



The European Elections from the Inside

Election Report issued by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung European Office regarding the 2019 European Parliament

The Election Report entitled “European Elections from the Inside” presents the results from the 2019 European Parliament elections from both a European and national perspective. Together with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung’s other overseas offices, we have compiled a concise overview for each of the 28 Member States of the European Union (EU), which analyses the results in the respective countries against the backdrop of current developments. In doing so, this series of reports therefore makes a significant contribution to enabling a more in-depth understanding of the overall results from the 2019 European elections.



Political groups in the European Parliament during the 2014 – 19 parliamentary term

› European People's Party (EPP)

Founded in 1976. Largest political group during the 2014-19 parliamentary term. Unites Christian Democrats, Conservatives and other mainstream centre and centre-right political forces. Stands for a united Europe.

Example members: CDU and CSU (Germany), CDA (Netherlands), Christian Democrats (Sweden)

› Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)

Present day name in existence since 2009. Centre-left alliance standing for an integrated European society based on the principles of freedom, equality and solidarity.

Example members: SPD (Germany), Socialist Party (Belgium), Social Democratic Party of Austria, Social Democratic Party (Romania)

› Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

In existence since 2004. Stands for a liberal society, politics and economy.

Example members: FDP (Germany), Venstre (Denmark), Democratic Movement (France), Liberal Democrats (United Kingdom)

› Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens)

Entered parliament for the first time in 1984. Advocates for a strong Europe in the areas of environmental protection, peace, social justice and fair globalisation.

Example members: Alliance 90/The Greens (Germany), The Greens/Déi Gréng (Luxembourg), Ecolo (Belgium)

› European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)

Founded in 2009. Critical of deeper EU integration. The European Union needs to put more focus on collaboration between Member States and become more functional.

Example members: Law and Justice (Poland), Sweden Democrats (Sweden), Conservative Party (United Kingdom)

› Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)

Founded in 2004. Made up of parties across the Eurosceptic spectrum. Champions open and responsible collaboration between sovereign European states.

Example members: AfD (Germany), The Patriots (France), Five Star Movement (Italy)

› Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)

Founded in 2015. Members characterised as right-wing populist and extreme right-wing. Opponents of European integration; focused on national sovereignty and identity.

Example members: National Rally (France), Lega Nord (Italy), Party for Freedom (Netherlands), Freedom Party of Austria (Austria)

› European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)

In existence since 1994. To the left of the political spectrum, somewhat Eurosceptic. Advocates a new start for Europe based on solidarity, equality and freedom.

Example members: The Left/Die Linke (Germany), Syriza (Greece), Sinn Féin (Ireland), Podemos (Spain)

› Non-Inscrits





June 2019

Report

European Office Brussels

Supporters of Europe win the 2019 European elections

Elections to the 9th European Parliament, May 2019

Dr. Hardy Ostry, Mathias Koch

A heterogeneous Parliament emerged from the European elections held between 23 and 26 May 2019, albeit with pro-European parties of the centre continuing to enjoy a large majority. Eurosceptics made some significant progress in a number of Member States, but failed to significantly strengthen their position when viewed in general terms. Voter turnout increased for the first time in the history of the elections to the European Parliament.

Results of the European elections

Parties of the centre continue to make up the largest political groups following the elections to the 9th European Parliament; European People's Party (EPP) made up the largest political group with 179 seats (a figure corresponding to 23.9 percent of seats), followed by the social democratic S&D political group (153 seats; 20.4 percent), the liberal ALDE political group (106 seats; 14.1 percent) and the Greens (74 seats; 9.9 percent). Parliament has a total number of 751 representatives, meaning therefore that a majority coalition needs to gain a minimum of 376 seats.

Both of the main political groups lost seats compared to the previous parliamentary term (EPP -37 representatives; S&D -32 representatives). Where both groups combined managed to win two-thirds of the seats available in the 1999 European elec-

tions, their combined result was only 42 percent this time round. The traditional distribution of political power in the European Parliament between the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats continues to decline.

As a result, the new European Parliament is more heterogeneous, and successful legislation will require broader majorities than has previously been the case. In addition to the two largest groups, where there is no mathematical alternative, the Liberals and the Greens will in particular have to play a key role.

Voter turnout increased for the first time in the history of the European Parliament, reaching a figure of 51.0 percent (2014: 42.6 percent). It was particularly the case in Germany, Spain, Austria, Czech Republic, Poland and Romania that there were significantly more people casting their votes compared to the previous elections.

Eurosceptic and anti-European parties made some significant gains in a number of countries. However, these parties made significantly less gains throughout Europe than had been predicted by observers prior to the elections. The Italian Lega party made massive gains in particular, and will in future be sending 28 MEPs (it currently only has six). The Polish PiS party built on its already strong performance, sending 27 representatives to Brussels. Parties from

the Eurosceptic spectrum also made gains in Belgium, Sweden, Estonia and Czech Republic. In France, the National Rally (RN) maintained its strong performance with 22 seats. Even the results for the German AfD and Austrian FPÖ parties remained broadly constant.

The United Kingdom's participation in the elections resulted in a special situation arising. The United Kingdom is currently in the process of leaving the European Union, and this process was originally due to have been completed prior to the elections. However, it was unable to leave as planned as a result of domestic political disputes, and the United Kingdom was therefore obliged to take part in the elections as a continued member.

British voters inflicted a heavy election defeat on the governing Conservative Party. The Brexit Party was by far and away the largest party, with more than 30 percent of votes. It is predominantly made up of former members of UKIP, a party that made a significant contribution to the Brexit referendum being held and ending in a positive outcome.

However, the 73 elected British representatives will only take their seats up until the UK's departure. The subsequent plan is to reduce the size of the European Parliament to 705 seats, whereby the remaining vacated seats will in part be distributed among Member States that are currently under-represented. The European Parliament would therefore see some major changes on the date Brexit takes place; in addition to the Brexit Party being eliminated, the Social Democrats, Liberals and Greens in particular would lose their seats won in the United Kingdom. However, the EEP, which does not have a member party in the United Kingdom, would add a few seats as a result of the seats being re-distributed.

Formation of political groups in the European Parliament

Until the inaugural session of the European Parliament is held, it is now a question of which political groups the elected representatives will merge into. A political group must contain a minimum of 25 representatives from seven Member States. The political groups play a key role in filling the Committee Chairs and other posts. The number of political groups traditionally fluctuates between seven and ten.

With significant gains forecast for Eurosceptics, the option was discussed for the parties in this particular wing, currently constituted into several political groups, to be able to merge into a single political group. Matteo Salvini, leader of the Italian Lega party, made his mark as the spokesman for the Eurosceptics. One month prior to the elections, Salvini formed a new political group, the European Alliance of Peoples and Nations (EAPN). So far, 15 European parties have declared their intention to join the Alliance, including the French RN, the German AfD, the Austrian FPÖ and the Belgian Vlaams Belang parties. The parties intending to form the EAPN will have 73 seats in total in the newly elected Parliament. The EAPN would therefore be almost as large as the Greens' political group.

However, the Polish PiS party and the British Brexit Party will not be joining Salvini's Alliance. Both parties have ruled out collaborating with the RN due to its long history of extreme right-wing activity. Other red lines also distinguish the Eurosceptic milieu; whilst parties like the RN, FPÖ and AfD are seeking exchanges with Russia and are being supported by the latter in some cases, the PiS party considers Russia to be an opponent. With regard to budgetary discipline, there are also differences between Lega and the other parties.

In terms of the pro-European majority, the entry of the French “La République en Marche” (LREM), the French President Macron’s party, is a particularly key development. After months of speculation, Macron declared his intention for his party to join the newly formed liberal political group. With regard to the EEP, there is uncertainty over whether the Hungarian Fidesz party will remain or not. As a result of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s harsh rhetoric against the EU and its representatives at times, the relationship with its European political family has been difficult for some time. Prior to the elections, Fidesz and the EEP agreed on initial plans to suspend the Hungarian governing party’s membership. Following the elections, official noises came out of Budapest suggesting Fidesz wanted to stay in the EEP.

Filling of important positions of authority

The elections to the European Parliament were the starting point for appointing replacements for the EU’s top positions. In addition to a new President of the European Commission (role currently held by Jean-Claude Juncker), the position of authority that is currently subject to great discussion, the EU also needs to appoint a new President of the European Parliament (role currently held by Antonio Tajani), a new President of the European Council (role currently held by Donald Tusk) and a new President of the European Central Bank (role currently held by Mario Draghi) by the end of the year. Even the office of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (role currently held by Federica Mogherini) is highly sought-after and is disputed between the Member States.

Prior to the elections, several political families nominated lead candidates with the intention of being elected as President of the European Commission if they won the election. However, this lead candidate process is hotly disputed. According to the EU Treaties, it is the responsibility of the European Council, having taken the election results into account, to propose the President of the European Commission, who will then be elected to Parliament with a majority. The most important political groups have in turn made it clear that they believe only the nominated lead candidates should be considered.

The EEP’s lead candidate, Manfred Weber, emerged from the vote in a stronger position. He has the support of Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and a number of other government leaders. The EEP stresses that by electing Weber, the political group’s long-time leader, this would be the first time an individual from the European Parliament was elected President of the European Commission, and would in turn enhance the EU’s democratic legitimacy. Government leaders from other parties, particularly Emmanuel Macron, are critical of Weber’s candidacy.

The next steps were discussed at an informal European Council meeting, held two days after the elections. EC President Tusk emphasised the need to establish a balance in terms of party, origin, demography and gender in filling the various positions. The last point in particular was broadly welcomed; the goal is therefore clear to fill at least two of the most important positions of authority with women.

A promising candidate in this regard is the European Commissioner for Competition, Margrethe Vestager, whose party belongs to the ALDE family. However, Vestager was not a lead candidate in the narrower sense, but was rather nominated by the ALDE party as a team. By refusing to put forward individual lead candidates, the ALDE political group sought to undermine the lead candidate system. In the days following the elections, Vestager publicly declared that she would put herself forward for the office of President of the European Commission.

It remains to be seen how the complex negotiations on filling these positions will go. From Parliament's perspective, the representatives of the major political groups are working on obtaining a majority with the intention of supporting a joint lead can-

didate. From the European Council's perspective, Donald Tusk's task is to sound out the various positions in individual discussions with government leaders.

However there is currently a united view in at least one point; any open confrontation between the various EU institutions should be avoided under all circumstances.

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Austria

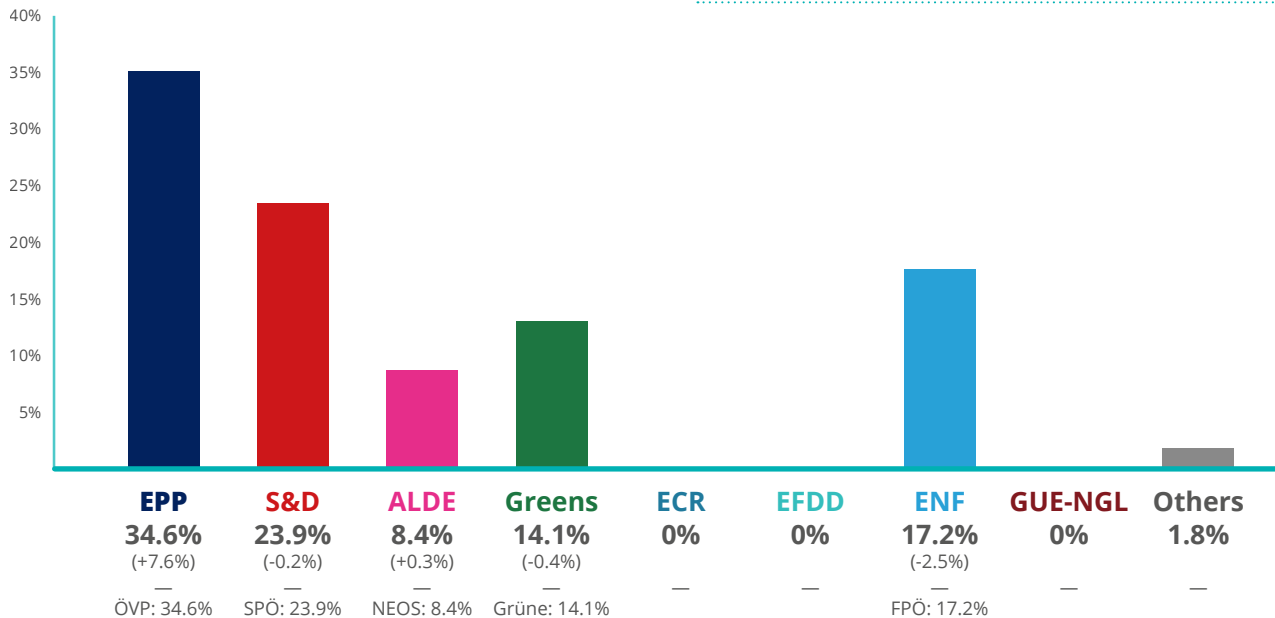


18 seats

Threshold clause: 4%



60%



Seats 7 5 1 2 0 0 3 0 0

Die neue Volkspartei

Largest party

The new Austrian People's Party (ÖVP, Christian-democratic/EEP): the governing party since 2017, up until the breakdown of the coalition with the populist FPÖ party; in government since 1987.

Has been a hybrid party and movement since 2017 (made a significant contribution to ÖVP's victory in the 2017 parliamentary elections). Only the classification by way of preferential



Noteworthy party

The Greens were the second biggest winners in the European Parliament elections in Austria: in the previous parliamentary elections, the party had dropped out of parliament as a result of internal disputes and a split in the party. Now the Greens have shown unexpectedly powerful signs of life with 13% of votes, including at the SPÖ's expense.

Lead candidates



Othmar Karas

The new People's Party (ÖVP)



Harald Vilimsky

FPÖ



Andreas Schieder

SPÖ



Developments key to the elections

The election campaign proceeded without any agitation to begin with: this included the largest party to date, the ÖVP (a permanently pro-European force, which also wanted to attract “constructive” EU critics for strategic reasons); there was also the co-governing FPÖ, which was openly soliciting those voters who saw the EU as a bad thing; in addition, there was a weak opposition, which had little to offer with the exception of the liberal NEOS party, with its professional stance both in terms of content and rhetoric.

The earthquake occurred eight days before the elections in the form of “Ibizagate”. There was a video from an unknown source, which put massive pressure on the Vice-Chancellor and leader of the smaller governing party, the FPÖ, and subsequently resulted in the end of the governing coalition in place since autumn 2017 led by Federal Chancellor Kurz (ÖVP).



Press reaction

“Ironically, the FPÖ has lost very little following on from the blue’s Ibiza scandal, with its former partner in government, the ÖVP, triumphing here. This is a real disaster for the SPÖ.

(Die Presse, middle-class)

“SPÖ Federal Chairman pleased with increased voter turnout; perhaps an (incurable) loss of reality, or even a (curable) denial of reality?”

(Profil, left-wing)

“Austrians want to see Sebastian Kurz in charge of Austrian politics.”

(Die Krone, tabloid)

KAS analysis

Prior to the Ibiza video, Chancellor Kurz had brought life to the election campaign, which had been quiet up until the point, with a number of powerful European policy announcements. However, the Ibiza video brought domestic politics to the fore. The impact on the elections was impossible to assess. Surprisingly, the SPÖ was unable to benefit from the political disputes and stagnated at a moderate level. The FPÖ in turn got off very lightly, given the circumstances involved. Despite everything that happened, it was able to mobilise a large portion of its core voters.

Early parliamentary elections are due to take place in September. The SPÖ will now enter these elections in a weakened position. It is questionable whether the motion of no confidence in Kurz will help the party or not, as the Chancellor enjoys a high level of popularity. The ÖVP will once again stand with Chancellor Kurz and has a good chance of making gains. It will also need to make these gains for any future coalition as it is hard to imagine at the present time that the SPÖ and FPÖ will be potential partners. On the contrary, NEOS and potentially the Greens, who are likely to succeed in re-entering the National Council, could become king-makers.

It is not expected that there will be any change to Austria’s European policy, which is typically pro-European in nature.



Belgium



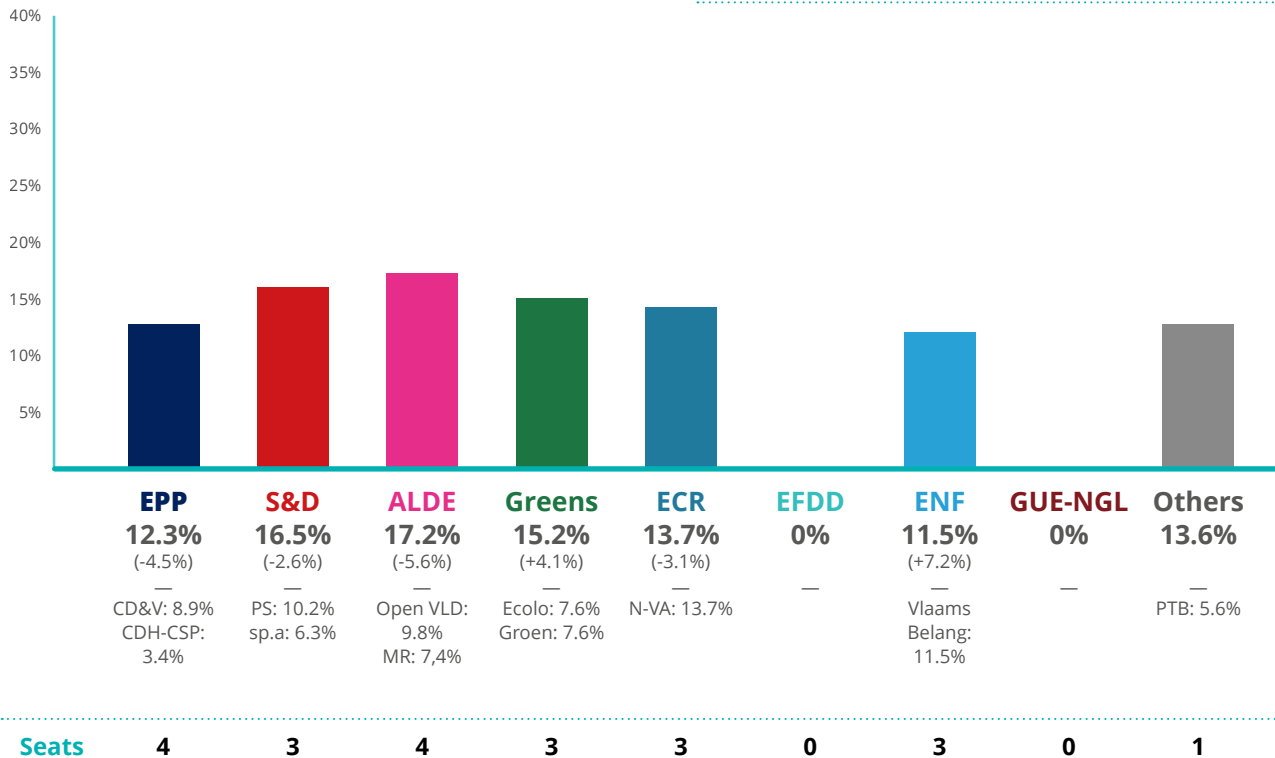
21 seats

Threshold clause: none



89%

(mandatory voting)



Largest party

N-VA (New Flemish Alliance) is a conservative separatist party from the Flemish region. It has been in existence since 2001 and is an advocate of Flanders in a Europe made up of strong regions.

N-VA was unquestionably the largest party in the federal elections held in 2010 and 2014. However, it failed to forge a governing coalition led by it back in 2014.



Noteworthy party

The Flemish party Vlaams Belang is the direct successor of the party dissolved in 2004, Vlaams Block, a right-wing extremist and separatist party, which had the support of up to a quarter of the Flemish population at the time it was dissolved. As the newly formed party moderated its tone to external audiences, it became less popular over the years. However, it increased its number of votes once again at the local elections in 2018.

Lead candidates



Geert Bourgeois
NVA



Guy Verhofstadt
Open VLD



Kris Peeters
CD&V



Developments key to the elections

The governing coalition in Belgium ended in December 2018 after the largest party (N-VA) withdrew from it. N-VA opposed the fact that Prime Minister Michel (MR) had signed up to the UN migration pact. Michel has since been in charge as part of a minority government.

The federal elections and key regional elections were also held at the same time as the European elections. Both of these elections dominated public debate, even in a traditionally pro-European country like Belgium.

The main topics in the election campaign were migration and climate protection. As a party in government, N-VA had to temper its separatist aspirations and increasingly focused on migration. Constitutional reform in the area of climate protection, which would have given the central government more powers, also failed recently. The subject of climate protection is currently a matter for the regions to deal with.



Press reaction

"Flanders has added a spot to the dark map of Europe" – Le Soir

"The paradox of 26 May is that Flanders is prospering like never before, but the Flemings are angry and worried." – De Standaard

"A true Black Sunday. Just like 1991, 2004 and 2019, history is repeating itself." – La Libre

KAS analysis

Belgium experienced an unusual election day: given the results at the national and regional level, the European elections were almost completely missing from the focus of national attention. This country, a founding member of the EU and the place where the majority of European institutions are based, is once again facing uncertain times politically; ultimately, that is perhaps the more significant message to be taken here than the distribution of the 21 Belgian seats in the European Parliament.

The four parties forming the government up until December 2018 lost more than ten percent combined of the votes, resulting in them no longer having a majority. In any case, it was unclear whether such a coalition would materialise again. However, with N-VA being clearly the largest party, it would at the very least need to be involved.

The re-emergence of the right-wing extremist party Vlaams Belang in Flanders was a cause for concern for many people, both in terms of the country's institutional stability as well as its international reputation.

Overall, the election results were almost identical at the national and European level, indicating the fact that voters placed a great deal of emphasis on national matters when casting their votes for the European Parliament.



Bulgaria

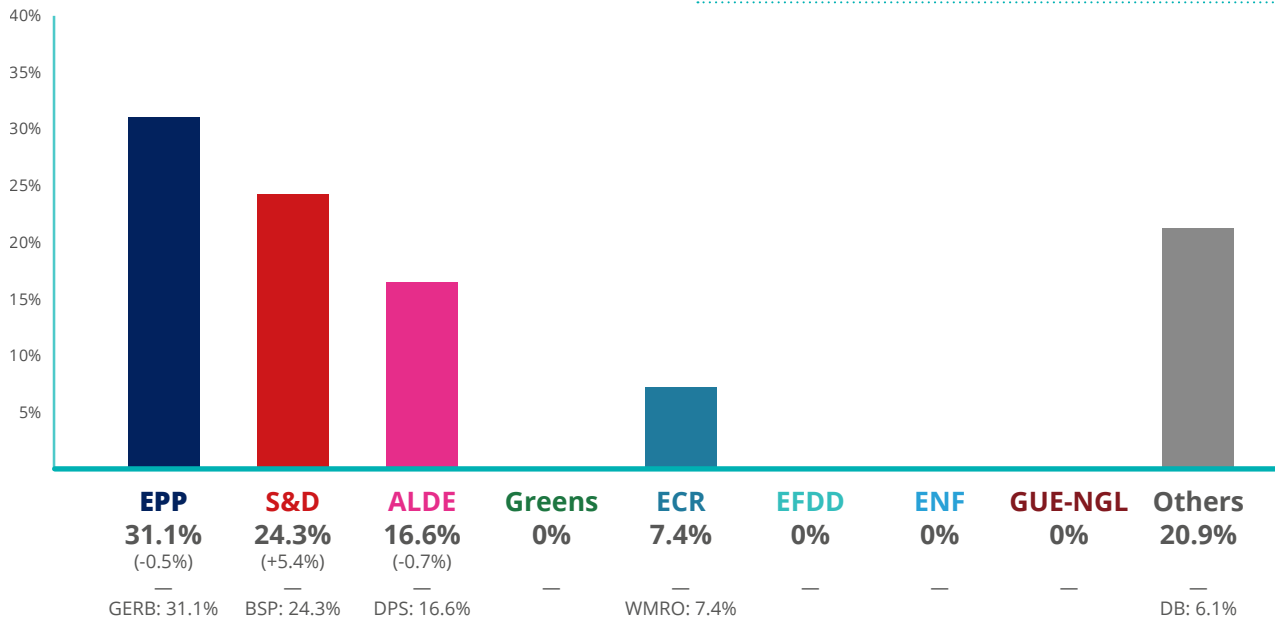


17 seats

Threshold clause: none



33%



Seats 6 5 3 0 2 0 0 0 1



Largest party

GERB is a pro-European "bourgeois" party. Apart from a brief period in opposition, it has been in government in Bulgaria since 2009.

GERB is a member of the EPP and had so far been represented with six seats in the European Parliament. It has very strong representation at the municipal level.



Noteworthy party

Die WMRO ist eine rechtskonservative, national-populistische Partei, die bei dieser Wahl ohne Partner antrat und dennoch zwei Mandate erringen konnte.

Sie ist EKR-Mitglied und Teil der Regierungskoalition in Bulgarien. Historisch bedingt besitzt die Partei enge Verbindungen ins heutige Nordmazedonien. Mit der dortigen Oppositionspartei VMRO-DPMNE teilt sie ihre Wurzeln.

Lead candidates



Maria Gabriel
GERB



Elena Jontschewa
BSP



Mustafa Karadaja
DPS



Developments key to the elections

The most recent topic dominating politics in Bulgaria was the so-called “Apartmentgate”. It was reported that several leading GERB politicians had purchased luxury apartments from one of the country’s largest real estate companies at below-market prices, resulting in several resignations from the government and a serious loss of trust among the population at large.

It is questionable whether the charges raised are of criminal relevance, but the political fallout for GERB was massive. In a country where many people live in frugal (housing) conditions, the accusations raised are highly charged from an emotional perspective and many existing GERB voters expressed their disappointment. Since GERB had initially been in the lead in the polls for a long time, this allowed BSP to make ever stronger gains.



Press reaction

KAS analysis

For many weeks, opinion polls looking at the European elections in Bulgaria had predicted a neck-and-neck race between the party in government, GERB (“Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria”, member of the EPP) and BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party, formerly known as the Bulgarian Communist Party, member of the PES), but in the end, GERB managed to gain a decisive lead.

GERB won the election „right at the last minute“. The “Apartmentgate” affair triggered numerous resignations of prominent GERB politicians. This resulted in uncertainty among GERB supporters, with the party fearing that it would be punished in the elections. The party gained crucial support from the EPP’s lead candidate, Manfred Weber, who spoke in front of several thousand people at a mass rally held in Sofia.

The result is a bitter disappointment for BSP. Although it did indeed make significant gains compared to the last European elections, they were lower than the results from the last parliamentary elections (27.93%), and significantly below the 31–32% forecast by opinion pollsters.



Croatia

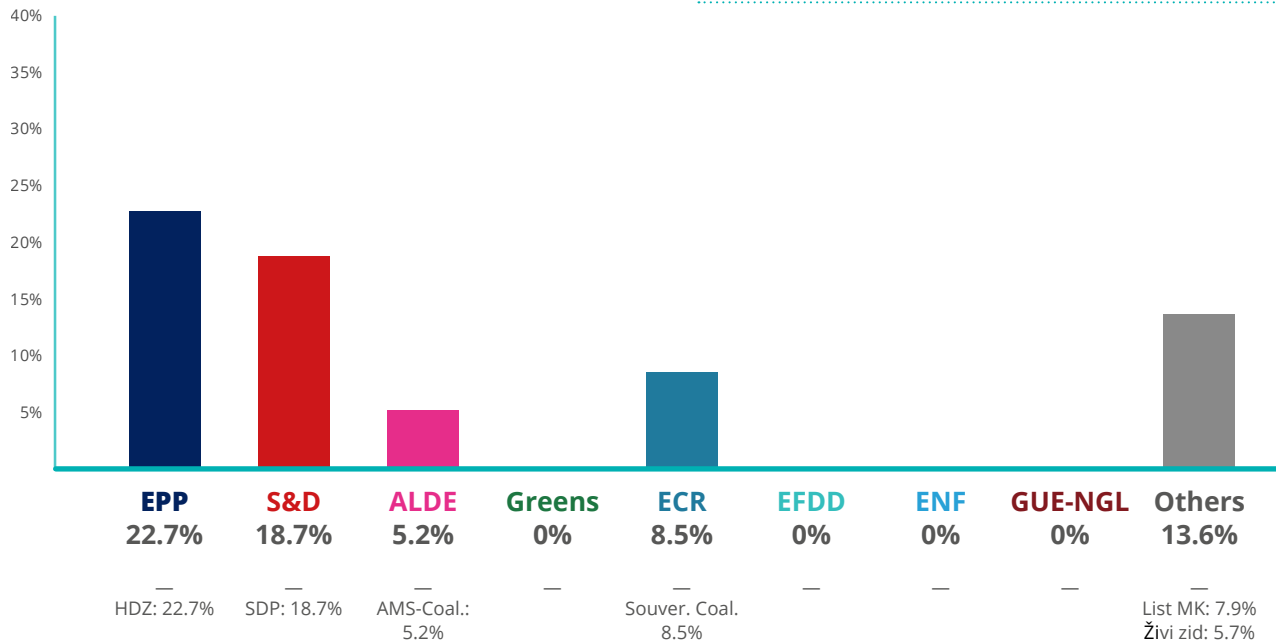


11 seats

Threshold clause: 5%



30%



Seats 4 3 1 0 1 0 0 0 0 2



Largest party

HDZ is a member of the EPP and has been the governing party in Croatia since January 2016. It is a Christian democratic and moderate national-conservative party. The former MEP, Andrej Plenkovic, has been the party leader since July 2016 and Prime Minister since October 2016. At the 2019 European elections, HDZ stood for the first time without a coalition partner under the motto of "Croatia for the generations".



Noteworthy party

Human Shield (Živi zid) is a protest party that is neither left-wing nor right-wing, and traces its roots back to activism during the last financial crisis. It prepared its European manifesto in collaboration with the Italian Five Star Movement. It highlights the level of corruption in the current political system and adopts anti-EU and anti-NATO positions.

Lead candidates



Karlo Ressler
HDZ



Tonino Picula
SDP



Tihomir Lukanic
Živi zid



Developments key to the elections

After two failed governing coalitions between HDZ and MOST (conservative) within a period of two years, summer 2017 saw the first attempt at forging a coalition between HDZ and the left-wing liberal party HNS (ex. SDP coalition partner). Apart from the left-leaning so-called Amsterdam Coalition, the relevant left-wing alliances failed to materialise for the EU elections. Even the fragmentation among right-wing parties had never been so pronounced. However, the populist parties were much stronger than in 2014. The political high-flyers, Human Shield (Živi zid), began with the presidential election in 2015 and currently have three seats in the national parliament.

In addition to a crisis in the shipyards, the referendum initiatives by trade unions for pension reform, as well as efforts by Human Shield (Živi zid) on the subject of party financing dominated the headlines ahead of the elections.



Press reaction

According to Jutarnji, HDZ cannot be anything other than disappointed with the result. After all of the opinion polls had projected at least five seats for the party, it was once again a case of the elections painting a completely different picture to the opinion polls. Telegram wrote that the SDP leader made a wise choice in including his critics on the list of candidates, and that the results confirmed its role as the strongest opposition party.

The biggest surprise for all of the media outlets was Mislav Kolakusic's success.

KAS-analysis

Once again, HDZ's list of candidates received the most votes. But the coalition of 2014 was no longer in place, meaning therefore that, as expected, right-wing voters were dispersed over a number of lists of candidates. The best performing of them was the Patriotic Coalition, whose success with 8.52% of the vote was unexpectedly high. Ruza Tomasic, its lead candidate, picked up most preferential votes among all of the lead candidates. MOST's failure to win a seat was also a surprise.

In the months leading up to the elections, the SDP suffered the same negative trend in the opinion polls that had also been present among other social democratic parties throughout Europe.

However, its list of candidates, headed by two distinguished MEPs, ensured that the gap between HDZ and its party had narrowed in the elections.

The former judge, Mislav Kolakusic, resigned from office in the days leading up to the elections and stood in the elections with a strong anti-corruption message. He even managed to overtake the share of the vote gained by the populist Human Shield (Živi zid), the latter only gaining 5.66% of votes, which was significantly less than expected.



Cyprus

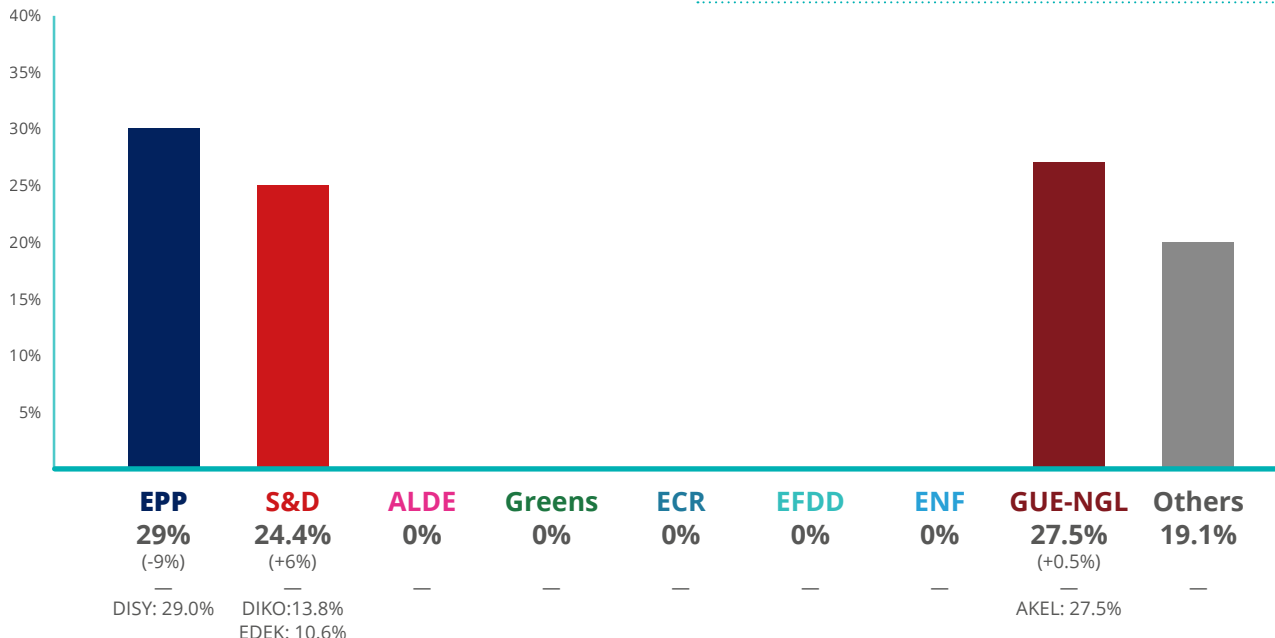


6 seats

Threshold clause: 1.8%



45%



Seats 2 2 0 0 0 0 0 2 0



Largest party

The Christian democratic conservative DISY party was formed in 1976. It is the largest party in the national parliament, and one of its members is the President of the Republic of Cyprus. The party supported the Annan plan, which aimed to resolve the Cyprus issue. It is part of the EPP political group in the European Parliament.



Noteworthy party

AKEL is a left-wing party with Communist origins in the Republic of Cyprus, which has been in existence since 1926. It was against the Republic of Cyprus' accession to the EU and had concerns about the introduction of the Euro. The party put forward the state president between 2008 and 2013. It belongs to the GUE/ NGL political group in the European Parliament.

Lead candidates



Lefteris Christoforou
DISY



Niyazi Kızılyürek
AKEL



Costas Mavrides
DIKO



Developments key to the elections

The most important political issue in Cyprus is the gas dispute with Turkey, which has occupied the northern part of the island with military forces since 1974. The dispute relates to the discovery of gas in the exclusive economic zone of the Republic of Cyprus, which is not recognised by Turkey. The Turkish government's intention to conduct natural gas exploration missions in the region caused major tension. All of the parties as well as the EU condemned Turkey's approach.

The candidacy of a Turkish Cypriot for the second largest AKEL party has been interpreted in a positive manner and is regarded as an important symbol towards reunification.

In addition, the economy, which has been brought back onto a path of growth by DISY with the aid of far-reaching albeit unpopular reforms, plays a key role here.



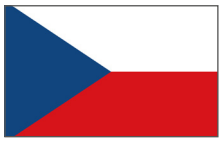
Press reaction

Six out of ten voters turned their backs on the European elections. Turkish Cypriot voters cast their votes for AKEL, enabling the election of Niyazi Kızılyürek, stated "Haravgi", title: "AKEL has started a new chapter for Cyprus" (left-wing, communist)

Yesterday's European elections were a message of unity and hope for the future of our country.

KAS-analysis

The vast majority of Cypriots are clearly pro-European. However, the low voter turnout and losses for the conservative governing party are evidence of the fact that voters do not expect things to change: as long as the Cyprus conflict overshadows all areas of public life and remains unresolved, the potential for the country to make political and economic progress remains limited. As a result, the election of the Turkish Cypriot AKEL candidate brings with it a great deal of hope, that there will be movement once again in the stalled negotiations, and that perhaps there is a small glimmer of hope for a resolution to southern Europe's longest conflict.



Czech Republic

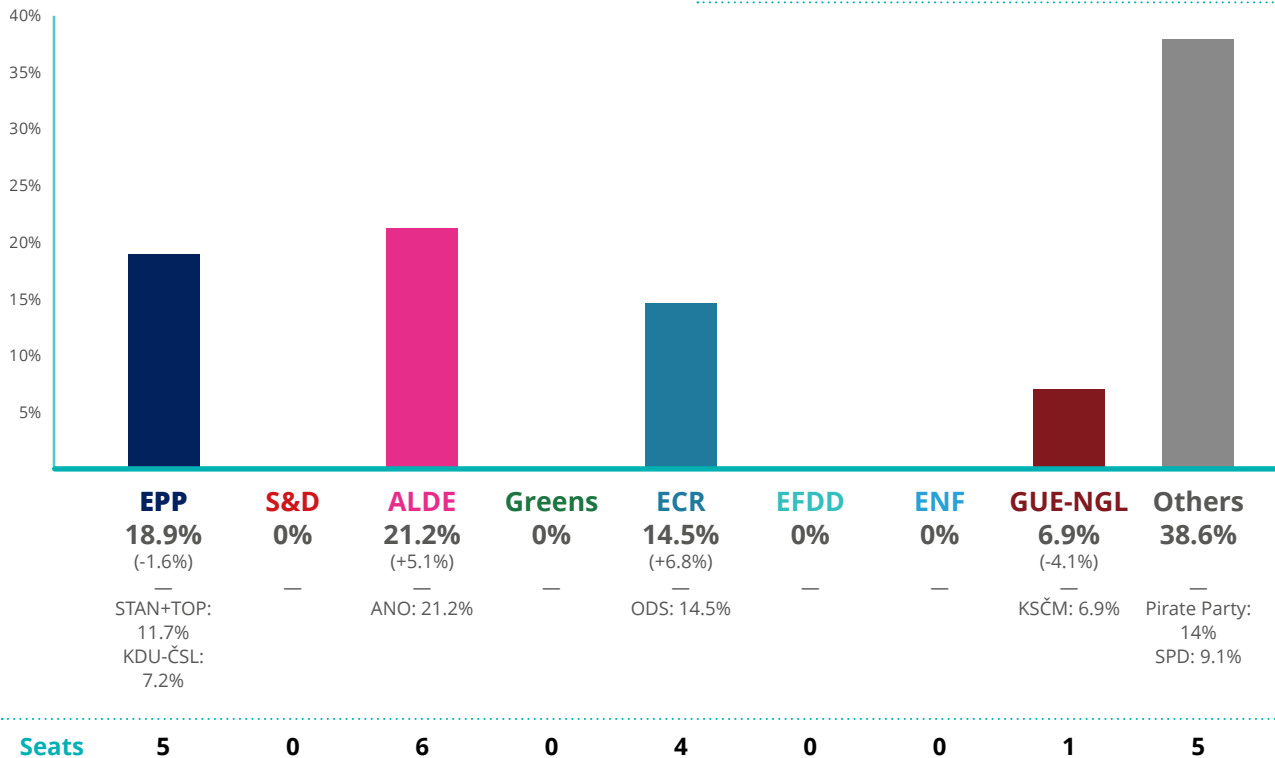


21 seats

Threshold clause: 5%



29%



Largest party

The ANO political movement led by the billionaire Andrej Babiš is an ALDE member, has been in the Czech parliament since 2013 and is currently a member of the government. However, it is regarded as being pragmatic and non-ideological. It is often referred to as a populist party, presenting itself as an alternative to the traditional parties. Its motto for the EU election campaign was "We will protect the Czech Republic. No ifs, no buts."



Noteworthy party

The Czech Pirates are social-liberal, pro-European and in favour of participatory democracy. The party was formed in 2009 and is currently in opposition in the Czech parliament.

They stand for freedom, openness and transparency (focusing in particular on the digital world). Their campaign motto was "Europe needs Pirates".

Lead candidates



Dita Charanzova
ANO



Jan Zahradil
ODS



Marcel Kolaja
Pirate Party



Developments key to the elections

The strong economic performance helped the ANO leader and Prime Minister, Andrej Babiš, to present himself as a successful and efficient statesman. At the same time, it also allowed the Babiš government to pass on numerous benefits to groups of voters, particularly to senior citizens (such as pension increases and free travel on public transport).

The 2017 parliamentary elections split the party spectrum up even further with a total of nine parties, which made it particularly difficult for the opposition parties to have a visible presence and be effective.

Shortly before the European elections, as media reports circulated regarding Babiš potentially being prosecuted, there was a controversial change in the post of Justice Minister. Tens of thousands of people demonstrated over fears about the independence of the judiciary.



Press reaction

Lidové noviny (Lidovky.cz): It seems the biggest lesson is reserved for the opposition: if the parties remain split, it will be difficult to beat ANO.

Hospodářské noviny (Ihned.cz): The ANO movement was victorious, but the opinion polls for the elections suggested something more. The biggest surprise was the collapse of the ČSSD, with the party failing to enter into parliament.

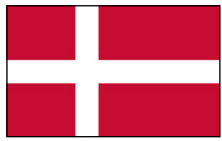
MF Dnes (Idnes.cz): In the next few years, the Pirates and ODS will jostle for the position of challenger to Babiš.

KAS-analysis

The Czechs' relationship with the EU has normalised once again following the refugee crisis. Following the low point reached in 2014, voter turnout rebounded to the levels seen in 2009 and 2004. The Czechs' attitude towards the EU has switched from critical to lukewarm approval. The majority of Czech parties are standing in the European Parliament on a platform of reform of the EU and strengthening of the principle of intergovernmental cooperation.

The election result is a warning sign for the governing parties, ANO and the ČSSD (Czech Social Democratic Party), who lost a significant percentage of votes compared to the 2017 parliamentary elections. In recent weeks, tens of thousands of Czechs have taken to the streets in expressing their fears about the independence of the judiciary.

The EEP parties TOP 09 (working in collaboration with STAN) and the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) lost approximately 7 percent of votes (two seats), something that can primarily be attributed to the rise of the Pirate Party. However, if they had a joint list of candidates in place, they would be the second largest force with around 19 percent of votes. Luděk Niedermeier (TOP 09) received the most preferential votes in the Czech Republic.



Denmark

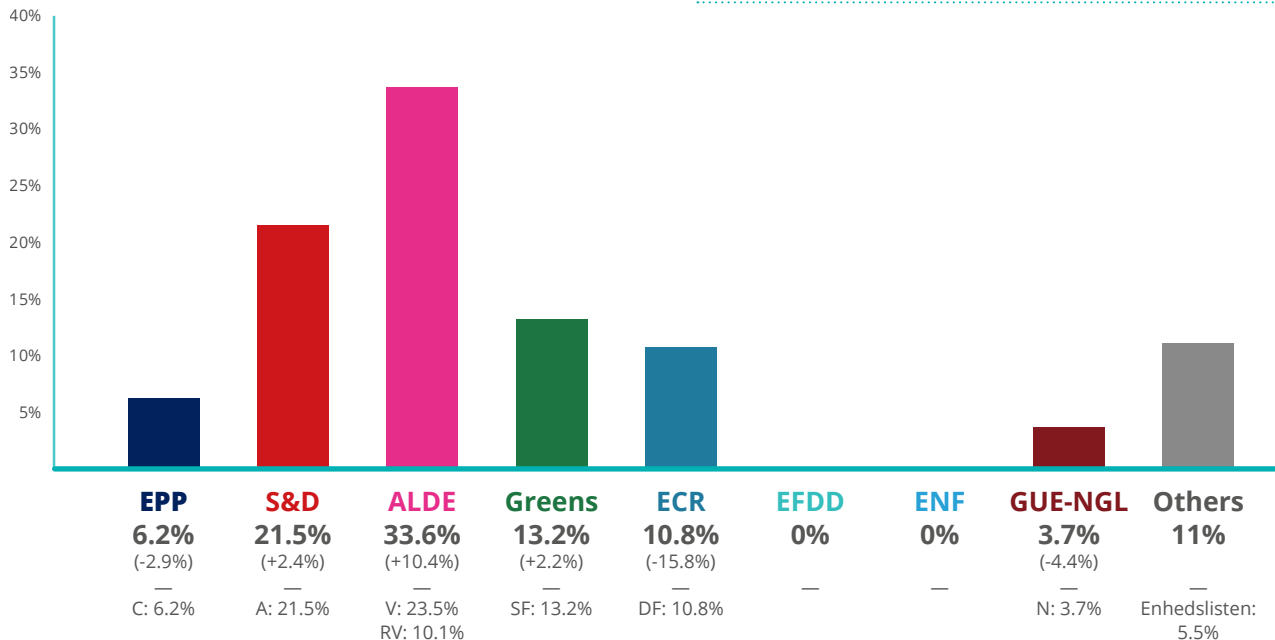


13 seats

Threshold clause: none



66%



Seats 1 3 5 2 1 0 0 0 1



Largest party

The Venstre (V) Party was formed in the late 19th century and is a conservative-liberal party. Unlike its name, which means “left” in Danish, it is a centre-right party and a member of the ALDE political group at the European level. Nationally, it is the largest party in government and has put forward the Prime Minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen.



Noteworthy party

The Danish People's Party (DF) was formed in 1995 during the course of the first wave of immigration into Denmark. It is regarded as a right-wing populist, national conservative and Eurosceptic party, and has supported the minority government in the Danish parliament since 2015. Its approval ratings have fallen back significantly in recent times – particularly when compared to the last European elections.

Lead candidates



Morten Løkkegaard
Venstre (V)



Jeppe Kofod
Social Democrats (A)



Pernille Weiss
Conservative People's Party (C)



Developments key to the elections

Brexit and its potential consequences for the Northern European states were particularly prevalent in the Danish debate prior to the European elections and resulted in an increase in approval of EU membership. At the same time, there were relatively few events held regarding the European elections, which was also down to the fact that Denmark elected its new parliament on 5 June and these domestic political issues overlapped the European elections. However, ahead of the elections, Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen announced plans to hold a referendum during the coming parliamentary term on Denmark's active participation in a common European defence policy, which the country is currently excluded from. This also applies to other policy areas.



Press reaction

In their reports, the press focused predominantly on the Venstre Party's success, referring to it as a hawk that had "gobbled up" the other parties.

There was also intense discussion about the collapse of the right-wing populist Danish People's Party. One commentator noted that the Party Chair had acted in a foolish manner when she spoke of a sense of "climate hysteria" in relation to the Fridays for Future protests and criticised the participants.

KAS analysis

Fears regarding low voter turnout as a result of the parliamentary elections taking place a week later proved to be unfounded in Denmark. As was the case in other EU Member States, there was a significant increase in voter turnout (from 56 percent in 2014 to 66 percent in 2019), with the liberal ALDE parties as well as the Social Democrats and Greens benefiting from this. The biggest loser in the election was the right-wing populist Danish People's Party (DF), which lost nearly 16 percent of the votes following its election victory in 2014, and which is now represented by just one seat in the European Parliament instead of four seats. Contrary to forecasts suggesting otherwise, the Conservative People's Party (C) was able to retain its seat in the European Parliament. The issue of climate protection also played a key role for the Conservatives as well.

National issues had defined the nature of discussions ahead of the European elections, and will continue to be pursued until the next election day in a week's time. Asylum policy, domestic security as well as environmental and climate protection will once again play a key role and provide an indicator as to whether voters will place their trust in the same parties at the national level too.



Estonia

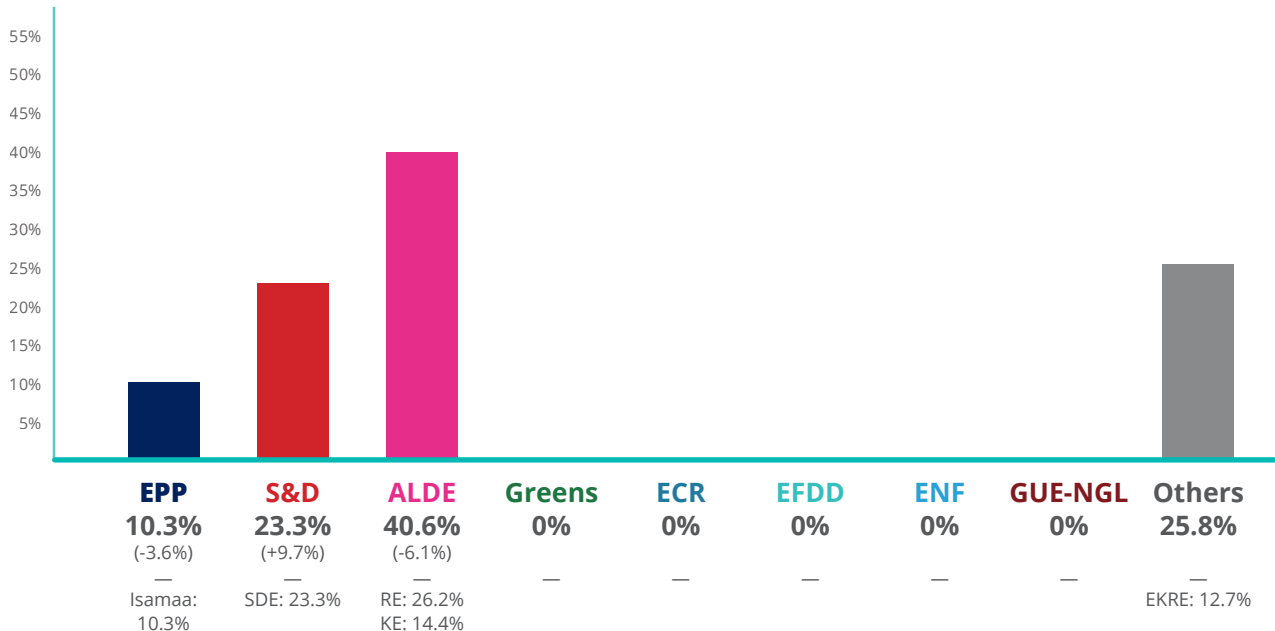


6 seats

Threshold clause: none



38%



Seats 0 2 3 0 0 0 0 0 1



Largest party

The Estonian Reform Party (RE) was founded in 1994 and is a classical-liberal party. Despite winning the 2019 parliamentary elections, it had to take its place in opposition. At the European level, it is a member of the ALDE political group, is regarded as the antithesis to the right-wing populist party EKRE and heavily criticised the latter's participation in the coalition.



Noteworthy party

The Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE) formed in 2012 and celebrated its first major success in the 2019 parliamentary elections. It has since become a member of the Estonian government. It is regarded as a right-wing populist, anti-immigration and anti-European party. It has yet to make its presence felt at the European level as it was still insignificant back in 2014.

Lead candidates



Andrus Ansip
Reform Party (RE)



Marina Kaljurand
Social Democrats (SDE)



Riho Terras
Pro Patria (Isamaa)



Developments key to the elections

Following the parliamentary elections held on 3 March 2019, there were public protests against the inclusion of the right-wing populist party EKRE in the governing coalition together with the Estonian Centre Party and the conservative Pro Patria party (EPP). This prevented the election winner, the Estonian Reform Party, from participating in the government. This particular situation resulted in the Liberals continuing to increase their approval rating in the various opinion polls. It should also be noted that portions of the Russian-speaking minority have turned their backs on the Estonian Centre Party as a result of these most recent developments, instead turning to the opposition Social Democratic Party and the new Estonia 200 party. These developments overlapped the European election campaign, ensuring that the elections held on 26 May were seen as a national referendum on the path taken by the parties and the Estonian government.



Press reaction

In their election reporting, the main Estonian daily newspapers offered a nuanced overview of the results in Estonia and other EU States.

The Postimees newspaper also published an opinion piece, which dealt with the increase in votes for populist and Eurosceptic parties against the backdrop of the EKRE Party's entry into the European Parliament, and which reached the following conclusion: "Behind all of the EU flags, the results of the sceptics have improved".

KAS analysis

As assumed prior to the elections, many Estonians considered recent domestic political developments to be a vote for or against the governing coalition in Tallinn, which also includes, for the very first time, the right-wing populist and Eurosceptic Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE). Compared to the parliamentary elections, it was particularly the case that the Estonian Centre Party, led by Prime Minister Ratas, and the EKRE lost votes. In terms of the opposition, the Estonian Reform Party was more or less able to retain its share of the vote, with the Social Democratic Party (SDE) enjoying a significant increase in votes. The conservative Pro Patria party (Isamaa) does not currently have any representation in the European Parliament, but would benefit from Brexit and the resulting additional parliamentary seat for Estonia.

Despite the domestic political debate, voter turnout was not significantly higher than in the 2014 elections, remaining well below the average across the EU. Turnout was particularly low in north-east Estonia, where the Russian-speaking minority makes up a high share of the population. As was the case in previous elections, around 50% of voters cast their votes online.



Finland

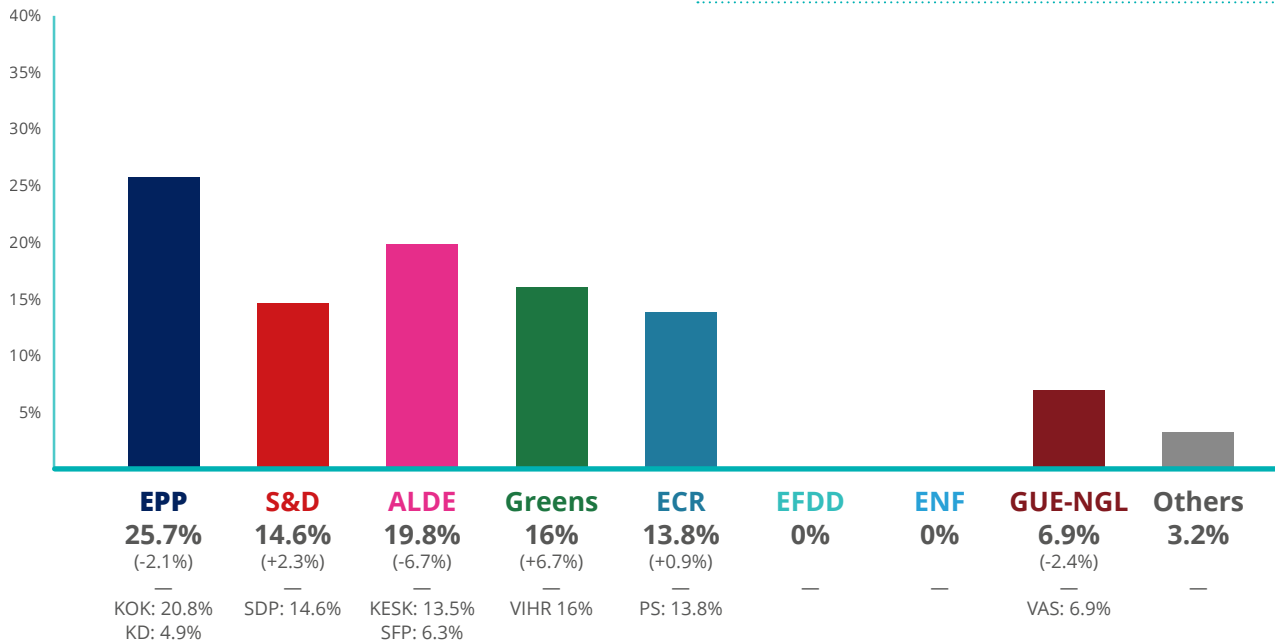


13 seats

Threshold clause: none



41%



Seats 3 2 3 2 2 0 0 1 0



Largest party

The National Coalition Party (KOK) was founded in 1918 and is currently the largest conservative party in the country. It champions a free market economy, the European Union, freedom of choice for individuals and Finland's accession to NATO. It forms part of the acting governing coalition at the national level, and it is a member of the EEP political group at the European level.



Noteworthy party

The Green League (VIHR) was founded in 1988 and is made up of several social movements. The party, which is predominantly strong in cities, is pro-integration, heavily in favour of the European Parliament being strengthened, wants to increase the EU budget and introduce EU-wide taxes. It has enjoyed increasing popularity in recent years and is a member of the Greens/EFA political group.

Lead candidates



Sirpa Pietikäinen
National Coalition Party (KOK)



Ville Niinistö
Green League (VIHR)



Eero Heinäluoma
Social Democrats (SDP)



Developments key to the elections

Not least because of its geographical location, Finland regards itself as a “bridge builder”, particularly with regard to Common Foreign and Security Policy issues, as well as in relation to Russia. European issues became increasingly relevant in the months leading up to the elections, thanks to the upcoming Council Presidency taking place in the second half of 2019. Climate protection and migration policy were increasingly positioned as thematic priorities in the various debates. On the contrary, there was a negative view of the fact that serving national parliamentary representatives are now able to put themselves forward as candidates for the European elections and relinquish their seat in Helsinki in the event they are elected to the European Parliament. This particular practice attracted criticism across all parties and political groups, leaving the affected representatives open to accusations that they were pulling the wool over the eyes of their own voters. Following the parliamentary elections held in April, the European elections were the second vote held in a matter of weeks.



Press reaction

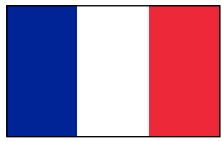
Finnish media picked up in particular on the election victory by the National Coalition Party (Kokoomus) as well as the strong gains made by the Greens, speaking in this context of a certain shift at the European level.

At the same time, the losers in the form of the Centre Party of Finland (heaviest losses among all of the parties) and the Finns Party (significantly overestimated) were made the subject of discussion. Overall, it is fair to say that the election results were pro-European.

KAS analysis

Although voter turnout of 40.7 percent was somewhat higher than in recent European elections, it is significantly below the turnout figure for the national parliamentary elections, which saw 72 percent of eligible voters casting their vote back in April. In general terms, Finland is a pro-European country in which the majority of the population is behind the country's membership of the EU. At the same time, however, there is also a certain lack of understanding in individual subject areas and issues in terms of what Brussels and the various European institutions actually do. In addition to the National Coalition Party (Kokoomus), which, together with the Christian Democrats, were more or less able to retain the EEP vote from the previous elections, the Greens were also the major winners in the elections in Finland, managing to increase their share of the vote by 6.5 percent.

The national government in Helsinki is due to be formed shortly and is unlikely to be influenced by the outcome of the European elections. Finland is due to take up the Presidency in the European Council from July 2019 onwards, meaning, therefore, that European issues will also be given high priority in the coming months in the European Union's northernmost Member State.



France

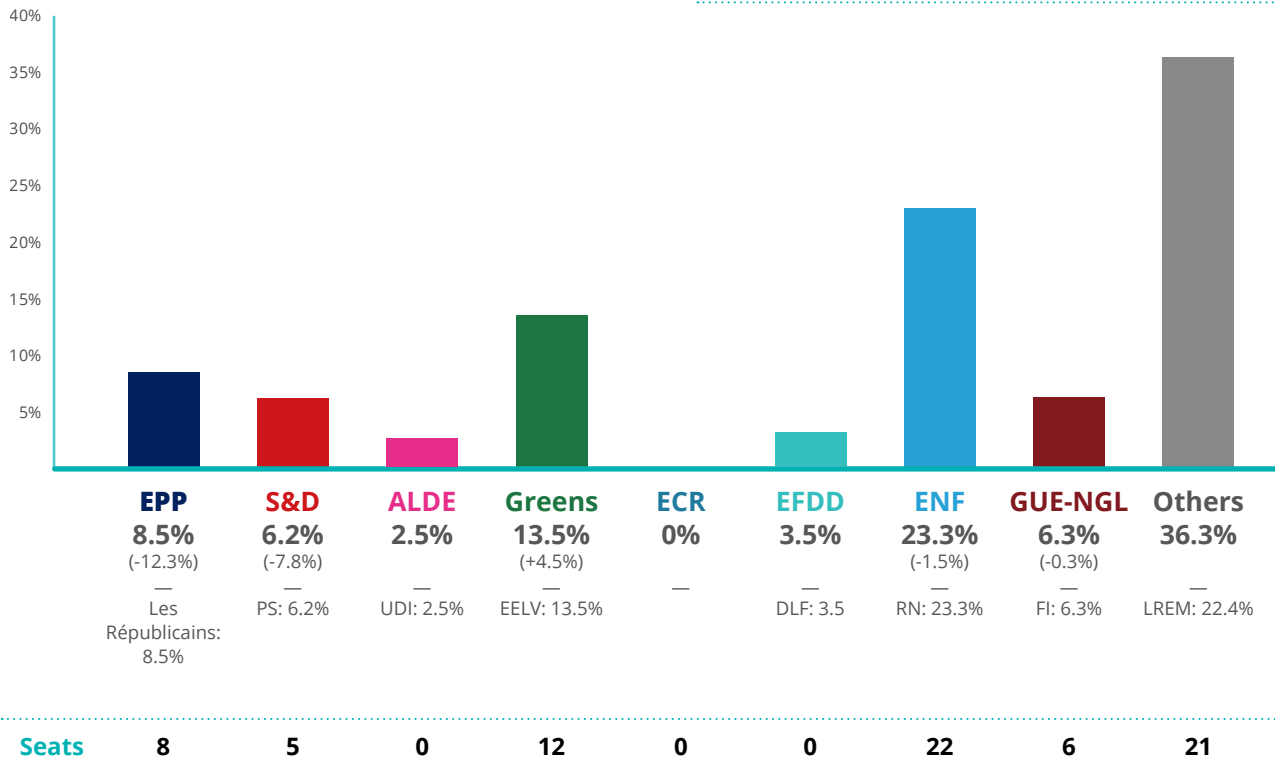


74 seats

Threshold clause: 5%



50%



Largest party

The National Rally ("Rassemblement National", previously Front National) is a right-wing populist party, which remains popular despite the defeat of its leader, Marine Le Pen, in the presidential elections. The party took first place in the 2014 European elections, gaining 24.9% of the vote. It was able to successfully defend its title in 2019. The idea of "Frexit" has since been withdrawn from its manifesto.

LA RÉPUBLIQUE
En Marche!

Noteworthy party

"La République en Marche" is the movement formed by Emmanuel Macron back in April 2016, which brings together pro-European and pragmatic socialists, liberals and bourgeois. Despite its victory in the 2017 presidential and parliamentary elections, it has not yet managed to build up long-term local structures.

Lead candidates



Nathalie Loiseau
La République En Marche



François-Xavier Bellamy
Les Républicains



Jordan Bardella
Rassemblement National



Developments key to the elections

The European elections are regarded as “mid-term elections” in France. Two years on from the last presidential and parliamentary elections, these were the first national elections, beyond opinion polls, where the actual level of approval in the policies of President Emmanuel Macron and his government could be ascertained.

Protests by the “gilets jaunes” have dominated politics since November 2018. The government responded to this by bolstering purchasing power and political involvement. The political parties have been unable to benefit from the protests. Their approval ratings have barely changed in recent months. While LREM was able to make environmental and climate protection as well as secure borders the subject of discussion, the opposition parties portrayed the European elections as a vote on President Macron.



Press reaction

The duel between Emmanuel Macron's list of candidates and Marine Le Pen's party was just as much the focal point of reporting as the surprisingly strong performance by the Greens and the astonishingly poor performance by the middle class-conservative Republicans. Macron's strategy of dividing the electorate into pro- and anti-European groups attracted criticism. This helped to strengthen the nationalists and weaken the moderate parties, including in particular the Republicans and the Socialists.

KAS analyse

The European elections were the first nationwide elections in France since the parliamentary elections in 2017. The polarisation of the electorate into pro- and anti-European groups, as brought about by President Macron, was transformed by the moderate opposition and populists into a vote on the present course taken by the government. With the demand for Frexit being dropped, the RN managed to mobilise a large portion of protest voters for its own cause. At the same time, the campaign fought by Macron's movement was rocky and, unlike in 2017, lacked inspiration.

The policies implemented by Macron, regarded as right-wing by many moderate left-wing voters, and the focus on green issues in LREM's campaign resulted in an above-average number of voters from this voter base casting their vote for the Greens. Meanwhile, the Republicans failed to mobilise their voter base. Those voters who endorsed Macron's policies since felt more adequately represented by LREM. Those voters who rejected Macron's policies also voted RN. Neither the left-wing populists nor the specially formed “Yellow Alliance” were able to benefit from the ongoing “gilets jaunes” protests taking place since November.



Germany

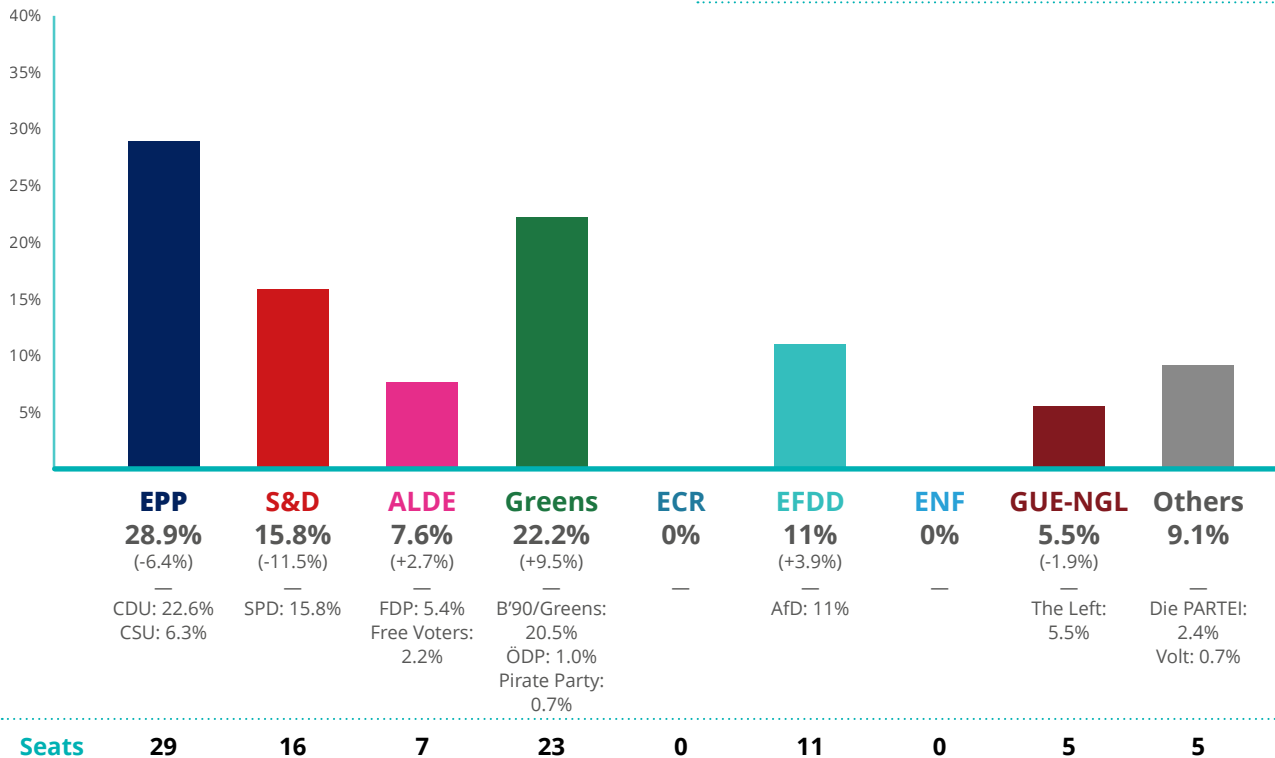


96 seats

Threshold clause: none



61%



Largest party

The CDU, together with its Bavarian sister party, the CSU, remains the largest political force despite losses. This was the first election campaign fought by the new CDU party leader, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer. For the first time ever, the CDU/CSU stood with a joint candidate and a joint electoral programme in which they focused on security, peace and prosperity as mainstream parties in the centre ground.

Noteworthy party

The origins of the Greens can be traced back on the one hand to the environmental and anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the peace and women's movement on the other hand. Climate and environmental protection remain their core issues up to the present day. They have also focused on issues such as an open and multicultural society, and have a particularly strong following in cities, in south-west Germany and among the educated middle-class.

Lead candidates

Manfred Weber
CSU

Dr. Katarina Barley
SPD

Ska Keller
B'90/The Greens

www.kas.de/bruessel



Developments key to the elections

This time around, the EU elections attracted more attention than in previous years, something which resulted in increased voter turnout. Despite the high level of interest in the elections, the lead candidates remained relatively unknown. Overall, there was a clear prevailing pro-European sentiment, which the parties attempted to exploit for themselves. Surveys showed that European issues were the focal point of interest. However, major controversy surrounding the future of the EU failed to materialise, but the political situation was instead characterised by the difficulty experienced by the mainstream parties in government, the CDU/CSU and SPD, in appealing to broad sections of the electorate.

The issues of climate and environmental protection, which were put onto the agenda in particular by young people taking part in the Fridays for Future protests, attracted a great deal of attention. The FPÖ scandal in Austria and the video by the YouTuber Rezo were defining issues in the final stages of the election campaign.



Press reaction

"Greens instead of the Grand Coalition ("Grüne statt Groko") and a blow to right-wingers - the informal grand coalition in the European Parliament is all over following these elections. And the grand coalition in Berlin could well suffer the same fate shortly too." Rheinische Post

"Anyone who ignores young people will get the political shock of their life; the European elections were a signal for the mainstream parties. They will ultimately have to find answers to the questions posed by these politically aware young people if they are to survive. The landscape of the Federal Republic could well change completely in just a few years." Die Welt

KAS analysis

The CDU and SPD once again suffered heavy losses. The SPD suffered the greatest losses, but the Union's result was down to the robust performance by the CSU. The established mainstream parties, with their well-rehearsed understanding of the role of assuming political leadership, increasingly need to get involved with other parties and constellations.

Manfred Weber is laying claim to the office of President of the Commission based on the result in Germany and the EPP's result in general. His legitimacy can largely be derived from the lead candidate process and high voter turnout, provided he is able to forge a coalition for himself.

Alliance 90/The Greens performed extremely well, becoming the second largest party in the federal elections for the very first time. Their strong performance among young voters is particularly striking. This performance can be attributed to their major focus on environmental and climate protection. They are pushing for political change and blame the Union and the SPD for not acting decisively enough.

The gains made by the AfD were less than feared following the Bundestag elections in 2017. However, the party performed very well in the eastern federal states of Germany, and was even the largest party in its strongholds of Brandenburg and Saxony.



Greece

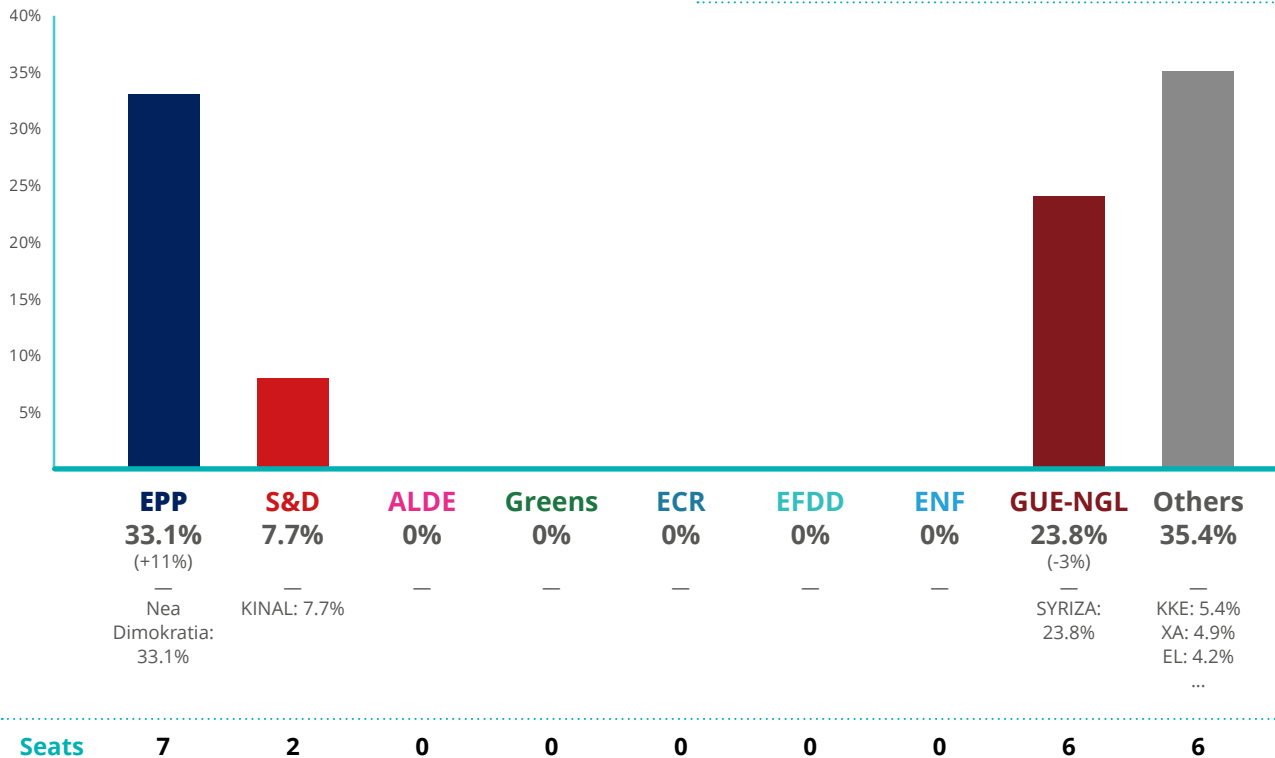


21 seats

Threshold clause: 3%



59%



Largest party

The liberal-conservative party New Democracy (Nea Dimokratia) was formed in 1974. It has been the largest opposition party in the Greek parliament since 2015. The party leader is Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

Greece's accession to the European Union took place in 1981 under the ND government. It belongs to the EEP political group in the European Parliament.



Noteworthy party

The left-wing populist Syriza party was formed in 2012, made up of a electoral alliance of left-wing extremists and populist groups.

Since the election victory in 2015, it has put forward the Prime Minister and is now regarded as a moderate social democratic party. It belongs to the GUE/NGL political group in the European Parliament.

Lead candidates



Vaggelis Meimarakis
Nea Dimokratia



Dimitris Papadimoulis
SYRIZA



Nikos Androulakis
KINAL



Developments key to the elections

Greece has survived a serious economic crisis, but the current economic situation remains far from rosy. Unemployment and public debt remain by far the highest throughout Europe.

Ahead of the elections, New Democracy, in the lead according to opinion polls, wanted to attract investment, reduce taxes and fight against crime. On the contrary, the governing Syriza party wanted to expand the welfare state further. The agreement reached with the Republic of North Macedonia, regarded as a major foreign policy success for Prime Minister Tsipras, caused political damage for him domestically and mobilised right-wing voters.



Press reaction

“Ta Nea”: Finally, the end of the SYRIZA government

Voters on 30 June following a decisive victory by New Democracy “Kathimerini”: Elections following a strong message for change

New Democracy is the only EPP party to have won votes.

“Avgi”: Parliamentary elections for a clear mandate (left-wing populist)

Golden Dawn has fallen apart

KAS analysis

The results show that the majority of Greeks want a return to normality. However, they are not looking for New Democracy to return to the “good old days” before the crisis; the new party leader Mitsotakis, regarded as a reformist, succeeded during the election campaign in conveying an inclusive and positive message, which appealed to large swathes of the population and was clearly based on economic competence and security. These issues, together with the rejection of the largely unpopular agreement with the Republic of North Macedonia, were close to the hearts of most voters.

The election results are a personal defeat for Prime Minister Tsipras, who had regarded the European elections as a vote of confidence in his government. Neither the pre-election “gifts” of individual tax concessions and pension increases, nor the attempt to shift the blame for the causes of official failures, such as the disastrous fire in Mati the previous summer, to the failures by previous governments, failed to provide any assistance. With an election defeat in double digit territory, Tsipras has now had to act and has already announced early parliamentary elections. A change of government is within reach in Greece.



Hungary

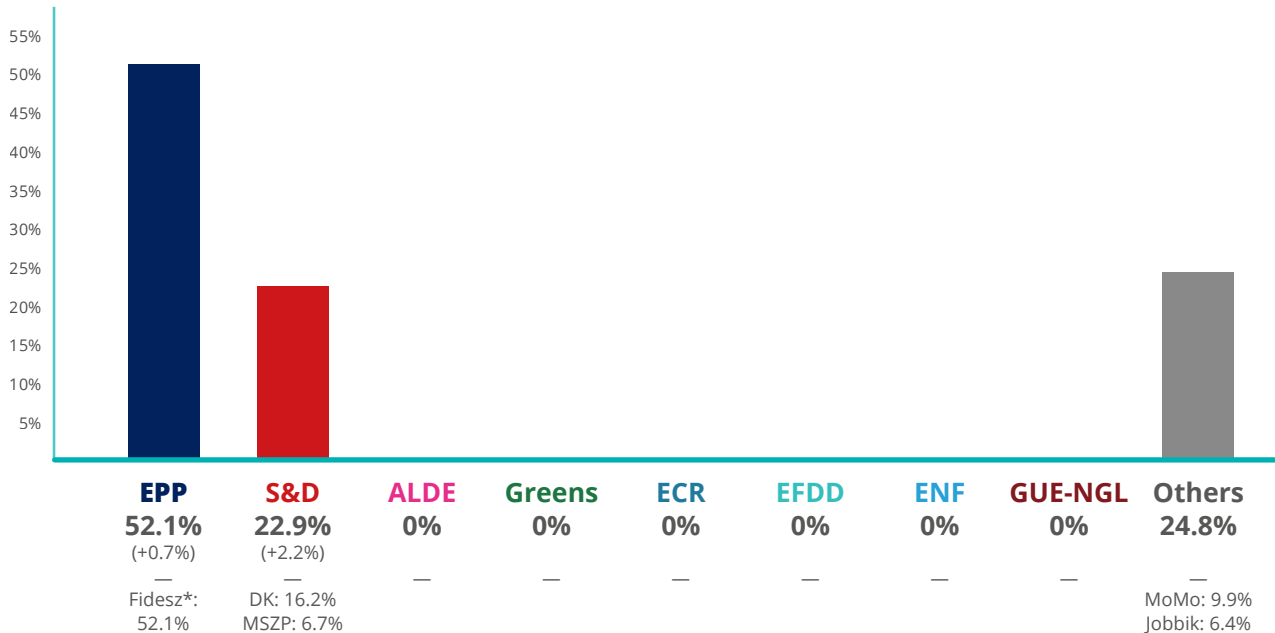


21 seats

Threshold clause: 5%



43%



Seats **13** **5** **0** **0** **0** **0** **0** **0** **3**



Largest party

The profile of Fidesz/KDNP is characterised by the preservation of Christian values, the strengthening of families, protection from immigration and unorthodox, market-based economic policies. Fidesz and KDNP are governing parties and stand as a combined list of candidates. Fidesz was formed in 1988 as an anti-Communist liberal youth association, which evolved into conservatism at a later date.



Noteworthy party

Jobbik, the largest opponent to Fidesz, is a right-wing extremist party that propagates the preservation of the nation. It initially stood for anti-Semitic, anti-Zionist and anti-European policies. It was also in favour of supporting paramilitary guards. From 2013 onwards, it began moving towards the political centre ground. However, it lost votes among its core voters and the party split. Recently there has been convergence with the Greens.

Lead candidates



László Trócsányi
Fidesz/KDNP



Klara Dobrev
DK



Márton Gyöngyösi
Jobbik



Developments key to the elections

The Sargentini report in the European Parliament significantly increased the distance between the governing Fidesz party and the EEP, with support for the report from large swathes of the EEP and the CDU causing particular irritation in Hungary. This particular conflict did not cause any damage to Fidesz with regard to voter behaviour. Fidesz was suspended from the EEP in March.

The conflict escalated following the creation of posters by the Hungarian government criticising Juncker. The government believed that "Brussels" wanted to turn European states into immigration countries, which Hungary would rebel against. Fidesz saw the elections as an important step in determining whether pro-migration or anti-migration forces would gain the upper hand in Europe. Immigration continued to be the key issue in the decision to be taken by Hungarian voters, who linked this to the country's sovereignty.



Press reaction

Magyar Nemzet (conservative): "It is a welcome fact that Fidesz adopts such a Hungarian and European approach in its communication and ideology; it represents the normal, real-life viewpoint of the average citizen in the key issues faced by our continent and our times."

Népszava (left-wing liberal): "Hungary's place in this community is uncertain as Orbán's authoritarian state has no place in a Europe made up of democracies."

Magyar Hírlap (conservative): "Powerful legitimacy for Orbán"

KAS-analysis

The election result is evidence of strong roots in the EU and the approval of large parts of the population with regard to European integration.

The policies of the governing Fidesz-KDNP parties were unambiguously confirmed, with the opposition having to go through the process of restructuring. The previously dominant Jobbik, MSZP and LMP parties have been outclassed, whereas the newer DK and Momentum parties, attracting 16% and 10% of the vote respectively, may be able to express themselves as a convincing alternative. However, the opposition's results demonstrate that they have been unable to attract new voters, with the share of the vote remaining static at 47%. Back in 2018, DK entered into parliament with 5.38% of the vote, while Momentum failed to gain representation with just 3.06% of the vote. Leadership of the opposition can now justifiably be reclaimed by DK.

Both of the EEP parties, Fidesz and KDNP, stood with a combined list of candidates, achieving their best ever result in absolute terms with 1,795,003 votes. The election result of 52.33% is the second highest throughout Europe. With 13 representatives in the EEP political group, Fidesz-KDNP is the strongest grouping after the CDU/CSU and PO. It therefore represents 7.22% of the political group's members (previously 5.43%).



Ireland

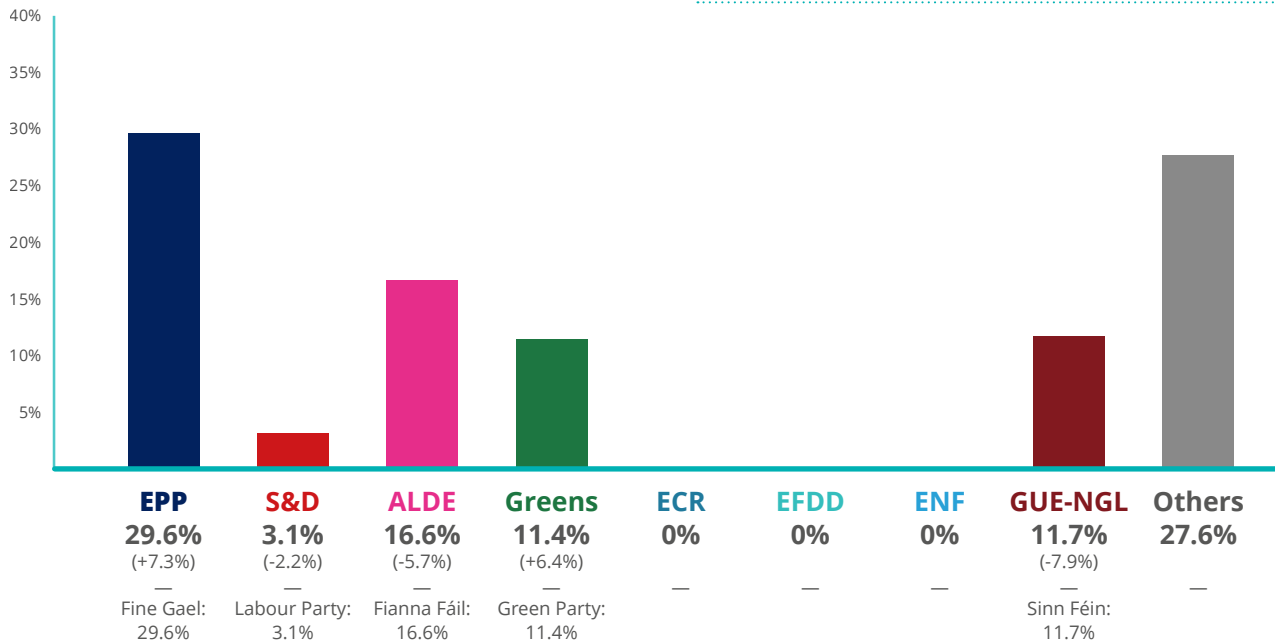


11 seats

Threshold clause: none



49%



Seats 4 0 2 2 0 0 0 2 1



Largest party

Liberal-conservative, pro-EU, EEP. For many years in recent history, FG has had to satisfy itself with the role of the largest opposition party. It has put forward the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) since 2011, a role currently occupied by Leo Varadkar.

FG has grown in popularity thanks to its clear positioning from an Irish perspective on Brexit.



Noteworthy party

Like many green parties, the Irish Green Party (green policies, pro-European) was formed during the environmental movements of the 1980s, only playing a marginal role at the national level until now.

The Greens have been able to exploit the growing debate surrounding environmental and climate policies for their own benefit and enjoy significant growth.



Lead candidates

There were no lead candidates in Ireland.



Developments key to the elections

Ireland is the country that will be most affected by the consequences of Brexit. This not only relates to economic losses, but also issues with the border with Northern Ireland. Although a hard border is not in Ireland's interest, Prime Minister Varadkar recently stated it would be almost impossible to avoid border infrastructure in the event of a hard Brexit. In this particular context, the European elections in Ireland were therefore held in the shadow of Brexit.

The two main parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael (FG), benefited from the uncertainty surrounding Brexit as established and important parties with well-known candidates. In addition, the EU's position during the Brexit negotiations has largely been interpreted as a display of solidarity with Ireland.



Press reaction

The left-leaning liberal daily newspaper, the Irish Times, regarded Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in particular as the clear losers in the elections: "It will be a tough day for Fine Gael following Leo Varadkar's first excursion into national elections as party leader."

"[In the European elections], voters are not electing a national government and are free from any concerns regarding national politics [...], giving them more opportunity to experiment in their voting preferences."

- Irish Independent, liberal business daily newspaper

KAS analysis

Overall, the Irish election result reflected a great deal of stability. Pro-European parties, such as Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and the Green Party, attracted around 60% of the votes cast in Ireland. In addition, many of the independent candidates were aligned with significantly pro-EU positions.

EEP member Fine Gael was able to assert itself as the largest party in the European elections. However, many supporters of the current Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Leo Varadkar will be disappointed. Despite Ireland being economically prosperous and Varadkar playing a convincing role in the Brexit negotiations, Fine Gael was only able to post marginal gains.

Eamon Ryan's Green Party benefited the most from the current debate throughout Europe on climate and environmental policies.

On the contrary, the Irish nationalist and socialist party Sinn Féin, long considered to be a political arm of the IRA, suffered losses. Although the situation on the North-South border could intensify once again as a result of Brexit, Sinn Féin was unable to benefit from this.



Italy

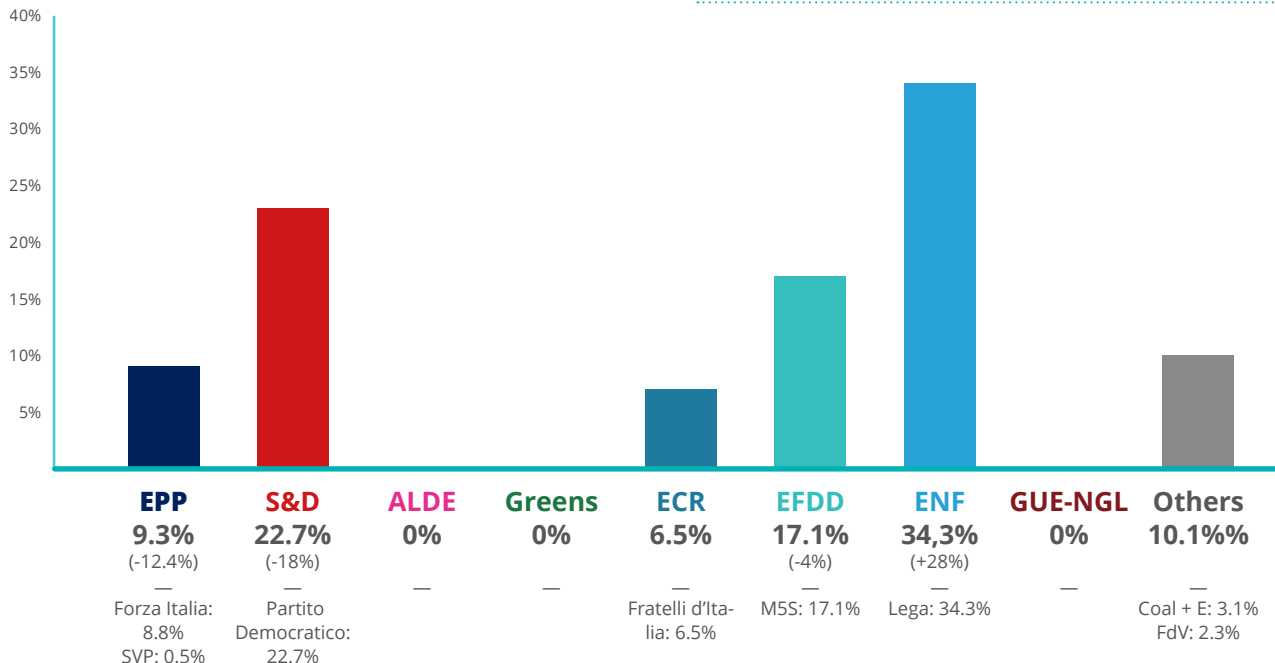


73 seats

Threshold clause: 4%



55%



Seats **8** **18** **0** **0** **5** **14** **28** **0** **0**



Largest party

In a paper written in 2012, Lega was referred to as "neo-European". Lead candidate and Lega leader Salvini now states a desire to change the EU. He promises an "Italy first" programme, a rigid asylum policy and a Europe close to its citizens. However, there is no current manifesto in place. At the beginning, Lega was primarily politically active in the north of the country, and is now active throughout the whole of Italy.



Noteworthy party

The Five Star Movement (M5S), a Eurosceptic and populist centrist party with its lead candidate, Luigi Di Maio, has lost in popularity since forming a coalition government with Lega. It is unclear which political group it will associate itself with at the European level. M5S is a champion of more opportunities for direct democracy at the European level.



Lead candidates



Matteo Salvini
Lega



Luigi Di Maio
M5S



Nicola Zingaretti
Partito Democratico



Developments key to the elections

For the first time ever, Italy has been governed by populist movements since June 2018, the Five Star Movement (M5S) and Lega. The balance of power in government has changed since then: Lega has transformed from the weaker partner to the stronger partner. In the 2014 European elections, the former regional party Lega Nord only managed to pick up 6% of votes. Salvini's aim is to form a new right-wing political group in the European Parliament in order to change Europe "from the inside". The sole Italian EEP party, Forza Italia, has fallen away, and the socialist Democratic Party has attempted to make gains with an extremely broad alliance of centre-left parties. M5S is standing on its own.



Press reaction

Lega emerged as the clear winner from the European election, with the biggest loser being the Five Star Movement. The Italian daily newspaper "La Stampa" ran with the following headline: "Landslide: Lega Boom, M5S Bust". M5S not only lost right-wing votes to its coalition partner Lega, it also lost left-wing votes to PD. The "government is upside-down", wrote Stefano Folli in "La Repubblica". The paper feared the emergence of "black shadows", following the success of the right-wing populists Lega and Brothers of Italy.

KAS analysis

Compared to the parliamentary elections in 2018, Lega was able to double their votes, while M5S received half the number of votes; after just a year or so in office, approximately 50% of Italians continue to support this unusual government alliance.

The results from the European election and the resulting consequences have predominantly been interpreted in a national context by the various political forces. Lega initially retained its coalition in place with M5S, but has put forward demands to implement its domestic objectives, such as introducing a flat rate of tax, a security decree and implementing the TAV high speed rail link.

In terms of the EU, this election result leaves Salvini feeling more confident to flex his muscles. He intends to form the "European Alliance of Peoples and Nations" political group in the European Parliament, which he hopes will include 100 to 150 MEPs.

However, conflict seems inevitable; on 5 June, the EU published a report on Italy's public finances. Salvini has previously pointed out that he wants to re-negotiate the stability criteria, including, in particular, the 3 percent budget deficit rule.

Lega has demanded the future Italian EU Commissioner is chosen from among its ranks, and should be given a key portfolio. The areas of agriculture, economy and competition have been specified.



Latvia

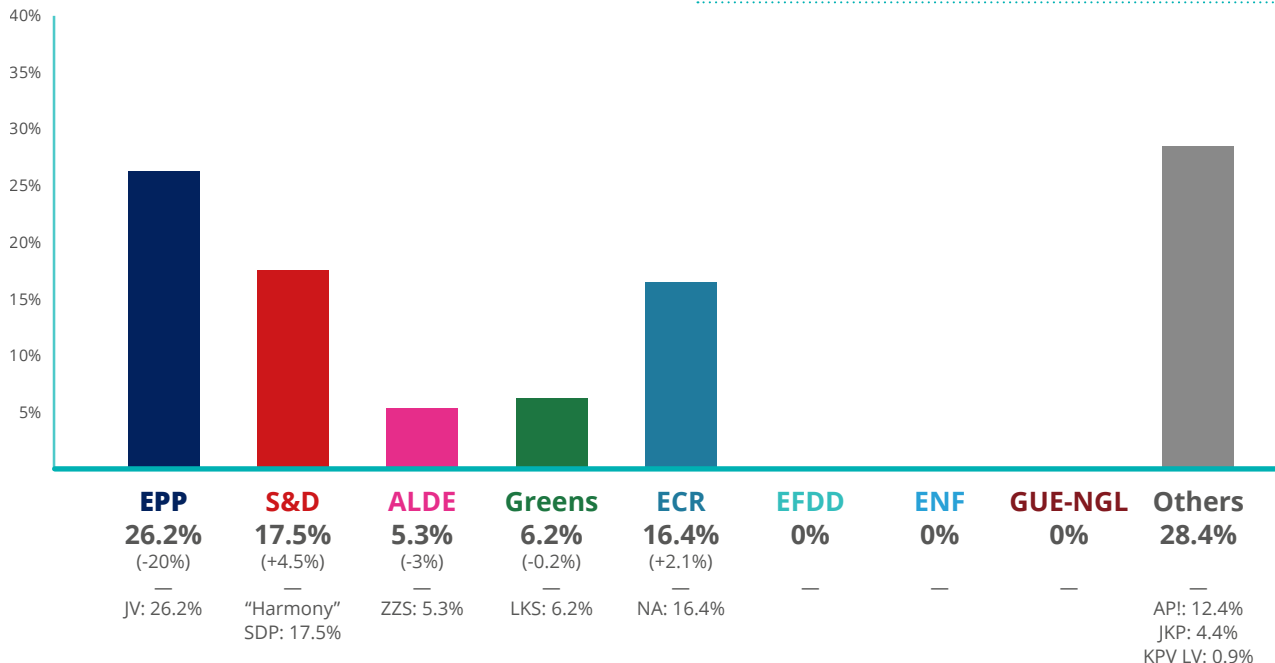


8 seats

Threshold clause: 5%



34%



Seats

2

2

0

1

2

0

0

0

1



Largest party

The Unity Party (JV) was established in this particular form in 2011, made up of a combination of several liberal-conservative parties. It suffered losses in the 2018 elections at the national level, but is in charge of the current governing coalition with Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš. It is a member of the EPP political group at the European level.



Noteworthy party

The second largest party in the national parliamentary elections, the populist and Eurosceptic party, KPV LV, saw its popularity plummet in the period leading up to the European elections, falling from 16 percent to just one percent of the vote, meaning that it failed to beat the 5% threshold. Reasons for this included internal disputes, which also had a very negative impact nationally. The party was first established in 2016.

Lead candidates



Valdis Dombrovskis
Jaunā Vienotība (JV)



Nils Ušakovs
"Harmony" Party (SDP)



Roberts Zīle
National Alliance (NA)



Developments key to the elections

Following the parliamentary elections the previous autumn and the protracted efforts to form a government, the new parties and movements divided themselves up with regard to the European elections and put forward European candidates for the first time. Ahead of the elections for the European Parliament, the subjects of environment and climate, security and agriculture all played a key role in particular. The main areas of overlap between the Latvian parties were in the areas of the EU Single Market, the EU budget and the approach to migration. On the contrary, the issues of how to deal with national minorities, labour migration and the future of the EU indicated different attitudes. Voter turnout for the European Parliament elections is traditionally low in Latvia, something that can generally be attributed to the perception that it is difficult to accomplish a great deal as a small country with just eight seats in the European Parliament.



Press reaction

The national press focused in particular on the clear election victory by the conservatives, who have experienced significant decline in recent years, and put this into context with the overall result.

Latvian reports also focused on the renewed low voter turnout, as it had been expected that there would be greater voter interest given the new options available to cast your vote, as well as the mood in Europe generally..

KAS analysis

Despite a number of innovations with regard to the options available for voting (polling stations had opened three days prior to election day, and there was also the option to vote from abroad for the very first time), voter turnout in Latvia, although higher, remained significantly lower than in other Member States. However, the percentage of voters reflected the share of the population who had stated in opinion polls that they were interested in politics. The conservative Unity Party (Jaunā Vienotība) did surprisingly well, appearing to have overcome the crisis they have experienced in recent years.

As has been the case previously, Latvian society is divided along ethnic lines in its voting behaviour. The vast majority of Russian-speaking Latvians also voted for the Social Democratic Party "Harmony" (Saskaņa SDP) or the pro-Moscow Latvian Russian Union (LKS) in these elections, and do not feel as though they are adequately represented by the other parties. On the contrary, Latvian-speaking voters cast their votes in a broader fashion. Unlike the parliamentary elections the previous autumn, opinion polls indicated the parties' political experience and competence at the European level played a major role in deciding who to vote for.



Lithuania

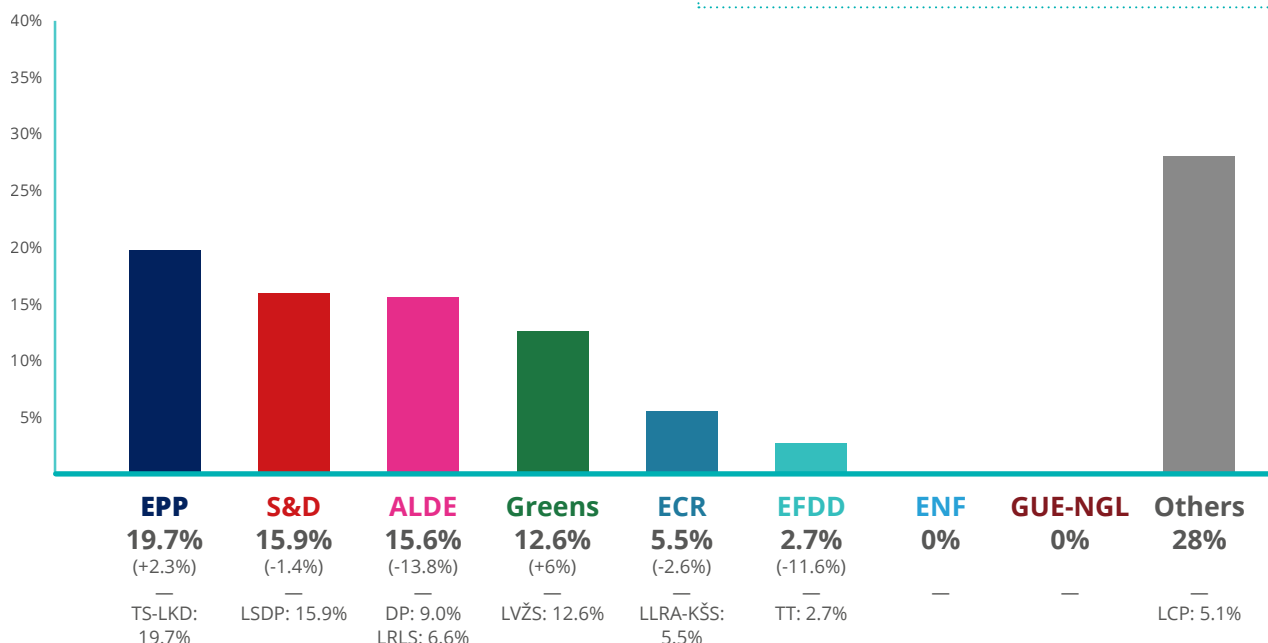


11 seats

Threshold clause: 5%



53%



Seats 3 2 2 2 1 0 0 0 1



Largest party

The Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD) party formed in 2008 as a result of several mergers and is the country's most important conservative party. It stands for a free market economy, establishing ties between Lithuania and the West and protecting the country's national identity. It forms part of the opposition at the national level, and it is a member of the EEP political group at the

Noteworthy developments

For the first time in Lithuanian history, five civic election committees stood in the European elections. These lists of candidates were formed without party allegiance around personalities or thematic priorities. In the opinion polls conducted prior to the elections, some of the committees were extremely popular, one of which ultimately managed to enter into parliament.



Lead candidates



Liudas Mažylis

Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD)



Vilija Blinkevičiūtė

Social Democrats (LSDP)



Bronis Ropė

Farmers and Greens (LVŽS)



Developments key to the elections

The European Parliament elections took place at the same time as the second round of presidential elections and were thematically overlapped by the latter. At the same time, the elections for the highest office of state resulted in higher voter turnout than in the previous European elections in 2014. The vote within the country has been very pro-European for many years; unlike in many other Member States, a Eurosceptic populist movement does not play any role in Lithuania. The governing party (Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union) attracted attention prior to the vote with the announcement that it would withdraw from its national responsibility if it lost the presidential and European elections. However, it remained in office after losing the presidential elections and emphasised its own responsibility for the country.



Press reaction

Due to the presidential elections taking place in parallel, reporting in Lithuania focused more on the new Head of State rather than the elections for the European Parliament. With regard to the European elections, it was noted in particular that the parties forming the opposition in the national parliament in Vilnius were the winners in the elections for the European Parliament and will now be sending more representatives to Brussels.

KAS analysis

Voter turnout in the European elections was influenced in a positive manner by the increased interest in the elections for the office of state president taking place in parallel. Both opposition parties (the conservative Homeland Union – Lithuanian Christian Democrats and the social democratic LSDP) received the most votes and will therefore be sending the largest number of representatives to the European Parliament. The huge amount of trust placed in the EU by the Lithuanian people, according to the “Euro barometer”, was reflected in an extremely pro-European election result. Eurosceptic or anti-EU parties continue to have no real traction in Lithuania either.

Of the five civic election committees standing for election, one of them managed to enter into the European Parliament and now has a single representative in Brussels and Strasbourg. Dr. Aušra Maldeikienė, an economist and national member of parliament, formed her committee shortly before the elections and plans to affiliate with a pro-European political group in the European Parliament. With regard to the election committees, it remains to be seen whether they can also establish themselves in future as an alternative to the traditional party system, or whether the established party structures can prevail again.



Luxembourg



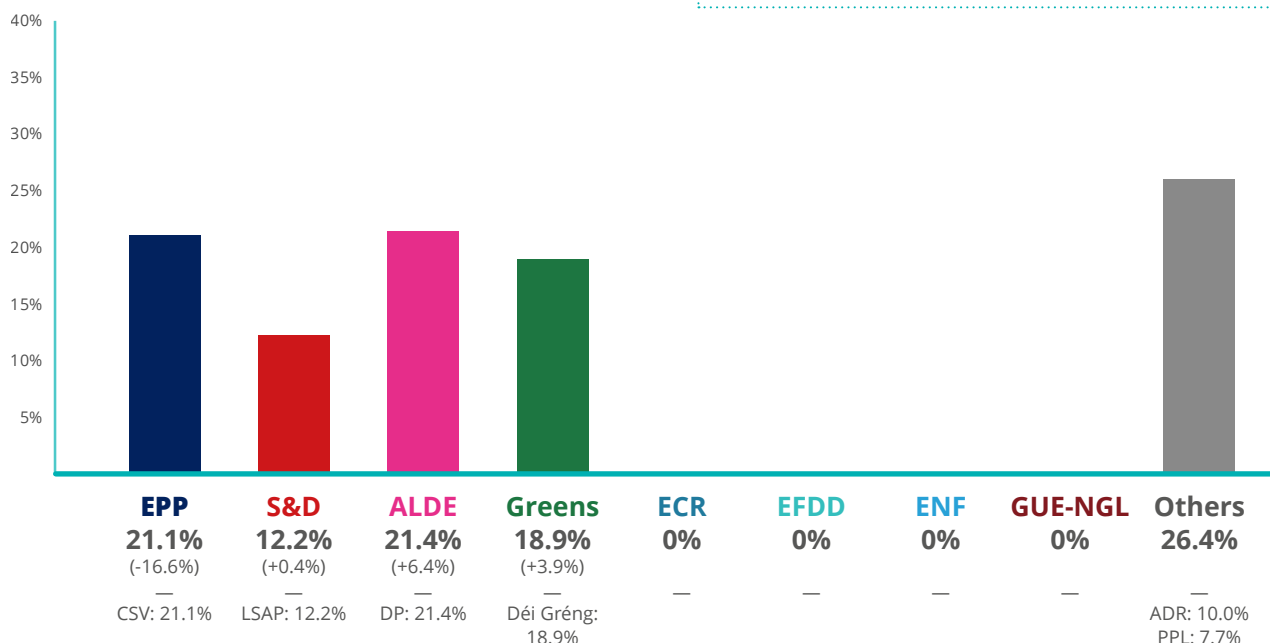
6 seats

Threshold clause: none



84%

(mandatory voting)



Seats 2 1 2 1 0 0 0 0 0



Largest party

The Democratic Party (DP) is a liberal party, which put forward Xavier Bettel as Prime Minister for the second time. The DP is currently in a governing coalition with the LSAP and the Greens. It is a member of the ALDE political group at the European level and a vocal supporter of the EU.



Noteworthy party

The Greens (Déi Gréng), the green party of Luxembourg, was formed in 1983. This one-time protest party, which originated from an anti-nuclear and peace movement, entered government for the first time in 2013 and is currently the fourth largest party in parliament. The Greens (Déi Gréng) are co-led by Djuna Bernard and Christian Kmiotek. The party primarily stands for a green and social Europe.



Lead candidates



Christophe Hansen
Christian Social People's Party (CSV)



Charles Goerens
Democratic Party (DP)



Tilly Metz
The Greens (Déi Gréng)



Developments key to the elections

Following the parliamentary elections in 2018, the three-party coalition in government since 2013, made up of the liberal Democratic Party (DP), the Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (LSAP) and the Greens (Déi Gréng), remained in office. The Christian Social People's Party (CSV) emerged as the largest political party in terms of the number of votes, but remained in opposition. Climate issues and social topics such as the European minimum wage are the defining elements of social and political discourse at the present time. In addition, the recent "Bausch affair", the potential involvement of Green Minister François Bausch in legal matters, has also triggered a debate about the separation of powers in the country. The opposition party The Left (Déi Lénk) demanded an investigation into the relationship between the judiciary and the government in Luxembourg, while the CSV opted against such a political investigation.



Press reaction

The Greens (Déi Gréng) in Luxembourg have also benefited from the "green wave" throughout Europe, with the party becoming the third largest in the country (L'essentiel).

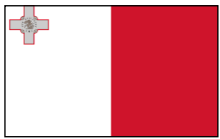
Prime Minister Xavier Bettel's liberal party has won an historic election victory. (sr.de)

CSV no longer the largest European party for the first time: "The loss is of its own making; voters confirmed that the list of candidates was no better than second best."

(Luxemburger Wort)

KAS analysis

The results in Luxembourg reinforce the trend that started in the chamber elections in 2018, and which have also become apparent in places at the European level too: the conservative CSV lost its position as the leading party in the European Parliament, losing massive amounts of votes and being overtaken by the liberal DP. The Greens enjoyed success once again, proving that there is currently a great deal of awareness among the Luxembourg people with regard to environmental issues. However, this success should result in mounting pressure on the party over the next few months to deliver specific results. It is noticeable that Luxembourg differs from many other Member States with regard to the right-wing political spectrum. Despite the upward trend seen throughout Europe, the ADR was unable to win a seat in the European Parliament. The conclusion to be drawn here is that the skilful use of its lead candidates like Charles Goerens is what appears to have been the liberal election winner's recipe for success in Luxembourg. The country has voted for "powerful minds" and, with the all-time lowest election result achieved by the Christian-social CSV, the party has joined this Europe-wide trend towards a split party landscape and the lack of clear majorities. As a result, the current government in Luxembourg has gained approval, but at the same time the pressure has increased on the winning parties to deliver results, along with the need for the CSV to have a rethink.



Malta

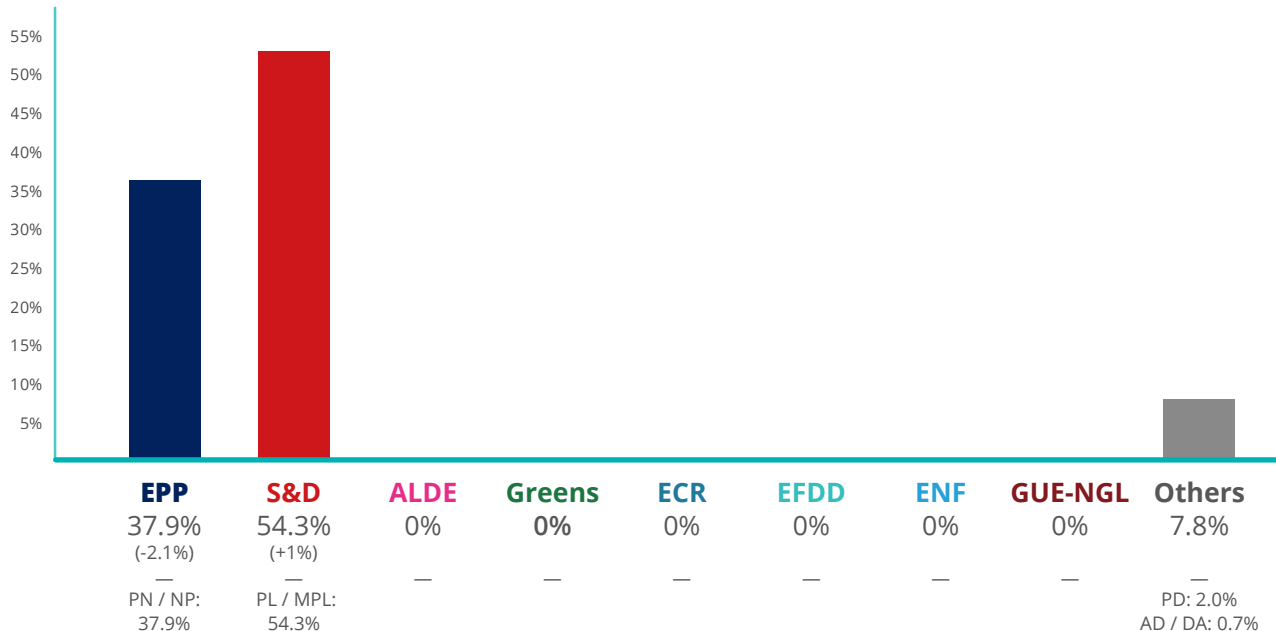


6 seats

Threshold clause: none



73%



Seats 2 4 0 0 0 0 0 0 0



Largest party

At the present time, the social democratic Labour Party (Partit Laburista), which was formed back in 1992, is 15 percentage points ahead of the Christian-democratic PN party, which is on approximately 19 percent according to opinion polls. PL, under the leadership of Joseph Muscat, stood with 14 candidates along with the slogan "Malta in our heart". It is part of the S&D political group at the European level.



Noteworthy party

The Christian-democratic Nationalist Party (Nazzjonalista) was formed back in 1880 as an "anti-reform party" in order to provide opposition against the colonial power of Great Britain. PN, which belongs to the EEP political group, led Malta into the EU back in 2004. The party has long had close links to the Catholic Church and is known as an advocate of human rights.

Lead candidates



Joseph Muscat
Partit Laburista



Adrian Delia
Partit Nazzjonalista



Developments key to the elections

Malta has a two-party system involving parties that are almost identical in size. The social democratic Labour Party (Partit Laburista, PL), which was voted in as the governing party in the elections held in June 2017 (55%), has been in government since 2013. In doing so, the PL displaced the Christian-democratic Nationalist Party (Partit Nazzjonalista, PN), which had been in power since 1998. The most important issues for both parties in the European elections were corruption, money laundering and the challenges posed by migration. Adrian Delia, PN leader, accused the governing party of wanting to legalise abortion in Malta. This would not happen with the PN in charge, stated Delia. 98% of the Maltese population on Malta are Roman Catholic.



Press reaction

Breakthrough success for the Labour Party. It achieved the best result at the European level. Pressure mounted on party leader Delia following the PN's poor election result; he refused to resign and confirmed his desire to "continue forward on the present path". However, it appears that a change of course is what is required. According to the blogger Manuel Delia, thousands of PN voters only cast their vote for the party due to the fact that the representatives Roberta Metsola and David Casa were standing for the party.

KAS analysis

The domestic political consequences of the election result will become apparent in the next few days: counting in the municipal elections, which took place in all 68 municipalities, was due to commence on the Wednesday. It remains to be seen how well the two main parties will perform. Voter turnout, for example, was very low in two cities regarded as "PN municipalities".

Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, who clinched a triumphant victory with the PL, has previously announced that he will not stand again at the national level. His term in office is due to run until 2022. He has coveted a role in Brussels for some time now. He believes he has a good chance of assuming such a role following his election success. However, it is unclear which post he is looking to fill at the European level.

The far-right party Imperium Europa, led by the Holocaust denier Norman Lowell, managed to pick up a large number of votes. Although other right-wing populist parties gained representation, he had by far and away been able to mobilise the most voters from this voter base.

The Maltese people were also able to take part in these elections at the age of 16 for the very first time. The PL, which had mobilised new and young voters, was primarily able to benefit from this. The PN lost many votes – particularly due to the fact that traditional PN voters stayed away from the elections.



Netherlands

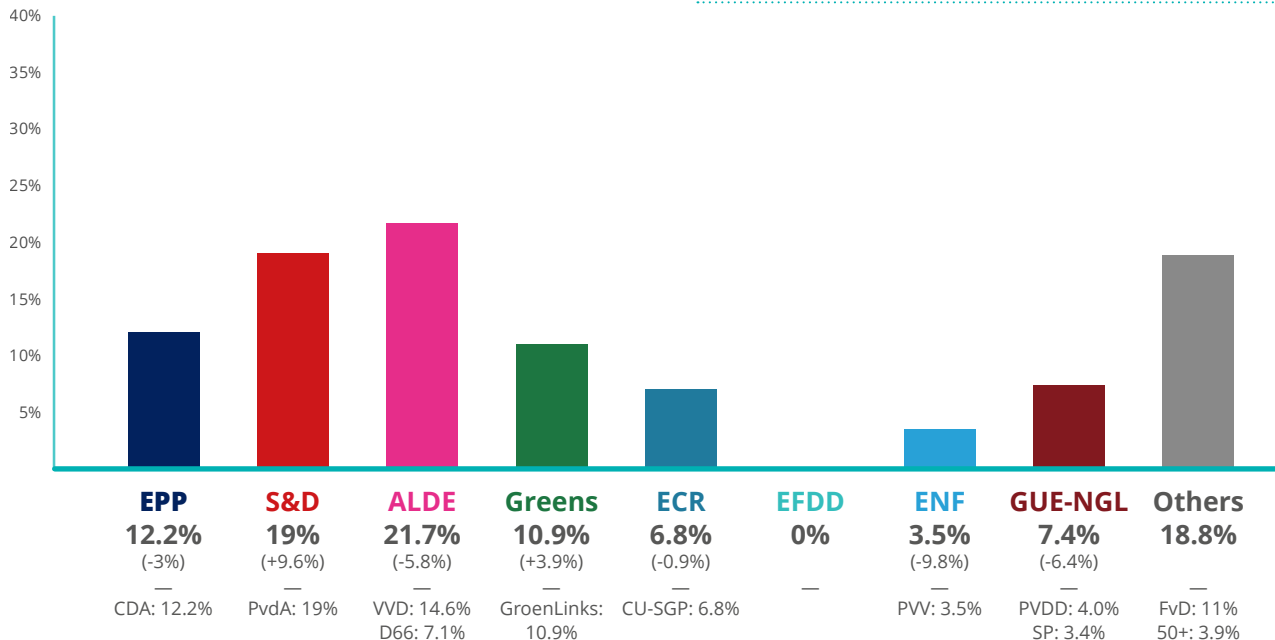


26 seats

Threshold clause: none



42%



Seats 4 6 6 3 2 0 0 1 4



Largest party

The Labour Party (PvdA) in its current form was founded in 1946 and is a social democratic party. It stood with Frans Timmermans as the lead candidate for the S&D political group at the European level. It is the largest opposition party at the national level and had been predicted to perform much more poorly in the forecasts for the European elections.



Noteworthy party

The Forum for Democracy (FvD) was formed in 2015 and is regarded as a right-wing populist and Eurosceptic party. It wants a referendum on membership of the Eurozone and, ultimately, the EU, and was the largest political force for the very first time in the provincial elections held in March 2019. However, it performed significantly worse than expected in the European elections.

Lead candidates



Frans Timmermans
PvdA



Malik Azmani
VVD



Esther de Lange
CDA



Developments key to the elections

Following the provincial elections, which took place on 20 March 2019 and resulted in significant losses for the governing parties, the European elections were the second vote held within a matter of a few weeks. Ahead of the elections, the established parties attempted to bring European issues to the fore, focusing primarily on further consolidation of European collaboration in various areas. The Common Security and Defence Policy as well as the development of a European army were specifically made the subject of discussion time and time again. Meanwhile, the Socialist Party and the right-wing populist Forum for Democracy attempted to use Eurosceptic policies to focus on national issues, such as immigration or energy and environmental issues, and direct them towards the institutions of the European Union.



Press reaction

Situation in the European Parliament same as in the Netherlands: three or four parties required in order to gain a stable majority. (NOS)

Timmermans was the only candidate with a high degree of recognition, which had an impact on the result. Increase in support for the Social Democrats ensures that the PVV and SP are no longer represented in the European Parliament. Forum and Left/Greens are the other winners in the elections.

(De Volkskrant)

KAS analysis

The Social Democrats' election victory was a surprise for many observers - including on the basis of the various forecasts suggesting otherwise - but this can predominantly be attributed to the role played by the national and European lead candidate, Frans Timmermans. The second largest party was Prime Minister Mark Rutte's VVD, the front-runner in most opinion polls, which was able to make slight gains compared to the previous elections. The liberal D66 party (the election winner back in 2014) suffered significant losses and halved its share of the vote; the Christian-democratic CDA also performed worse than in 2014, albeit significantly better than expected in the opinion polls.

The shift to the right that had been feared failed to materialise. The Forum for Democracy, formed just a few years ago by party leader Thierry Baudet, and the leading party in the provincial elections held in March, received 10.9 percent of votes, which was significantly below its own expectations. The PVV party, in existence for a longer period of time under the leadership of Geert Wilders, was well back in tenth place with 3.5 percent of votes and will no longer be represented in the European Parliament.



Poland

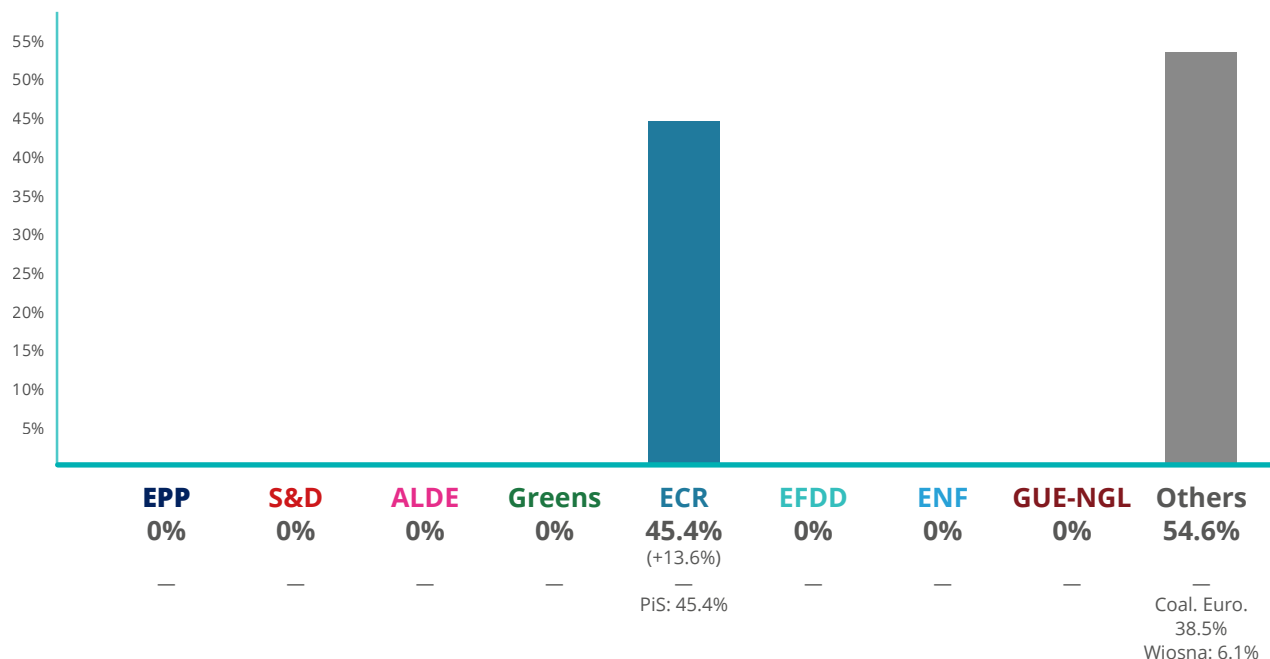


51 seats

Threshold clause: 5%



46%



Seats

0

0

0

0

27

0

0

0

15



Largest party

The largest party in Poland is the PiS party, which has had an absolute majority in the Sejm since 2015. It is critical of the EU, characterised by its welfare policy (including child benefit, among others) as well as its national-conservative ideology. It is sceptical of deepening EU integration and is therefore demanding the transfer of an increasing amount of powers to the nation states.



Noteworthy party

A broad, pro-European electoral alliance called the „European Coalition” was established under the leadership of the liberal Civic Platform (PO). In addition to the EEP members, the PO and the Polish People's Party (PSL), social democratic, green and liberal parties are also represented here. The joint programme in which pro-EU positions are the common denominator was presented in April.



Lead candidates



Jerzy Buzek
Koalicja Europejska



Beata Szydło
PiS



Robert Biedroń
Wiosna



Developments key to the elections

Poland's economy continues to perform strongly. With real growth of 5.1% in the previous year and a forecast increase in GDP of 4% for 2019, the Polish economy is one of the EU's champions. The unemployment rate is at its lowest level since the transition in 1989, and 69% of Poles regard their economic situation as positive in opinion polls, the highest value since these opinion polls began.

Comprehensive welfare programmes have been introduced since 2015: child benefit for families with more than one child, building funds for young families, a reduction in the retirement age and prescriptions for pensioners have all been subsidised. In May 2019, the government intends to pay a one-off additional pension to all pensioners, extend child benefit, provide tax relief for young workers and expand local public transport.



Press reaction

"The revolution failed to materialise", commented Polityka in relation to the results of the European elections. Eurosceptics would indeed have won votes in the European Parliament. However, other pro-European groups would have offset the losses incurred by the main parties (EEP, S&D). All media outlets reported on the high voter turnout as an indicator of successful efforts to mobilise voters and mentioned the polarisation within the country. They traced the governing party's victory to the electoral programme involving a national focus and welfare incentives.

KAS-analysis

The election result confirms the balance of power in Poland. The PiS party won with 45.6% of votes, coming out on top over the pro-European Coalition (38.3%). The third largest party, which entered into the European Parliament with 6% of votes, was the progressive-liberal Spring (Wiosna) party, which attracted young, urban voters. In the election campaign, which was regarded as a dress rehearsal for the parliamentary elections in the autumn, the governing party focused on comprehensive welfare programmes as the dominant subject matter. These elections were not a verdict on Europe's direction or even a referendum about Poland's membership of the EU, as evoked by the opposition.

There was a surprising fall in voter turnout. The highest share ever in European Parliament elections (43.8%) provided the PiS with a solid mandate. As a result, it will fight the election campaign in the autumn in a strengthened position and will examine the membership of political groups in the European Parliament with a new level of confidence. With 27 seats, it would be the largest member of the European Conservatives and Reformists political group, but it would need to attract other representatives or parties in order to ensure it is not marginalised by the Eurosceptics and right-wing populists.



Portugal

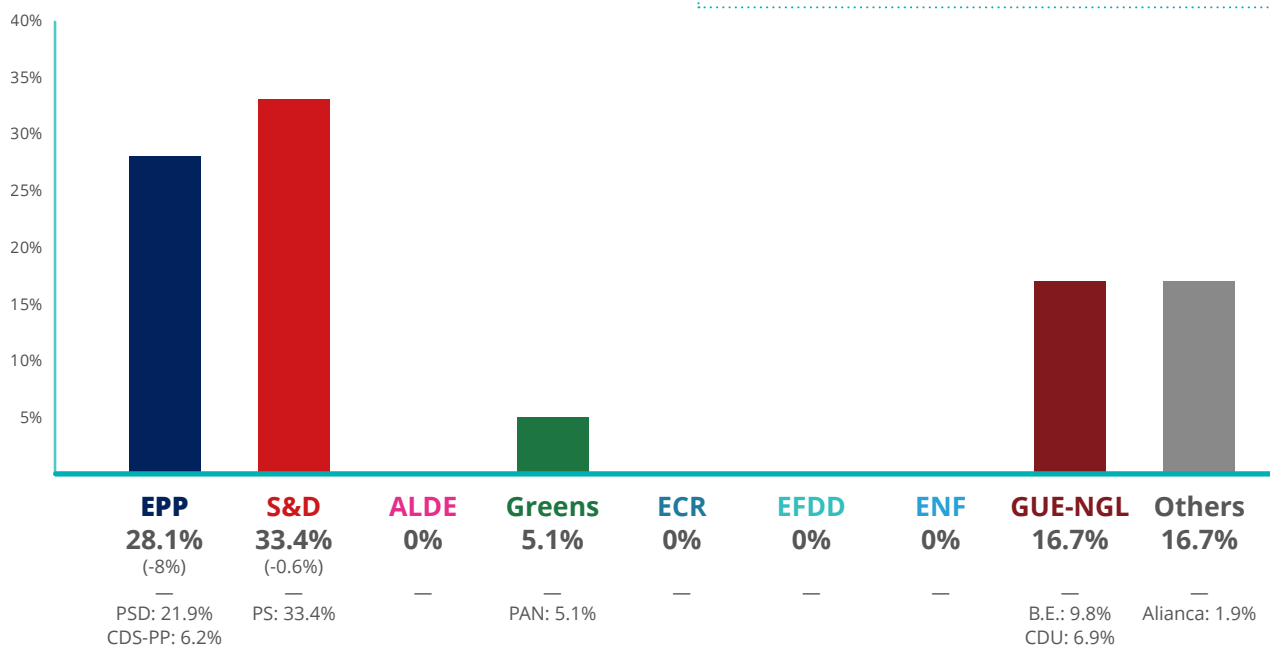


21 seats

Threshold clause: none



31%



Seats **7** **9** **0** **1** **0** **0** **0** **4** **0**



Largest party

Despite its election defeat in 2015, the Socialist Party (PS) has since formed a socialist minority government in a one-off alliance with left-wing parties. The party was heavily critical of EU austerity measures during the course of the financial crisis and reversed a whole raft of established austerity measures after gaining power. The PS Secretary-General is António Costa.



Noteworthy party

The Social Democratic Party (PSD), founded in 1974, is the second largest party according to opinion polls. The party is an advocate of economic liberal and conservative values and was the driving force behind the implementation of the austerity measures demanded by the EU. The party is currently in opposition. Rui Rio was elected as the party's leader in 2018.

Lead candidates



Pedro Marques
Partido Socialista



Paulo Rangel
Partido Social Democrata



Marisa Matias
Bloco de Esquerda



Developments key to the elections

The informal left-wing governing coalition has also proven to be stable in its third year, thanks to positive developments in the economy and labour market, and the socialist Prime Minister Costa also has high approval ratings. Given these circumstances, the opposition has struggled to put pressure on the government. It is possible that the government crisis at the beginning of May could have impacted the result of the European elections. Prime Minister Costa threatened to resign if the opposition enforced the retroactive repeal of the freezing of teachers' salaries and the associated high budgetary expenditure. It is noted in general that there are no notable left-wing or right-wing populist movements in Portugal.



Press reaction

"PS aguenta, PSD e CDS afogam-se, PAN estreia-se" (translates as "PS holds firm, PSD and CDS fall back, PAN makes its debut") Público

"A vencedora das Europeias: a abstenção [...] E se querem procurar dois culpados [...]: classe política portuguesa e a União Europeia" (translates as "The winner of the European elections: abstentionism - and if you are looking for the two guilty parties here, they are the political class in Portugal and the European Union") Observador

KAS-analysis

Unlike other European countries, the right-wing and left-wing radical parties did not play a relevant role in these elections. The Portuguese people generally have a positive view of the EU. However, it should be noted that there was a record low voter turnout with abstentions of nearly 70%. A majority of Portuguese people primarily regard the European Parliament as a tool for the major states, with no relevant representation of Portuguese interests offered by way of the 21 MEPs, and confirmed their lack of interest in these elections on 26 May.

The Socialist Party, which is currently in government as part of a left-wing alliance, won the election with a clear lead of more than 11%. Both EEP parties, the PSD and CDS-PP, have struggled to put pressure on the government since the start of the parliamentary term. They retained the same number of seats as in 2014. Even though the PSD still had hopes for a better result a few weeks beforehand, it failed to achieve its objective of adding seats.

Coming as a surprise with more than 5% of votes, the People-Animals-Nature party (PAN), which was formed in 2009 and put forward a representative for the national parliament for the very first time in 2015.



Romania

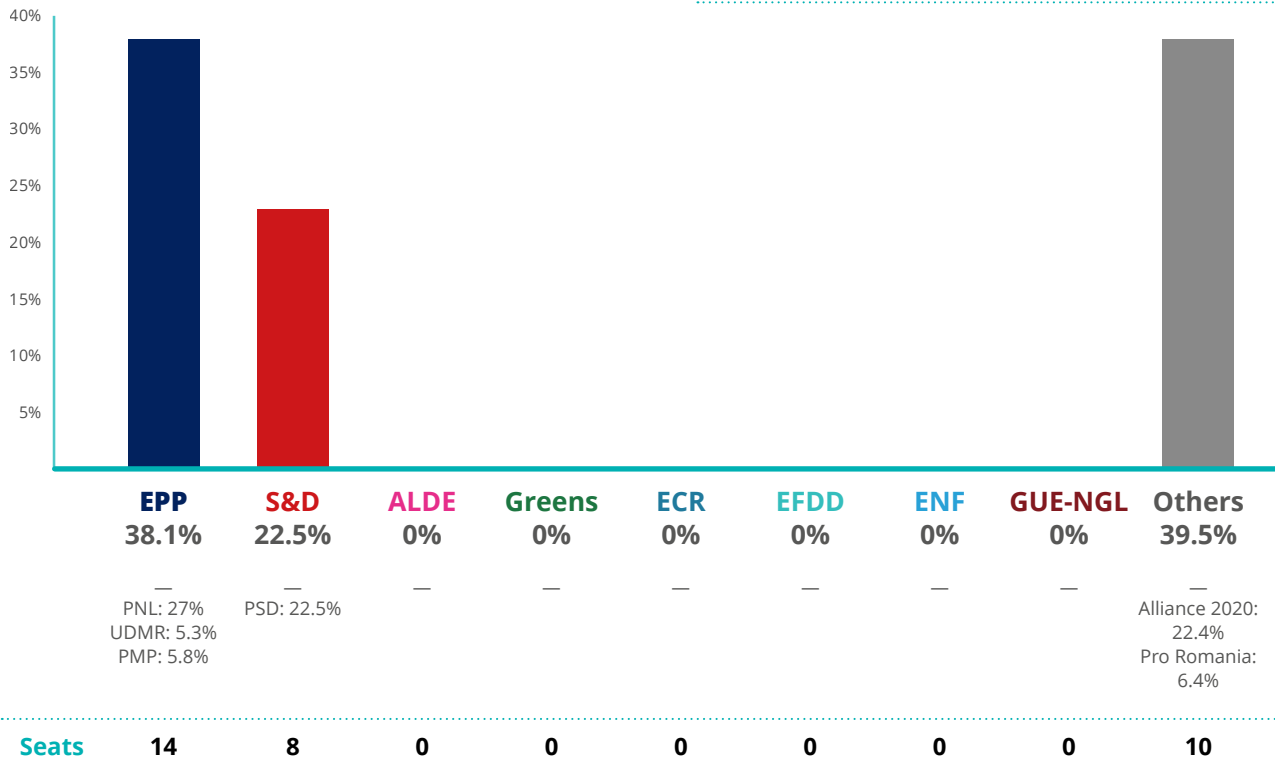


32 seats

Threshold clause: 5%



51%



Largest party

The largest party was the National Liberal Party (PNL), which is also supported by President Klaus Iohannis.

As an EEP member, the conservative-liberal party clearly positioned itself as a pro-European party, defending the rule of law as well as the benefits of the country's membership of the EU during the course of domestic political debates.



Noteworthy party

The second largest party in Romania is the Social Democratic Party (PSD). Its leader, Liviu Dragnea, is regarded as the country's most powerful politician. The PSD is based on a mix of social clientelism and national conservatism, meaning therefore that it is described in many cases as left-wing nationalist. It presents itself as a defender of Romanian interests against "Western paternalism".

Lead candidates



Rovana Plump
PSD



Rares Bogdan
PNL



Dacian Cioloș
Alliance 2020



Developments key to the elections

The debate lasting more than two years regarding the position of the rule of law and anti-corruption measures proved to be key to the outcome of the European elections. While the governing Social Democratic Party (PSD) and its coalition partner ALDE made systematic attempts to undermine the independence of the judiciary, President Klaus Iohannis, the opposition including, among others, the PNL (National Liberal Party) and the Romania 2020 alliance, made clear statements in favour of strengthening the state governed by the rule of law.

For the first time since the country's accession to the EU in 2007, explicitly Eurosceptic language and electoral slogans were noted in the governing parties' political discourse. The PSD attempted in particular to present Romania as a victim of Western interests and a second-class member of the EU to which double standards would be applied by Brussels.



Press reaction

The massive voter turnout as well as the strong results achieved by the PNL and USR-PLUS were interpreted by the press as a protest vote against the governing PSD and/or its leader, Liviu Dragnea. The following day, the latter was sentenced to a prison term on the grounds of incitement to abuse of authority. The fact that the most powerful politician for many years had to go to prison immediately after the elections dominated the extremely controversial media reporting at times, in addition to the opposition's election victory.

KAS-analysis

With regard to the European elections, which took place at the same time as a referendum on the rule of law called by President Klaus Iohannis, there was an unexpected voter turnout, which was very high given the local conditions. The election result can in particular be regarded as a protest against the governing Social Democratic Party (PSD), which has undermined the independence of the judiciary and initiated anti-corruption measures in the past two years. On the other hand, the PNL and USR-PLUS put forward a strategy that clearly differed from the PSD whilst simultaneously defending the rule of law. Together with the rejection of the PSD, among others, by the urban and bourgeois middle classes, the PNL and USR-PLUS were able to mobilise potential voters in a much greater manner than the PSD. The PSD emerged from the elections in a weakened position, even though it had barely lost any votes at all, or only lost a limited number of votes in absolute terms compared to previous elections. In addition, the votes for Pro Romania, a spin-off of the PSD, can therefore be allocated to the same electoral spectrum. However, only the PNL was able to increase its number of votes since the 2016 parliamentary elections by 1 million to 2.4 million.



Slovakia

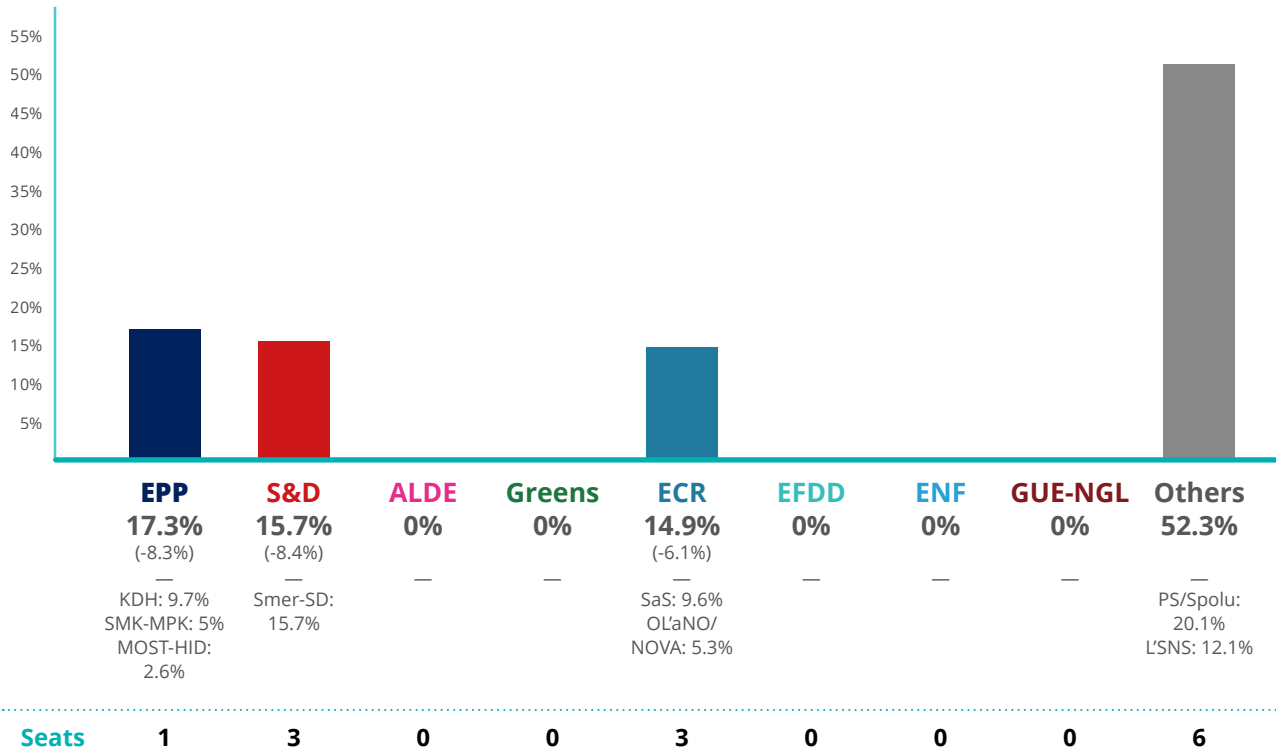


13 seats

Threshold Clause: 5%



23%



Seats 1 3 0 0 3 0 0 0 6



Largest party

"Progressive Slovakia/Civic Democracy (Spolu)" is a coalition of two new parties for a new political culture in the country. They have already supported the election of the new president-elect, Zuzana Čaputová.

PS is a left-wing liberal party formed in 2017, whereas Spolu is aligned in a centre-right manner. Spolu was formed in 2018 and is looking for EEP membership.



Noteworthy party

The largest party to date in Slovakia was the governing party SMER-SD, led by the departing Prime Minister, Robert Fico. It is a social democratic party in name only. It is aligned in a left-wing and/or left-wing populist manner in finance and social issues. However, it also assumes traditional or even national-populist perspectives on societal issues.

Lead candidates



Monika Benova
SMER-SD



Michal Simecka
PS-Spolu



Ivan Stefanec
KDH



Developments key to the elections

The dominant government position over many years, corruption cases and heightened tension in society following the assassination of the journalist Jan Kuciak and his fiancée resulted in significant losses for the previously dominant governing party, Smer-SD. The call for political change was particularly noticeable, reflected by the election of the legal expert and environmental activist Zuzana Čaputová to become the state president, as well as the new "Progressive Slovakia - Together" electoral coalition.

The complexity of the political landscape was promoted by the existence of anti-establishment parties as well as the right-wing extremist LSNS party. Three groups with the letter "C" in their names all tried to attract voters from the traditional Christian parties. Some of these votes were "lost" due to the 5% threshold.



Press reaction

"The European elections confirmed the trend for change", SME daily newspaper, liberal

"European elections: a triumph for progressives, conservatives manage to survive", Postoj online paper, conservative

"The main issue in the elections was the fight against the extremist LSNS", Director of the AKO Institute for the Hospodárske noviny business newspaper

"Despite SMER's fourth loss in succession, Fico sees a bright future for his party and is attacking his political opponents", Denník N daily newspaper, liberal, close to Progressive Slovakia

KAS-analysis

Voter turnout, which almost doubled compared to 2014, indicates the fact that some voters were more aware of the importance of the European Parliament elections.

The result can be seen as an election victory for the pro-European parties.

The call for change in politics at the national level is reflected in the election victory for the new "Progressive Slovakia/Civic Democracy (Spolu)" coalition, winning four seats. The largest governing party, SMER-SD, received three seats (-1 compared to 2014), and the governing partners SNS and Most-Híd were unable to beat the 5% threshold. National parliamentary elections are due to take place in spring 2020.

For the very first time, Slovakia will send two representatives from the right-wing extremist party "Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia" (LSNS) to the European Parliament.

When compared to 2014 (six seats gained for four EEP parties), the non-parliamentary group, the KDH, was able to retain its position with two seats (one seat of which will only come into force after Brexit), the SMK just fell short of the 5% threshold with 4.96 % of votes, and Most-Híd achieving a disappointing result with just 2.59% of votes. The Civic Democracy (Spolu) party intends to apply for membership in the EEP. This would give the EEP political group two more representatives.



Slovenia

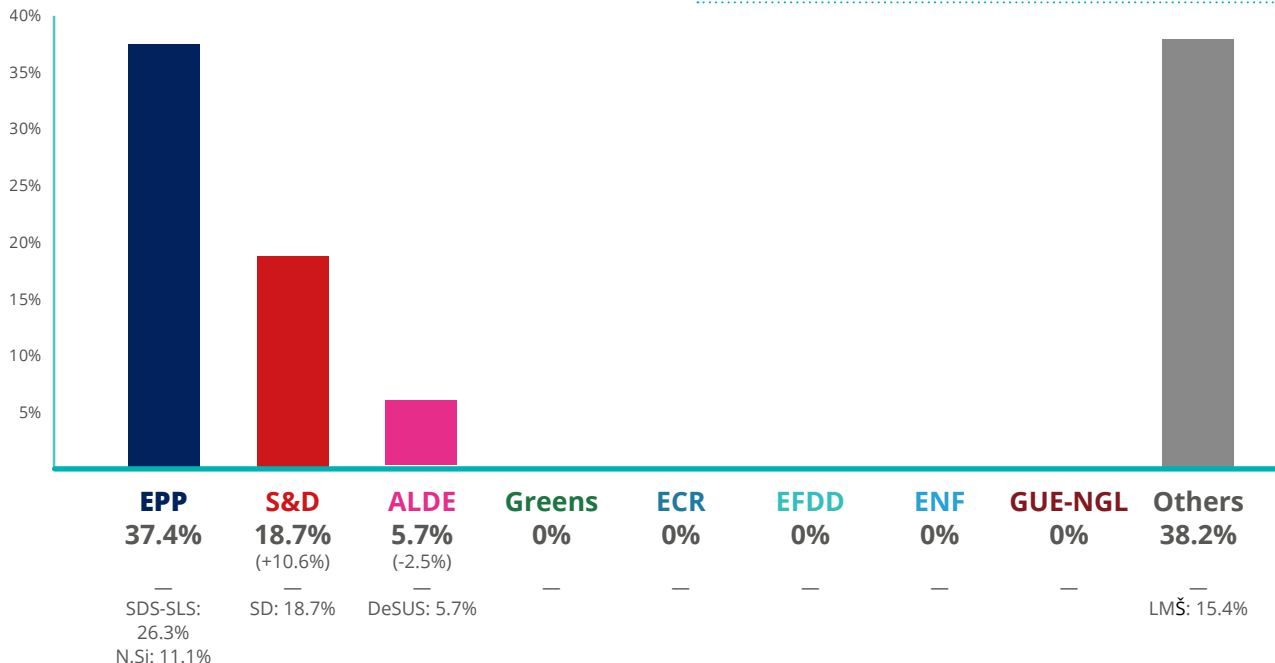


8 seats

Threshold clause: none



29%



Seats 4 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 2



Largest party

The SDS, a conservative, national-conservative party and member of the EEP, has been the largest opposition party since March 2013. Janjč Janša has been the party leader since 1993, and was also the Prime Minister of Slovenia between 2004-2008 and 2012-2013. At the 2019 European elections, the SDS stood with a joint list of candidates (SDS-SLS) for the very first time under the motto "Together we are



Noteworthy party

The "List of Marjan Šarec" (LMŠ) was formed in 2014. Marjan Šarec is regarded as social-liberal and pro-European. He has governed as Prime Minister together with a centre-left minority government since 2018. The lead candidate for the EU elections was a (politically unknown) journalist, whose motto for the EU elections was "We can succeed both at home as well as in the EU".

Lead candidates



Dr. Milan Zver
SDS



Tanja Fajon
SD



Irena Joveva
LMŠ



Developments key to the elections

In the parliamentary elections held in 2018, the SDS (EEP party) emerged as the largest party (25 out of 90 seats), but it had not won enough seats to form a government. The LMŠ, led by Marjan Šarec, had reached agreement with four other parties to form a five-party coalition taking up 43 of the 90 seats in parliament. The Left Party ("Levica") supports the government, but is not a formal member of the coalition. As a result, the leader of a new party was promoted to the role of Prime Minister for the third time in succession.

Two of the three EEP parties (the SDS and SLS, the latter with no representation in parliament) stood jointly in the European elections as a list of candidates for the EU elections.



Press reaction

Igor Kršinar, Reporter.si:

"It should be noted that the SDS would not have managed to win the third seat without the SLS."

Matija Stepišnik, Večer.si:

"If you take a closer look at matters, the centre-left has gained one seat compared to 2014, meaning therefore that the ratio with the centre-right is 4:4."

NOVA 24TV:

"The most important outcome of the European elections is the fact that the Marjan Šarc coalition no longer has any legitimacy and, as a result, the government should be dissolved as soon as possible", according to the analyst Iršič.

KAS-analysis

The European elections confirmed Slovenia's pro-European stance. The Slovenian EEP political group gained the majority, even though it had four representatives, one less than before. It is important to note within the EEP that the largest party, the SDS, and the non-parliamentary party, the SLS, cooperated with each other during the elections with a joint list of candidates. Thanks to the system of preferential votes, the SLS representatives managed to enter into parliament. The surprise from the elections was the fact that the Social Democrats managed to chalk up the first win for a left-wing party since 2009. The SMC party, led by the current Foreign Minister, was badly hit by the election results (1.60%). The Left is regarded as one of the biggest losers, as it was the only party with a candidate for the EC leadership and only managed to receive 6.34% of votes. Of the five parties forming the governing coalition, only two of the parties (the LMŠ and SD) managed to nominate any MEPs. This could well be a potential reason for future discussions regarding the stability of the government.



Spain

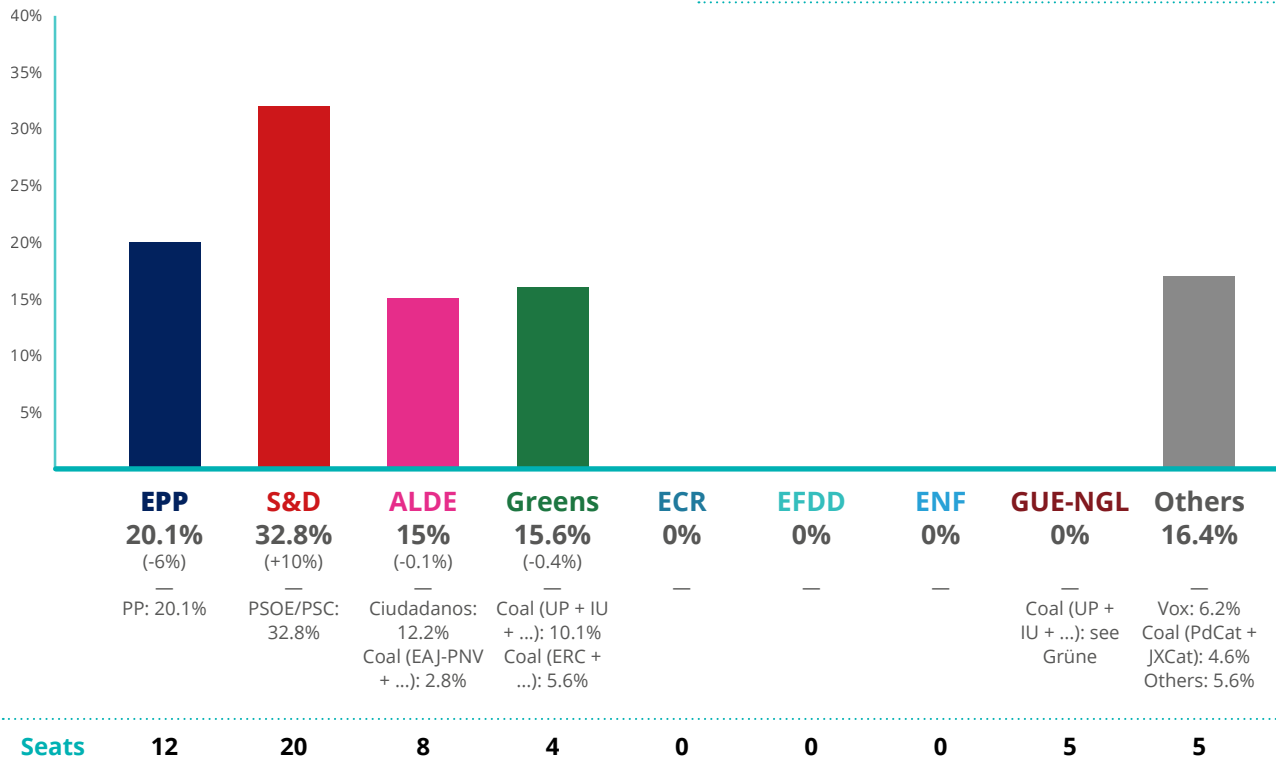


54 seats

Threshold clause: none



64%



Largest party

The social democratic Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) was formed in 1879 and currently has 123 seats. It is in favour of higher welfare spending, taxes and new borrowing, and assumes some of the positions taken by Podemos (see the 2018 budget). The PSOE forms part of the S&D political group in the European Parliament.



Noteworthy party

Vox, under the leadership of its party chairman Conde, is the right-wing populist equivalent of Podemos and benefits from disillusioned voters who reject the central government's strategy in Catalonia. The party was formed in 2013 by former members of the Popular Party (PP). Fears about Vox mobilised many left-wing voters for the elections held on 28 April 2019.

Lead candidates



Dolores Montserrat
Partido Popular



Josep Borrell
Partido Socialista Obrero Español



María Eugenia Rodríguez Palop
Unidas-Podemos



Developments key to the elections

Thanks to Unidos-Podemos and the nationalists PNV, ERC, PDECAT, Compromís, EH Bildu and New Canaries, Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) was victorious in a vote of no-confidence against the PP, held in June 2018 as a result of a corruption scandal. However, the Catalan nationalists did not support the 2018 budget. This resulted in Sánchez calling new elections to be held on 28 April. The PSOE was now able to significantly improve its position (123 seats, +39), but the PP fell back to 66 seats (-71). The result for Ciudadanos (C's) almost doubled to 57 seats (+24), with the right-wing populist Vox entering parliament for the very first time (24 seats). Several corruption scandals along with the competition with C's and Vox had weakened the PP in the past.



Press reaction

"The PSOE triumphed in the European Parliament with a gain of six seats. The PSOE last won the European elections in 2004, when Josep Borrell was the lead candidate back then. The PP, with Dolors Montserrat at the helm, posted significant losses with four less seats".

El Mundo

KAS-analysis

The lead candidate for the Socialists, Josep Borrell, was the winner of the 2019 European elections in Spain. The PSOE was the party with the most votes, gaining 32.8% of votes. The People's Party (PP), which lost four seats, took second place. Ciudadanos gained five seats, which was enough for third place. However, it is important not to overlook the fact that the UPyD party, which has since become an irrelevant force, won four seats in the previous parliamentary term, and whose voters presumably gave their vote to Ciudadanos in almost all circumstances. Nevertheless, the more than tripling of the number of seats must be regarded as a major success for the liberal centrist civic party. The left-wing populist alliance of parties made up of the United Left (Izquierda-Unida) and Podemos, known as "Unidas-Podemos", only did enough to win fourth place. Where both parties standing separately in 2014 managed to win eleven seats and 18% of the vote, both parties fell back this time to a combined total of six seats and 10% of the vote. As a result, Unidas-Podemos emerged ahead of the PP as the most dramatic loser from the European elections. Following an all-time low in the 2014 election year, voter turnout hit a peak value of 64.31%. The main reason for this is that the European elections in Spain take place at the same time as the municipal and regional elections every 20 years, the latter mobilising much greater numbers of people. The right-wing populist Vox entered into the European Parliament with three representatives, but its performance was well below the party's own expectations.



Sweden

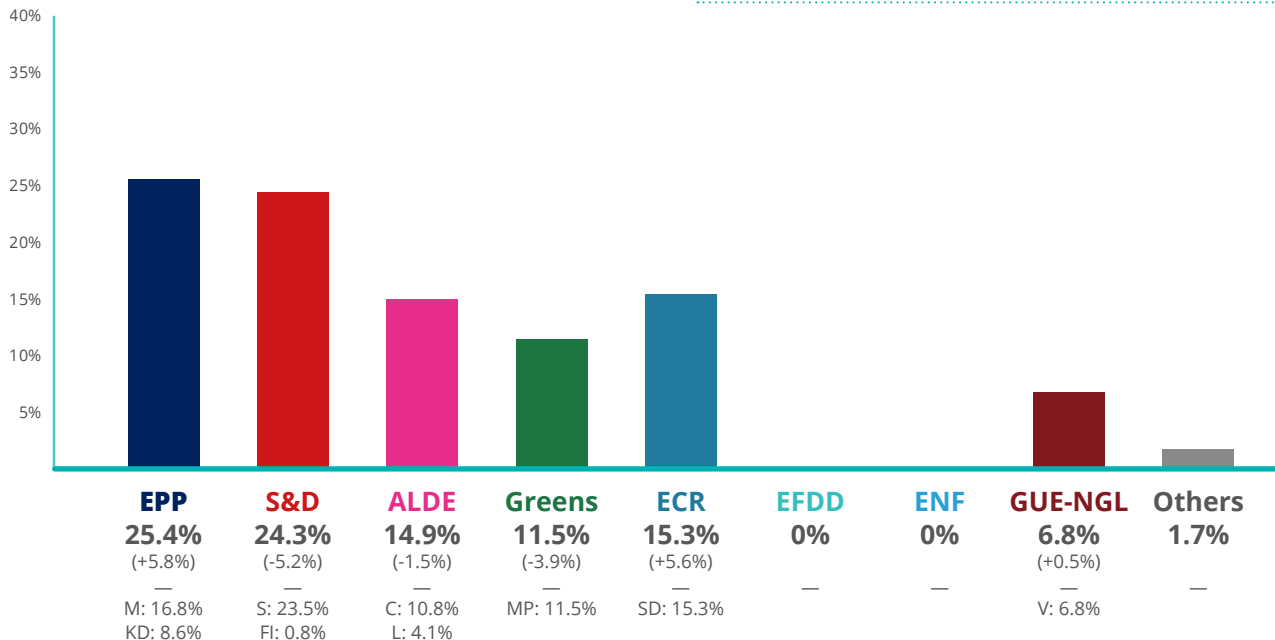


20 seats

Threshold clause: 4%



55%



Seats 6 5 3 2 3 0 0 1 0



Largest party

The Swedish Social Democratic Party (S) was formed in 1889, making it Sweden's oldest party and the current leader of the governing coalition in Stockholm. It champions the fight against right-wing extremism, increasing social equality in the EU and climate protection and is a member of the S&D political group at the European level.



Noteworthy party

The Swedish Christian Democrats (KD) have experienced an increase in growth under the leadership of Ebba Busch Thor, and are constantly polling around 10% of the vote at the national level, doing so for the first time in around 20 years. The party is an advocate of Christian social values and family policies and is one of two Swedish parties that are EPP members at the European level.

Lead candidates



Helene Fritzon
Social Democratic Party (S)



Tomas Tobé
Moderate Party (M)



Sara Skyttedal
Christian Democrats (KD)



Developments key to the elections

In the months leading up to the European elections, all of the parties confirmed that they did not want their own country to leave the EU after this had been demanded for a long period of time by the Left Party (V) and the right-wing populist Sweden Democrats (SD). These parties now want to change the European Union from the inside out together with their allies. Approval of the EU among the population had previously increased to an all-time high. European as well as national issues played a key role ahead of the elections. The schoolchildren climate protests (known as Fridays for Future), initiated by the Swede Greta Thunberg, were reflected in the manifestos of virtually all of the parties in the form of amended as well as more ambitious climate protection targets, resulting in efforts to outdo one another in this particular issue.



Press reaction

In its reporting, Svenska Dagbladet picked up on the “radical new and recurring old” conflict between liberalism and conservatism, which would be decisive for these elections, and made this clear particularly in the debates between the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats.

On the contrary, Dagens Nyheter devoted itself to Prime Minister Stefan Löfven (S) and assumed the latter would have been able to breathe a sigh of relief based on the results.

KAS-analysis

The election result highlights Sweden’s pro-European attitude, which has also led to anti-EU parties dropping their demand for their own country to leave the European Union. The chaos in the United Kingdom also plays a role in this context, providing a certain cautionary tale to Sweden, which has traditionally been closely associated with London. During the election campaign, the parties in the Stockholm governing coalition made use of the opportunity to raise their own focal points from the national to the European level and, in doing so, distance themselves from the parties to the right of centre. However, it remains to be seen whether this unity will also continue to this level of quality beyond election day.

From the EEP’s perspective, the result in Sweden is very pleasing as both the Moderate Party (M) as well as the Christian Democrats (KD) have each added a parliamentary seat compared to the previous elections. The “Greta effect” expected by many people did not pay off for the Greens at least. They saw a significant fall in support compared to 2014, and are now only represented by two representatives in the European Parliament instead of four.



United Kingdom

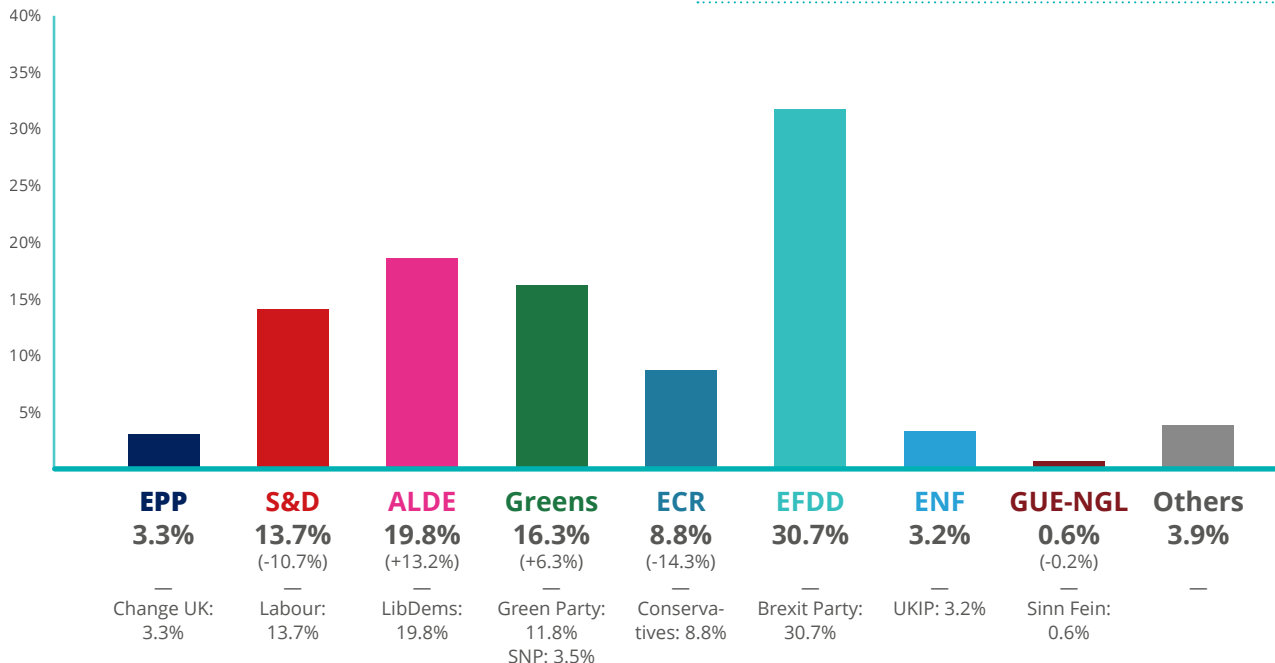


73 seats

Threshold clause: none



37%



Seats 0 10 16 11 4 29 0 1 2



Largest party

Single issue party, pro-Brexit, right-wing populist in places. It has no representatives in the national parliament and was established in January by Nigel Farage and Catherine Blaiklock.

The Brexit Party was created by former UKIP members, after the latter had increasingly begun to display extreme right-wing tendencies.



Noteworthy party

The Conservative Party (conservatism, economic liberalism, Eurosceptic) represents the Prime Minister in a minority government, and has been in government most frequently, most commonly with an absolute majority.

Prime Minister May has only had a few supporters in her party in recent times. The political heavyweights have already been preparing for a leadership contest. In fact, May resigned directly after the elections.

Lead candidates

There were no lead candidates in the United Kingdom.



Developments key to the elections

Participation in the European elections appeared to have been ruled out initially as Prime Minister May emphasised, on several occasions, the fact that she did not want to take part in the elections. After the attempts made by the Prime Minister to get Parliament to pass the EU Withdrawal Agreement failed on three separate occasions, the country now finds itself in a political impasse over Brexit. Voters punished both of the main parties (Labour and Tories), which was also the case in the recent local elections.

The Tories and Labour recently engaged in cross-party talks with the aim of reaching a compromise on Brexit. However, the talks broke down approximately one week before the elections. The mutual "blame game" played by both sides served to reinforce voter discontent. At the same time, May announced plans for another vote on the Withdrawal Agreement to be held in June.



Press reaction

"What has finally been killed off in these elections is any realistic prospect of a silent majority that is only looking for a soft Brexit [...]. No Dealers and hardcore Remainers have taken their place."

- The Guardian, left-wing liberal daily newspaper

Very little about changes in British politics can be derived from these elections [...], as no-one voted for anyone who would actually have any influence [...]" - The Daily Telegraph, conservative, Eurosceptic.

KAS-analysis

Contrary to many expectations on the continent that proved to be far too optimistic, the European elections did not reveal any changes in the basic political situation. Almost half the population aligned themselves with the Brexit position of the Brexit Party, Tories and UKIP. The other half was spread among pro-EU parties, although the Labour Party is not yet fully positioned as a pro-European party. The elections, interpreted by most as the dress rehearsal for a second EU referendum, were a manifestation of the social division running across virtually all party lines in the form of supporters and opponents of the EU.

Theresa May's loss of power since the start of the week caused the Conservatives to haemorrhage even further. Even moderate Brexiteers, owing to their fatalism and irritation, were drawn in by the charismatic figure of Nigel Farage, who is campaigning for a hard Brexit. The Liberal Democrats, who have a clear objective of stopping Brexit, stood out among EU supporters.

The European Union will be dealing with the division in the ailing Kingdom for a long time to come. Following May's resignation, the Tories are preparing for a power struggle that will not be conducive to finding a compromise.

Comments



Ranking of voter turnout rates among European Member States

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Belgium 88 % ! | 15. Poland 46 % |
| 2. Luxembourg 84 % ! | 16. Cyprus 45 % ! |
| 3. Malta 73 % | 17. Hungary 43 % |
| 4. Denmark 66 % | 18. Netherlands 42 % |
| 5. Spain 64 % | 19. Finland 41 % |
| 6. Germany 61 % | 20. Estonia 38 % |
| 7. Austria 60 % | 21. United Kingdom 37 % |
| 8. Greece 59 % ! | 22. Latvia 34 % |
| 9. Sweden 55 % | 23. Bulgaria 33 % ! |
| 10. Italy 55 % | 24. Portugal 31 % |
| 11. Lithuania 53 % | 25. Croatia 30 % |
| 12. Romania 51 % | 26. Slovenia 29 % |
| 13. France 50 % | 27. Czech Republic 29 % |
| 14. Ireland 50 % | 28. Slovakia 23 % |

! Countries with mandatory voting



The depiction of the political groups in the European Parliament and the allocation of the national parties is in line with the 2014 – 19 parliamentary term status. Where possible to do so, attempts were made to reflect percentage changes in the individual political groups.

The number of seats per Member State is based on the situation as at the election date, and will be subject to change when the United Kingdom leaves.

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The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung's European Office would like to give its warmest thanks to the overseas offices involved for their excellent collaborative work.

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