

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS REVIEW 2019

NEW IN THE APRIL ISSUE

POWER DYNAMICS

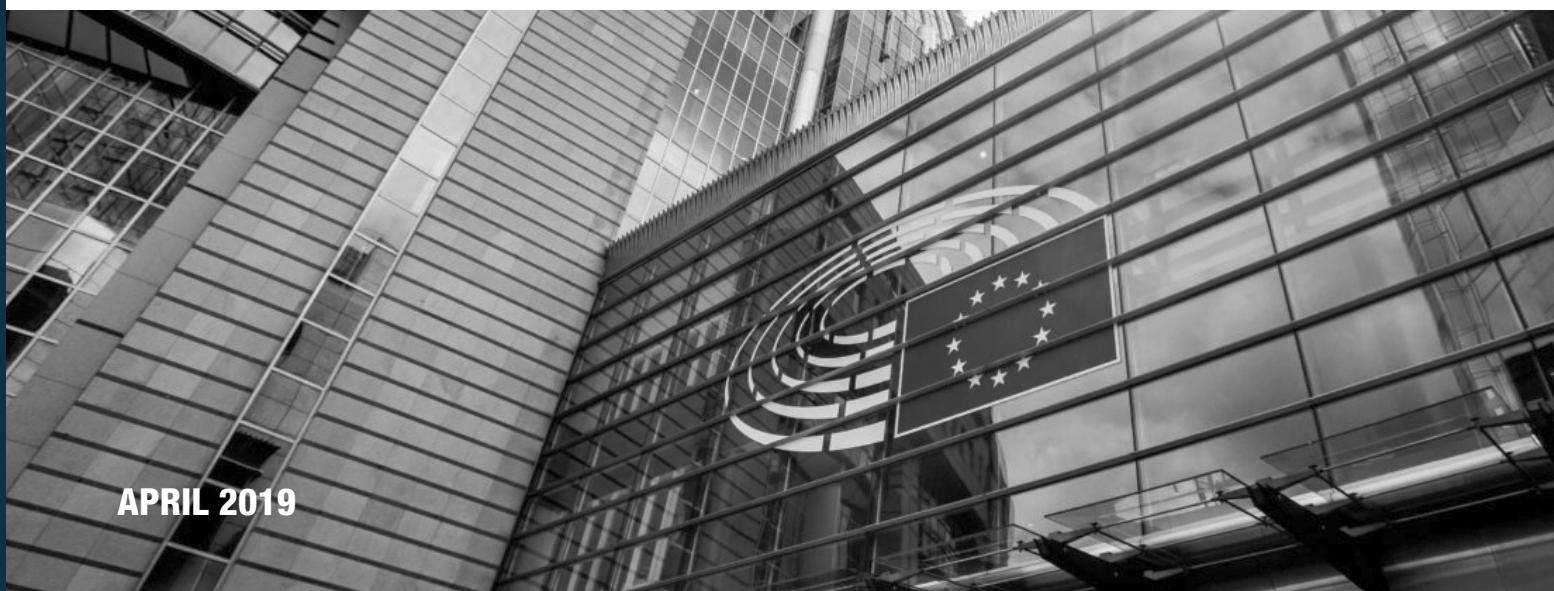
This month we take a look at Fidesz's suspension and the internal turmoil within the European People's Party, the latest developments from the European Social Democrats, the announcement of Team Europe who will lead the Liberals in the May elections, and the potential rise of a large new unified Eurosceptic bloc.

FEATURED MEPS

We also take a look at the profile and election chances of some Members of the European Parliament active in the tech, health and environment sectors.

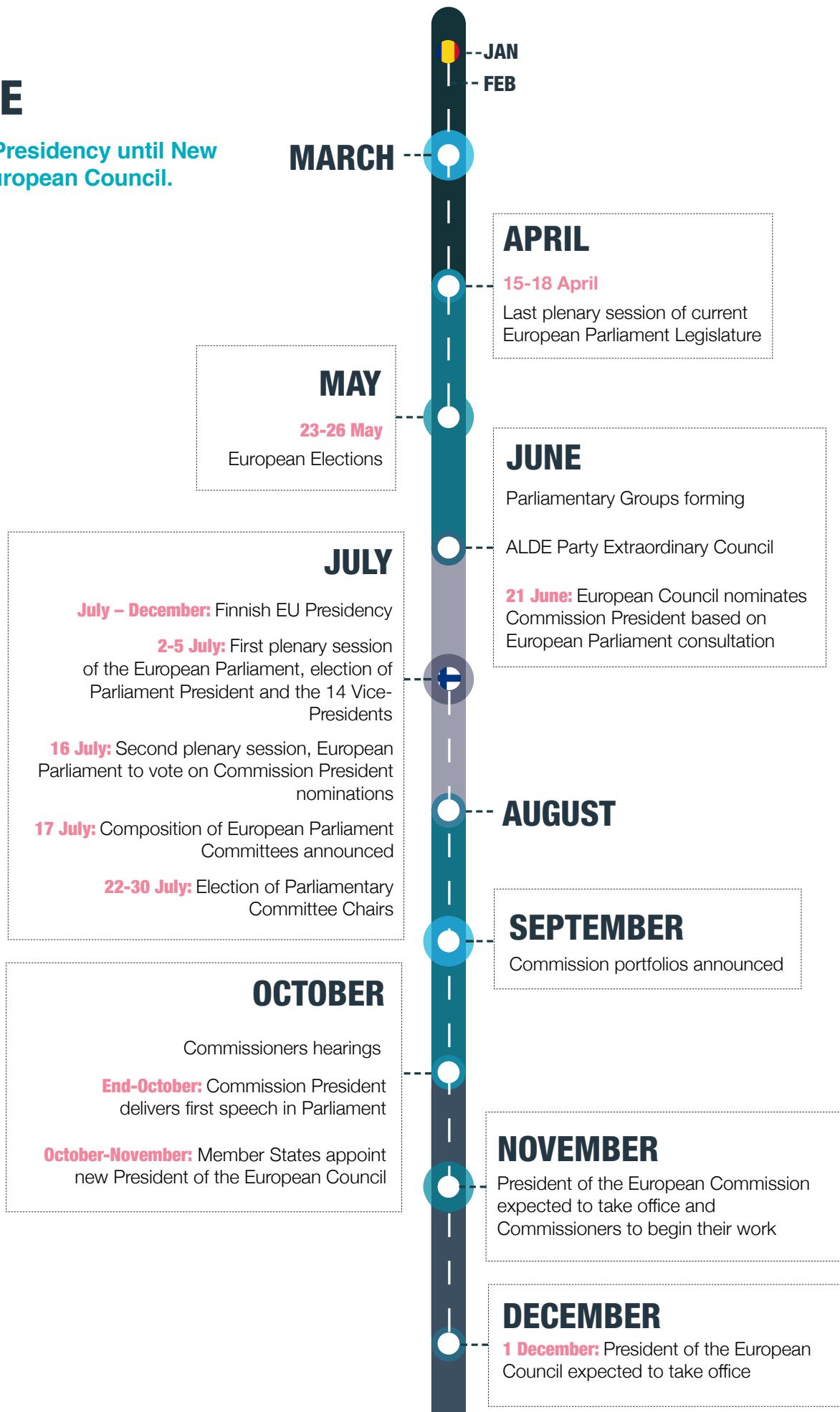
OUR EXPERTS

Our units from across Europe in Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Romania, Netherlands, Hungary, Slovakia and Ireland update us on the latest news from the field on the European Elections.



TIMELINE

Romanian EU Presidency until New President of European Council.



POWER DYNAMICS

European People's Party (EPP) addresses criticism of Fidesz's membership

On 20 March, European People's Party (EPP) members voted to suspend Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party from their party.

The move came in response to increasing criticism over Budapest's rule-of-law record as well as to a recent smear campaign by the Hungarian government directed at the European Commission President, EPP's Jean-Claude Juncker.

The suspension has been criticised as being a mere formality which allows the EPP to avoid losing Fidesz's 12 MEPs.

An exclusion of Fidesz from the EPP ranks could gift Orbán the leeway he would need to reinvigorate the Parliament's Eurosceptic camp.

Meanwhile, the biggest delegation of the EPP Group, the German conservative CDU and CSU, launched a manifesto for EU Elections. The paper calls for majority voting in EU Foreign Policy making, the creation of a "European FBI" as well as a much debated and controversial reform to the European Union's competition rules.



S&D PARTIES LOOKING FOR A NEW STRATEGY?

The Party of European Socialists (PES)

The Party of European Socialists (PES) triggered a lively internal debate over the potential to branch out to new political parties and ideas. Their strategy for the next election will focus on campaigning for themes borrowed from the European Greens like the fight for climate change, in an attempt to ride the green wave.

The transnational left-wing movement, European Spring (formerly DiEM25), has recently adopted their programme, and its leaders - including former Greek finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, and former French presidential candidate Benoît Hamon - are building on the vacuum left by the Socialists & Democrats (S&D) and further challenging the possibility of a homogeneous left in the next parliament.

The S&D Spitzenkandidat Frans Timmermans pledged to take charge of delivering the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and promised to link the mandates of all Commissioners with corresponding goals, if appointed Commission President.



ALDE PRESENTS TEAM EUROPE

Without En Marche

On March 21, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE) kicked off its electoral campaign by announcing Team Europe, a list of seven leaders from across Europe who committed to “renew the European Project”. The team represents ALDE’s pick of top candidates for powerful EU posts including EU Commission President, European Council President, High Representative for Foreign Policy, and European Parliament President.

While reflecting a gender and geographical balance, Team Europe does not include representatives from Macron’s party La République en Marche (LREM), which fueled questions about the actual nature of the ALDE-LREM alliance announced earlier this year.

Macron’s new movement, La Renaissance, released its list of candidates for Europe. French minister for European Affairs and top candidate Nathalie Loiseau confirmed Macron’s party is in talks with “other parties” in the attempt to build a new group.



NICOLA BEER (DE)
Secretary General and Lead candidate of FDP for the European Elections



LUIS GARICANO (ES)
Professor of Economics and Strategy, Lead candidate of Ciudadanos for the European Elections



EMMA BONINO (IT)
Senator for Rome and Lead candidate of Più Europa for the European Elections



GUY VERHOFSTADT (BE)
ALDE Group Leader in the European Parliament and Lead candidate of Open Vld for the European Elections



VIOLETA BULC (SI)
European Commissioner for Mobility and Transport



MARGRETHE VESTAGER (DK)
European Commissioner for Competition



KATALIN CSÉH (HU)
Doctor in obstetrics and gynecology and Lead candidate of Momentum for the European Elections

EUROSCPTICS JOINING FORCES

Europe of Nations and Freedom Group

The Vice-President of the Europe of Nations and Freedom Group (ENF), Harald Vilimsky, announced that an alliance with the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group (EFDD) and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) is under discussion.

While the objective is to gather Eurosceptic factions in a single group in the next parliament, the wide spectrum of political positions within the three groups is a major challenge to forming a single coherent group.

Still, a unified ENF-EFDD-ECR bloc would become a powerful voice in the chamber. Current polls would position a new potential party as the second-biggest force with 154 seats.



FEATURED MEPS

The following section is an overview of selected Members of the European Parliament who have been active on key dossiers in the Tech, Health, Energy and Environment sectors. We have illustrated their contributions thus far and assessed their likelihood of re-election/highlighted if they are no longer standing.



Tech



Tech

ANGELIKA NIEBLER (EPP, DE)

Profile:

- Member and former Chair of the ITRE Committee and joint-Chair of the German EPP Delegation;
- Specialised in Cybersecurity, 5G Infrastructure, intellectual property and data privacy;
- Part-time Consultant on tech and privacy.

EP Elections 2019

- Number 2 on the CSU European List in Bavaria, right after Manfred Weber;
- Christian Democrats / Christian Social (CDU / CSU) seat projections: 29;
- Likelihood of election: **Very High**

MICHAL BONI (EPP, PL)

Profile :

- LIBE and AFCO Committee Member and ITRE Substitute;
- Former Minister of Administration and Digitization of Poland and Creator of the Governmental Operational Programme Digital Poland 2014-2020;
- Involved in the Copyright file since 2017, where he served as Opinion Rapporteur for the LIBE Committee.

EP Elections 2019

- Michal Boni is number 5 on the Civic Platform list for the Constituency of Warsaw;
- Civic Platform (PO) seat projection: 15;
- Likelihood of election: **Very low**

BIRGIT SIPPEL (S&D, DE)

Profile :

- LIBE Committee Member and Coordinator for the S&D Group;
- Rapporteur on the e-Privacy Directive Review and specialised in privacy and data protection.

EP Elections 2019

- Number 7 on the SPD Federal list;
- Social Democrats of Germany (SPD) seat projections: 15;
- Likelihood of election: **High**



Tech



Tech

DITA CHARANZOVA (ALDE, CZ)

Profile :

- IMCO Vice-Chair and coordinator for the ALDE Group;
- Former Head of Unit in the Czech Permanent Representation to the EU and current Vice-President of the Alde Party;
- Specialised in digitalisation and worked on EU-wide rules on Web accessibility.

EP Elections 2019

- Lead candidate for ANO party;
- ANO Seat projections: 9;
- Likelihood of election: **Very High**



Health

TIEMO WÖLKEN (S&D, DE)

Profile:

- BUDG Committee Member and ENVI Committee Substitute;
- He is the youngest MEP of the German socialist party SPD, of which he is the spokesperson on health topics;
- S&D leader on supplementary protection certificate for medical products dossier.

EP Elections 2019

- Wölken is number 12 on the German SPD list;
- Social Democrats of Germany (SPD) seat projections: 15;
- Likelihood of election: **Probable**



Health

SOLEDAD CABEZON RUIZ (S&D, ES)

Profile:

- ENVI Committee Member and ITRE Committee Substitute;
- As an MEP her focus is on citizens' access to health services and was granted the Public Health MEP award by Dod's Parliament Magazine in 2018;
- Rapporteur on the EU Regulation on Health Technology Assessment.

EP Elections 2019

- Soledad Cabézon Ruiz will not run in the 2019 Elections;
- Socialist Party (PSOE) seat projection: 18;
- Likelihood of election: **Not standing**



Health

FRANCOISE GROSSETÈTE (EPP, FR)

Profile:

- ENVI Committee Member, ITRE Committee Substitute and Vice-President of the EPP;
- Francoise Grossetête is the founder and current chair of the association Alzheimer Europe;
- Her long term focus has been pharmaceutical legislation, e.g. anti counterfeit and promotion of innovation.

EP Elections 2019

- Francoise Grossetete will not run for EP Elections;
- Les Républicains (LR) seat projections: 13;
- Likelihood of election: **Not Standing**

PETER LIESE (EPP, DE)

Profile:

- Chairman of the EPP Working Group on Bio-ethics and coordinator for the EPP group in the ENVI committee;
- A paediatrician by background, Peter is specialised in pharmaceutical and health policy, and was one of the thought leaders of the EPP group position paper on cancer.

EP Elections 2019

- Peter Liese is the lead candidate of the CDU list in North Rhine Westphalia;
- CDU / CSU seat projections: 29;
- Likelihood of election: **Very High**



Health



ADINA VALEAN (EPP, RO)

Profile:

- ENVI Committee Chair;
- Former Vice-President of the European Parliament and Head of the Romanian delegation in the EPP Group;
- Engaged MEP on sectors like circular economy, environment and energy;
- Served as rapporteur on the Connecting Europe Facility.

EP Elections 2019

- Adina Iona Valean is standing for re-election in 2019;
- National Liberal Party (PNL) seat projections: 13;
- Likelihood of election: **High**



SIMONA BONAFE (S&D, IT)

Profile:

- ENVI Committee member;
- Engaged MEP in waste management, circular economy and energy governance;
- She is the former rapporteur for the EU sustainable Investment Framework, the EU Directive on Waste and the Energy Labelling Regulation.

EP Elections 2019 :

- Simona Bonafè is likely to run for EP Elections
- Democratic Party (PD) seat projections: 17
- Likelihood of election: **High**



BAS EICKHOUT (GREENS, NL)

Profile:

- Co-chair of the Dutch Green delegation in the EP and member of the ENVI Committee. He is also the lead candidate for the Greens;
- Engaged MEP in discussions on chemicals standards and low emission mobility;
- Served as a rapporteur on the Framework on sustainable investment, CO2 emission performance standards for new heavy-duty vehicles and the European Strategy for Low-Emission mobility.

EP Elections 2019 :

- Bas Eickhout is the lead candidate for the Dutch Groenlinks;
- Green Party (GL) seat projections: 4;
- Likelihood of election: **Very High**



JERZY BUZEK (EPP, PL)

Profile:

- Chair of the ITRE Committee and former President of the European Parliament;
- Jerzy is the current President of the European Energy Forum and has been calling for a European Energy Community since his early beginnings as an MEP;
- Served as a rapporteur on the clean energy innovation and as a member of the Parliament's team negotiating the EU 4th Gas Directive.

EP Elections 2019 :

- Lead candidate in the constituency of Śląskie for the European Coalition led by the Civic Platform;
- Civic Platform (PO) seat projection: 15;
- Likelihood of election: **Very High**

NEWS FROM MEMBER STATES



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On 9 March, the leader of the German Conservative CDU, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (known also as AKK) presented her own vision of the future of the European Union.

Kramp-Karrenbauer's remarks came as a response to French President Macron's manifesto for a European "renaissance", released on 4 March.

In the op-ed "Getting Europe right", the CDU leader stressed that "Europe must become stronger", and proposed a number of measures directed towards further EU integration: a common internal market for banks, a European pact for climate protection, an agreement on uninterrupted border protection in order to secure the EU's external borders. She also suggested, like Macron, the creation of a European security council. AKK was equally clear in setting out the limitations of European integration, warning against the risks of a "communitarisation" of public debts, the homogenisation of European social systems and of minimum wages. She also suggested putting an end to the European Parliament (EP) plenary sittings in Strasbourg, to focus all its work in Brussels.

The op-ed generated mixed reactions.

It was welcomed by the CDU and by Chancellor Merkel, who was apparently informed of AKK's vision shortly before its publication - marking a significant change, as European policy is normally the Chancellor's remit. The coalition partner in the federal government, SPD, criticised her plan as being "completely unambitious". The opposition reacted with disappointment as well, calling the suggestion to end EP sittings in Strasbourg "not a real gesture of friendship". Paris did not directly react to AKK's statement, but the sentiment was mirrored by a French government spokesperson, who conceded that differences of opinion over the Strasbourg seat do remain.

NEWS FROM MEMBER STATES



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As public support of the Yellow Vest movement is slowly fading (supported by more than 10% of the electorate at its peak), “old-school” politics has been returning over the last number of weeks, meaning intense negotiations between political figures, threats of departure, backstabbing and criticism among allies.

Traditional parties such as Les Républicains (LR) and the Parti Socialiste (PS) have seen some positive results in the polling, which seems to validate their strategy in setting up their lists.

Recent opinion polls show continuity as LaREM is still ahead of the far-right party RN (EFDD group) in the run-off to European elections, with 23.5% against 21% of votes in the polls respectively. Following the two favourites, LR is the only other party to come close to the 10% benchmark. All the parties representing the left electorate are below this threshold due to the fragmentation of lists. This could evolve in the coming weeks as some major figures are calling for unity in order to counter the right and far-right hegemony.

At the end of march, LaREM’s list was finally published with Nathalie Loiseau, former Minister of European Affairs, at its head. The composition of the list reflects Macron’s “at the same time” strategy with former members of the Green

Party, members of centre-right parties and candidates coming from civil society, whilst also portraying LaREM as progressive in opposition to the populist RN.

In an attempt to make up for lost ground, the PS and LR have bet on young blood to represent them as head of list during the campaign.

Having presented François-Xavier Bellamy, a lead candidate close to catholic activists, LR had to refute accusations that it is fishing for RN’s voters. The party did so by including a large bandwidth of candidates at promising positions to reflect the LR’s different factions.

Prominent philosopher Raphaël Glucksmann who created the “progressive” movement, Place Publique, will be spearheading the social-democrat front. A joint list, however, presents a considerable risk for the PS, who might completely disappear within Place Publique after the elections.

After announcing Jordan Bardella, a hitherto unknown darling of Marine Le Pen, as its head of list, Rassemblement National (RN) has launched its campaign designed to attack Macron, its favourite enemy.



NEWS FROM MEMBER STATES



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Is the Five Star Movement doomed to political irrelevance?

The Five Star Movement's project of forging a new European political group out of the ashes of the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group (EFDD) is finally taking shape. Earlier last month, Five Star leader Luigi Di Maio announced that the Five Star Movement will be partnering up with the Croatian Živi Zid, Poland's Kukiz'15, Finland's Liike Nyt Movement and Greece's AKKEL.

The parties converge on common themes such as the promotion of direct forms of democracy, and anti-austerity policies – which are expected to be formalised in a 10-point manifesto. Di Maio then explained that single parties will be presenting their own programmes, and MEPs will be granted free votes on single policy issues. While limited in numbers (not all parties are in fact expected to reach the minimum threshold in their respective countries), the alliance is likely to be a loose one, if successful at all.

The Five Star Movement needs two additional parties in order to form a new political group in the European Parliament (seven being the minimum required). Talks with the French Yellow Vests movement have not been fruitful so far.

Domestically, the Five Star Movement is facing increasing pressure following poor electoral performances at regional level. By contrast, Matteo Salvini's Northern League is enjoying renewed public support across the whole country and is determined to extend its political agenda beyond migration, starting with an announced tax policy reform worth (at least) €12 billion.

Meanwhile, Nicola Zingaretti, President of the Lazio Region, has been elected leader of the Democratic Party with an overwhelming majority of 67% (1.26 million) of votes. As many as 1.8 million people voted at the Democratic Party's primaries, and the party is currently polling at around 20% as it appears to have benefited from Five Star's latest electoral defeats.

NEWS FROM MEMBER STATES



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Following the failed vote on the draft federal budget, the Prime Minister called for general elections on 28 April, one month prior to the local, regional (in most autonomous regions) and European parliamentary elections which will all take place on 26 May.

The Spanish political landscape is complex and suggests a strongly fragmented national parliament. According to the latest polls, admittedly managed by the government, the centre-right/right-wing parties of Partido Popular (PP), Ciudadanos and right-wing VOX may not be able to reach the necessary 176 seats in the national parliament to be able to form a government. If confirmed, that would mean both a rather unstable situation domestically, and bode well for left-wing parties in the European elections.

In terms of political leadership, the Socialist Party (PSOE) confirmed that the Foreign Affairs Minister, Josep Borrell will head the list for the PSOE to the European elections. Borrell has been the President of the European Parliament and was an MEP candidate in the European Parliament elections of 2004 and 2015.

The leader of the PP, Pablo Casado, is preparing a major renewal in the party's candidacy for the European elections.

Several former ministers under Mariano Rajoy, such as Juan Ignacio Zoido, Dolores Montserrat and José Manuel García-Margallo, will also feature on the list. Confirmation of the candidates is expected between 17 and 24 April.

Ciudadanos has chosen Luis Garicano as head of the list. He is well respected in Brussels and has been the Vice-President of ALDE.

Podemos in turn, has to rethink its lists, after Pablo Bustinduy, has announced he is withdrawing his candidacy for personal reasons, although the real reason is his proximity to the party's co-founder, Iñigo Errejón, who has split from other co-founder, Pablo Iglesias Turrión. María Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, a university professor, will replace him as head of the European Parliament list.

According to the latest polls carried out by the European Parliament itself during the month of February, the results of the elections, if held today would be 33 seats to the conservative, liberal and right-wing parties – PP (15), Ciudadanos (12) and Vox (6) – and 25 seats to left-wing parties – Podemos (9) and PSOE (16).

NEWS FROM MEMBER STATES



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Romanians are not very interested in the European elections, and turnout will probably be low. The mandate of the MEP is regarded as a sinecure for party leaders. Romanian parties are likely to use the elections as an electoral test ahead of the presidential elections due in the autumn.

The governing Social Democratic Party (PSD) has chosen patriotic nationalism in Europe as a campaign theme. Its leader Liviu Dragnea strongly supports Rovana Plumb to head the MEPs list and is likely to rely largely on the existing group of MEPs, including Claudia Țapardel, Ioan Mircea Pașcu and Victor Boștinaru. Loyal supporters Claudiu Manda and Florin Iordache could also be awarded good positions on the list.

The National Liberal Party (PNL), the main opposition force, appears to be open to experiments. The well-known journalist Rares Bogdan is the new hope of the Liberals who have put him head of the list. The PNL are going through an image and identity crisis and seeking a credible alternative to the PSD's populist-nationalist message. Unfortunately for them, a campaign tailored to Bogdan is expected to make him vulnerable to PSD attacks.

Former Premier and European Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacian Cioloș, will open the list for Alliance 2020 (a pact between the Save Romanian Union (USR) and the Freedom, Unity and Solidarity Party (PLUS)), followed by Cristian Ghinea (USR), Dragoș Pîslaru (PLUS) and Clotilde Armand (USR). The formation represents a fresh angle for the Romanian political spectrum and proposes a pro-European agenda.

Victor Ponta and the current European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina Crețu are opening the list for the social-liberal PRO Romania. People's Movement Party's (PMP) Traian Băsescu, former Romanian President, will also run.

To date only PNL and Alliance 2020 have finalised lists of candidates for the EP elections.

NEWS FROM MEMBER STATES



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Now that the provincial elections of 20 March are over, it is time for the Dutch to focus on the European elections in May. Due to the recent provincial campaigns, Dutch parties haven't been promoting their European programmes largely, as of yet.

Big win for right wing Eurosceptic party Forum for Democracy

The relatively new right wing Eurosceptic party Forum for Democracy booked an enormous win in the provincial elections. These elections determine the eventual seats in senate. The party rose from zero to 13 seats, making it the biggest party. Since the party will also participate in the upcoming European elections, big wins for the new Eurosceptic party are expected. If they win seats in the European elections, FvD aims to join the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) in the European Parliament. Whether or not FvD supports a 'Nexit' is unclear. Party leader Baudet has stated frequently that he supports a Nexit – but Henk Otten, first on the list for the senate, disagrees. According to Otten, the EU should only consider economic collaboration.

On February 26th the PVV (Far-right populist party) presented their European election programme, consisting of a single page, and containing no surprises. The populist party still

agitates against the EU and supports a 'Nexit'. The SP (Socialists) expressed their opinion on European presidencies: the EU would be better off without a president and should focus on collaboration instead of 'ambitious chairmen with big mouths.'

Most parties have published their European election programmes

Currently, most parties have published their European election programmes. Others, such as the SGP-CU Christian collaboration, and the D66 liberals, have recently held their annual party congresses at which party members amended the draft programmes. At the CU (Christian Union) congress, an interesting resolution was proposed by which the party management was asked not to join a European faction with over 20% 'populist MEPs'. The resolution was revoked, however, after party leaders assured members they would critically assess Parliament formations. Both CU and the Party for the Animals have not presented a final list of candidates yet. Surprisingly, the SP (Socialists) haven't even published a draft European programme.

NEWS FROM MEMBER STATES



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The Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Party of Dialogue (P) are the only two parties that have decided to establish a joint list for the European elections. MSZP's list approved on 16 February, features the leader Bertalan Tóth as top candidate, although Tóth expressed the wish not to take the mandate following the election. Current MEPs István Ujhelyi and Tibor Szanyi feature as second and third.

P has a single MEP, Benedek Jávor, who is the fourth candidate and one of the most well-known politicians of his party, and very active in the EP. According to current polls, MEP Jávor seems unlikely to be re-elected. Gábor Vágó leads the list of the LMP (Politics Can Be Different) party, followed by current MP Márta Demeter, co-president of the party. With LMP struggling to reach the 5% threshold for Parliament, Demeter is unlikely to be elected.

Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary) announced their list on 13 March. Among the ten candidates announced, six are current members of the Hungarian Parliament. Jobbik's top candidate is deputy party leader and leader of their parliamentary group, Márton Gyöngyösi.

Multilingual and with experience in foreign affairs, he appears to have an appealing profile, but previous anti-Semitic and anti-Israel statements make him a controversial figure and might worsen Jobbik's prospects to find allies in the new EP. The second runner up is current MEP Zoltán Balczó. He is said to disagree with the sudden ideological change within the party, but is holding back in order to be able to secure a place in the EP. The third candidate of the party is spokesperson and MP Péter Jakab. He is unlikely to take the mandate if elected, but he is currently one of the most well-known politicians within Jobbik. Jakab is also rather controversial, again due to previous anti-Semitic comments.

The top candidate of DK (Democratic Coalition) is Klára Dobrev, wife of ex-prime minister and party leader Ferenc Gyurcsány. This is the first time that Dobrev is running for political office, allegedly because immunity comes with the candidacy, which could be useful since she has been implicated in a case of tax fraud. Second on the list is Csaba Molnár, who has been an MEP since 2014. It came as a surprise to many that former DK MEP Péter Niedermüller did not get a place on the list of candidates, even though he was very active in the EP.

NEWS FROM MEMBER STATES



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Slovakian political parties are close to finalising their respective candidate lists for the European Parliament elections in May. For a complete overview of the candidates of the eleven main political parties [click here](#).

Two noteworthy MEP candidates with a reasonable chance of being elected are:

Eugen Jurzyca – SaS Freedom and Solidarity (ECR)

- Minister of Education from 2010 to 2012, MP since 2012
- Before SaS, he cooperated with Christian Democrats in SDKU-DS.
- He used to work at the Antimonopoly Office of the Slovak Republic and was a member of the Council of the National Bank of Slovakia (2000 - 2001).
- He also worked at the Institute for Economic and Social Reforms (INEKO) and as consultant for OECD.
- He acted as advisor to former presidents, ministers of finance and ministers of labour.
- University of Economics in Bratislava; short study stay at Georgetown University in the U.S. (1993) and several trainings from OECD, World Bank etc.
- Political orientation and position: Member of liberal parliamentary party SaS (strongest opposition party); big

supporter of free market economy; Vice-Chairman of Finance and Budget Committee.

Michal Šimeka – Progressive Slovakia (ALDE)

- Currently working as both a researcher for Institute of International Relations in Prague and an adviser for Czech Foreign Ministry. His research mostly covers European integration and security.
- D.Phil from Oxford in Politics and International Relations.
- Began as a journalist in Slovak SME Daily and the Financial Times.
- Used to work in the EP and CEPS think-tank.
- Political orientation and position: Organizes a lot of public discussions, advocating for the EU and fighting disinformation. Believes in deeper EU integration and agrees with Macron's 'European Renaissance'. Openly criticizes Russian foreign politics and presents China as a possible threat.

NEWS FROM MEMBER STATES



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With the political landscape dominated by Brexit, the European election campaign kicking off might offer some relief. Despite having a high EU membership approval rating, there is still a tendency in Ireland to see Brussels as a retirement scheme, rather than an entity which has significant legislative and regulatory clout. Brexit has made it clear that Ireland needs to change this attitude.

Brexit also means Ireland will have two extra seats in the next EP (up to 13 MEPs), and parties have started pulling together candidates. The centre-right governing party Fine Gael has decided to run in Dublin former Deputy Prime Minister, Frances Fitzgerald (who is seen as a strong contender) and former Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) leader Mark Durkan. The four-seat constituency of Midlands-North West will be the one to watch, as it remains unclear whether Fine Gael's candidates Mairead McGuinness and Maria Walsh can win two seats. The Ireland South constituency will see Sean Kelly and Deirdre Clune seeking re-election. Junior Minister for Agriculture Andrew Doyle has been added as a chaser candidate. Seat projections attribute four seats to Fine Gael.

The liberal-conservative Fianna Fáil will run former Minister of State for Children, Barry Andrews, in Dublin. Andrews is

seen as a safe bet and a welcome addition to the European Parliament after his party's de facto absence in Brussels for the past five years. In Ireland South, MP Billy Kelleher and Local Councillor Malcolm Byrne received the nomination. MP Anne Rabbitte was also added to the ticket in Midlands-North West. Seat projections foresee four MEPs for Fianna Fáil.

Within the left-wing Sinn Féin, Matt Carthy, Liadh Ní Riada, and Lynn Boylan are all seeking re-election. Seat projections give the party three MEPs.

Among Independents, only Luke "Ming" Flanagan is seeking re-election. MEPs Marian Harkin and Neasa Childers will retire. The Labour Party has selected former Minister for Communications Alex White, MP Dominic Hannigan and Sheila Nunan. The Social Democrats, who had reservations about the party fielding a candidate, nominated Councillor Gary Gannon. The Greens have their best shot in Dublin where Ciarán Cuffe is running. Senator Grace O'Sullivan is running in Ireland South. Seat projections attribute to all these groups two MEPs.

NOTES





APRIL 2019