EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE

Parliamentary Affairs

European Elections 2019 – Fifth Issue

On post-election day, this fifth issue updates you on the major takeaways and things to know ahead of the meeting of the EP Conference of Presidents on the morning of 28 May and the European Council on the same day.

1) The Turnout

The turnout in the European elections, for the first time in 40 years, increased on a Europe wide level. Overall participation reached an unexpected 51 per cent (up from 42.6 per cent in 2014).

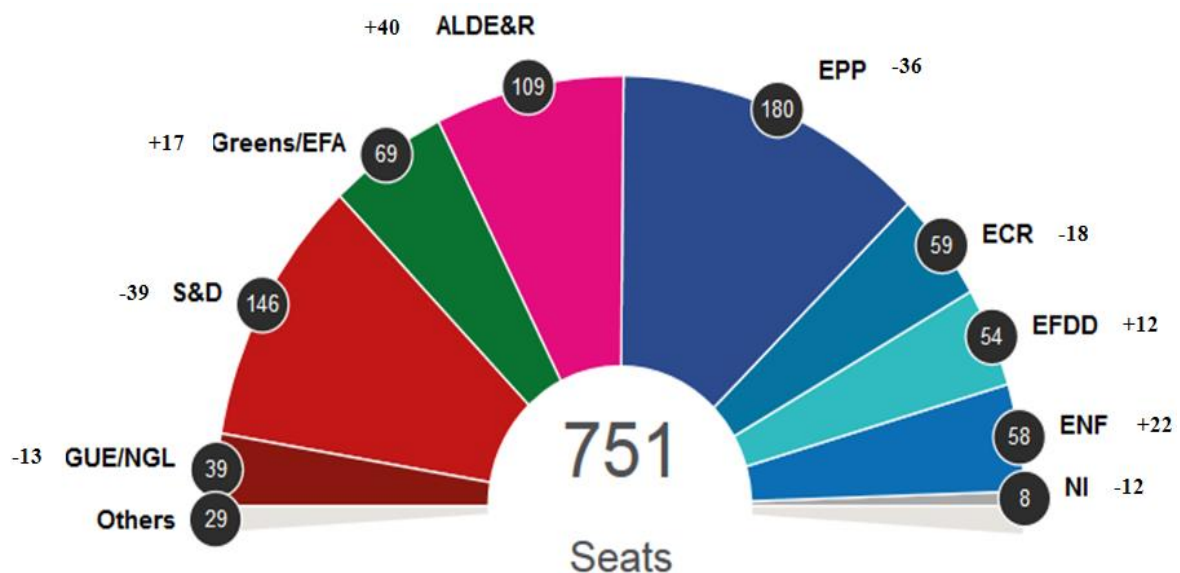| Member state	Turnout 2014	Turnout 2019	Change	Highest since
Spain	43.8	64.3	20.5	1987
Poland	23.8	43.0	19.2	Ever
Romania	32.4	49.0	16.6	Ever
Hungary	29.0	43.4	14.4	Ever
Germany	48.1	61.5	13.4	1989
Czech Republic	18.2	28.7	10.5	Ever
Denmark	56.3	66.5	10.2	Ever
Austria	45.4	55.0	9.6	1996
France	42.4	51.0	8.6	1994
Slovakia	13.1	20.0	6.9	Ever
Lithuania	47.4	52.0	4.6	Ever
Netherlands	37.3	41.2	3.9	1989
Croatia	25.2	28.9	3.7	Ever
Slovenia	24.6	28.2	3.6	2009
Latvia	30.2	33.6	3.4	2009
Sweden	51.1	53.2	2.1	Ever
Finland	39.1	40.7	1.6	1996
United Kingdom	35.6	37.0	1.4	2004
Estonia	36.5	37.6	1.1	2009
Italy	57.2	58.0	0.8	2009
Belgium	89.6	89.6	0.0	2014
Cyprus	44.0	42.8	-1.2	2014
Luxembourg	85.6	84.1	-1.5	2014
Portugal	33.7	32.0	-1.7	2014
Malta	74.8	72.6	-2.2	2014
Greece	60.0	57.3	-2.7	2014
Ireland	52.4	49.3	-3.1	2014
Bulgaria	35.8	31.4	-4.4	2014
EU	**42.6**	**51.0**	8.4	

Source: Prof. Simon Hix, The London School of Economics

The high turnout is significant because if reflects a higher relevance that citizens appear to attach to the EU. Increased participation also provides a long-needed boost to its democratic legitimacy and that of the European Parliament in particular. This might also result in a growing self-confidence of the EP vis-à-vis the other EU institutions.

2) Main Takeaways

There is a **clear pro-EU majority** in the new parliament – albeit a more fragmented one. The Grand Coalition between EPP and S&D, which has been dominating over the past decades, will be expanded to a multi-party coalition with a strong role for ALDE and/or Greens/EFA.

European Parliament 2019-2024
Provisional results

Source: European Parliament (subject to change, data still being processed)

While Europe's far-right and Eurosceptic parties — which include ECR, EFDD and ENF — make up around 25 per cent of the new parliament, **the big expected shift towards a Eurosceptic parliament did not take place**. Although Matteo Salvini's Lega (28 seats) was the clear winner in Italy (they almost match the German CDU's 29 seats), the share of Le Pen's National Rally – even when remaining the strongest party in France – actually went down compared to 2014. Looking at Europe as a whole, most commentators agree that, in spite of some increases, the Eurosceptic vote remained rather stable.

The success of Nigel Farage's Bexit Party in the UK (29 seats) should be regarded against the backdrop of a separate contest – the campaign in the UK focused almost entirely on Brexit as a single issue.

The big changes were a decline of the mainstream centre-left and centre-right, accompanied by a rise of the Liberals and the clear EU-wide success of the Greens. Also, the far-left (GUE/NGL) lost more than a dozen seats.

3) The Spitzenkandidaten Caroussel

The gains of **ALDE** and **the Greens** mean that these parties – in particular ALDE (with En Marche on board) and its large number of representatives among the EU Heads of State and Government – will have a **strong say** in the upcoming selection of the European Commission President and, subsequently, European Council President and HRVP. As next steps in the process, the EP Conference of Presidents (the body that comprises the Presidents of the political groups, chaired by the EP President) will meet on 28 May, ahead of the European Council to provide a recommendation to the Heads of State and Government.

The EEAS EP-Team will keep you posted on developments as they unfold, not least with regard to the effects that the ongoing Brexit process will have on the set-up of the new parliament.