

1. Elections brief

1.1 Overview of the main EU institutions

The European Council

- The European Council (EUCO) brings together the heads of state and government of the Member States, the President of the European Commission, and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The group comes together at least every quarter.
- EUCO meetings are chaired by the President of the European Council, appointed by the Council itself by qualified majority for a renewable 2.5 year mandate. This position is currently held by **Charles Michel**, who, as per information available at time of publication, is expected to step down from his role in July to run as an MEP candidate.
- This group sets the EU political agenda: it defines the general political directions and priorities of the EU, that are summed up in a five-year strategic agenda.

The European Commission

- The European Commission (EC) is the EU's executive body. It is divided into policy departments - known as Directorates-General (DGs) - that develop policies for specific areas.
- Each DG is headed by a Commissioner. The EC has one Commissioner per country, usually from national political majorities. Together, they form the College of Commissioners.
- Each Commissioner then appoints their own staff, i.e. the cabinet, that assists in the preparation of the Commission's decisions.
- Overall, the EC works under the leadership of a President, proposed by the European Council to the European Parliament for a renewable five-year mandate. This position is currently held by **Ursula von der Leyen**.¹
- The EC represents the interests of the EU as a whole, and ensures that EU legislation is correctly

¹See: [Spitzenkandidat process](#)

applied. It can also propose new legislation to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. The EC also manages the EU budget.

The Council of the European Union

- The Council of the EU brings together the ministers of the Member States grouped by field of activity - which ministers participate in the meetings depends on the topic to be discussed. There are ten council configurations within the Council of the EU. Twice a year, usually in spring and autumn, development ministers meet to discuss international development matters in the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC DEV).
- The presidency of the Council rotates among the EU Member States every 6 months. Member States holding the presidency work together closely in groups of three, called 'trios'. The trio sets long-term goals and prepares a common agenda determining the topics and major issues that will be addressed by the Council over an 18-month period. The current trio is made up of the presidencies

of **Spain** (July-December 2023), **Belgium** (January-June 2024), and **Hungary** (July-December 2024).

- The Council of the EU shares the legislative and budgetary powers of the Union with the Parliament.

The European Parliament

- The European Parliament (EP) is made up of Members of Parliament (MEPs), who are directly elected by voters in all Member States to represent people's interests for a five-year term. After Brexit, the EP is composed of 705 MEPs. MEPs sit in political groups - they are not organised by nationality, but by political affiliation. There are currently 7 political groups in the EP. One week per month of parliamentary work is devoted to meetings of the political groups.²
- MEPs are also part of various committees, each with a chair and a secretariat, where they draw up, amend, and adopt legislative proposals and own-initiative reports. There are currently twenty committees and three subcommittees in the EP. Committees meetings are held in Brussels for two weeks each month. The most relevant

² [See: Political groups in the European Parliament](#)

committees for international cooperation are Development (DEVE), Foreign Affairs (AFET) and its subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI), Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), and Environment, Public Health, and Food Safety (ENVI).

- Some key figures inside committees are the chairs, political group coordinators, rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs. The rapporteur is the MEP who is responsible for a certain topic on behalf of a committee. Each political group may then have a shadow rapporteur to negotiate the topic with the rapporteur. A shadow rapporteur coordinates the position of a political group on a specific issue and represents the group in negotiations, finding compromise between

political groups.

- Intergroups may as well be formed by MEPs to hold informal exchanges of views on particular subjects and to promote contact between Members and civil society.
- The EP has a President, who is elected by MEPs for a renewable term of 2.5 years. This position is currently held by **Roberta Metsola**.
- The EP exercises a power of control over the institutions, and shares the legislative and budgetary powers with the Council of the EU.³



³[See: Role of the EP](#)

Role of the EP

Legislative power

The EP, together with the Council of the EU, adopts the Union's legislation based on the proposals of the European Commission. The EP also examines the Commission's work programme and invites it to submit legislative proposals.

Budgetary power

The EP approves the multiannual financial framework (MFF), i.e. the EU multiannual budget. It also has the power to adopt the annual budget, on an equal footing with the Council, and to approve how the Union's budget is spent.

Supervisory power

The EP has a range of supervisory and control powers:

- It hears the President of the Council of the EU in plenary session on their programme;
- It may set up committees of inquiry to investigate possible breaches of EU law by Member States;
- It elects the European Ombudsman, who investigates complaints about maladministration in the Union's institutions and bodies;
- It can ask the Court of Justice to take action against the Council or the Commission if it observes contradictions with European legislation;
- It is presented with an annual report from the Court of Auditors and the European Central Bank (ECB);
- It is consulted on the appointment of the Presidency and the Executive Board of the ECB by the European Council.

In addition, MEPs have the power to influence the Council's action by sending written or oral questions to request new measures or policies.

Special procedures

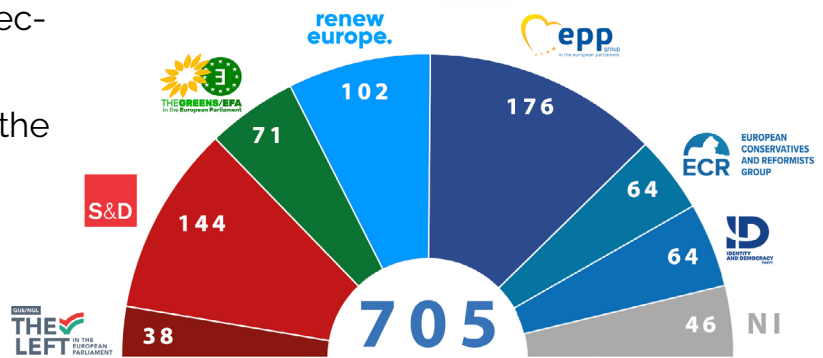
The EP also intervenes through several special procedures.

1. The **approval procedure**, which is a right of veto in 16 areas (such as the investiture of the Commission, accession to the Union, the signing of international agreements or judicial cooperation in criminal matters);
2. The **consultation procedure**, that allows the EP to give a non-binding opinion and is compulsory in some 50 areas;
3. The **right of initiative**, that allows the EP to ask the Commission to submit a proposal.

1.2 The ninth legislature

The 2019 European Parliament election was held between 23 and 26 May. For the first time since 1979, the turnout rose, increasing to 51%.

After Brexit, the EP is composed of 705 seats, divided as follows:



How many seats does my country have, and in which political groups are my MEPs?

COUNTRY	EPP	S&D	RENEW	GREENS/EFA	ECR	ID	LEFT	NI	TOTAL
AUSTRIA	7	5	1	3		3			19
BELGIUM	4	2	4	3	3	3	1	1	21
BULGARIA	7	5	3		2				17
CZECHIA	5	1	5	3	4	2	1		21
CROATIA	4	4	1		1			2	12
CYPRUS	2	2					2		6
DENMARK	1	3	6	2		1	1		14
ESTONIA	1	2	3			1			7
FINLAND	3	2	3	3	2		1		14
FRANCE	8	7	23	11		18	6	5	78
GERMANY	30	16	7	25	1	9	5	3	96
GREECE	7	1	1		1		5	6	21
HUNGARY	1	5	2					13	21
ITALY	12	16	3	3	10	23		9	76
IRELAND	5		2	2			4		13
LATVIA	3	2	1		1			1	8
LITHUANIA	4	2	1	2	1			1	11
LUXEMBOURG	2	1	2	1					6
MALTA	2	4							6
NETHERLANDS	6	6	7	3	5		1	1	29
POLAND	16	7	1	1	27				52
PORTUGAL	7	9		1			4		21
ROMANIA	14	10	7	1	1				33
SLOVAKIA	4	1	4		1			4	14
SLOVENIA	4	2	2						8
SPAIN	13	21	9	3	4		5	3	58
SWEDEN	6	5	3	3	3		1		21
EU 27	178	141	101	70	67	60	37	49	703

Political groups in the European Parliament

While some MEPs are not affiliated to any group, there are currently seven political groups in the EP.



1. European People's Party (EPP)

The EPP is the EU centre-right party and the largest political group in the EP for the 2019-2024 period. It currently includes 83 parties and partners from 44 countries. Both Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, and Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament, belong to the EPP. The largest block in the group, with 30 members, is the German delegation.



2. Socialists and Democrats (S&D)

The S&D Group is the centre-left political group in the EP that brings together social democrats, socialists, labour and democrats from 26 EU countries. It is now the second largest group in the EP. The largest national delegations are the Spanish (21 members), Italian, and German (16 members each) ones.



3. Renew Europe

Previously known as ALDE, the Renew Europe Group is the third largest political group in the EP, bringing together the European liberals and democrats. The President of the European Council, Charles Michel, belongs to this group. In terms of national delegations, the Member State most represented in this group is France, with 23 MEPs.



4. Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)

The Greens/EFA parliamentary group includes members of Green movements, Pirate and Independent MEPs, and MEPs from the EFA, representing stateless nations, regions and minorities, standing up for the right to self-determination. The largest delegation is the German one, with 25 MEPs, followed by the French delegation, with 11 MEPs.



5. European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)

The ECR is a centre-right political group in the EP, bringing together Eurosceptic and anti-federalist political groups from 16 EU countries. The group is mainly led by its 27 Polish members.



6. Identity and Democracy (ID)

The ID Group is the right-wing to far-right political group of the EP, bringing together nationalists, right-wing populists and eurosceptics from ten EU countries. The Italian delegation is the largest, with 23 MEPs, followed by the French (18 MEPs) and the German (9 MEPs) delegations.



7. The Left - GUE/NGL

The Left comprises political parties with democratic socialist, communist, and eurosceptic orientation. It is the smallest group in the EP, with the French delegation (6 MEPs) being the largest.

1.3 Timeline and projections

The European Parliament elections are scheduled to be held between 6 and 9 June 2024.

The EP is due to grow to 720 MEPs after the 2024 elections, 15 more than in the previous five-years term. The national distribution of seats in the new EP will see two more seats for France, Spain and Netherlands, and one more seat for Poland, Belgium, Austria, Denmark, Slovakia, Finland, Ireland, Slovenia, and Latvia.

With nearly half of the Member States holding domestic elections before or right after the EP elections, shifts in political balances at the national level and in Brussels are expected.

Some polls indicate that the elections could mark a political reshaping of the EP with growing support for conservative and far-right voices. In particular, the most sizable gains are expected to be recorded for the ID group, due to the surge in national polls of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, and the ECR group, featuring Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy and Poland's nationalist Law and Justice party.

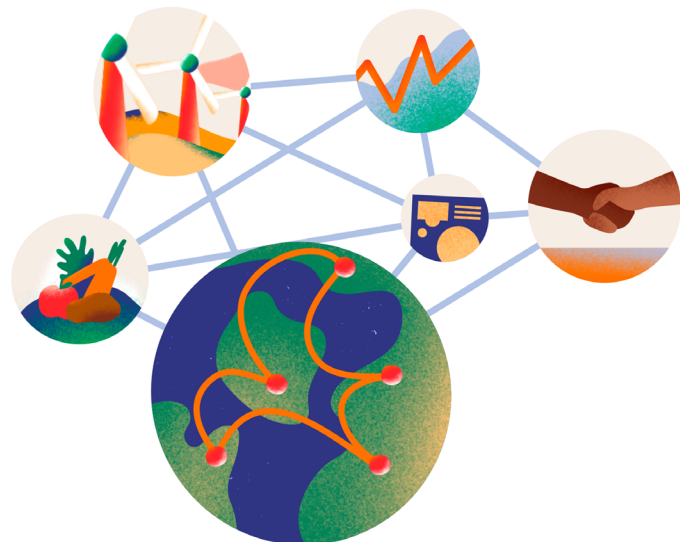
On the left, the Greens are expected

to lose 24 spots (the biggest loss in the EP), while the Left group would gain several seats but remain the smallest group in the Parliament.

Despite a predicted seats loss, the EPP is expected to retain its spot as the Parliament's largest group.

Likewise, the S&D would preserve its spot as the EP second-largest group. On the other hand, according to the latest projections, the ID group could overtake Renew as the third-largest group in the EP, with the ECR almost tied with the Liberals.

Overall, the traditional grand coalition of EPP, S&D and Renew Europe is still expected to maintain a majority within the EP. However, part of the EPP has been showing willingness to partner with the ECR on some Green Deal legislation, and has already shifted further right in its rhetoric.



Belgian Presidency

January

Start influencing the process: political groups manifestos will eventually feed into EC President priorities

February

2-4 | European Greens
Electoral Congress in Lyon

March

1-2 | PES Electoral Congress in Rome

6-7 | EPP Electoral Congress in Bucharest

21-22 | European Council

Portugal elections 

April

22-25 | Last plenary of the 9th legislature

EP in recess:
campaign acceleration

May

June

6-9 | European Elections

27-28 | European Council

- Election of European Council President
- Adoption of Council Strategic Agenda 2024-2029

Croatia elections 

Belgium elections 

Organisation of MEPs within the EP

Reach out to political parties to influence hearings - identify key MEPs that can support in Committees and hearings.

Be in touch with political groups advisors - looking for ideas on priorities.

Create a CONCORD welcome pack for new MEPs

Hungarian Presidency

July

16-19 | First EP plenary

- Election of EP President
- Election of EP Vice-presidents
- Size and composition of EP Committees decided

22-25 | Committees meetings

- Election of Chairs and Vice-Chairs

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August

September

16-19 | Second EP plenary

- Proposed EC President presents his/her political agenda for the following 5 years before the EP
- Election of EC President

EC President selects class of Commissioners

October

Commissioner designates and HR/VP hearings in the EP

Austria elections 

Lithuania elections 

November

Commissioner designates and HR/VP hearings in the EP

13-14 or **25-28** | EP plenary: new college of Commissioners approved

Romania elections 

December

1 | New institutions take office

Spitzenkandidat process

Before the 2014 European Parliament elections, senior MEPs came up with the so-called Spitzenkandidat, or lead candidate, system. This procedure foresees the nomination of one lead candidate for each political party, that would also be the party's candidate to be European Commission president.

In theory, once the elections have taken place, the European Council would nominate the candidate of the winning party, who would then be confirmed by the Parliament.

MEPs stressed the democratic nature of this system for the choice of the Commission chief: according to the Treaty of Lisbon (Art 17.7 TEU), the European Council should take into account the results of the parliamentary elections when it proposes a candidate for European Commission President.

While the system prevailed in 2014, with the EPP lead candidate Jean-Claude Juncker being appointed Commission president, in 2019, the European Council nominated non-Spitzenkandidat Ursula von der Leyen as President of the new European Commission, whose nomination was subsequently approved by the European Parliament.

[Updates on Spitzenkandidaten & manifestos](#)

Overall, compared to the 2019 elections, deadlines appear to have been delayed, and major decisions will probably be taken only in the coming months.

While it's not clear whether the Spitzenkandidat system will still be

in place, some political groups have announced they will bring forward one or more lead candidates.

Political groups are expected to publish their European manifestos a few months before the elections, following consultations between their member parties.

1.4 After the elections

Following the elections, political groups are formed within the EP. To form a political group, a minimum of 25 MEPs elected in at least one quarter of the EU Member States is required. The EP Bureau, including the EP President and vice-presidents, is elected. Each parliamentary committee also elects a bureau, consisting of a chair and vice-chairs, in separate ballots.

Elections for the Bureau are scheduled to take place during the first plenary session of the new EP, on 16-19 July. The election of Committee chairs and vice-chairs, on the other hand, can be expected to take place during the first committee week, on 22-25 July.

On the basis of the elections' results, and possibly taking into account the Spitzenkandidat system, the European Council proposes the candidate for the presidency of the Commission, who is then elected by the European Parliament. The Parliament vote is based on a set of political guidelines which form an outline of the EC President's policy and sets the Commission overarching priorities

for its five-year term. The candidate will have to convince the EP that they have taken on enough of the political priorities and guidance from the EP to secure the vote.

As there will only be one plenary session in July, September seems to be a safer time to elect the EC President, possibly during the second plenary of the new EP on 16-19 September. This means there is more time to influence the process during the summer.

The European Council also appoints the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP), who shapes the standing of the EU on the global stage. The appointment is subject to both the approval of the EC President and the EP vote. The High Representative also holds the role of Vice-President of the European Commission.

Once the EC President is elected, they will select their class of Commissioners in consultation with EU Member States and address each one of them with a mission letter, outlining their tasks and responsibilities. In this phase, the Commission

Secretary-General - currently Latvian diplomat **Ilze Juhansone** - plays a key role in advising the EC President on mission letters.

Each Commissioner-designate is then subject to a hearing before the responsible parliamentary committee, as well as to a vote of approval by the European Parliament, prior to his or her appointment. The EP can either approve Commissioner-designates or issue a motion of censure against them.

Given the delayed timeline compared to the 2019 elections, if all goes smoothly, Commissioner hearings are most likely going to be held in early November.

The European elections will therefore shape not only the EP composition, but also the composition and priorities of other bodies and institutions and, as a consequence, the EU's international cooperation policy. More specifically, the appointment of the EC President, HR/VP and DG INTPA Commissioner will be of paramount importance for sustainable development and international partnerships⁴.



⁴[See: Keep an eye on: appointments and mandates](#)

Keep an eye on: appointments and mandates

EC President political guidelines & mission letters

Every 5 years, the President of the Commission determines the political priorities for its mandate, setting out the areas to be focused on during that term. These areas are drawn from the Council's strategic agenda and from discussions with the political groups of the EP. Naturally, the EC President priorities will mainly reflect the manifesto of the political group they come from, but since they also need the support of other political groups, it is likely that some priorities from other groups' manifestos will also feed into the Commission guidelines.

DG INTPA

DG INTPA is responsible for international cooperation policy and providing aid through programmes around the world. It implements part of the European aid budget and develops and carries out the EU development policy abroad. Its current mission is to contribute to sustainable development, reduce poverty, and promote democracy, human rights, and the rule of law through international partnerships that uphold and promote European values and interests.

The incumbent DG INTPA Commissioner is **Jutta Urpilainen**, a former Member of the Finnish Parliament with the Social Democratic Party of Finland.

EEAS

The European External Action Service (EEAS) is the European Union's diplomatic service. The EEAS shapes the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy to promote peace, prosperity, security, and the interests of Europeans across the globe. The EEAS is led by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, who is also Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP). This dual role would ideally allow further coordination and ensure coherence in EU foreign policy, as the European Commission has a central role in shaping EU policies on, among others, development, trade, and humanitarian aid. The incumbent HR/VP is **Josep Borrell**.

FPI Service

The Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) reports directly to the HR/VP, and works in close cooperation with the EEAS and Commission DGs to ensure the effectiveness and coherence of EU external policies. FPI is responsible for the operational and financial management of the budgets for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy..

DG NEAR

The mission of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) is to take forward the EU's Neighbourhood and Enlargement policies. DG NEAR works closely with the EEAS, implementing assistance actions and supporting reform and democratic consolidation in Europe's eastern and southern neighbourhood.

The incumbent DG NEAR Commissioner is **Olivér Várhelyi**, a Hungarian lawyer and diplomat who took office after the rejection of László Trócsányi by the European Parliament in the hearings process.

DG TRADE

The Directorate-General for Trade (DG TRADE) develops and implements the EU's trade policy towards non-Member States. DG TRADE is responsible for protecting the trade interests of the EU and advancing in the removal of trade barriers.

The incumbent Trade Commissioner is Latvian politician serving as Executive Vice-President of the EC for An Economy that Works for People **Valdis Dombrovskis**.

Additional resources:

- POLITICO [Poll of Polls](#)
- The Good Lobby [Roadmap to the 2024 Elections](#)
- EU Matrix [forecasts](#)
- CONCORD Sweden's "[How the EU works](#)"