National Liberal Party (PNL), part of the national governing coalition and an important EPP member³. Also returning as MEPs are RE’s **Jan-Christoph Oetjen** (FDP/Germany), vice-president of the European Parliament, vice-chair of the Transport and Tourism (TRAN) Committee and rapporteur for a regulation on reporting requirements in road transport and aviation; ECR’s **Roberts**

² Greens’ co-Chair Philippe Lamberts (ecolo/Belgium), ID Chair Marco Zanni (Lega/Italy) and ECR co-Chair Ryszard Legutko (PiS/Poland) will not return.

³ One outstanding question is whether Romania would try to appoint a replacement for Vălean for what would remain of the Commission mandate — or

how this might affect the distribution of portfolio responsibilities within the College; Romania’s next commissioner will likely come from the Social Democratic Party (PSD), per power-sharing talks within the national governing coalition.

Zīle (LNKK/Latvia), shadow rapporteur on this same file; the Greens’ **Bas Eickhout** (Green Left/Netherlands), rapporteur for the proposal on the regulation to strengthen CO₂ emission performance standards for new heavy-duty vehicles, and just elected on 19 June as new Greens’ co-chair; the S&D’s **Aurore Lalucq** (Place Publique/France), who pushed for fast decarbonisation in the transport sector; and ID’s **Philippe Olivier** (RN/France), involved in discussions on motor vehicle sustainability⁴. Still to be finalised, notably, is the Single European Sky legislation.

TRAN Committee member **Henna Virkkunen**, member of a Kokoomus party (EPP) which has not lost an election, at any

level, since winning the 2019 European Parliamentary elections, was put forward on 15 June as Finland’s next commissioner.

Margrethe Vestager, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for a Europe Fit for the Digital Age, with oversight over competition policy, is unlikely to return as Denmark’s commissioner, given her *Radikale Venstre* party’s struggles for years now, in particular vis-à-vis fellow Danish Liberal/RE parties, and given the fact that current Danish PM Frederiksen is a Social Democrat.

Key MEPs



[Brando BENIFEI](#)



[Anna CAVAZZINI](#)



[Eva MAYDELL](#)



[Jan-Christoph OETJEN](#)



[Christel SCHALDEMOSE](#)



[Andreas SCHWAB](#)



[Henna VIRKKUNEN](#)



[Axel VOSS](#)

The how and when

The European Commission is not a parliamentary government; it is rather more akin, practically, to the US executive branch (minus, crucially, European citizens’ ability to vote directly for presidential candidates). This means the Commission president’s mandate does not depend on any formal coalition in the European Parliament — though the European Parliament must legitimise the five-year mandate of the Commission president and the College of Commissioners which he or she assembles.

The first step, following the European Parliamentary elections, in inaugurating a new five-year Commission is the nomination by the European Council — made up of the 27 Member States’ heads of state or government (as determined by each Member State) — of a candidate to become European Commission president. This nomination must garner a qualified majority in the Council: ie, both

55% (or 15 of 27) of all Member States as well as a group of Member States representing at least 65% of the total EU population. The Council’s nomination is then either approved or rejected, in a secret ballot, by an absolute majority of MEPs. Also negotiated as part of this process — by the Council, by EU parties and in the European Parliament — are decisions on who will become the next European Council president and EU foreign policy chief, on which parties will control the two forthcoming two-and-a-half-year mandates for European Parliament president and possibly even, this cycle, on who will succeed NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg in October 2024.⁵

Once elected, the European Commission president moves to present political guidelines for the coming Commission mandate. This is accompanied by efforts to organise the next College of Commissioners, with one commissioner for

⁴ Greens’ TRAN Committee Chair Karima Delli (Europe Écologie/France) will not be returning.

⁵ Dutch PM Rutte seems the clear favourite; but his VVD party’s membership in the Liberal/RE family could factor into other discussions over top jobs.

every Member State overseeing portfolios as agreed with national governments and carefully balancing geography, gender and party-political leverage⁶. The relevant, newly-reconstituted European Parliamentary committees hold hearings in the autumn to vet — and ultimately recommend for the European Parliament’s either approval or rejection — each commissioner-designate. Since the College must be approved ‘as a body to a vote of consent by the European Parliament’⁷, MEPs can withhold consent pending the replacement of disagreeable candidates⁸.

Political negotiations have long been underway. In the European Parliament, new groupings could still arise prior to the start of the new mandate in addition to (or to replace) the existing seven groups; and individual members as well as parties retain their ability, throughout the mandate, to move from one group to another. Groups will try to maximise their leverage, based on size, over

parliamentary and committee leadership roles, over the agenda and with regards, for instance, to speaking time in the plenary⁹.

European Council members met informally on 17 June; they will meet formally on 28 June. The European Parliament, during its constitutive session starting 16 July, will consider a date to confirm (or not) the Commission president candidate nominated by the European Council. A confirmation vote seems likely the following week, during the 22-25 July plenary, but could also be pushed to the 16-19 September session. The first plenary will also see MEPs elect the European Parliament’s president and vice-presidents. If von der Leyen fails to win a majority of MEP votes, the European Council will have one month to propose another name.

The why

Both Member-State and party-political factors will play essential roles in determining outcomes in the European Council and European Parliament.

Past context

In 2014, in an attempt to more closely link citizens’ votes for MEPs with those MEPs’ subsequent votes to approve the European Council’s nomination for president of the European Commission, the biggest EU-level parties for the first time each put forward a *Spitzenkandidat* (SK), or lead candidate. Luxembourgish PM Jean-Claude Juncker won the EPP’s SK nomination; with the EPP winning the European Parliamentary elections, the Socialists conceded and Juncker became Commission president.

In 2019, the SK system was again attempted — but failed. EPP SK Manfred Weber, leader of the EPP group in the European Parliament, was rejected by the Council in favour of a compromise candidate, despite Weber’s representing a strong plurality of incoming MEPs. The Council instead nominated Ursula von der Leyen, a former German defence minister, protégée of then-Chancellor Angela Merkel and longtime member of the EPP’s largest party, Germany’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

Why did the SK system fail? First, regarding Member States: Council members have an interest in guarding their intergovernmental prerogative by choosing the Commission president themselves rather than outsourcing this power to MEPs. In particular, in 2019, it seems clear Macron wanted a different outcome than that yielded by the SK system — and Merkel conceded. The ensuing negotiations with Member-State governments and party leaders were difficult and acrimonious.

At the party-political level, the reality in 2019 was a more fragmented spectrum — with the EPP and S&D no longer controlling, between them, as had long been the case, most of the seats in the European Parliament — and so forming a working majority proved harder. The Greens, in particular, having won big in Germany and France especially, pressured the EPP, Socialists and Liberals/RE to make concessions in exchange for their support for von der Leyen as Commission president. The Green Deal — to be directed by Frans Timmermans, a Dutch Socialist, as the top Executive Vice-President of the European Commission — became a pillar of the new Commission programme, even as Green MEP votes for von der Leyen did not in the end materialise. She won with just a nine-vote majority. Among her backers were far-right MEPs from Hungary’s Fidesz and Poland’s Law and Justice (PiS) parties.

⁶ Each Member State government nominates to the new European Commission president its nominee(s) for the College of Commissioners; in 2019, President von der Leyen requested both male and female nominees from each Member State, to guarantee a gender-balanced College.

⁷ Treaty on European Union, article 17

⁸ The case of Sylvie Goulard, Macron’s first choice in 2019, for the Single Market portfolio, is a case in point: in October of that year, Goulard faced accusations of conflicts of interest and other unethical behaviour; her defence was deemed

insufficient and she was rejected by the committee, to be replaced ultimately by Thierry Breton.

⁹ If all ECR, ID and so-inclined-but-thus-far-unaffiliated parties were to join together, their new group of roughly 151 MEPs would represent the second political force in the European Parliament; such an alignment is unlikely, however, given these parties’ diverse sociological constituencies and divergence on key policy questions, foremost their stance vis-à-vis Russia.

2024

And in 2024? Again, both national and party-political considerations are at work. In the Council, the EPP now claims a dominant twelve of 27 seats — compared to five for the Liberals/RE (with two of those, in Belgium and the Netherlands, on their way out), four for the Socialists, two for the Conservatives and four independents. (If ECR and ID work together at EU level, they could soon claim between them a bloc of four Council seats, plus potentially in July an RN prime minister of France.)

In the biggest Member States, as we have seen, the right has momentum. In both France and Germany, all governing parties — from the Socialist, Liberal/RE and Green families — performed badly in the European Parliamentary elections. In Italy, Meloni's governing FdI came first and added 10 seats. In Poland, EPP parties, led by PM Tusk's Civic Platform (PO) coalition, came first and added five seats. In Spain, the EPP's Partido Popular (PP), leader of the opposition, came first and added nine seats.

Latest reports indicate the European Council and EU parties — led in particular by the EPP, Socialists and Liberals/RE — have backed EPP SK von der Leyen for a second mandate, alongside agreements to accept former Socialist Portuguese PM Costa as Council president (for two successive two-and-a-half-year terms) and current Liberal/RE Estonian PM Kallas as vice-president of the European Commission and high representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy. It is also expected, as part of these talks, that parties agree to back the EPP's Roberta Metsola (PN/Malta) for another two-and-a-half-year mandate as European Parliament president; per their second-place finish as well as precedents going back at least a decade, the Socialists would likely demand control of the second two-and-a-half-year mandate for European Parliament president. But nothing is yet formally agreed.

Who is likely left outside of — or unhappy with — these arrangements? As noted, the Fidesz and PiS votes von der Leyen won in the European Parliament in July 2019 are unlikely to go her way again, given her Commission's attempts to hold the current Hungarian and previous Polish governments accountable for rule-of-law violations. The far-right ID, including foremost France's RN, as well as many ECR and even some few EPP parties (as indicated, for instance, by a lack of support by 18% of delegates in the EPP's March Congress in Bucharest) oppose a second von der Leyen Commission which they fear would be — as they believe von der Leyen's first mandate was — ideologically left-wing and an unwelcome force for EU federalisation. The Greens, by contrast — big winners in the previous mandate — may withhold support for a second von der Leyen term unless she eschews overtures to conservatives

and doubles down on ambitious nature-restoration and net-zero climate goals. Yet such recommitments, indeed, are precisely those most delicate for von der Leyen currently: given the EPP's push, for the last year and more, and apparently validated by voters in June, for a pro-industry, pro-competitiveness, pro-farmer programme.

Italy

At the Council level, Italian PM Meloni, in office since October 2022, has worked constructively with von der Leyen and with fellow G7 and European Council leaders. On migration, in particular, a major priority for FdI and Meloni's governing coalition, partnership with the Commission yielded a consequential agreement with Tunisia in July 2023; one demand Meloni and FdI may make, indeed, in exchange for supporting a second von der Leyen mandate is further efforts to tighten irregular migration: in the form, e.g., of more Frontex officers, more resettlement agreements with third countries or even a revision of the Migration and Asylum Pact finalised at last in May 2024 after years of painstaking negotiations. It seems clear Meloni — whose FdI manifesto stressed a strong, resilient and self-sufficient Europe — will also try to leverage her bolstered political stature for a bigger Italian portfolio within the College of Commissioners. Unhelpful to this effort, probably, is the breaking accusation that von der Leyen may be, in exchange for Meloni's support in July, protecting the Italian government from Commission criticism over lapses to media freedom in Italy¹⁰.

Germany

In Germany, the governing coalition includes neither of the country's two EPP member parties, the CDU or CSU; and yet it seems Chancellor Scholz, per a contingency foreseen in the 2021 coalition agreement, has decided to back von der Leyen for a second mandate — essentially trading Member-State interest for party-political affiliation. Given the governing coalition's poor performance in the European Parliamentary elections, however, snap elections this year (they would normally fall in early autumn 2025) are not out of the question. Scholz's centre-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) came third, at just 13.9% — less than half the centre-right CDU/CSU coalition's 30% (including Bavaria's Christian Social Union). The SPD came even below the 15.9% won by the AfD, which gained six seats despite equivocal comments in May by its head of list regarding the Nazi SS. The SPD's two governing partners, the Greens and liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP), performed badly as well, at just 11.9% and 5.2%, respectively. The AfD is poised to win state elections in September in Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg, heightening already strong tensions within Scholz's coalition.

¹⁰ Clothilde Goujard, "Von der Leyen buries report slamming Italy as she seeks Meloni's vote," *Politico*, 16 June 2024, [Von der Leyen buries report slamming Italy as she seeks Meloni's vote – POLITICO](https://www.politico.com/news/2024/06/16/von-der-leyen-buries-report-slamming-italy-as-she-seeks-meloni-s-vote-00128488)

France

And then there is France, where Macron had for weeks expressed ambivalence for a second von der Leyen mandate, but where domestic exigencies seem clearly now, following the European Parliamentary elections, to have eclipsed European concerns. Immediately following Renaissance's big loss on 9 June, Macron invoked the need for democratic clarity and announced the dissolution of the National Assembly (AN), calling for new two-round elections on 30 June and 7 July. The move shocked the nation, whose Fifth Republic has seen just five dissolutions in its 66 years' existence. Macron is betting the French people — including ultimately an alliance of otherwise divided left-wing parties, when faced with a potentially more consequential choice than who will sit in the European Parliament — opt for stability and continuity and reject right-wing extremism. But the stakes are high: RN, surging after becoming the incoming European Parliament's biggest single-party delegation, could for the first time take control, or partial control, of the AN, with dramatic implications as well for the 2027 French presidential election. Would this represent for RN an opportunity for responsible governance and political normalisation — or rather call their bluff as neophytes unprepared for office? For an absolute majority in the AN, RN must gain 200 new seats, up from its current 89. This would mean more than tripling the party's historic 2022 result. Recent polls have indicated a range of 220-270 seats for RN¹¹.

The what

EPP SK von der Leyen ran on a platform of democracy, prosperity and security. If she wins support from Socialists and Liberals/RE, as part of a core agreement, with Greens and Conservatives seeking influence on the margins, what would the resulting terms of a new Commission programme look like?

One indication was given immediately on election night, 9 June, when EPP both party and group leader Manfred Weber suggested backtracking on EU commitments to ban new combustion engine sales from 2035 — thereby reflecting a policy demand, incidentally, featuring prominently in both ECR's and Fdl's platforms prior to the elections. At any rate, given the EPP's strong campaign for a business- and farmer-friendly EU, able to compete geopolitically with major powers, the next mandate will likely look to qualify certain Green-Deal goals, arguing priorities such as protecting jobs or promoting

Crucial for the next French government could be the result for *Les Républicains* (LR), France's centre-right party, formed in 2015 and claiming former presidents de Gaulle, Chirac and Sarkozy as forebears. LR is expected to win just 30-55 seats, putting it at risk of falling even below the 5% threshold needed to qualify for campaign reimbursement by the state. Eric Ciotti, LR's leader from December 2022, was nearly expelled from the party for proposing an alliance with RN¹². LR — which had already signalled, at EU level, its clear opposition to a second von der Leyen Commission — is divided over its domestic strategy and faces an uncertain future.

International affairs are normally the *domaine réservé* of French presidents; but an RN-led government could have major implications. For while Macron would continue to represent France in the European Council, his new government ministers would assume that role in the various formations of the Council of the EU. More fundamentally, and with regard to past *cohabitations* (when the president and prime minister are not politically aligned): the coherence and competence of French policy itself would be at risk.

Finally, what impact will France's pending parliamentary elections have on Macron's vote in the Council — or on his Renaissance MEPs' votes in the European Parliament — for a second von der Leyen term? For now — and despite the risk of further mobilising the right of France's political spectrum against him — the question seems settled in favour of EU continuity.

competitiveness are more pressing. An enhanced right-leaning majority would further stress efficiency and growth, including a deeper Single Market, less red tape, lower energy costs and greater R&D investment. Support for Ukraine — including as regards EU enlargement — also looks to continue, along with stronger EU defence to complement NATO. This may well entail another major, NextGeneration 2.0-type, joint borrowing scheme. Support for a 'made in Europe' strategy for critical sectors seems likely to intensify.

On tech, the centrist EU parties express similar commitments to protecting against child abuse and fighting cyberbullying and disinformation, and to a human-centred AI. ECR and ID generally prefer a market, rather than a regulatory, approach for AI and GDPR.

¹¹ "Les Français et les élections législatives," *Elabe*, 12 June 2024, <https://elabe.fr/elections-legislatives-2024/> (in French)

¹² "Les Républicains: Le tribunal judiciaire invalide l'exclusion d'Éric Ciotti," *France TV Info*, 16 June 2024, https://www.francetvinfo.fr/elections/les-republicains-le-tribunal-judiciaire-invalide-l-exclusion-d-eric-ciotti_6606174.html (in French)

For transport as well as tech, tensions with China and the US over WTO compliance or other practices deemed unfair or threatening will likely play a decisive role. One unfolding development to watch is the Commission's negotiations with China over pending tariff hikes on Chinese EVs; China has so far threatened retaliatory tariffs on EU pork, sensitive in particular for Spain and its Socialist-led government. The German government, Socialist-led since December 2021, has also long resisted further trade tensions with China.

Major fault lines could still appear — during pending preliminary talks and throughout the mandate — over, for instance, the extent to which defence procurement or operations should be integrated at EU level (the EPP is pushing for a senior Commission portfolio to focus on this, as a move towards a true defence union); the extent of economic re-risking to pursue vis-à-vis China; the extent to which nuclear energy or imported LNG should be incentivised as relatively clean (and secure) alternatives to fossil fuel; or the extent to which GMOs or PFAS chemicals should be restricted in the name of the precautionary principle or sustainability. The price of Meloni's support for a second von der Leyen mandate may be greater subsidiarity in environmental policy and/or, as mentioned, tougher commitments to stopping irregular migration, including via more Frontex officers to deter migrants in the Mediterranean — both conditions the Greens (and likely many Socialists and others) would be almost certain to strongly oppose. Progress in completing the Energy, Banking and Capital Markets Unions, or in moving to Qualified Majority Voting in the Council for certain key foreign policy or other files, may struggle, as in the past, to win the needed Member-State approval, despite broad agreement in principle among the centre-right, centre-left and liberal EU families.

Hungary will on 1 July 2024 assume the rotating six-month presidency of the Council of the EU, putting the Hungarian government in charge of ministerial meeting agendas and goals. Hungary announced on 18 June its 'Make Europe Great Again' priorities¹³: including a New European Competitiveness Deal, stronger defence industry and tech sectors, tougher migration policies, more economically viable agriculture and a plan for addressing Europe's critical demographic challenges. With regard to tech and digital policy, specifically, the Hungarian presidency will focus on the payment services review, financial data and the digital euro; taking forward revision to the Alternative Dispute Resolution Directive; moving forward on trilogue talks with the European Parliament on revisions to the Package Travel Directive; and generally reducing the burden on tourism businesses and developing a single database of tourism services in support of a common EU data space. The government will also prioritise supporting implementation of the eIDAS 2, Interoperable Europe Act

and Single Digital Gateway Regulation; evaluating implementation of the DSA and DMA; and preparing for implementation of the AI Act.

Many observers suspect Hungary could threaten to slow down the EU's legislative process and delay urgent decisions (e.g., on climate, Russia or China policy) — unless PM Orbán gets further concessions, say, on rule-of-law infringement procedures or derogations in sanctions policy vis-à-vis Russia. Such potential threats, though, could also backfire: as Member States could simply wait out the Hungarian presidency, or find novel ways to circumvent its influence, leaving Hungary in an even more isolated position. Although Orbán remains Hungary's undisputed leader, furthermore — serving his fifth overall, and fourth consecutive, mandate as prime minister — he nonetheless faces growing political competition at home: his Fidesz party secured only 44% in the June vote, resulting in a loss of two MEPs (from twelve to ten), while new centre-right opposition party Tisza, founded by a former Orbán ally, won 30%, for seven seats. This new force could act as a counterweight to Orbán's most controversial anti-EU moves.

¹³ [Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU: Homepage \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/european-council/en/hungarian-presidency-of-the-council-of-the-eu), 18 June 2024



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