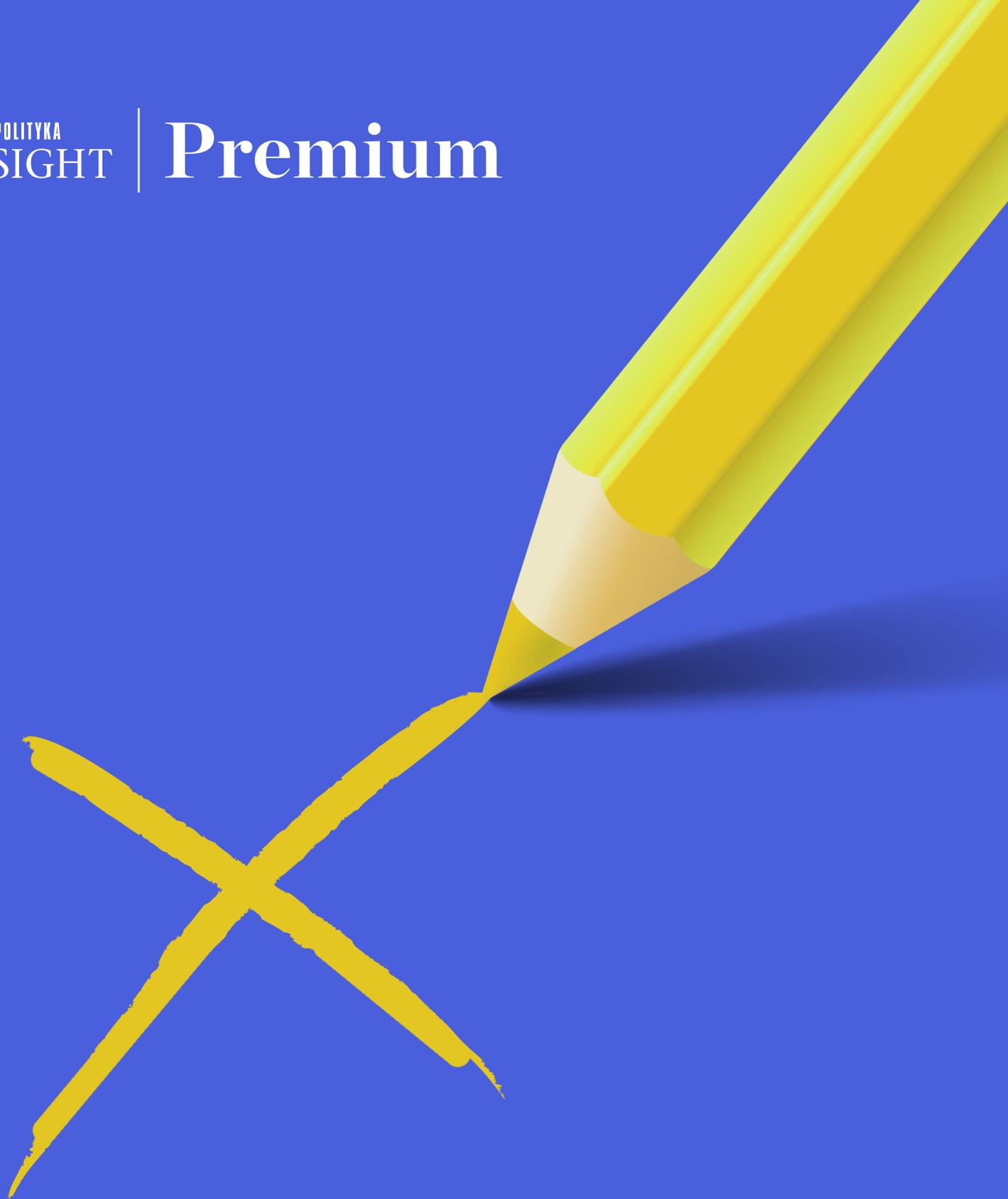


POLITYKA  
INSIGHT

Premium



Who will win  
the European  
elections

# Ladies and Gentlemen,

The elections to the European Parliament have already taken place in the Netherlands and Great Britain and will have been held in all EU Member States by May 26. In total, Europeans will elect 751 representatives, and the shape of the European Union over the next few years will depend on who will sit on the parliamentary benches and in what political configuration.

This year's elections were supposed to be different from the previous ones. Only two months ago it seemed that Great Britain would not take part in them because it would be already outside the EU. EU leaders meanwhile had planned for the election campaign to be an opportunity for a real European debate on the future of the Union. However, this has not happened - campaigns in individual countries have been dominated by internal issues. A lot has also happened on domestic political stages in different Member States.

2019 will be remembered as the year when the Socialists' and Christian Democrats' duopoly in setting the direction and tone of the EU was broken. A coalition of at least three factions will be needed to build a majority in the European Parliament, as the Chamber will be much more fragmented than it is at present. New actors will appear on the political scene to take advantage of such transformations. The radical right, which has united under the leadership of Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, no longer wants the EU to be dissolved, but plans to change the Union from within. A new, central faction, in which the French President Emmanuel Macron's party will play the main role, will position itself as the defender of European integration.

The dossier, which we have prepared for you, is intended to help you understand what reality we will wake up in on May 27, the day after the election in the last Member State. We project the future of European groups and those states, in which the results will determine the new balance of power in the European Parliament. We also present a forecast of the election results, broken down by individual factions, with a particular emphasis on the results of the Polish political parties. We explain the bearing which the shifts in the balance power are likely to have on the workings of the new European Parliament.

[Agnieszka Smoleńska i Paweł Wiejski](#)

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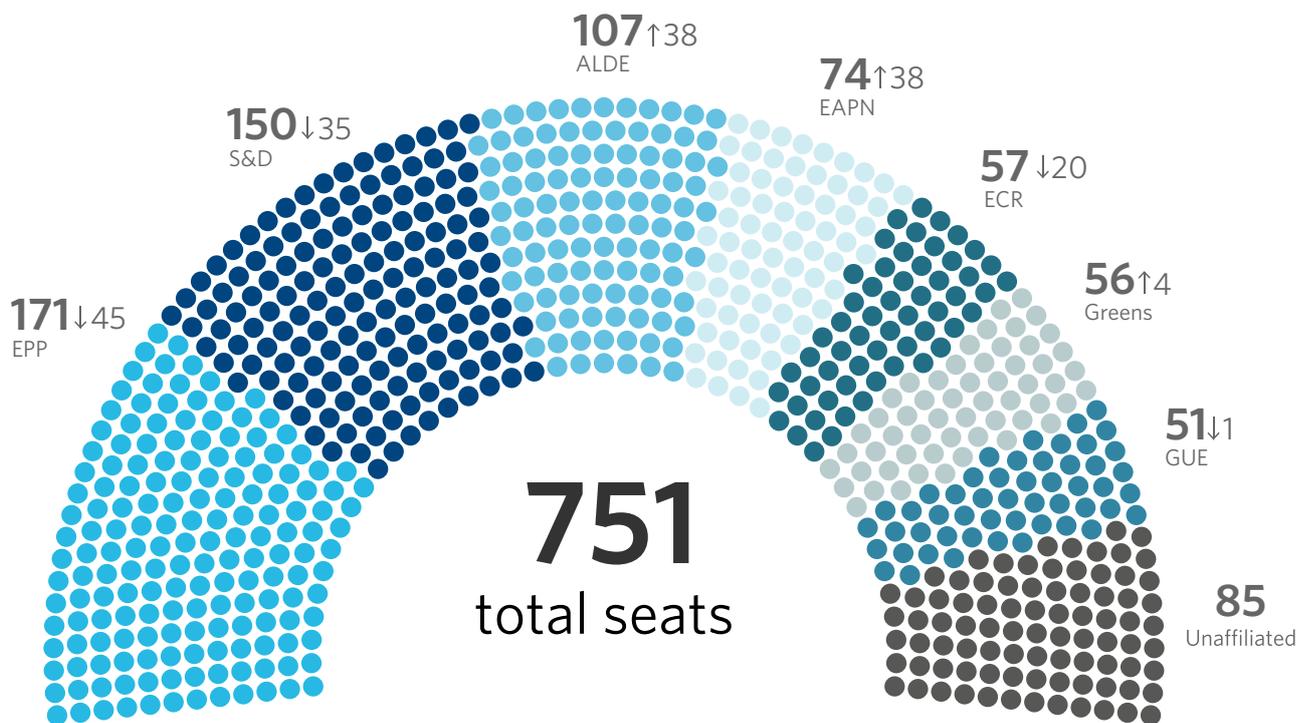
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# What the new European Parliament will look like

The Christian Democrats will win the elections, but it will take a minimum of three factions to build a coalition. The liberals and the far right will gain the most compared to previous elections.

WHAT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MIGHT LOOK LIKE FOLLOWING ELECTIONS



↑ increasing number of seats compared to current state

↓ decreasing number of seats compared to current state

- **EPP** European People's Party
- **EAPN** European Alliance of Peoples and Nations
- **GUE** European United Left-Nordic Green Left
- **S&D** Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
- **ECR** European Conservatives and Reformists
- **Unaffiliated**
- **ALDE** Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (with French En March)
- **Greens**

Source: [pollofpolls.eu](http://pollofpolls.eu)

**Christian Democrats will win, but lose most seats.** According to polls, the European People's Party (EPP) can count on 171 seats, 45 seats fewer than in 2014. The Christian Democrats will suffer their greatest losses in the Western European countries, including in France (-8), Spain (-7) and Italy (-5). The German MEPs will remain the dominant force and stand to win 29 seats. The Polish delegation composed of MEPs from Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform, PO) and Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish People's Party, PSL) will be the second largest (17 seats), followed by the Hungarians (Fidesz with 14 seats). It is, however, unclear whether or not Viktor Orbán's party will leave the faction - it has been suspended as an EPP member since March for the violation of rule of law by the Hungarian government.

**Socialists will benefit from Brexit deferment.** Were it not for the UK's MEPs, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (Socialists and Democrats, or S&D) would have suffered the largest losses of all factions in EurParl. At the same time, polls indicate that S&D will get 150 seats, 35 fewer than it currently boasts. The delegations from Western European countries will shrink even more in this faction than in the EPP. The Labour Party will have five fewer UK MEPs than in 2014, and the centre-left in Germany, France and Italy will lose a dozen or so seats. The role of the parties from the south and north of Europe will increase, as well as those from Poland and Romania (nine seats each).

**Strengthened liberals will change name after election.** The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), along with the allied French En Marche group, can count on 107 seats, 38 more than it has now. ALDE head Guy Verhofstadt announced that in place of the existing group in EurParl, a new centre faction will be formed, which will also include Emmanuel Macron's party. The French will be the largest national delegation in the group (21 MEPs). Like the socialists, the liberals will benefit from the postponement of Brexit - the UK MEPs will be the second largest group after the French (12 members).

**Extreme right in fourth place.** The Italian Deputy PM has succeeded in uniting most far-right parties in Europe under the banner of the European Alliance of Peoples and Nations. The parties which were members of the former Europe of Nations and Freedom faction (e.g. the Italian League with 25 seats and the French National Union with 22) will be joined by the Alternative for Germany (AfD with 12 seats) and other parties. According to the polls, the faction will have a total of 74 MEPs. After the election Salvini will, however, try to recruit more parties, including the UK Brexit Party and Hungarian Fidesz.

**PiS faction weakens by the day.** The European Conservatives and Reformists can count on 57 seats. Just a few weeks ago, it seemed that its results would be helped by the UK Conservatives, but the latter is polling increasingly badly with each subsequent poll and it seems that they will win at most 8 of 73 UK seats. Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice, PiS), with 22 seats, will be the largest party of the group, but due to the general weakness of ECR, this will not result in the party getting any important positions in the new EurParl.

**Greens and Left unchanged, large number of unaffiliated members.** Despite favourable surveys in Germany, the Greens will improve their result only slightly - they will win about 56 seats, four more than at present. For their part, the radical United European Left (GUE) will most likely very nearly repeat the result of 2014 - the latest forecasts give it 51 seats (one fewer than before). Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy, which included the Italian Five Star Movement and the UK Independence Party (UKIP) will probably cease to exist, and the members of this faction will probably start the session as unaffiliated. The number of MEPs not belonging to any group will amount to about 85, so the possibility of their joining one of the existing factions will significantly affect the balance of power in EurParl.

*\* All poll results from [pollofpolls.eu](http://pollofpolls.eu), 22.05.2019*

## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

Despite the growth of the popularity of the extreme right, the new EurParl will continue to be controlled by mainstream, pro-European parties. The most important change will be fragmentation - the so-called grand coalition of Christian Democrats and Socialists will not have a big enough majority to approve the composition of the new EurCom by itself and vote on legislation. It is possible that no permanent coalition will emerge and the two main groups will build ad hoc alliances with Greens, liberals, conservatives and radical leftists and far right. The situation is further complicated by Brexit - for when the UK finally leaves the EU, the balance of power within EurParl will change.

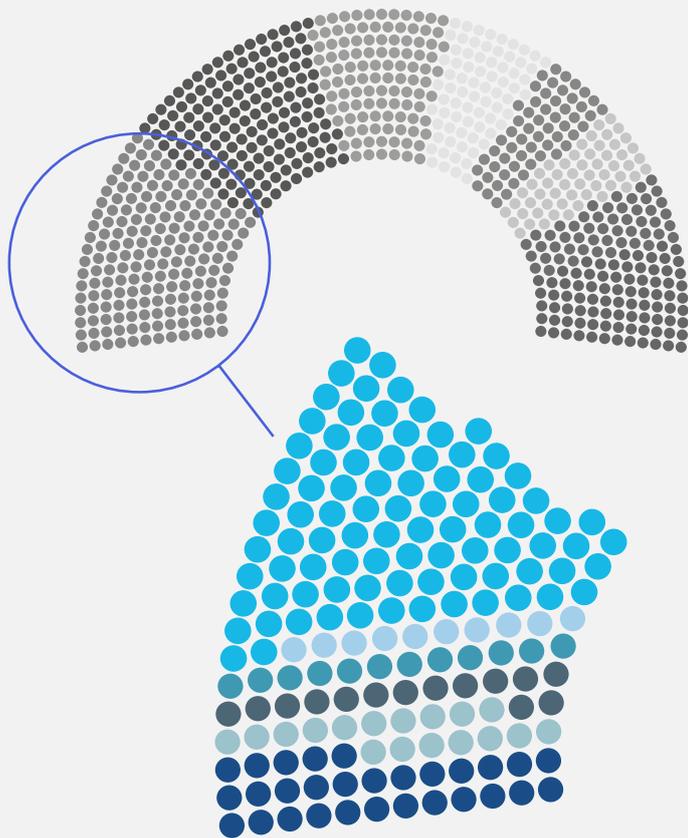
**Paweł Wiejski**

European Affairs Analyst

# European People's Party jumps further to the right

The EPP will remain the largest faction in the European Parliament, however its lead over other groups will decrease, changing the internal balance of power.

PROJECTED NUMBER OF SEATS FOR EPP



751 SEATS  
171 EPP

● Germany - 29	● Poland - 17	● Hungary - 14
● France - 12	● Spain - 10	
● Remaining:		
Greece - 9	Croatia - 5	Slovenia - 3
Portugal - 9	Belgium - 4	Cyprus - 2
Bulgaria - 8	Ireland - 4	Luxembourg - 2
Romania - 8	Czech Rep. - 3	Malta - 2
Italy - 7	Finland - 3	Latvia - 1
Austria - 6	Lithuania - 3	Slovakia - 1
Sweden - 6	Netherlands - 3	

**Christian Democrats will get the best result in EurParl.** After the May elections, the European People's Party (EPP) will remain the largest faction in the European Parliament (as it has been since 1999), but it will have over 20 per cent fewer seats than at present (171 as against 216). It will also be the only major faction that will not

increase its mandates as a result of UK members remaining in EurParl. In practice, this means that the Christian Democrats will have fewer important positions than they presently hold. In the current term, the EPP has five EurParl vice-presidents and eight chairs of parliamentary committees; after the elections the number will decrease in proportion to seats obtained. If Christian Democrat Manfred Weber is not elected head of EurCom, the party will probably still be able to get the post of EurParl president – it may then go to an Irish MEP, Mairead McGuinness. The EPP will also maintain its influence in the administration of the institution as the secretary general of EurParl Klaus Welle will keep his post.

**Germany will be the largest national delegation in EPP.** According to forecasts, after the May elections the Germans will have 29 seats, i.e. almost twice as many as the next nation (Poles with 17 seats). They will remain the strongest in the faction (currently they have 34 seats), but their delegation will change significantly. Although Weber will remain its head if he is not elected as President of EurCom, Elmar Brok, one of the most important European politicians within the CDU (Christian Democratic Union), will not return to EurParl. According to our information, the priorities of the German delegation will also change; emphasis will be placed on issues related to migration and security - the Angela Merkel era is coming to an end, and the leadership of the more conservative Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Germany is turning to the right.

**Fewer MEPs from Western Europe.** The faction's biggest losses will be a result of the reduced popularity of Christian Democrats in Western Europe. There will be a drop in the size of delegations from France (from 20 to 12 MEPs), Spain (from 17 to 10) and Italy (from 12 to 7). They will however, still have a big impact on the future direction of the faction, due to the experience of their MEPs (the current head of the Spanish delegation Esteban González Pons and the secretary general of the EPP Antonio López-Istúriz, among others, will return to EurParl) and because of the role these parties play in the faction's secretariat. As in the case of the German delegation, new delegations from Western Europe will probably present different views from the present regional representatives. In countries where the extreme right is becoming stronger, the Christian Democrats are becoming more and more conservative, for example on issues pertaining to worldviews. The Spanish Partido Popular is eager to form a coalition with the far-right Vox party and Silvio Berlusconi from Forza Italia has announced its plans to partner with Matteo Salvini.

**Further departures to the right and centre possible.** At the present moment, the biggest variable is the future of Viktor Orbán's party, which is suspended from faction membership. The final decision regarding Fidesz's membership of the EPP will probably be made only after the election, and will be of great importance for the position of the faction in EurParl. According to the forecasts, Orbán's party is set to receive 14 seats, which could make it the third-largest delegation in the EPP. The polarisation of the political scene is conducive to departures, both to the extreme right and moderate groups. In March already, the Italian party Brothers of Italy (the European Conservatives and Reformists) left the EPP, while the current EurParl vice-president Françoise Grossetête from the French Republican party is promoting the electoral lists of En Marche, the French president's movement, criticizing the EPP for departing from its roots.

## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

After the May elections, the EPP's lead over other EurParl factions will decrease. If the group wants to set the tone for the work of the parliament, it will have to create broad coalitions more often than it does now (it will no longer have the majority along with the Socialists). This, however, will affect the cohesion of the group - not all coalitions, whether with the extreme right or with the new liberals, will be acceptable for all national delegations. Already at the outset this may make cooperation within the faction more difficult, but in the long run any strong right-wards pressure of some delegations (e.g. German, Italian and Austrian delegations) may test the resolve of the more moderate delegations (the Poles and Portuguese).

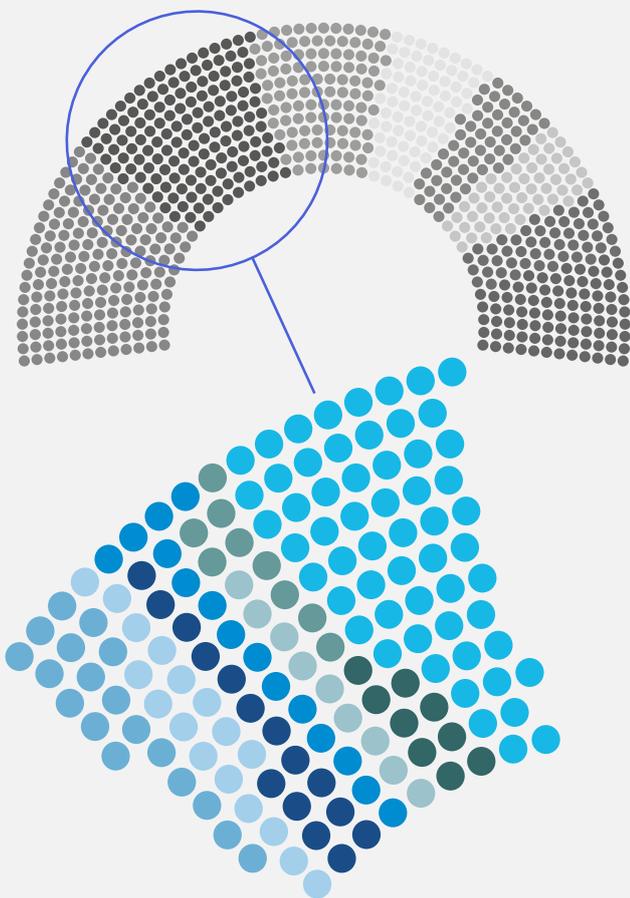
### **Agnieszka Smoleńska**

Senior European Affairs Analyst

# Socialists seek allies

The Socialists and Democrats faction will suffer considerable losses in the upcoming European elections. They will work with the extreme left, Greens and liberals.

PROJECTED NUMBER OF SEATS FOR S&D



751 SEATS  
150 S&D

● Italy - 18	● Spain - 17	● Germany - 15
● UK - 15	● Poland - 9	● Romania - 9
● Portugal - 9		
● Remaining:		
Bulgaria - 7	Belgium - 3	Slovenia - 2
Austria - 6	Croatia - 3	Cyprus - 1
Denmark - 4	Latvia - 3	Czech Rep. - 1
France - 4	Netherlands - 3	Estonia - 1
Hungary - 4	Slovakia - 3	Lithuania - 1
Malta - 4	Finland - 2	Luxembourg - 1
Sweden - 4	Greece - 2	

**Socialists will remain the second-largest party.** Although they are set to win 40 seats fewer than they have in the current term, they will - as has been the case over the course of the last two decades - only be overtaken by the European People's Party (EPP). The Socialists will have 150 out of 751 seats, while the EPP will have 171. A weakening of traditional parties means that they will get fewer key posts.

The progressive alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) currently boasts five vice presidents of EurParl and eight committee heads. In addition, Socialist Spitzen candidate for EurCom president Frans Timmermans, although considered one of the campaign favourites, will struggle to convince member states that he is the best person for the job.

**Delayed Brexit in faction's favour.** The British Labour Party will have 15 MEPs in the new EurParl, making it one of the largest national delegations in the S&D. However, the UK MEPs will only remain in EurParl until Brexit takes place, i.e. until October 31, 2019, if nothing changes. This means that they are unlikely to be able to apply for any important positions. It is also possible that the UK delegation will be smaller than polls suggest - Labour has recently been losing support and voters to the more anti-Brexit Greens and LibDems.

**Balance of power set to change.** The social democratic parties of the „old” EU, which have dominated the faction thus far, are losing support. An example is France, where the Socialist Party might not clear the 5 per cent threshold, while in 2014 it won 13 seats. Although the German and Italian social democrats will get into EurParl, they will lose a dozen or so seats each compared to 2014. In practice, this means that socialists from the south (especially from Spain, where they are set to win 17 seats, up 3 seats from 2014) and the north of the continent will have a greater impact on the faction's work. In addition, the significance of the Romanian Social Democratic Party will increase - it is currently suspended as a member of the faction due to corruption scandals the Bucharest government is mixed up in.

**Polish delegation could double.** Three or four members of the Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance, SLD, running on KE lists), which belongs to the S&D faction in EurParl, are likely to win seats. Wiosna members will probably also join the socialists in EurParl. If that happens, the Polish delegation will increase from five to as many as ten members (the polls give Wiosna 4-6 seats). Biedroń is viewed by the S&D with particular enthusiasm. Apart from KE's Bogusław Liberadzki, the Polish representatives will be newcomers - their lack of experience could affect their impact on the group's work.

**Timmermans wants to build coalition in opposition to EPP.** Speaking during TV debates, the socialist Spitzen candidate has expressed his willingness to work with pro-European forces from the extreme left, ranging from the Greens to the liberals. The coalition would not, however, include the Christian Democrats, in spite of the fact that they will become the largest faction in the new EurParl. Timmermans has good relations with the party of Greek PM Alexis Tsipras, which currently sits with the extreme left GUE/NGL faction. Italy's Democratic Party (PD) Italy's Democratic Party (PD), on the other hand, will be one of the biggest in the S&D and is on good terms with the French president Emmanuel Macron's En Marche party (an En Marche representative in Italy is running on PD lists). Even if Timmermans were to unite all the forces to the left of the EPP, however, he still would not have a majority in EurParl.

#### **THE BOTTOM LINE**

The Socialists and Democrats will suffer considerable losses in the European elections in May but will remain a major force in EurParl. In any case, the scale of defeat will not be as severe as polls suggested just a few months ago, mainly due to the Brexit delay. The S&D's position will depend on the outcome of negotiations with other EurParl groupings. Even if forming a coalition does not result in the Socialist candidate becoming EurCom president, close cooperation within the faction will strengthen their position in the new term. When Brexit finally happens, however, it is the socialists that will lose the most seats of all major political forces.

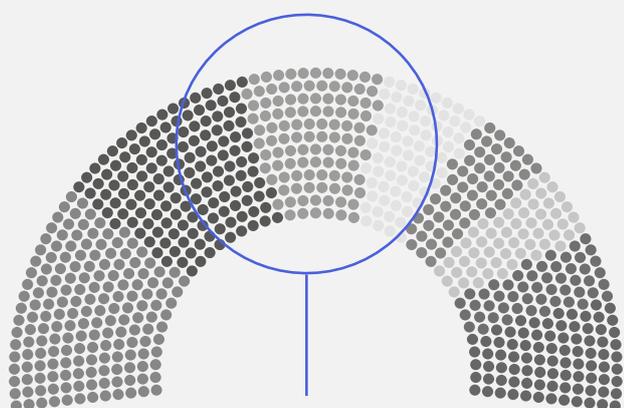
#### **Paweł Wiejski**

European Affairs Analyst

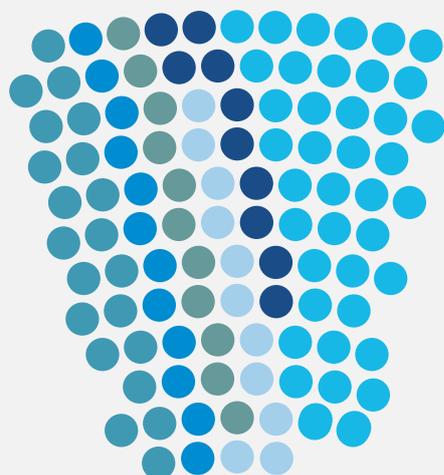
# What will happen to the liberals

ALDE will change its name after the elections. Its main strength will be the party of Emmanuel Macron.

PROJECTED NUMBER OF SEATS FOR ALDE



751 SEATS  
107 ALDE



● France - 21	● UK - 12	● Romania - 11
● Spain - 11	● Germany - 10	
● Remaining:		
Netherlands - 7	Sweden - 3	Slovenia - 2
Czech Rep. - 6	Finland - 3	Austria - 1
Denmark - 4	Bulgaria - 2	Croatia - 1
Estonia - 4	Ireland - 2	Hungary - 1
Belgium - 3	Lithuania - 2	Luxembourg - 1

**A new centrist group to appear after the elections.** Guy Verhofstadt has announced the disappearance of the “liberal” party at a May 2 conference. The new party, which will include by the party of French President Emmanuel Macron, En Marche, will have 107 seats. During the current term, the liberals had 69 MEPs from 22 states, making the party the chamber’s fourth-largest (their worst result since the 1990s).

ALDE MEPs led three committees: budget, regional development and financial crimes, tax evasion and tax avoidance.

**French will have the biggest group of MEPs.** The Renaissance Coalition, which includes candidates from En Marche, the Greens and smaller liberal parties in France, will have more than 20 seats (today there are seven French in ALDE). The domination by the French of the previously rather decentralised party will change the way it functions. The head of the new party will also likely be French. The favourite is Nathalie Loiseau, who, according to commentators, lacks charisma. After the election, the role of the delegations from the UK and Romania will also increase. The former will have 12 seats (compared to just one currently), while the latter will hold 15 (compared to three).

**The centre will expand.** Macron wants to boost the centrist powers in EurParl. So, the new liberals will seek to convince other parties that will agree to cooperate within EU institutions to join their ranks. These include the Portuguese socialists (Macron appeared in the campaign of Prime Minister António Costa) and Italian democratic party (its leader Nicola Zingaretti took part in a Renaissance election rally in Strasbourg). Some French Christian democrats are also interested in the alliance with Macron - the vice - president of the EurParl supported Macron's list.

**Liberals will become an essential coalition partner.** The liberals may become the most important partner for the socialists and Christian democrats in EurParl. Their support will be key to pass new laws and approve new nominations for the top positions in Brussels. Until now, the liberals cooperated with the Socialists and Democrats mainly on issues such as internal and migration policy and the environment. They cooperated with EPP on market regulations, eurozone reforms and international trade. The liberals know that their support in EurParl will be important, so they will delay coalition talks. They would like get the position of the EurParl president, but this is unlikely.

**Will defend the legacy of integration.** The centrist coalition of the liberals and En Marche is a response to the way the radical right and traditional parties see the future of the EU. Despite the division within the group (the parties differ on issues such as economic policy, with Dutch PM Mark Rutte's party and German FDP much more conservative than the other parties), it will position itself as a defender of European integration. Its priorities include further supranational cooperation as a response to reinstating the union of nations that is advocated for by the radical right.

**THE BOTTOM  
LINE**

Macron's ambitious plans to reshape the political scene in Europe have fizzled. The new party will be created, but it will not be as strong as the French president had hoped. Although it will be attractive to the pro-Europeans from a rhetorical point of view, it will lack internal cohesion. Along with the shift of traditional parties further to the right and left, the shift towards a division into an open and closed Europe is setting in.

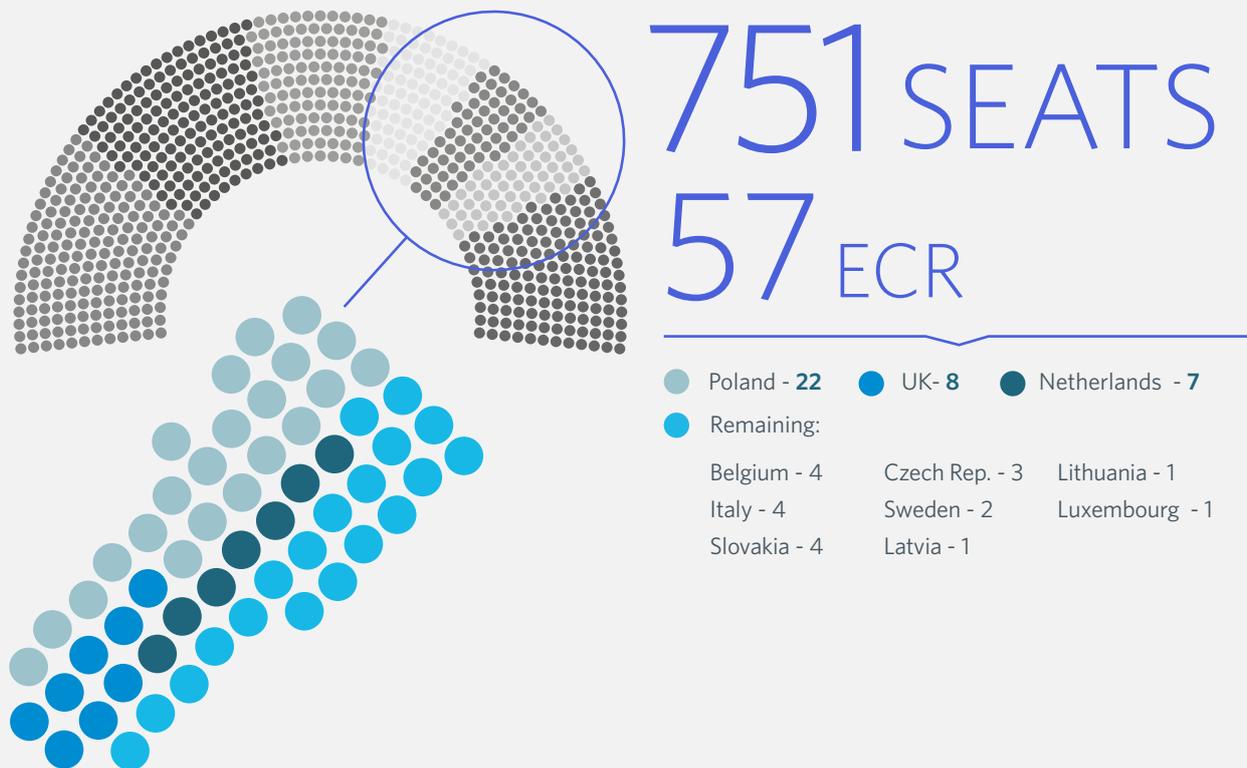
**Agnieszka Smoleńska**

Senior European Affairs Analyst

# PiS faction weakens in the European Parliament

The European Conservatives and Reformists will win fewer seats in May than in previous elections. They are losing out in part due to Brexit-related uncertainty.

PROJECTED NUMBER OF SEATS FOR ECR



**Conservatives will lose out in the new EurParl.** The European Conservatives and Reformists faction (ECR) currently consists of 77 MEPs (from 19 different member states), making them the third-largest group in the European Parliament. In the new parliamentary term they can lose as much as 20 seats which will place them in the fifth place in the chamber, behind the radical right under the leadership of Italian deputy PM Matteo Salvini. A smaller number of MEPs will translate into less

posts for ECR at ParlEur. The conservatives will have fewer chairs of parliamentary committees (at present they chair two committees, but this includes an internal market committee) and representatives of ECR are less likely to be appointed as rapporteurs for legislative files.

**Tories leaving will change group priorities.** It was because of the Conservative Party's initiative in 2009 that the group was formed (at the time this was David Cameron's first concession to the Eurosceptic wing of the Tory party). The prospect of Brexit will therefore affect both the functioning of the ECR in the new session, as well as the very identity of the faction. Issues which were fundamental for the Tories, such as the promotion of the free market and trade, will lose importance, and the issue of the division of competencies between the EU and the member states will come to the fore. However, the most important effect of a deferred Brexit will be a prevailing uncertainty among faction members. There is a great risk that the Tories who set the tone for the group's work will not be as involved as before, for they will be centred on work relating to Brexit.

**PiS will be the largest national delegation.** According to polls, PiS will have 22 seats – given the historically low levels of support for the Tories, there could be as many as three times more Poles than Brits in ECR. Up till now, both parties had 19 MEPs, and their representatives - Syed Kamall and Ryszard Legutko - led the group jointly. This time, the PiS representative will not have to share the chair - Legutko will most likely retain his position, but possible contenders also include Tomasz Poręba, Joachim Brudziński and Beata Szydło. Within ECR, PiS will be able to continue to cooperate with other Central European parties, including those from the Czech Republic (where the Civic Democratic Party may win three seats) and from Slovakia (where three ECR member-parties can hope for a total of four seats).

**Faction's right wing will be strengthened.** Four members of the Sweden Democrats will join the ECR; until only recently, the party called for the Sweden to leave the EU (SD joined the ECR in July 2018). An idea similar to Swedexit, except with regard to the Netherlands, was raised by the Forum for Democracy (FvD), which (with seven MEPs) will be the third-largest party in ECR after the elections. Vox, the Spanish extreme right, is likely to join the faction, although Salvini, who is creating his own group in the new EurParl is also courting the party. Support for the Spanish radical right however has dropped dramatically in the last weeks – today they could win only two seats. All these parties will strengthen the far right wing of ECR, because they have extremely conservative views on issues such as migration and women's rights.

**No real chances for top jobs.** Regardless of the electoral result of the two largest parties within the EKR - the Tory Party and PiS - the group cannot influence appointments in Brussels in a comprehensive manner. Only two commissioners are likely to come from this faction. The ECR representative also has no chance of becoming head of EurCom, despite the fact that - unlike in 2014 - the faction has nominated its Spitzen candidate: Jan Zahradil, the long-serving Czech MEP and ECR party chair. Zahradil is the only candidate for this position from Central and Eastern Europe - he is calling for the creation of a union of nations and is in favour of a multi-speed Europe.

**THE  
BOTTOM  
LINE**

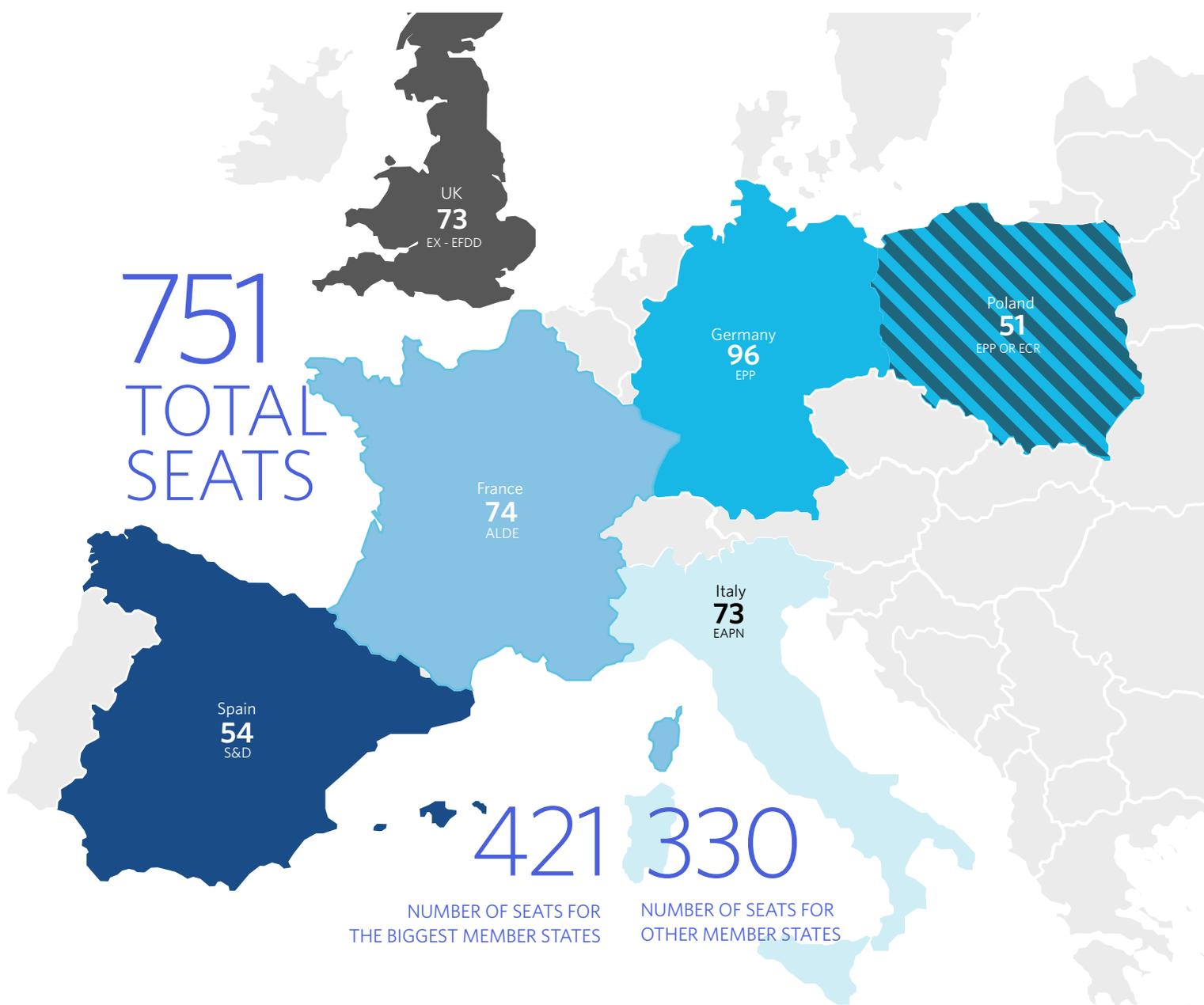
The European Conservatives and Reformists were unable to take advantage of the changes in the balance of power in the European political scene. The group will lose out both on the uncertainty over the United Kingdom's continued membership in the European Union, and due to the emergence of new groupings on the right side of the chamber. Matteo Salvini, who is creating his own group, has already poached ECR members and potential partners (talks about a possible ECR coalition with the Italian League ended in a fiasco). However, as the new EurParl will be more fragmented in the new term than currently, the European Conservatives and Reformists may turn out to be an indispensable coalition partner on issues of economic and migration policy, including for the European People's Party.

**Agnieszka Smoleńska**

Senior European Affairs Analyst

# Biggest states set to decide European election result

More than half of the European Parliament will be chosen by the six biggest states. Far right is set to make gains, especially in the UK and Italy.



**Germany: Greens going strong, reds weak.** German voters will elect 96 MEPs, the largest number of all member states. In previous elections, they chose mostly the traditional giants: the centre-right CDU/CSU (34 seats) and centre-left SPD (27 seats). While the Christian Democrats will probably only lose a few seats, the SPD's situation is a lot harder: according to recent polls\*, it could lose up to 50 per cent of its current seats. This will benefit the Greens, who have been ahead of the SPD in the polls for a few months and could get as many as 18 seats (seven more than in 2014). The eurosceptic far-right AfD is also likely to improve its result - although it has been weakening in the polls in recent months, it can count on 12 seats (five more than in the last election).

**France: Macron revolution and weakened Le Pen.** The political scene in France has undergone a serious transformation since Emmanuel Macron's victory in the presidential election of 2017. In recent polls, his party - La République En Marche (LREM) - is slightly behind Marine Le Pen's far-right Rassemblement National, winners of the last European election. A coalition led by the LREM (under the name "Renaissance") will have 22 MEPs and will form a joint grouping with the liberal ALDE. Le Pen's party, on the other hand, has seen its polls grow in recent weeks (it can count on 22 seats), but is unlikely to improve on its result from five years ago, when it got 24 seats. The traditionally dominant parties will be the biggest losers: the centre right Republicans (former UMP) will get 12 seats (eight fewer than in 2014) and centre-left Socialist Party will struggle to achieve the five percent threshold.

**Italy: Salvini dominates, unpredictable Five Stars Movement.** Matteo Salvini's far-right League has been moving up in the polls for months and has overtaken its coalition partner - the Five Star Movement (M5S) - by 10 percentage points. The League could have as many as 25 MEPs, becoming the largest national delegations on Europe's political scene (a few seats behind the German Christian Democrats). By comparison, in 2014, when it was still called the Northern League - Salvini's party only got five seats. According to recent surveys, the M5S will also improve on its 2014 result, but in a much less spectacular manner (up from 17 to 19 seats). The head of M5S, Luigi di Maio, says that he plans to set up his own grouping in EurParl, but he will struggle to meet the formal requirements to do so (he would need 25 MEPs from 7 Member States). As in France, the biggest losers of the election will be the centre-right and the centre-left, which will lose almost half of the seats they hold at the moment.

**Spain: socialists gain after parliamentary elections.** The decision of the prime minister Pedro Sanchez to call early elections a month before the European ones proved to be beneficial for the ruling party. Recent polls put the governing socialists in the lead and likely to win 17 seats, three more than in 2014. Spain's political scene seems relatively stable compared to that of France, Germany and Italy. The only change was supposed to be the result of the far-right Vox party, however despite the good result in the parliamentary elections (10 per cent), recent polls give them only two seats. The centre-right People's Party will suffer substantial losses – it will take 10 seats, six less than in 2014.

**Poland: PiS set to become a key player on European right.** According to recent polls, the difference between the Koalicja Europejska (European Coalition, KE) and PiS will be small, but it is the ruling party's MEPs that will be the most numerous in the Polish delegation. That is due to the fact that KE will include several SLD members who will join the Socialists (S&D) and a dozen or so PO and PSL members who will become part of the centre-right EPP. If the elections took place today, PiS would have 22 seats in EurParl. PiS is currently a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and due to the meagre result of British Conservatives, it will become the biggest party of its grouping. The result of Robert Biedroń's Wiosna is still uncertain - according to the latest studies, it could get four to six seats and will probably join the S&D.

**United Kingdom: mainstream parties will lose support.** The Brits are supposed to elect their MEPs only for a few months – if there is no further delay of Brexit, their country will leave the EU on October 31. The voters will therefore treat the election as another chance to voice their opinion on Brexit itself, and the two main parties – Tories and Labour – are internally divided on the issue. Opinion polls seem to reflect that, with a new Brexit Party, led by Nigel Farage, set to get 25 seats, far ahead of the Labour Party (15 seats, five fewer than in 2014). Labour risks being overtaken by the pro-EU Liberal Democrats (12 seats according to recent polls). Conservatives will suffer biggest losses – they will get at most eight seats, 12 fewer than in 2014. Their final result may be even worse, due to Andrea Leadsom leaving the government on the eve of the election, and due to rumours about the imminent resignation of the prime minister Theresa May.

## **THE BOTTOM LINE**

The European elections in the union's six biggest member states show the key trends in European politics: the weakening or collapse of traditional party systems, the increasing importance of the populist far-right and the potential of new, anti-establishment parties and movements. In recent weeks, there has been a noticeable upward trend for mainstream parties in the polls in the biggest countries, for instance CDU in Germany or the Democratic Party in Italy. The results in the UK remain the most uncertain, as subsequent polling rounds return substantially divergent results.

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