

INFOSPECTIVE ON THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Introduction

The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) founded in 1952, laid the foundation stones for European integration and has evolved to what we see as the European Union today. In the Treaty of Paris signed to create the ECSC, three key institutions, the High Authority, the Common Assembly and the Special Council of Ministers were responsible for the functioning of the Community. The Parliamentary Assembly later replaced the Common Assembly when the Treaty of Rome created the European Communities in 1958.

The High Authority is now the European Commission, the Special Council of Ministers is now the Council of the European Union, and the Parliamentary Assembly which began more as an Advisory Body is now a full-fledged co-legislator in the institutional triangle of the European Union. This institutional triangle refers to the relationship that governs the European Commission, the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament - each institution has to act in accordance with the powers conferred on it by the Treaties in accordance with the division of powers.



The Institutional Triangle

The powers that the parliamentary body initially had from 1958 until the early 1970s were limited. Firstly, the parliament's attempts to increase its importance were blocked by European political leaders. Secondly, the Treaty of Rome stipulated that the Parliamentary Assembly would be elected, but the Council failed to agree to a uniform voting system beforehand.

The growth in power of the European Parliament only came after 1970 and this was a gradual process that had to do with the convictions of and push by federalists like Altiero Spinelli and Simone Veil, and also, as a response to foster legitimacy of the institutions. Indeed, budgetary powers were extended to the Parliamentary Assembly in 1970 and further strengthened in 1975, while the Summit Conference of December 1974 led to the development of the Act on European elections in September 1976. Simone Veil, the first woman President of the European Parliament (from 1979 to 1982), stood at the forefront of expanding the European Parliament's role in European social, political and economic life, while Spinelli worked tirelessly on a treaty for a "federalist" European Union – this draft plan provided the basis for the Single European Act of 1986 and the Maastricht Treaty of 1992.

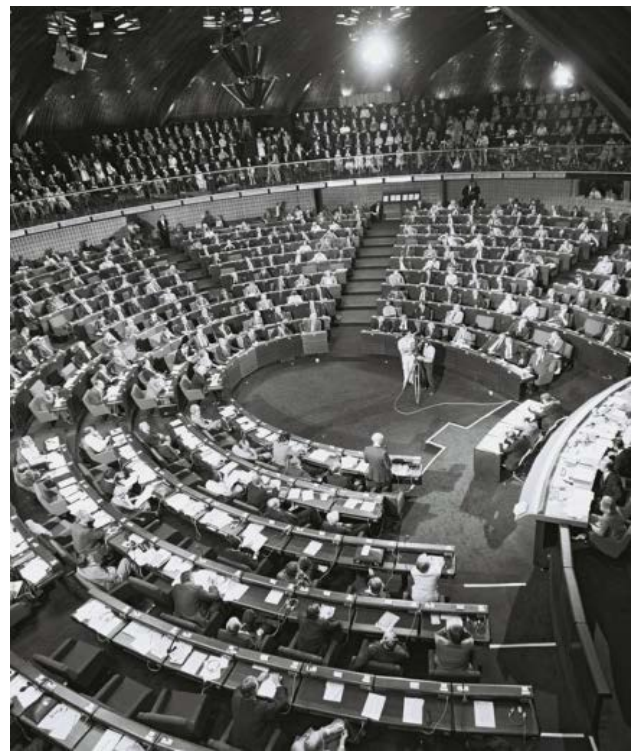


Photo: thisis1979.blogspot.com

The first direct elections for the European Parliament took place in 1979.

Yet, because of the lack of a European "demos" and pan-European parties, the campaigning during the European elections tended to focus on national issues and very few pan-European issues surfaced throughout the first few European elections. Furthermore, voter turnout has been steadily declining since the first election, from slightly over 60% in 1979 to 43% in 2009. However, debates on pan-European issues such as European integration, social policy and even foreign affairs gained prominence during the later elections in the 1990s and 2000s. The major phases of expansion with the addition of member states in 1995, 2004 and 2007 have led to questions being asked about the European integration project. The severe economic crisis beginning in 2009 have also heightened interest on issues of unemployment, social welfare and job creation.

Also, European parties began to develop common manifestos since the 1994 elections in order to highlight their common stance on policy issues, and a change in rules in 2007 to allow pan-European parties to compete at the national level were put in place in order to reverse the trend of declining turnout.

This background brief will begin with a quick overview of the development of the European Parliament and some of the issues that have occupied each election. The brief also provides a summary of the "electioneering" for the upcoming 2014 elections, and highlight some of the key issues and personalities running for leadership positions in the European Union.

The **Treaty of Paris** originally gave Member States the choice of whether to designate representatives from their own national parliament or to have them directly elected by universal suffrage. Member states picked the former set up and while this eliminated the firmest opponents of the Community it also undermined the representative nature of the Common Assembly (later renamed “Parliamentary Assembly” in 1958).

The Parliamentary Assembly subsequently acquired the name **‘European Parliament’** in January 1962.



Treaty of Paris establishing the ECSC. Photo: NATO

At the **Fontainebleau Summit of December 1974** major decisions were taken on direct elections to the European Parliament.

The Decision and Act on European Elections by direct universal suffrage were signed in Brussels on 20 September 1976. Following ratification by all Member States, the Act entered into force on July 1978, and the first European Parliament elections took place on 7 and 10 June 1979. The Act gave the Parliament new legitimacy and authority by introducing its election by direct universal suffrage (1.3.4).

The Act was revised in 2002, with the introduction the Fact Sheets on the European Union, the general principle of proportional representation and other framework provisions for national legislation on the European elections.

Key Figures

Simone Veil (1927 -)

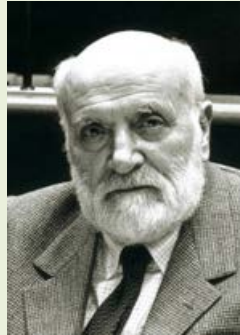


First female President since the creation of the Parliament

- Elected President of the European Parliament in 1979.
- At the forefront of expanding the European Parliament’s role in European social, political and economic life.

Photo: minniebeaniste.wordpress.com

Altiero Spinelli (1907-1986)



Advocate of a united federal Europe and deeper European integration

- Elected as a Member of the European Parliament in 1979.
- Formed ‘The Crocodile Club’ and together with the club proposed to parliament that a committee be set up to draft a proposal for a new treaty on the European Union.
- ‘Spinelli Plan’ i.e. ‘Draft Treaty Establishing the European Union’ was introduced by Spinelli in Parliament and accepted by the Parliament in 1984.
- Spinelli’s plan provided the basis for the Single European Act of 1986 which opened up the national borders for the common market, and for the Maastricht Treaty of 1992.

Photo: Associazione Politicamente

Timeline: Evolution of Parliament

Sep 1952

Mar 1957

Jan 1962

Jan 1973

Jun 1979

Jan 1981

ECSC Common Assembly meets for the first time. with 76 members.

EEC is founded. The Parliamentary Assembly then numbered 142 members delegated by national Parliaments.

Renamed “European Parliament”

EEC expands with UK, Denmark and Ireland. Parliament members increased to 198.

European Parliament elected by direct universal suffrage. 410 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) elected in 9 member states.

Accession of Greece as 10th member state increased number of MEPs to 434.

Parliament has undergone various changes over time and in the process its powers have been strengthened in attempt to increase the legitimacy of the EU in the eyes of its citizens. Parliament's powers were strengthened by:

- Making Community agreements on enlargement and association agreements subject to Parliament's assent;
- Introducing a procedure for cooperation with the Council (co-decision) in the Maastricht Treaty which gave Parliament real, if limited, legislative powers.
- Except for agriculture and competition policy, the co-decision procedure applied to all the areas where the Council was permitted to take decisions by qualified majority. In four cases (Articles 18, 42 and 47 and Article 151 on cultural policy, which remained unchanged) the co-decision procedure was combined with a requirement for a unanimous decision in the Council. The other legislative areas where unanimity was required were not subject to co-decision.
- With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, Parliament has become an equal partner with the Council when it comes to the legislative procedure.



The European Parliament then and now. Photo Sources: German Federal Archive (left) and <http://www.ep-site.eu> (right)

Legislative power

- Parliament and the Council became co-legislators on a practically equal footing when the co-decision procedure was extended to 15 existing legal bases under the Maastricht Treaty.
- The Treaty of Amsterdam extended the co-decision procedure- the appointment of the President of the Commission was made subject to Parliament's approval, thus increasing its powers of control over the executive.
- The Treaty of Nice and Treaty of Lisbon further extended the scope of the co-decision procedure, and also gave new powers to European Commission, European Parliament and European Court of Justice in the fields of justice and home affairs.

Power of control

The Lisbon Treaty provides the European Parliament with the power to elect the president of the European Commission on the basis of a proposal made by the European Council, taking into account the results of the European elections (Article 214).

Election and statute of Members

With regard to the procedure for elections to Parliament by direct universal suffrage (Article 190 EC), the Community's power to adopt common principles was added to the existing power to adopt a uniform procedure. A legal basis making it possible to adopt a single statute for MEPs was included in the same article. However, there was still no provision allowing measures to develop pan-European political parties (cf. Article 191).

Jan 1986	Jun 1994	Jan 1995	May 2004	Jan 2007	Jul 2013
Accession of Spain and Portugal to EC increases number of MEPs to 518.	4 th EP election: Number of MEPs increased to 567 to account for German unification.	Austria, Finland and Sweden join the EU. No. of MEPs increased to 626	10 new Eastern and Southern European nations join the EU, MEPs now number 732	Number of MEPs increased to 736 after Romania and Bulgaria join the EU.	Croatia joins as the EU's 28 th member state. MEPs increased to 766.

Elections 1979

Main Issues:

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Disenchantment with CAP due to the perception that it imposes a burden on the Community budget

Working Hours

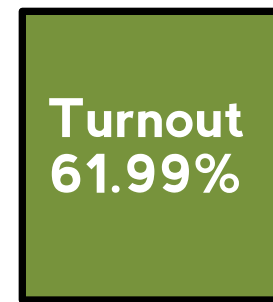
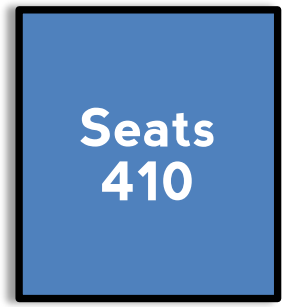
Proposals to reduce working hours to 35 hours per week within a European Framework

Gender Issues

Principle of equal pay in 1976 Council Directive that called for equal treatment of men and women not fully applied. Many member states addressed the question of gender equality. Expectations of the European Parliament to play a dynamic role in developing directives to fight gender inequalities were high, especially now that it is being elected by universal suffrage.

Environment Issues

A series of environmental issues such as reduction of nuclear energy usage were on the table. There were calls to look for solutions to these issues on a supranational level.



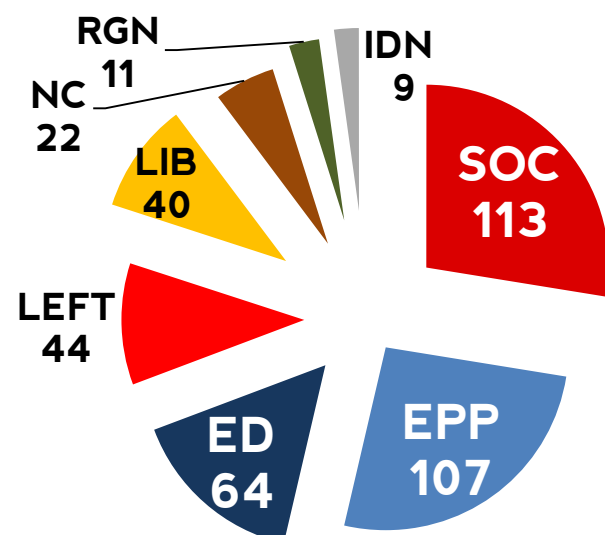
Post-Election

Media coverage and public opinion following the elections suggest no significant rise in the visibility of the parliament despite the direct election.

The European Parliament became more assertive; especially in relation to the Council

- In December 1979, the European Parliament (EP) used its power under Article 203 of the Treaty of Rome to veto proposals
- In December 1982: the EP blocked the Supplementary Budget

Results



Party Groups

Confederation of Socialist Parties (SOC)

European People's Party (EPP)

European Democrats (ED)

Communists/Far-Left (LEFT)

Liberals and Liberal Democrats (LIB)

National Conservatives (NC)

Heterogeneous/Regionalists (RGN)

Independents (IDN)

Elections 1984

Context

Recession

In the years preceding the elections (1981-1983) member states such as the UK and Ireland were hit by a recession.

Entry of the Greens

The 1984 elections mark the first time that the Greens enter the European Parliament scene. They have been represented in the European Parliament ever since.

The EC's first expansion

Greece became the 10th member state of the Community in 1981.



Issues

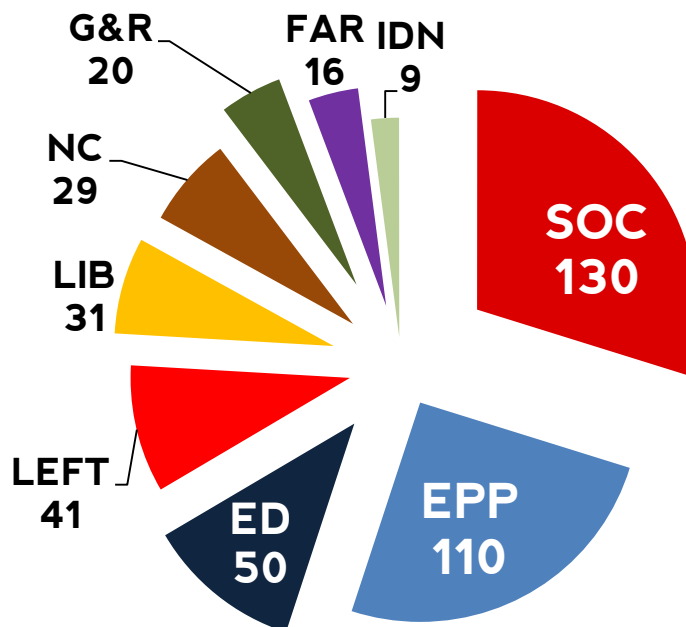
Renationalisation of campaigns

Transnational issues take a backseat

Electorate
200.5 million

Results

Seats
434



Turnout
58.98%

- Confederation of Socialist Parties (SOC)
- European People's Party (EPP)
- European Democrats (ED)
- Communists/Far-Left (LEFT)
- Liberals and Liberal Democrats (LIB)
- National Conservatives (NC)
- Greens and Regionalists (G&R)
- Far-Right Parties (FAR)
- Independents (IDN)

Main Issues

Context

In 1987, two years before the elections, the **Single European Act** was adopted and as consequent of this act, 1992 was set as the deadline for the creation of a single market.

Despite the significance of the Single European Act that provided the foundation for the creation of the Single Market with four freedoms, pan-European issues were not particularly discussed either.

A survey showed that :

- 72% of people felt unemployment was one of the important issues
- 39% considered environmental protection to be an important issue too
- Only 8% chose the realization of the Single European Market as an important point to be discussed during the elections

1989

Sources: European Parliament and Voters' Study of the European Elections Study 1989

1994

Issues

- Greater attention devoted to European issues in these elections. Greatest amount of debate in Denmark, France, and Great Britain.
- The ratification of the Maastricht Treaty was an important point of campaign in all states
- Growing tendency by the political parties to use common manifestos
- Unemployment and environmental issues were once again discussed during these elections

Context

The **Treaty of Maastricht** was ratified and came into force in November 1993 thereby creating the European Union (EU).

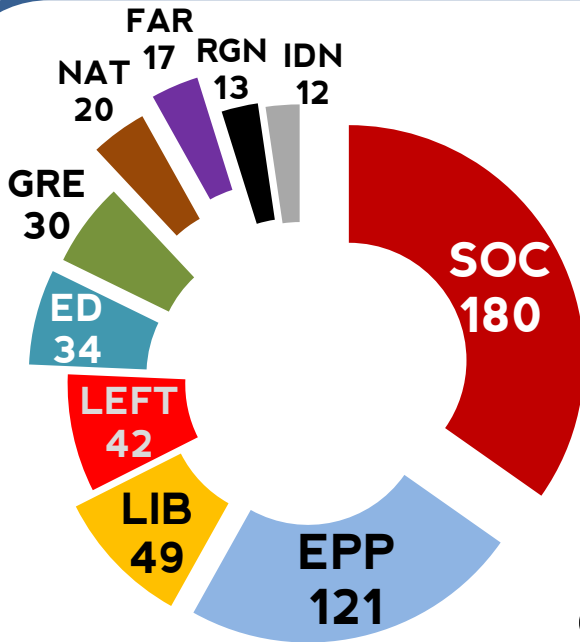
The European Economic Area came into force in January 1994.

The reunification of Germany in 1990 and the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe saw a wave of new applications by European states to join the EU.

Sources: European Parliament and European Commission

Party Groups

- Confederation of Socialist Parties (SOC)
- European People's Party (EPP)
- Liberals and Liberal Democrats (LIB)
- Communists/Far-Left (LEFT)
- European Democrats (ED)
- The Greens (GRE)
- National Conservatives (NAT)
- Far-Right (FAR)
- Regionalists (RGN)
- Independents (IDN)



Total Seats: 518

Sources: European Parliament and Europe-politique.eu

Electorate Turnout
244.9m 58.5%

Results

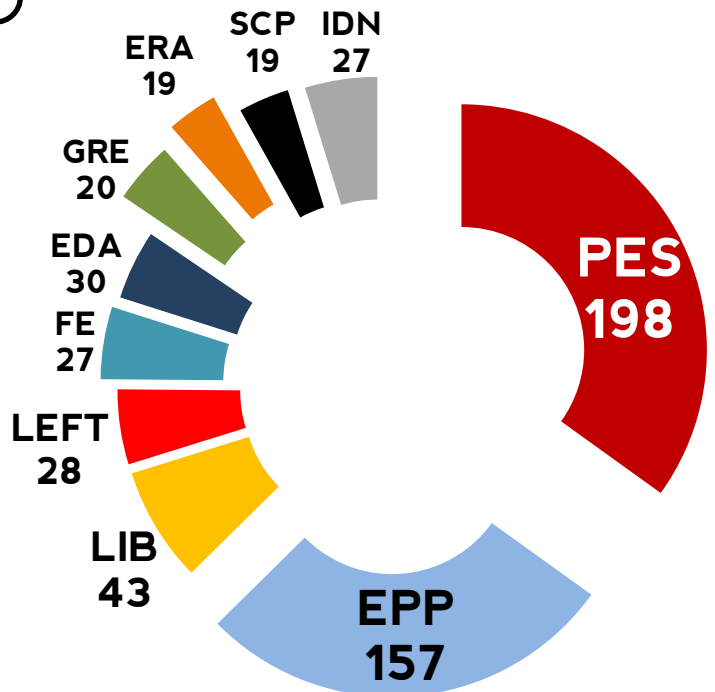
1989

Electorate
269.2 million

Turnout
56.8%

Results

1994



Total Seats 567

Party Groups

- Party of European Socialists (PES)
- European People's Party (EPP)
- Liberals and Lib Dems (ELDR)
- Communists/Far-Left (LEFT)
- Forza Europa Conservatives (FE)
- European Democrats (EDA)
- The Greens (GRE)
- Radical Liberals (ERA)
- Euroceptics (SCE)
- Independents (IDN)

Context

- The **Amsterdam Treaty of 1997**, which entered into force in May 1999, opened more legislation to co-decision and confirmed the EP's role in approving the European Commission President.
- Creation of the Euro: Public opinion on the single currency was favourable
- Emergence of the Green Parties as a "fourth" force, and increasing salience of environmental issues.

Issues

Prevalence of national issues over European issues when EP elections held in conjunction with regional or local elections/referendums, particularly in Belgium, Luxembourg, Spain and Ireland

Major national level issue for voters include unemployment, the transfer of jobs abroad and fighting poverty and social exclusion.

Major EU-level issues include:

- Desired accountability of European Central Bank vis-a-vis the European Parliament,
- Confidence in European Commission – a May 1999 poll indicated that 53 percent of Europeans had little or no confidence in the European Commission which came in the wake of a corruption scandal in the Commission.
- Debate on deepening or widening of the EU were prominent in both UK and France

Elect 1999

Electorate
300,000,000

Turnout
49.51%

Seats
626

Party Groups

European People's Party (EPP)

Party of European Socialists (PES)

European Liberals (ELDR)

European Greens (GRE)

National Conservatives (NC)

European United Left (Left)

Euroceptics (AEN)

Independents and Others (ID)

Results

EPP
233

PES
180

ELDR
50

GRE
48

Left
42

NC
31

ID
29

AEN
16

lections 2004

Electorate
342,000,000

Seats
732

Turnout
45.6%

Issues

The Constitutional Treaty and Turkey's prospective EU membership was widely discussed in virtually all member states. Issues related to foreign policy and security, such as military non-alignment and the US occupation in Iraq were more prominent in the older member states in Western Europe, while national interest issues were more prominent in the new EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe.

The European party groups (EPP, PES and ELDR) reflected their support for the Constitutional Treaty and an expanded Europe in their manifestos, but lack of proper debate on European integration by these parties.

Context

Negotiations on the **Constitutional Treaty**, which was first conceived in December 2001 by the European Council, were concluded in June 2004 by the Irish Presidency of the European Union.

The ascension of eight new member states from Central and Eastern Europe and two from Southern Europe on 1st May 2004 brought the number of EU member states to 25. The number of MEPs increased from 626 to 732 as agreed in the EU's Constitution Treaty, with 151 seats contested by parties in these new member states.

The Treaty of Nice capped the number of seats in the European Parliament at 732.

Party Groups

- European People's Party (EPP)
- Party of European Socialists (PES)
- European Liberals (ELDR)
- European Greens (Greens)
- National Conservatives (NC)
- European United Left (UL)
- Eurosceptics (AEN)
- Independents (ID)

Results



ELECTIONS 2009

Issues

Which issues mattered to voters in the EU, and in which member states were they prominently discussed?

European Integration & Identity



The Economy



The Environment



Social Policy and Integration



Turkey's EU Aspirations



Electorate
385.6m

Seats
732

Turnout
43%

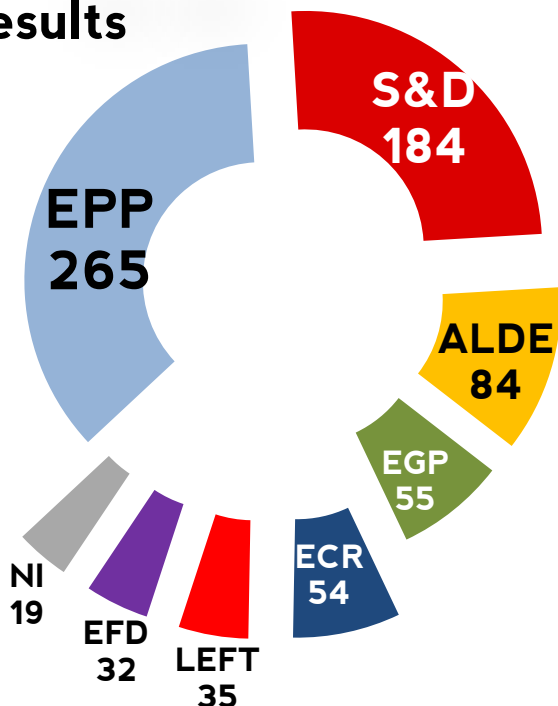
Context

The financial and debt crises unfolded in 2009 when a number of EU member states asked for bailouts from the European Union. Both Ireland and Spain were in recession at the time of the elections.

- The 2007 Treaty of Lisbon: Institutionalised the European Council meetings and created the position of a permanent President of the European Council.
- Further empowered the European Parliament
- Created the position of a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy supported by the European External Action Service.
- Allowed for the possibility of a member state withdrawing from the EU.

Also, new rules proposed by the European Commission to allow pan-European political groupings to compete at the national level were made law in 2007.

Results



Party Groups

- European People's Party (EPP)
- Socialists and Democrats (S&D)
- Alliance of Liberals and Democrats of Europe (ALDE)
- European Greens (EGP)
- European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)
- European United Left (LEFT)
- Europe for Freedom and Democracy (EFD)
- Other Parties (NI)

Sources: European Parliament, Europa.eu, Europe-politique.eu and EUDO-EUI 2009 Elections to the European Parliament Country Report



European People's Party

EPP

The European People's Party (EPP) is a centre-right European political group that was founded on 8 July 1976 in Luxembourg by French MP Jean Seitlinger, the then Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans (was also elected as the party's first president) and the later Belgian Prime Minister and EPP President Wilfried Martens. The party has contested all European elections since 1979, and it was enlarged in 2002 after the European Democrat Union (EDU) successfully negotiated a merger with the party.

The EPP has consistently stood for freedom, democracy, respect for traditions and associations, the principle of subsidiary and a Social Market Economy. The party has is also known for advocating deeper European integration in areas such as the completion of the single market, the integration of immigrants, the continued enlargement of the EU and a direct election for the European Commission President.

PES

Socialists + Democrats

Party of European Socialists

PES

The Party of European Socialists (PES) is the main social democratic political group in the European Union. PES first started out as a loose group of centre-left parties in the 1960s, before being inaugurated as the Confederation of the Socialist Parties of the European Community (SOC) in 1973 after the accession of Denmark, the UK and Ireland into the EC. The party adopted its current name in 1992 after the formation of the European Union, and it sits as the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats group (S&D) in the European Parliament.

As a social democratic alliance, the PES has stood firm on ideals such as the protection of workers' and human rights, equal pay, equality and diversity. The party is a proponent of European integration, and in recent times, has advocated for a "Social Europe" that calls for governments to work towards fair redistribution of wealth and the setting of binding targets on employment, education and social cohesion.

STATE OF THE POLITICAL GROUPS

Alliance of Liberals & Democrats for Europe



ALDE

The ALDE is a European political group comprising 57 national-level liberal parties from across Europe. European Liberal parties first formed a political confederation in 1976, before embarking on a name change of the group to the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR) in 1994. The ELDR then partnered with the European People's Party-European Democrats Group in the 1999-2004 European Parliament to form a grand coalition, and in 2004, the party registered itself as a political entity and absorbed MEPs from the European Democratic Party. The party had adopted its current name in 2012 to match the pan-European alliance and parliamentary group of the same name.

Since its formation, the ALDE has often espoused the principles of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, individualism and tolerance, and has strongly supported the enlargement of the European Union as well as free trade.

European Green Party



EUROPEANGREENS.EU

The European Green Party started out as a Coordination of European Green and Radical Parties (CEGRP) prior to the 1979 election, though no Green MP entered the European Parliament in that year. The Greens then set up a European Green Coordination (EGC) in 1984, winning 11 seats in that election. It was only in 1989 were the Greens able to form their parliamentary group in the European Parliament, and in 1999 they replaced the European Left as the fourth largest party group in the European Parliament.

The Greens champion the basic tenets of Green politics such as environmental responsibility, individual freedom, inclusive democracy, diversity, social justice, gender equality, sustainable development and non-violence. The party initially advocated the formation of a neutral and decentralised Europe, though from 1999 onwards it has proposed pragmatic alternatives to the EU's policies and institutions.

Sources: EPP.eu, Party of European Socialists 2014 Manifesto, ALDE.eu and Europeangreens.eu

**EUROPEAN
ELECTIONS
22-25 MAY 2014**
WWW.ELECTIONS2014.EU
#EP2014

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20

Front

Context

The 2014 European Elections will be held between 22 and 25 May 2014 in the 28 member states of the European Union.

Voters will indirectly elect the European Commission – According to the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament is empowered to elect the President of the European Commission on the basis of a proposal of the European Council taking into account the election results. The European political groups have each nominated a candidate for the Commission presidency.

The partisan electoral contest for Commission President has led for the first time to television debates where candidates for the Commission Presidency would face each other in April and May. Candidates also hit the road to campaign for votes.

There is a rise of “hard” Eurosceptic and far-right parties in Europe in the midst of economic crisis as Europeans give greater backing to far-right parties – an increase in hard Eurosceptic MEPs in EP could pose problems for other EU institutions such as the Council and Commission.

Also, will turnout drop further or will the new changes to EP’s powers encourage more voters to turn out?

JEAN-CLAUDE Juncker

European People’s Party (EPP)



Aged 60, Juncker was one of the longest serving Prime Ministers of Luxembourg (1995-2013) and has experience chairing the Eurogroup of finance ministers during the recent financial and debt crisis. Juncker is a strong supporter of European integration and the Union’s social justice agenda.

Other Candidates



Guy Verhofstadt
Alliance of Liberals
and Democrats of
Europe (ALDE)



Alexis Tsipras
Party of the
European Left

Electorate
400,000,000

Seats
751

Sources: elections2014.eu, European Parliament, European Council, epp.eu, pes.eu, euobserver.com

14

runners

MARTIN

Schulz

Party of European Socialists (PES)



A former aspiring football player, German Martin Schulz has worked through the ranks of Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) and was first elected to the European Parliament in 1994. He served as its President from 2012 to 2013, and is an ardent champion of human rights, reform of financial markets, deeper European integration and promotion of economic growth in the EU away from austerity.

The topic of European integration is expected to be one of the biggest issues in these elections and all European parties have addressed their plans for Europe in their manifestos. However, 60% of Europeans do not trust the EU and anti-EU feelings are on the rise, making the task of getting voters to the polls even tougher.

Eurosceptic and far-right parties are hoping to capitalise on the surge of nationalism to gain more seats in the European Parliament. The French National Front (FN), the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the Dutch PVV are calling for national control over immigration, while Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and Italy's Five Star Movement (MF5) are calling for their countries to exit the Eurozone.

Economy and social policy remains a prominent issues: outgoing MEPs call for a new narrative that binds Europeans together in a globalised world with the PES campaigning on building a social union with effective integration policies. There is a desire among Europe's youth for education schemes on rights and identity as EU citizens.

Lastly, the recent crisis in Ukraine has overshadowed other national concerns in Poland, and is expected to feature strongly in the election campaigns in the EU's Baltic states as well as in Bulgaria.

Ones to watch

"No" to electoral threshold in Germany

Germany's Constitutional Court annulled the Bundestag's decision on a 3% electoral threshold, opening the door for the 15 month old anti-Euro Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) to gain its first seats in these upcoming elections.

First-place finishes for FN and UKIP

Opinion polls suggest that Marine Le Pen's Front National (FN) and Nigel Farage's UKIP will come out tops in France and the UK respectively. If these polls are accurate, this will be the first time that mainstream parties in both these EU member states will fail to clinch first place.

Crisis in Ukraine

The ongoing Ukraine crisis has prompted fresh debate on Poland's security issues and is set to ensure that the centre-right Civic Platform will come out tops in these elections.



Ska Keller & José Bové
(Joint Candidates)
European Green Party

The Alliance of European Conservatives & Reformists (ECR), Le Pen and Wilders' new European Alliance for Freedom (EAF) and the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group (EFD) all declined to present a candidate for the Commission Presidency.



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