

The background of the cover is a photograph of the European Parliament building in Strasbourg, France. The building is a large, curved, modern structure with many windows. In front of the building, there are several tall flagpoles with various flags, including the European Union flag. The sky is a mix of yellow and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the foreground, there is a dark, abstract sculpture on a pedestal.

**YOUNG
FABIANS**

MEMBERS OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2019

Publication One: Intro and Factfiles

Edited by Charlotte Norton

Table of Contents

<u>Editor's Comments</u>	3
<u>Introduction</u>	8
<u>Factfiles</u>	12
<u>Initial Thoughts</u>	61



Charlotte Norton

The Soul of Europe

THE SOUL OF EUROPE

Frans Timmermans, the Party of European Socialists' (PES) Common Candidate, spoke at PES Congress and said that the soul of Europe was at stake in these upcoming MEP elections in May 2019. With the rise of extremism on both the right and left around Europe, Timmermans' comments could not be more apt.

At the time of writing, the UK is due to leave the EU on 29th March 2019 and will not be running candidates in the upcoming MEP elections. This means that our seats will be spread around the various nations.

The Young Fabians will be observing the EU elections over the course of the coming months. We will look at statistics, campaigns, results, and speak to those on the ground in the election. We will explore which issues are talked about the most and which policies are resonating with voters on the ground.

Whilst the UK is leaving Europe at the end of March, the EU will naturally remain our most important ally and trading partner. It is in our interest that the EU continues to survive and thrive.

As Social Democrats, we will be closely watching the campaigns of PES candidates in each country. We live in a global world, and the policies which resonate around Europe tend to be the same as those which resonate in the UK. The successes and failures of PES in these campaigns will provide learning lessons for us all.



For those of us who wished to remain in the EU, these elections will be a poignant moment. Many of us who campaigned to remain in the EU did so on the belief that we could work with our brothers and sisters across Europe to transform the EU. I continue to bemoan the fact that Gordon Brown's book title was not our slogan - 'Leading, not Leaving'. With population growth in the UK, we would be set to gain more and more seats in the European Parliament. A Labour victory in those seats could transform the EU for social democracy and improve the lives of millions across the EU.

For Socialism and Social Democracy to be truly effective it must also be international. The Labour Party cannot be strong when our brothers and sisters around the world are weakened. As well as providing lessons for UK Labour, we hope that in monitoring trends through the EU elections, we will gather learning points for socialists around the globe. This is why we will engage with European partners through the election observation process.

We have a vested interest in Europe electing socialist and social democratic MEPs. Labour will be strengthened if the UK's main partner is progressive, fair and sustainable. The EU cannot maintain the status quo much longer and is faced with existential threats from extreme politics on all sides. Anyone with a desire for the UK to return to the EU in future will want to ensure that the EU is a body that we want to join, and one that can improve the lives of our citizens in a fair, free and sustainable way.

Charlotte Norton is the Chair of the Young Fabians. Follow her on Twitter at @charlotteln90



These are not ordinary elections. These elections are about the soul of Europe. We need to adapt to a changing world. We are the political force with the willingness and capacity to do this. We need to write a new social contract with Europe's citizens.

**FRANS TIMMERMANS - PES COMMON CANDIDATE
FOR THE 2019 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS**

Contributors

Core Team : Imogen Tyreman, Hunter Christopher, Laura Griffiths, Serhan Wade, Laura Schettini, Charlotte Norton

Contributors: Nik Koch, Joe Corry Roake, Grace King, Noah Froud, Ollie Lund, Ian Odiwe, Fionn Mcgorry, Nico Camponi, Jan-nike Wachowiak, Harry Spencer, Sam Nutt, Jonathan Harty, Aisha Malik Smith, Kieran O'Halloran, Joe Farnworth-Myers, Anjali Mukhi, Oliver White, Alex Holmes



Charlotte Norton

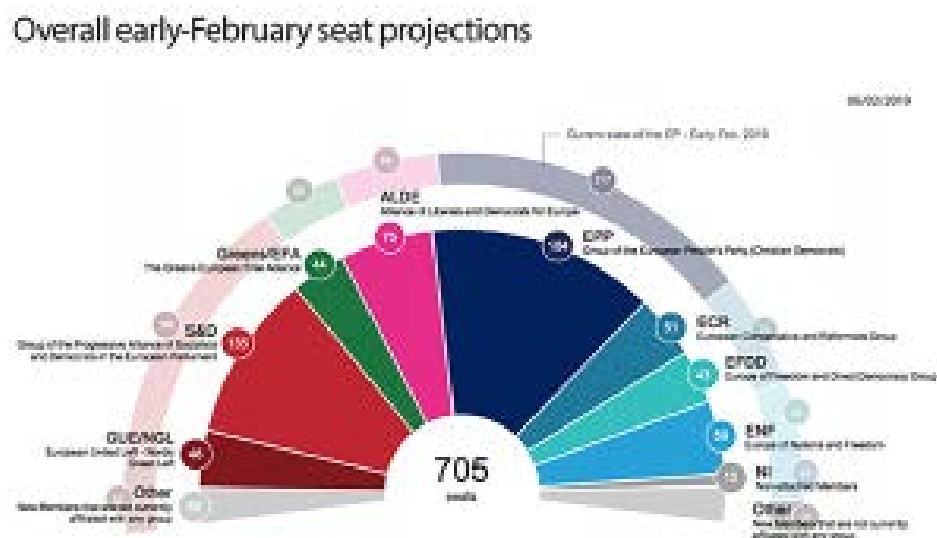
Introduction

Introduction

Throughout the EU election observation project, we will be monitoring predictions, and comparing that to real stories on the ground.

Predictions are tricky as the situation in Europe fluctuates daily. Many parties are delaying finalising their lists until April. At the time of writing, only 30% of sitting MEPs have confirmed that they will be rerunning. This late confirmation will leave little time for voters to make up their mind, and for politicians to make their predictions.

Both POLITICO and the European Parliament predict a victory for the EPP.



EU Parliament's prediction. Photo Credit (and for larger image): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/eurobarometer/political-landscape-developments>

The main differences (as set out on the POLITICO website) are that POLITICO predicts 176 seats for the EPP compared to the 183 predicted by the European Parliament. POLITICO also predicts 68 seats for Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) en Marche, compared to the 75 predicted by Parliament.

POLITICAL SHIFTS

A recent Eurobarometer survey of political landscape looked at how the political landscape has been shifting in Europe. You can find the full report [here](#).

The biggest gains are predicted for the ENF (the far right grouping), particularly in France and Italy. In France, this seems to correlate with a sharp downturn for the EPP (the centre-right grouping).

The S&D Group is predicted to take the biggest decrease, particularly in Germany, France and Italy. This reflects a decline in support for social democratic and socialist parties in those countries in favour of center right, and right wing parties.

ISSUES IN THE ELECTION

Immigration is consistently a top priority in the [Eurobarometer](#) surveys. In the most recent Eurobarometer, Immigration was mentioned by 40% of respondents as their main concern. Top of every country's list, except Sweden and Portugal where it was second. Terrorism comes in second with 20% of respondents.

The state of EU Member states public finances (19%) comes above EU citizen's general concerns about their own country's economic situation. (18%). Presumably, this is connected to the concerns around immigration.

Climate change comes in at 16%, and is considerably higher in Scandinavian

countries, such as Finland where 36% of people surveyed said it was their most important concern.

BREXIT IMPACT

Brexit creates an opportunity for the social democrat grouping to unite and gain strength in the European Parliament. A majority of the UK's representatives sit with right-leaning groups, coming from the Conservative party and UKIP. The UK has for a long time been a proponent for a more economically liberal Europe.

Whilst the S&D Group will lose its Labour members, on the whole, it would be left strengthened by the greater loss to the right.

Brexit also produces new opportunities for the European defence cooperation, as the UK has consistently vetoed moves in this direction, arguing it would undermine NATO.

Perhaps the most important impact of Brexit is that after the UK voted to leave, support for the EU has reached [its highest point in 35 years](#).

This could be counter balanced by the far right groups who have been invigorated post Brexit. However, these groups are not new to the European Parliament, and they have historically been too divided to make any serious impact. This doesn't look to change in these elections, but those who wish for a more progressive Europe will watch the far right with interest and trepidation throughout the campaign.

These opening comments set the scene for the factfiles below, which look at the state of play in each member state.

If you can't wait until our next report to keep yourself updated on the developments, Politico regularly updates their website and predictions, and you can follow it [here](#).



Country Factfiles

COUNTRY	EU ACCESSION DATE
Austria	January 1, 1995
Belgium	March 25, 1957
Bulgaria	January 1, 2007
Croatia	July 1, 2013
Cyprus	May 1, 2004
Czech Republic	May 1, 2004
Denmark	January 1, 1973
Estonia	May 1, 2004
Finland	January 1, 1995
France	March 25, 1957
Germany	March 25, 1957
Greece	January 1, 1981
Hungary	May 1, 2004
Ireland	January 1, 1973
Italy	March 25, 1957
Latvia	May 1, 2004
Lithuania	May 1, 2004
Luxembourg	March 25, 1957
Malta	May 1, 2004
Netherlands	March 25, 1957
Poland	May 1, 2004
Portugal	January 1, 1986
Romania	January 1, 2007
Slovakia	May 1, 2004
Slovenia	May 1, 2004
Spain	January 1, 1986
Sweden	January 1, 1995
United Kingdom	January 1, 1973

AUSTRIA



Population: 8.77m

Current National Government:

Centre-Right (ÖVP) / Far-Right (FPÖ) Coalition Government led by Sebastian Kurz as Chancellor from the ÖVP (Austrian People's Party) in coalition with the FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria)

The opposition is led by Socialist Party of Austria (SPÖ)

Number of MEPs: 18

Current MEP make up:

National party	EP Group	MEPs	Last Results ±
People's Party	EPP	5	1
Social Democratic Party	S&D	5	0
Freedom Party	NI, ENL	4	2
The Greens–The Green Alternative	G-EFA	3	1
NEOS – The New Austria	ALDE	1	1

Prediction for the EU election:

The SPÖ seek to maintain their current five members.

The ÖVP looks to potentially pick up 1 or 2 MEPs from either the FPÖ (Freedom Party) who have lost some of their popularity or the Greens who have collapsed.

Likely most important issue in the election:

Immigration and Refugees

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

There will be no election discussion around Brexit as it is irrelevant to the EU election in Austria. The EU has universal support among all the Austrian political parties.

Brexit will effect Austria in a wider context as:

- The UK is Austria's 8th most important trading partner. Austria currently has a trade surplus with the UK.

- Brexit has already effected Austrian Trade with the UK resulting in a 2% fall in export volume in 20

Observations:

The SPÖ will be facing this election with their new leader as well will the ÖVP. Which will be the first time both leaders will be campaigning against each other's party.

The NEOs (the liberal party) will be a wild card in this election as their popularity has swung wildly over the last few elections in Austria. This could potentially effect the ability for the ÖVP to gain their expected one or two seats.

BELGIUM



Population: 11.4 million

Current National Government:

Prime Minister Charles Michel resigned on 18th December 2018 following a vote of no confidence. The minority cabinet are acting as a caretaker government.

Number of MEPs: 21

Current MEP make up:

Dutch speaking electoral college:
 New Flemish Alliance - 4 (ECR)
 Open Flemish Liberal Democrats - 3 (ALDE)
 Christian Democrats - 2 (EPP)
 Socialist Party - 1 (S&D)
 Green - 1 (Green-EFA)
 Flemish Interest - 1 (ENF)
 List Dedecker - 1

French speaking electoral college:
 Socialist party - 3 (S&D)
 Reformist movement - 3 (ALDE)
 Ecology Party - 1 (Green-EFA)
 Humanist Democratic Centre - 1 (EPP)

German speaking electoral college:
 Christian Social Party - 1 (EPP)

Prediction for the EU election: (Politico)

Dutch speaking electoral college:
 New Flemish Alliance - 4 (ECR)
 Open Flemish Liberal Democrats - 2 (ALDE)
 Christian Democrats - 2 (EPP)
 Green - 2 (Green-EFA)
 Flemish First - 1 (ENF)
 Social Democrats - 2 (S&D)

French speaking electoral college:
 Socialist party - 2 (S&D)
 Reformist movement - 2 (ALDE)
 Workers' Party - 1 (GUE/NGL)
 Christian Democrats - 1 (EPP)

German speaking electoral college:
 Christian Social Party - 1 (EPP)

Likely most important issue in the election:

As with all other EU countries, immigration is the most mentioned issue. Climate change is the second most mentioned issue, being cited by 26% of respondents asked.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Belgium is one of the EU countries that will be hit hardest by Brexit, due to close ties with the UK. Deloitte prepared a report stating that Belgium would be the fourth hardest hit EU country if there is a no deal Brexit.

Almost 9% of Belgium's exports are to the UK, and nearly 5% of their imports come from the UK.

Any other interesting observations:

52% of Belgians say that they have trust in the EU, 10 points higher than the EU average of 42%.

Belgium will hold national and regional elections on the same day as the MEP elections. The New Flemish Alliance is predicted to win, but it isn't clear if they would be able to easily form a government.

BULGARIA



Population: 7.4 million

Current National Government:

GERB supported by the United Patriots (ECR)

Number of MEPs: 17

Current MEP make up:

7 EPP (6 GERB, 1 Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria); 4 S&D (3 BSP, 1 other); 4 ALDE (Movement for rights and freedoms); 2 ECR (1 Reload Bulgaria, 1 VMRO)

Prediction for the EU election:

Politico Prediction for the EU election; EPP: 8, S&D: 6, ADLE: 2, ECR: 1

Likely most important issue in the election:

The election may well become a referendum on current Prime Minister, Boyko Borisov who's currently in his third term. Euroscepticism is currently relatively weak in Bulgaria, with 57 percent of Bulgarians saying they trust in the EU, by comparison by comparison 74% of Greeks and 59% of Brits had the opposite view. Similar numbers said they thought positively about the EU.

Considering the amount of time Borisov has been in office, issues around corruption may become a focal point in the election, particularly if they're seen as impeding further integration into the EU.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have;

Brexit could impact Bulgaria's economy, but so far, the impact has been mixed. Fears of a plunging pound have benefited Bulgaria's tourist hotspots against more expensive resorts in Western Europe.

In 2015 it was estimated there were 70,000 Bulgarians in the UK. A considerable proportion of seasonal agricultural workers from other EU states come from Bulgaria and many have apparently begun to shun Britain already.

Whilst these will impact the Bulgarian economy, its unlikely they'll impact electoral politics directly.

Observations:

40% of Bulgaria's population is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, the highest in the EU. It has a GDP per capita half the average of the EU. Most Bulgarian's have a negative image of their own economy and many are concerned about inflation.

The European Parliament has voted to allow Bulgaria into the Schengen Area in late 2018 but the council has vetoed this previously.

The big question is whether the United Patriots (ECR), an electoral alliance of three nationalistic, eurosceptic parties will fight the election as one. These divisions have also weakened their coalition partner GERB.

CROATIA



Population: 4.2 million

Current National Government:

The government is a (rather unstable) coalition of the Croatian Democratic Union (centre right) and the Croatian People's party (liberal).

The Social Democratic Party polls at around 14-22%, depending on who commissioned the poll.

Number of MEPs: 11

Current MEP make up:

Croatian Democratic Union - 6 seats, EPP
Social Democratic Party - 4 seats, S&D
OrAH Sustainable - 1 seat, Greens/EFA

Prediction for the EU election:

Croatia will gain one more seat after Brexit, taking the total to 12.

Politico predicts that the Croatian Democratic Union will maintain their 6 seats, and that the Social Democratic Party will fall to 3 seats.

The other seats are predicted as follows:

Zivi Zid (Human Shield) - 2 seats
Bridge of Independent Lists - 1 seat

Zivi Zid is a populist party, which is largely Eurosceptical.

Likely most important issue in the election:

The most recent EuroBarometer report shows that 48% of Croatians mentioned immigration when asked about issues facing their country.

The economic situation of the country was voted in second place, with 28% of Croatians finding it the most important issue, and only 16% stating that they believed that their economy was in a good place.

56% of Croatians are pessimistic about the job market in their country, which is an increase of 10% since spring this year.

The new populist Zivi Zid party emerged out of an anti eviction group, so housing is likely to be an other important issue, but it will be couched in terms of immigration and the economic situation.

On EU specific issues, Croatia's eligibility to join Schengen. There is a hope that Croatia would join by 2020, but this may be held up by concerns regarding the migrant crisis, and border disputes with Slovenia. Hungary has said that it would veto Croatia joining the Schengen area after it let migrants travel from Croatia to Hungary.

56% of Croatians are against adopting the Euro, and support is consistently low or falling. Despite the fact that joining the Euro was a condition of Croatia's membership, no date was set. At the moment, it is hoped that Croatia would join the Euro in 2025 but this could be pushed further

down the line.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Croatia's Prime Minister called Brexit a 'lose, lose, lose' situation.

A limited number (about 4000) Croatian citizens live in the UK. Croatia was the last country to join the EU under Brexit, and the UK still applies restrictions. Croatians are worried that the UK will continue to apply more severe restrictions to their citizens than other EU countries.

More recently, Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic has shifted the focus of the impact that Brexit will have on the UK, rather than focusing on the impact on the EU or Croatia.

Any other interesting observations:

Croatia is likely to have its presidential elections in December this year.

Towards the end of last year, the Croatian president dismissed her domestic political advisor, Mate Radeljić, who it was rumoured caused sour relations between the president and the government. After dismissal, Radeljić said he was threatened by the security agency not to politically damage the President. He was allegedly told that the agency would run him over with a car if necessary. The president and the national security office both issued statements saying they acted legally, but neither outrightly denied all Radeljić's claims.

Due to the instability of the right wing government coalition, it is also more than possible that there will be Parliamentary elections



CYPRUS



Population: 970,000

Current National Government

Since February 2013 the Government is led by Nicos Anastasiades of Democratic Rally who has been re-elected for a second term in February 2018.

Number of MEPs:

6

Current MEP make up:

In 2014, both Democratic Rally (37,75%) and the Progressive Party of Working People (26,98%) got respectively 2 seats each. The Democratic Party (10,83%) and the Movement for Social Democracy (7,68%) got respectively 1 seat each.

Prediction for the EU election:

The polls give Democratic Rally (33,58%) and the Progressive Party of Working People (23,15%) to maintain 2 seats each. Also the Democratic Party (15,05%) will maintain 1 seat. The real change should be the conquest of 1 seat by the National Popular Front (6,03%) which is linked

with the fascist Greek party of Golden Dawn and in 2014 got only 2,69%. A normal turnout is expected which should reach 42-43%.

Likely the most important issue in the election:

Economy remains central in Cypriot politics, especially after the financial crisis that hit the island in 2013 and from which it exited in 2016 thanks to the support of the EU and the IMF.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Cyprus is a member of the Commonwealth and has a long history with the UK. Cyprus is one of the three countries along to Ireland and Spain that has been authorised by the EU to start bilateral negotiations with the UK regarding the presence of the British military bases of Akrotiri and Dhekelia.

It is not just a matter of two military bases, but Cypriot portions of land transferred from the country to the UK under the 1960 Treaty of Independence of Cyprus. Within the two areas, there are cities, factories, schools, hospitals and agricultural fields and almost 7,700 Cypriots live there. Although the two bases are defined as Overseas Territories and therefore not part of the EU, on some matters fall under European legislation (they are part of the customs union regarding VAT, fisheries and agriculture) and therefore Brexit will have an impact.

Moreover, the almost 15,000 Cypriots working in the bases risk not being able to benefit from freedom of movement, as well as the right to settle and do business and take advantage of the social services of the bases. Also, the two bases make use of the euro, and it is not clear if they can continue to use it.

Lastly, tourism could be affected because Cyprus is a top destination for Britons and at the same time the UK is the top destination for Cypriot students.

Initial Observations:

Cyprus is much affected by its cultural proximity to Greece and it is no coincidence that the National Popular Front is increasing its votes and has elected two MPs for the first time in the 2016 legislative elections.

Furthermore, the issue of the reunification of the island remains a hot topic, on which a great part plays the possible Turkey's accession to the EU.

Lastly, the island has developed in a financial hub, especially for investors from Russia and Eastern Europe.



CZECHIA



Population: 10.6 million

Current National Government:

ANO – ČSSD minority government (93/100)

Number of MEPs:

21

Current MEP make up:

ANO (ALDE) – 4 MEPs / 19%;
TOP 09 and Mayors and Independents (EPP) – 4 MEPs / 19%;
ČSSD (S&D) – 4 MEPs / 19%;
Communist Party (EUL – NGL) – 3 MEPs / 14%;
Christian and Democratic Union (EPP) – 3 MEPs / 14%;
Civil Democratic Party (ECR) – 2 MEPs / 9%;
Party of Free Citizens (EFDD) – 1 MEP / 4%

Prediction for the EU election:

(Politico)

ANO – 8 seats / 30% (+4)
Civil Democratic Party – 4 seats / 14% (+2)
Czech Pirate Party – 4 seats / 14% (+4)
ČSSD – 2 seats / 9% (-2)

Communist Party – 2 seats / 9% (-1)
Freedom & Direct Democracy – 1 / 6% (+1)

Likely most important issue in the election:

Euroscepticism - Prime Minister Andrej Babiš has previously criticised EU migrant quotas, the dominance of the Commission, and cuts to the Common Agricultural Policy which could increase alienation to the EU, but he remains a supportive centrist. On the other hand, popularity of extreme left and right-wing parties could cause actual damage to the EU project.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

According to analysis by Česká spořitelna, a hard Brexit on WTO rules may cut Czech GDP by up to 55 billion (1.1% of GDP). This could mean the loss of 40,000 Czech jobs – however as growth is currently 3.3%, a hard Brexit would lead neither to a recession nor slow down growth enough to cause economic stagnation

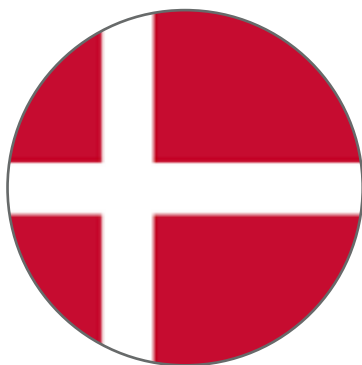
Brexit would increase the comparative voting majority of Eurozone members

Czech GDP per capita is likely to rise relating to the EU average after Brexit, slashing the amount of EU funding the country receives

Any other interesting observations:

The success of the Czech Pirate Party – the third largest party in parliament, and a party popular with young people and those disenchanted with mainstream politics

DENMARK



Current National Government:

Right-wing coalition administration consisting of:

Liberal Party (leader of coalition, centre-right)
Danish People's Party (biggest party of coalition, far-right populist)
Liberal Alliance (centre-right)
Conservative People's Party (centre-right)

Number of MEPs:

13

Current MEP make up:

Danish People's Party, ECR, 3 +1
Social Democratic Party, S&D, 3 -1
Liberal Party, ALDE, 2 -1
Socialist People's Party, Greens/EFA, 1 -1
Social Liberals, ALDE, 1 +1
People's Movement Against the EU, GUE/NGL, 1 0
Conservative People's Party, EPP, 1 0
Independent, Non-attached member, 1 +1 (former Danish People's Party member)

Prediction for the EU election:

Latest Voxmeter polling (Jan 2019):

A-S&D: 28%
V-ALDE: 18% (-1)
O-ECR: 16% (-1)
Ø-LEFT: 9%
B-ALDE: 7%
F-G/EFA: 6% (+1)
I-*: 5% (+1)
C-EPP: 4%
Å-G/EFA: 3% (-1)
D-*: 2%
K-EPP: 1%

Likely most important issue in the election:

Denmark's role in the European Union (EU) remains an important political issue. Two referenda (June 2, 1992 and May 18, 1993) on the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union with four exemptions (or "opt-outs"): common defense, common currency, EU citizenship, and certain aspects of legal cooperation, including law enforcement.

The Amsterdam Treaty was approved in a referendum May 28, 1998, by a 55% majority.

Fear of losing national identity in an integrated Europe and lack of confidence in long-term stability of European economies run deep.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Denmark will have the benefit of gaining an additional seat in the European parliament, increasing to 14 in total. However, this small gain will not compensate for the significant loss in support of British MEPs who they have a history of collaborating with, given both countries' sceptical attitude to 'ever closer union'. They have been aligned on

more than 85% of EU votes in Parliament, generally holding similar views on economic, justice, military and home affairs policy.

In terms of their approach to the Brexit deal, securing the rights of the 30,000 Danish citizens living in the UK (which is a significant migration deficit with Britain) will be of fundamental importance for Danish MEPs, when voting to ratify any negotiated deal, should it reach parliament.

Any other interesting observations:

Denmark is heavily dependent on international trade, meaning any global economic downturns could severely damage its economy and political landscape by extension.



ESTONIA



Population: 1.3 million

Current National Government:

The current Prime Minister of Estonia is Jüri Ratas, who has been in power since November 2016; following an expected rise that led to him becoming party leader and then prime minister within a one-month period.

He leads a centrist minority coalition, made up of three parties; the centrist social-liberal Estonian Centre Party; the centre-left Social Democratic Party; and the centre-right Pro Patria party.

The President is Kersti Kaljulaid, the female head of state and the youngest ever President at the time of her election. The role is largely ceremonial.

Number of MEPs:

6

Current MEP make up:

Marju Lauristin – Social Democratic Party, MEP since 2014.

Tunne Kelam – Pro Patria, MEP since 2004.
Yana Toom – Centre Party, MEP since 2014.
Urmas Paet – Reform Party, MEP since 2014.
Igor Gražin – Reform Party, MEP since 2018.
Indrek Tarand – Independent, MEP since 2009.

Prediction for the EU election:

Since Estonia joined the EU in 2004, four of the seats have remained unchanged – one for each of SDE, Pro Patria, Centre, and Reform. This election may see a significant shift in the status quo.

The current polling suggests that the Pro Patria will lose their seat, currently polling around 7%. The SDE may also lose their seat as they're polling around 10%.

The beneficiaries will be the Centre Party, which is on course to gain a seat. Reform will likely keep both their seats.

EKRE will gain representation in the European Parliament for the first time, polling around 20%. EKRE are a right wing party formed in 2012 and are Euro-sceptic. They are shunned by other major parties. Their performance will be a good indicator of Estonian Euro-scepticism.

It remains to be seen whether independent candidate Indrek Tarand can hold his seat for a third term.

The EU elections will follow a general election on 3rd March, which will be a good indication of strength.

Likely most important issue in the election:

Much like the rest of Europe, the great debate in Estonia is whether the EU continues to be a positive force and whether there should be more cooperation or looking inwards and retreating away from



global issues like global migration and climate change. The success of EKRE will be a good indication of the strength of Euroscepticism in Estonia in 2019.

The other interesting factor is the Estonia's relationship with Russia; it is under significant threat from Russia's aggressive behaviour and it concerned by Russia's meddling in the EU's affairs. Relations between the two countries are currently poor, after Ratas cancelled his state visit to Russia in May.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Brexit is unlikely to have a significant impact in Estonia. If, by the election Britain has left the EU, Estonia will be allocated an additional MEP.

Any other interesting observations:

Estonia is the only EU member state where both national and European elections are held electronically.

FINLAND



Population: 5.5 million

Current National Government:

The current prime minister is Mr. Juha Sipilä, leader of the Centre Party of Finland.

In recent decades there used to be three big parties in the parliament, the moderate conservative National Coalition Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Centre Party. Since 2011 the Finns Party has become one of the big parties. After the parliamentary elections in 2015 the party is currently the second biggest after the Centre Party.

Number of MEPs

14

Current MEP make up:

National Coalition Party (EPP) 3 Seats
Centre Party (ALDE) 3 seats
Finns Party (ECR) 2 seats
Social Democrats (S&D) 2 seats
Green League (EFA) 1 seat
Left Alliance (GUE/NGL) 1 Seat
Swedish People's Party (ALDE) 1 seat

Prediction for the EU election:

Social Democrats (S&D) 3 seats
National Coalition Party (EPP) 3 Seats
Centre Party (ALDE) 3 seats
Green League (EFA) 2 seats
Finns Party (ECR) 2 seats
Left Alliance (GUE/NGL) 1 Seat

Likely most important issue in the election:

As with most other EU countries, immigration comes in as the top issue from Finland
Climate change was the second most mentioned issue at 36% According to the Finnish Environment Institute three year survey reported in 2018 the share of habitats classified as threatened in the southern Finland is 59% and northern Finland 32%.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

The UK is Finland's seventh biggest trading partner.

Laura Huhtasaari ran for President from the far right Finns Party. She used the election to set the ground for the upcoming EU election. Like many populists around Europe, she cheered Brexit - "I look at Nigel Farage's example. It took 17 years, but Brexit came. I don't plan to wait that long" — Laura Huhtasaari

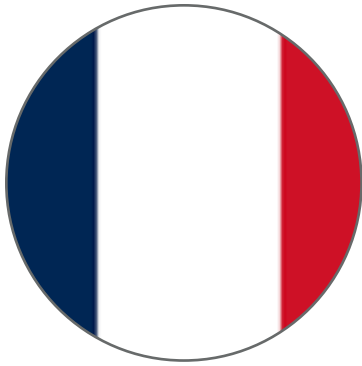
Any other interesting observations:

Finland has made broadband access a legal right for every citizen.

By 2015 more than 93% of the population was online, one of the highest rates of internet penetration in the European Union.

Finland was also the only country to trial UBI, but it has pulled back on its commitment to renewing the

FRANCE



Population: 67.3 million

Current National Government:

France is a unitary, semi-presidential republic with both a President [Emmanuel Macron] and a Prime Minister [Édouard Philippe].

In 2017 La République En Marche!, a newly founded centrist party, won an absolute majority in the National Assembly and became France's party of power in support of President Macron.

Number of MEPs:

France currently has 74 MEPs. Following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, France will gain 5 more seats and therefore will have 79 MEPs after the 2019 EU elections.

Current MEP make up:

National Rally (formerly known as the National Front)
24 / 74
The Republicans (formerly known as the Union for a Popular Movement)
20 / 74

Socialist Party

13 / 74

Democratic Movement+ Union of Democrats and Independents

7 / 74

French Greens (formerly known as Europe Écologie)

6 / 74

Left Front

4 / 74

Prediction for the EU election:

National Rally

21 / 79

La République En Marche!

20 / 79

The Republicans

11 / 79

Unbowed France

8 / 79

French Greens

8 / 79

France First

6 / 79

Socialist Party

5 / 79

Source: Politico

Likely most important issue in the election:

According to a survey requested and coordinated by the European Commission on Public Opinion in the European Union (March 2018), unemployment was frequently cited by members of the electorate as the most important issue facing France.

Immigration and rising prices/inflation/cost of living closely followed as major national concerns. The recent Yellow vests movement is arguably a direct result of the latter.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

As with many Member States, France is likely to be materially impacted by Brexit. It has been estimated that 2.9% of France's GDP will be exposed to the departure of the United Kingdom from the EU (Chen, Wen, et al., 2017).

Trade between France and the UK will be negatively impacted. The majority of which occurs via the Channel crossing, arguably Europe's most active thoroughfare.

French fishermen are likely to lose access to the British fishing areas as the UK will leave the EU's Common Fisheries Policy. This departure will see the UK taking back control of its shores and potentially prohibiting access to its waters.

Further negotiations to the Le Touquet Agreement, which allows British immigration officials to carry out border checks in northern France rather than in Dover, may be conducted in the wake of Brexit. Negotiations could lead to the UK pledging to take in more child refugees from France and/or commitments around further spending.

Any other interesting observations:

Based on recent projections, two of France's mainstream parties [the conservative Les Républicains and the Socialist Party] will see their influence in the next European Parliament drastically reduced. This is mainly due to the expected gains of Marine Le Pen's National Rally and Macron's La République En Marche.



GERMANY



Population: 82.7 million

Current National Government:

Fourth cabinet Angela Merkel: Grand coalition of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CSU), and the Social Democrats (SPD)

Number of MEPs: 96 seats

Prediction for the EU election:

Both major political parties in Germany (the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats) are

likely to suffer losses while most of the smaller parties (Greens, Alternative for Deutschland and Free Democrats) are expected to increase their voters' share.

Current election predictions anticipate a 5 % loss for Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and a 12 % loss for the Social Democrats (SPD) (cf. Insa), resulting in them dropping to third place behind the Green party. Compared to the 2014 EU election the Greens could soar from 10,7 % to 17 % or more.

Other small parties are also expected to significantly increase their vote share – the far-right AfD might go up from 7 % to 12 % and the Free Democrats from 3,4 % to 8%.

Likely most important issue in the election:

The public narrative in Germany is predominantly pro-European. The 2018 Eurobarometer found that 86% of German citizens feel that they are citizens of the EU. Trust in the EU prevails at least in 51 % of the population and the majority of Germans has a positive image of the EU (cf. Eurobarometer 2018). The mainstream political parties widely share the assumption that Germany has benefitted from its EU membership. However, a recent study found that two out of three German citizens still recognise the need

Current MEP make up

National Party	EP Group	Seats
Christian Democratic Union/ Christian Social Union (CDU/ CSU)	EPP	34 seats (35,3%)
Social Democrats (SPD)	S&D	27 seats (27,3%)
The Green Party	Greens/EFA	11 seats (10,7%)
The Left	GUE/NGL	7 seats (7,4%)
Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)	EFDD / ENF	7 seats (7,1%)
Free Democrats (FDP)	ALDE	3 seats (3,4%)
Free Voters	ALDE and ECR	1 seat (1,5%)
Pirate Party	Greens/EFA	1 seat (1,4%)

for reforms and a majority wants a more social EU (cf. study by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung). Broadly speaking, the below topics can be expected to feature prominently in the establishment parties' campaigns:

1. A "fateful election" for Europe: The defence of European democracy and the rule of law against populist forces within and outside the EU
2. The call for a more social Europe
3. The EU as a more autonomous & strategic actor in changing world order
4. The EU as a peace project

Amidst the pro-European narratives, the far-right Alternative for Germany represents the only relevant Eurosceptic voice. In their election manifesto the party demands radical reforms and even considers a German exit from the EU if those reforms are not implemented. Among other things, they demand the abolition of the European Parliament and Germany's withdrawal from the Euro.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Even though Brexit will affect certain parts of the German economy the government parties prioritise EU27 unity over economic losses. The EPP's Spitzenkandidat Manfred Weber from the German CSU party considers Brexit a "tragedy". He recently described the AfD as the German Brexit party and issued a warning not to follow this path. If anything, Brexit will serve most parties as a deterrent example and will be referenced to reiterate the value of European solidarity. The issue around the Irish border has already evoked a (new) sense for Europe as a peace project. The SPD's EU lead candidate visited the Irish border area to highlight the EU project as a guarantor of open borders, peace and solidarity within Europe.



GREECE



Population: 11.1 million

Current National Government

Syriza (The Coalition of the Radical Left) led by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras

Number of MEPs: 21

Current MEP make up:

The Greek party with the most MEPs is currently SYRIZA with 6 seats, closely followed by New Democracy with 5. The far right Golden Dawn hold 3 seats. Social Democratic parties the Panhellenic Socialist Movement and The River hold 2 each. Finally, the Communist Party of Greece and Independent Greeks hold 2 seats and 1 seat respectively. By EU parliamentary parties the United Left hold 6 seats, the EPP and non-attached hold 5 each, S&D 4 and ECR 1.

Prediction for the EU election:

New Democracy are expected to double their seats in the European Parliamentary elections from 5 to 10. However, this should not come at the expense of SYRIZA, who are predicted to hold on to their six seats. In-

stead smaller parties such as the far Golden Dawn and the Communist Party are expected to lose one seat each. In addition, Independent Greeks and The River are expected to lose all of their seats. Finally, the new Social Democratic coalition party, Movement for Change is expected to hold onto the two seats held by the former Panhellenic Socialist Movement. By European Parliamentary groups this would mean an increase of the EPP by five, a decline of both non-attached members and the S&D by two, and the loss of the last Greek ECR MEP.

Likely the most important issue in the election:

According to European Commission polling, the most important electoral issue for the Greek people is immigration. 2015, the year before immigration overtook the economy as a more significant issue, saw 850,000 refugees arrive in Greece by sea; the greatest number of arrivals into the country in a year. Previous leader of New Democracy and former PM, Antonis Samaras, previously criticised the SYRIZA government, who he claims have worked in collaboration with NGOs and human smugglers to maintain open borders allowing 1.5 million illegal immigrants to enter the country.

The fact this criticism was made immediately following the Novartis scandal, in which Samaras is a suspect, suggests the use of immigration issue as a distraction. A particular reform which could be the focus of this anti-immigration sentiment is the Dublin agreement which places the responsibility of processing refugees with the country in which they first arrive. As a Mediterranean country Greece' finances and capacity to process refugees has been significantly affected by this regulation. Combined with the appointment of Adonis Georgiadis (a member of the hard right faction of New Democracy) as Vice President of the Party and strong opposition to the rename of the Republic of Macedonia, New Democracy appears

to be appealing to a more nationalist base.

Though immigration is a more important issue for Greeks according to polling and the EU bailout officially ended in August 2018, the importance of the bailout programmes should not be understated. Both the second and third bailout plan have been implemented under SYRIZA, a party that ran on a platform opposed to further EU imposed austerity. Since the snap election in September 2015 and the imposition of third and longest bailout plan, SYRIZA has dropped in the polls remaining lower than New Democracy since the start of 2016. The leader of New Democracy, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, has presented his anti-austerity credentials instead favouring pro-business reforms. In the context of the EU parliament this is likely to mean an election campaign around opposition to tighter regulation and supporting a loose interpretation of rules surrounding harmful tax competition.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

In 2017 just under 4% of Greek Exports had the UK as a destination. While this represents a real term increase of €100 million since 2010, the share of exports going to the UK has declined 1 per cent. Furthermore, Greece has increased its exports to countries which were not amongst its top ten export markets since 2010. This has been an increase of over €4.4 billion and a 3.7% share of markets. While a No Deal Brexit will be a shock to the Greek economy, as it will be to many other members states of the EU, the impact on trade is less substantial than it would have been in 2010. Furthermore, a deal which does allow for free movement of goods should have minimal impact on Greek trade.

The more significant impact will be in trade of services, free movement of people and diplomatic relations. ONS statistics show that the Greek born population of the UK is around 67,000 people who will have to return to the EU or apply for residence in the event of a No Deal Brexit, or may wish to return due to a perceived hostile environment to immigrants.

Altering freedom of movement would also have a significant impact on the Greek tourist industry. In 2017 over 2.3 million UK residents visited Greece, spending €1.4 billion. Yet even this is unlikely to be a cause for alarm if the EU's agreement that visa free travel will be available for UK citizens even in the event of No Deal remains applicable. Finally, the UK and Greece have an ongoing diplomatic issue regarding the British Museum's ownership of the Parthenon Marbles. Brexit seems to have revived this issue when Lydia Koniordou, requested a dialogue on the future of the marbles. This has been seen as a carefully timed response in line with British diplomatic uncertainty which could result in increased political discord between the two countries.

Any other interesting observations:

The Greek government accepting the title of The Republic of North Macedonia (previously the Republic of Macedonia) for its northern neighbour has led to a collapse of the coalition government in Greece. A vote of no confidence was held in Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras which just failed when 151 of 300 MPs voted with the government. The significance of this title is it paves way for the Republic of North Macedonia to join NATO and the EU. Many Greeks feel that the former and current name of the country is a threat to Greece's territorial jurisdiction over a region in the North of Greece also called Macedonia.

While the Council of Europe is responsible for determining EU ascension, it is plausible that the EU parliamentary vote could be used as a means of criticising the SYRIZA government. New Democracy toured the Greek region of Macedonia highlighting the opposition of the rename in the region and of 68% of Greeks overall. On street protests against the name further highlight the unpopularity of this change amongst the Greek people.

HUNGARY



Population: 9.7 million

Current National Government:

Viktor Orban, of Fidesz, was re-elected as Prime Minister in April 2018 for the third time. Fidesz-KDNP (Fidesz's satellite party) won 91/133 seats in the 2018 parliamentary elections.

Likely most important issue in the election:

Migration is likely to be a huge issue in the election. In August 2018 Orban and Italian Interior Minister Matteo Salvini launched an anti-migration manifesto ahead of the elections. In January, Orban said that Hungary's goal was for anti-immigration majority in the European Parliament, to be followed by the European Commission and European Council.

He suggested that migration has radically transformed European politics, with the party structures shifting from left-right dynamics, to pro-migration - anti-immigration dynamics. Fidesz's campaign in the Hungarian parliamentary elections of 2018 was largely based on migration, as well as on demonising Hungarian-American billionaire George Soros. Orban has also praised Salvini's anti-im-

Current MEP make up (21)

National Party	EP Political Group	Number of Seats	Previous electoral results +/-
Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz–KDNP)	EPP	12/21	-2
Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) *	NI	3/21	0
Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) (Magyar Szocialista Párt)	S&D	2/21	-2
Democratic Coalition (DK) (Demokratikus Koalíció)	S&D	2/21	+2
(Együtt 2014 - Párbeszéd Magyarországért)	Greens/EFA	1/21	+1
Politics Can Be Different (LMP) (Lehet Más A Politika)	Greens/EFA	1/21	+1

* The Jobbik MEPs are currently non-aligned (or NI (non inscrites)) in the European Parliament. Krisztina Morvai and Béla Kovacs were both elected as Jobbik MEPs, and yet are listed as NI on the European Parliament website.

migration rhetoric, calling him a hero. He has also suggested that 52 per cent of Hungarians think that immigration is the biggest challenge in the EU, and that liberals are the enemies of freedom.

In February 2019, Orban described the elections as a 'historic crossroads' for Europe, with the vote between pro-migration Brussels bureaucrats who are under the sway of 'money men' such as George Soros, and sovereign nation states defending tradition and Christianity.

In September 2018, when a majority of EPP MEPs voted to start an Article 7 sanctions procedure against Hungary over concerns of rule of law breaches and attacks on the media and minorities, Orban said that he would resist any EU-wide attempt to deny Hungary the right to protect its borders, and that it will continue to oppose the pro-migration stance of the EPP. Orban's chief spokesman, Zoltan Kovacs, said Hungary would resist any EU-wide migration reform until after the elections, as they expect more anti-migration MEPs to be elected.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

It does not seem that Brexit will have a direct impact on the EP elections in Hungary. However, Politico suggests that Brexit makes it more likely that the next European Parliament will have more mainstream politicians, to the benefit of pro-EU MEPs. 45 of the UK's 73 MEPs were in the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group and the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) Group, which are both to the right of EPP, and Politico points out that their departure will lead to a big hole in these groups. The far-right groups, including the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) Group, will have to rethink their formations.

The majority of British Conservative MEPs supported Hungary during the Article 7 sanctions vote, although they denied that this was done to secure Hungary's support in the Brexit process. In response, Orban told reporters in Strasbourg that the British deserve a 'good' and 'fair' deal. If Politico is right that the elections will see more mainstream MEPs, then the loss of British right-wing and far-right MEPs may lead to less support for Orban's government in the European Parliament.

Moreover, Hungary has complained about the

MEP Predictions

National Party	EP Political Group	Number of Seats	Previous electoral results +/-
Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz–KDNP)	EPP	13 / 21	+1
Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) *	NI	4/21	+1
Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) (Magyar Szocialista Párt)	S&D	3/21	+1
Democratic Coalition (DK) (Demokratikus Koalíció)	S&D	1/21	-1
Momentum Movement	ALDE	0/21	
Politics Can Be Different	Greens/EFA	0/21	-1
Two-tailed Dog Party		0/21	
Our Home Movement		0/21	

loss of Britain's 'common sense' from the EU immigration debate. Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said that without the UK, Hungary will be even more 'outnumbered' than it currently is.

Any other interesting observations:

Notably, Orban and his Government have opposed Frans Timmermans, current European Commission First Vice President and Spitzenkandidat of the Party of European Socialists (PES), as being in hoc with George Soros, who they believe is trying to taken over European institutions.

Orban appears to have turned down the

chance of joining a potential Eurosceptic alliance with Italy's Lega and Poland's Law and Justice party (PiS), although he has welcomed such a move. Instead, Fidesz will remain part of the main right-wing alliance, the European People's Party (EPP), even though they believe the EPP has become liberal. However, many in the EPP are uneasy about both the corruption and rule of law concerns and Orban's comments on migration, and the EPP itself has been under pressure to kick Fidesz out. Nevertheless, the EPP has argued that if they expel Orban, he would be far more dangerous as the figurehead for far-right forces. Meanwhile, Orban has implied that he will continue to look for alliances with other nativist politicians, as he is fed up with the EPP only looking for pro-immigration allies.



IRELAND



Population: 4.8 million

Current National Government:

Fine Gael (EPP) minority government supported by independents, and a confidence-and-supply arrangement with Fianna Fáil (ALDE). The government was elected in February 2016, and has been led by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD since June 2017, having taken over from former Taoiseach Enda Kenny. This confidence and supply arrangement is a novelty, with either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael having led the government since independence.

Number of MEPs: 11 (13 post-Brexit)

Current MEP make up:

4 Fine Gael (EPP), 3 Sinn Féin (GUE/NGL), 1 Fianna Fáil (ECR), 1 Independent - Nessa Childers (S&D), 1 Independent - Luke 'Ming' Flanagan (GUE/NGL), 1 Independent - Marian Harkin (ALDE)

Prediction for the EU election:

5 Fine Gael (EPP), 4 Fianna Fáil (ALDE), 2 Sinn Féin (GUE/NGL), 1 Labour (S&D), 1 Independent

With several MEPs retiring, including Nessa

Childers (Independent, S&D), and Brian Hayes (Fine Gael, EPP), and the addition of two seats after the UK's seats are redistributed, all parties are hoping to make gains. Ireland's seats are elected by PR-STV in three regions (Dublin, South, and Midlands North-West), and historically have been opportunities for smaller parties and independents to take seats. Labour, particularly, will be hoping to regain at least one seat, having suffered a significant defeat in the 2016 General Election after being the junior partner in a coalition government with Fine Gael. Other parties hoping to make inroads are the Greens (who have historically held seats in the European Parliament), and the Social Democrats (a breakaway party from the Labour Party).

Likely most important issue in the elections:

Brexit (see below) will undoubtedly continue to be the major issue of importance in Irish political discourse. Eurobarometer also highlights immigration, terrorism, climate change and cost of living.

Dominant domestic issues in Ireland at the moment include housing and healthcare. Housing in Ireland has seen long-term underinvestment in affordable housing, and in recent months there has been significant demonstrations involving occupations of vacant buildings. While not a European competency, given the salience of the issue and the occasion of a large electoral event, it is likely that housing will form a large part of public political discourse. Additionally, there is an ongoing industrial dispute with nurses and midwives, which is a core political issue.

One European competency that does elicit public comment is with respect to the Irish position of neutrality. The Permanent Structured Co-operation (PESCO) of the European Common Security and Defence Policy has attracted significant attention from some smaller parties, and the perceived threat it poses to Irish neutrality. An additional area of controversy has to do with Ireland's corporate tax rate - 12.5%. Among other factors including the use of the English language and the Euro, as well as a

high level of third-level educational attainment, a low corporate tax rate has been an important part of Ireland's industrial strategy, and attempts to create a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base in Europe have been met with hostility by many major parties in Ireland.

The European elections will be concurrent with Local Elections for all county and city councils, and possibly, one or multiple referenda (on liberalising divorce laws and on votes for Irish citizens living abroad for Presidential elections at least, with several other proposals also slated for 2019).

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Brexit is a hugely significant issue in Ireland, not least because of its land border with the UK. Dependent on the time-frame of Britain's withdrawal, the future of a North-South relationship is probably the most significant issue in political discourse in Ireland at the moment. The Irish government's position with respect to the border with Northern Ireland and specifically to the 'backstop' is one supported by all parties. Resultantly, it is unlikely that there will be major divergence between the parties on positions with respect to Ireland's future relationship with the UK, though naturally a lot depends on the fate of May's deal.

The only Irish party which has historically contested elections in Northern Ireland has been Sinn Féin, though this may change (see below). The future of North-South relations therefore is likely to be a significant discussion in the election. Sinn Féin has had an MEP in Northern Ireland and will lose this seat post-Brexit - they will be hoping to make gains in order to consolidate their size in the European Parliament.

Importantly, Brexit will also impact on other domestic issues, specifically housing, with the relocation of some high-paying jobs to Dublin (particularly financial sector jobs) placing additional strain on an already strained sector.

It is important to note that support for the EU in Ireland is high - domestic polls (Red C) have placed support for remaining in the EU at 88% or 92%. Eurobarometer states that 85% of Irish people feel like European citizens, and 64% of people have a positive view of the EU.

Observations:

Fianna Fáil's only current MEP is Brian Crowley, who, despite the party officially being affiliated to ALDE, personally affiliated to the European Conservatives and Reformists. Crowley is also notable due to his having the lowest attendance record of any MEP in the current parliament. He has been absent 100% of the time, due to illness preventing him from attending sessions. He has announced he will not be contesting the 2019 elections.

The integration/merger between Northern Ireland's Social Democratic and Labour Party (S&D) with the Ireland's Fianna Fáil (ALDE) may have effects in the campaign. At this time, they remain separate parties, but negotiations are ongoing. Until now, the SDLP have had a relationship with Ireland's Labour Party and has been a member of the Party of European Socialists and sat in the European Parliament with the Socialists and Democrats.

Several high-profile former members of the Dáil, (the lower house of the national parliament) are expected to be candidates, including Labour's Alex White and Dominic Hannigan, the Greens' Ciarán Cuffe, and Fianna Fáil's Barry Andrews. Other high-profile names include former political director of the successful "Yes Equality" campaign in the 2015 Marriage Equality Referendum, Tiernan Brady (Fianna Fáil), and former Rose of Tralee Maria Walsh (Fine Gael).

ITALY



Population: 60 million

Current National Government:

Since March 2018, the government is led by a populist alliance between 5 Stars Movement and North League.

Number of MEPs: 73 (76 post Brexit)

Current MEP make up:

In 2014 elections, the Democratic Party had a very strong electoral success, obtaining 31 seats (40.8%). The second biggest party was the 5 Stars Movement, with 17 seats (21.15%). Forza Italia had 13 seats (16.81%). The North League obtained 5 seats (6.15%). The alliance between the New Centre Right and the Union of the Centre got 3 seats (4.38%). The Other Europe with Tsipras got 3 seats (4.03%) and the South Tyrolean People's Party obtained 1 seat.

Prediction for the EU election:

The North League is expected to obtain much more seats than the last elections, thanks to his anti-migration and anti-European bureaucracy issues (around 30%). 5 Stars Movement is also expected to improve their

results (around 27%). The Democratic Party and Forza Italia, identified as the pro-European and more traditional parties, are both expected to lose votes: the Democratic Party is expected to obtain the 17%, Forza Italia the 10%. Finally, Brother of Italy, inspired by neofascist issues and which didn't enter the EU Parliament in 2014, is expected to obtain the 4%.

Likely the most important issue in the election:

Immigration: after focusing the entire national electoral campaign on the consequences of immigration for the country, it is expected that the North League will insist on the issue also during the European election. The creation of an unfavourable public opinion towards immigration and the choice of the Government of closing the access of the NGOs ships to the Italian harbours head towards a campaign critical against the current management of the immigration flows, characterized by a lack of shared responsibilities between the Member States. The most interesting thing about the North League strategy is the fact that its ownership of the issue is going to be hard to jeopardise. In fact, if on one hand, the party appeals to the emotional fears of the population, on the other hand, part of its solution to the problem (a shared European responsibility in the flow management) will be addressed also by the less radical parties. But the credibility that the North League was able to raise in the last month will make it the best party to vote in order to solve the problem, in the eyes of the voters.

A different Europe: the 5 Stars Movement will probably try to adapt their more important issue at the European level. They already declared that they will focus on the reduction of the EU expenses, in order to have more money to spend on the European citizens' problem. Also, they endorse a stronger use of direct and bottom-up democracy. Therefore, the party abandoned their anti-European positions,

as well as their proposal of exiting the monetary union, pointing towards the creation of a different model of the European Union, more political, in opposition of the current one, too focused on the financial stability and uninterested in citizens' problems.

In this context, the difficulties of the Democratic Party are clear: in fact, the party has always focused on a critic of the European Union as it is, asking for a change in order to create a Union more democratic, closer to its citizens and better able to solve its many problems thanks to a stronger cooperation between its members. Now, those issues have been taken by others that the voters believe to be more able to actually make the change.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Brexit will probably affect the UK - Italy relationships in three ways.

First of all, there will be a relevant economic impact: the amount of the Italian export to the UK is around 23 billion euros. It is not clear what will be the consequences of Brexit on those numbers, but it is likely that they will decrease. Moreover, some Italian regions would suffer more from a no deal Brexit, due to the industrial interests and exchanges that currently exist between them and the UK.

Second, it has been calculated that there are around 700 000 Italian citizens in the UK.

A no deal Brexit would create difficult conditions for these people, which represent an important work and intellectual force. The impossibility to remain in the country, and the decreasing of the arrival from Italy to the UK would probably have some consequences on the economic and social development of the country.

In general, the overall economic impact of Brexit, especially if there will not be some kind of a deal, could be difficult to manage.

Finally, a political problem: it has been noted how often the UK has supported the Italian positions in the EU decision-making processes, in opposition to the coalition between France and Germany. Therefore, the exit of the UK from the European Union could create a lack of balance between the most important Member States, contributing in the strengthening of a European Union mostly focused on the France-Germany relationship.

Any other interesting observations:

The Italian political situation is currently quite chaotic. The 2018 general election have recorded the establishment of the two populist parties as the governmental forces. The so-called traditional parties obtained results much below expectation.

Since then, the centre-left party, which obtained 18% at the elections, had struggled in finding a new political strategy. The hope is that the party primaries will elect a new leader, able to build a new strategy.

On the other hand, Berlusconi's party, Forza Italia, does not seem able to jeopardise the success of the North League, which catches many of the centre-right votes with its radical right-wing discourse. Moreover, the party continues to benefit from the main issue that granted the party success at the election, the immigration, while the party leader Matteo Salvini is managing to control both the government action and policy and the political agenda.

On the other hand, the 5 Stars Movements, that got the highest percentage of votes at the elections, does not seems capable to stay in control of the government and to successfully accomplish its electoral program, while the polls show its consent decreasing every week. Therefore, the strategy that the Movement will choose for the forthcoming European Election will be probably connected with the attempt to regaining the control of the national political situation.

The overall political situation will be probably reflected also at the EU level. The North League is expected to be the winner of the elections, followed by the 5 Stars Movements. The Democratic Party, which obtained an extraordinary result in 2014, is not considered able to regain its votes and its strategy is still confused. Moreover, due to the success of the North League radical right view, also other parties from the right-wing are expected to enter the European Parliament.

The second element of interest is connected with the 5 Stars Movement strategy. Their campaign against the waste of the European resources has been linked to a strong critic of the President of France Emmanuel Macron. The party is attacking France on two sides: as the symbol of those which want to carry on the current anti-democratic and unjust model of the European Union, and as the main responsible of the migrant crisis.

On one hand, Macron and France were strongly attacked during a Facebook Live from the European Parliament in Strasbourg, in which two of

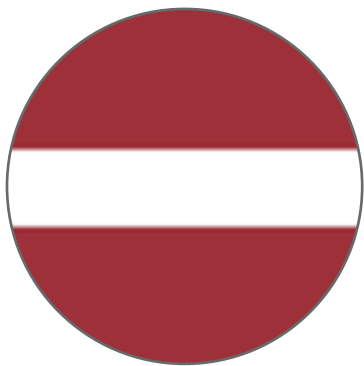
the leaders of the Movement started to explain their program for the EU elections.

On the other hand, the attacks to France history of colonialism and its current behaviour towards immigration are probably an attempt to take a position on the immigration issue, in order to avoid that only the North League benefits from it.

Therefore, two explanations have been given to this strategy: first, the issue of an EU seat in the UN Security Council, which would substitute the one occupied by France; due to its strategy founded on the idea of a new and better European Union, the Movement took a clear position on the issue. Second, the necessity of regaining consent is probably pushing the Movement towards the identification of a clear enemy, and Macron, who is facing fierce popular protests and seems to be the most appropriate example of the insensible EU bureaucracy, is probably considered as the perfect candidate.



LATVIA



Population: 2.2 million

Current National Government:

Coalition Proportional Representation government consisting of:

New Conservative Party (conservative)
Development/For! (liberal, pro-europe alliance consisting of 3 parties - Movement For!, Latvian Development and Growth)
National Alliance (right-wing populist)
Who owns the state? (anti-establishment populist)
New Unity (liberal-conservative)

Number of MEPs:

8

Current MEP make up:

Unity, 6
Union of Greens and Farmers, 1;
National Alliance, 1;
Latvian Russian Union (left-wing), 1;
Harmony Social Democrats, 1 (social-democratic, centre left with large Russian-ethnic following)

Prediction for the EU election;

According to politico,

Progressive alliance of Socialists and Democrats (+2)

Harmony Social Democrats +2,

New parties (+4)

Who Owns the State? +1,

New Conservative Party +1,

Union of Greens and Farmers +1,

Movement/For! +1 , U +1

European Conservatives and Reformists

National Alliance +1,

Likely most important issue in the election:

A reoccurring narrative surrounding countries neighbouring Russia is the potential for Russian interference in either elections or general cyber security. One of the biggest threats identified by the Latvian government has been that of fake news circulated by Russian networks. The Saeima has been working with Facebook and Twitter to impose restrictions on the circulation of fake news. An active stance on Russian meddling was even used in campaigns for the October 2018 election, with candidate of the Latvian Union of New Unity party, the country's Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics having the slogan 'Despite the Kremlin, Latvia is and will succeed' on a pre-election poster (Euractiv, 2018).

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

The number of seats held by Latvia in the European Parliament will remain untouched by the UK's exit of the European Union. In regards to voting alliance, Latvia seems to be on neither end of the scale in how it agrees with the UK on issues debated in European Parliament. Whilst reports have indicated that there would be a significant drop in GDP for Latvia following Brexit (-0.19%), representatives of the two countries have praised the potential for a mutually beneficial relationship to exist between the two nations (Swedbank, year;

Gov.co.uk, 2018). Additionally, the status of Latvians living in the UK prior to the Brexit process will remain unaffected by Brexit.

Any other interesting observations:

Latvia's elections has previously kept pro-Russia politicians away from the Saeima. However, with the success of Harmony in the October 2018 elections, and the predicted success in the

May MEP elections, the representation of ethnic Russians living in Baltic states becomes more significant. This could potentially have significant effects on the narrative surrounding human rights and the cultural inclusion of ethnic Russian practices, i.e. the presence of Russian language in education or segregated schools.



LITHUANIA



Population: 3.4 million

Current National Government:

President and PM are both Independents.

Number of MEPs:

11

Current MEP make-up:

Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD) - 2 seats, (17.43%) - European People's Party Group

Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (LSDP) - 2 seats (17.26%)

Liberal Movement (LRLS) - 2 seats (16.55%) (

Order and Justice (TT) - 2 seats (14.25%)

Labour (DP)- 1 seat (12.81%)

Poles in Lithuania - Christian Families Alliance (8.05%)

Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (6.61%)

Prediction for the EU election: (according to Politico poll of polls projections January 16)

Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD) - 3 seats (26%) - European People's Party Group

Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (LVZS) - 3 seats (21%)

Social Democratic Party of Lithuania (LSDP) - 1 seat (11%)

Order and Justice (TT) - 1 seat (11%)

Labour (DP) - 1 seat (7%)

Poles in Lithuania - Christian Families Alliance (LLRA-KSS) - 1 seat (5%)

Social Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania (LSDDP) - 1 seat (5%)

Likely most important issue in the election:

Depends on the outcomes of the 2019 General Elections. However, they are not absorbed by migration issues in a similar way to much of Europe. Lack of confidence in their political system and integrity of politicians after allegations of corruption.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Unlikely to have a huge effect. Few Lithuanians live in the UK. Perhaps the UK's strong anti-Russian stance amongst EU Member States could be missed by Lithuania.

President Dalia Grybauskaitė is quoted as saying "No Deal would be better than chaos of delayed leaving"

Any other interesting observations:

2019 General Elections Scheduled for 12th May 2019.

Relationship with Russia is paramount international political issue, particularly responding to Russia aggression.

LUXEMBOURG



Population: 600,000

Current National Government:

Coalition of Democratic Party (DP: ALDE), Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (LSAP: S&D) and The Greens (DG: Greens-EFA).

Number of MEPs:

6

Current MEP make up:

Christian Social People's Party (CSV: EPP) - 3

Coalition of Democratic Party (DP: ALDE) - 1

Luxembourg Socialist Workers' Party (LSAP: S&D) - 1

The Greens (DG: Greens-EFA) - 1

Prediction for the EU election:

The same, with potential continued de-

cline in CSV vote.

Likely most important issue in the election:

Luxembourg is very European-centric in its politics. Brexit and the accompanying move of various financial services companies to the continent are likely to figure prominently in the elections, as will the issue of Luxembourg's favourable tax regime.

However, domestic issues, particularly increased pressure on housing, the health-care system and declining social mobility (what the Luxembourgish press are calling the "flip side of growth" are also increasingly prominent.

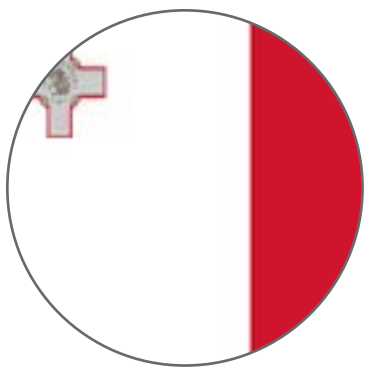
What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Luxembourg stands to gain from FS companies

Any other interesting observations:

Whether or not CSV will be able to reverse its longstanding decline in vote share since 2013 will be one talking point after the elections.

MALTA



Population: 460,000

Current National Government:

Since March 2013 the Government is led by Joseph Muscat of the Labour Party who has been re-elected for a second term in June 2017.

Number of MEPs:

6

Current MEP make up:

In 2014, both the Labour Party (53,39%) and the Nationalist Party (40,02%) respectively elected 3 MEPs each.

Prediction for the EU election:

The polls give the Labour Party the advantage of earning 1 seat (63,29%) whereas the Nationalist Party should lose 1 (34,49%). A very high turnout is expected which should reach 74-75%. Furthermore, Malta is one of the few countries that has granted the right to vote in European elections for 16 years.

Likely most important issue in the election:

Priorities of the Maltese Government in Europe are migration, the Digital Single Market, security, social inclusion, the stabilisation of Europe's southern neighbours and maritime affairs.

The problem of migrants is undoubtedly the central theme of the moment. Since a populist government took office in Italy, it has started to press on Malta so that NGO ships with migrants can dock on the island rather than arrive in Sicily. The Maltese government strongly opposed because Malta is unable to accommodate the migratory flow and does not have sufficient naval forces to be able to patrol the waters.

At home the Government plans to invest in infrastructure, introduce tax cuts and increase pensions for the working and middle class.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Malta is a member of the Commonwealth and has a long history with the UK. Therefore, the countries' ties are strong, and Malta will be losing a staunch ally in the EU when the UK leaves.

However, Malta also sees opportunities in Brexit. As English is widely spoken and the country has a favourable business climate, Malta will be looking to attract companies that are currently based in London and want to move to an EU country to open subsidiaries. On the one hand "Malta can be the UK's gateway to Europe" as Prime Minister Joseph Muscat said, on the other hand, Malta will try to be more attractive for investments, especially in the financial and gaming sectors.

Furthermore, due to the restrictions on the labour market that Brexit will impose on EU citizens, many Maltese could return home, and this will contribute to enriching the Maltese economy with skilled workers. Besides, there is the fact that many Britons could apply for

Maltese citizenship to retain European citizenship as well.

Tourism could be affected by Brexit because a weak pound could create competition with Greece and Cyprus. For this reason, it is a priority for the country to try to keep the flow of British tourists constant, which today totals about 500,000 out of 1.8 million tourists.

Muscat also said that British funding and public-private partnerships to the island to make it a centre for medical tourism and education are not at risk. Furthermore, Maltese citizens in the UK will not run the risk of not being able to access British healthcare anymore.

The gaming industry, one of the most important in the country, could benefit from Brexit as Gibraltar, which competes with

Malta in this field, risks losing a lot of workers as Spain could make it more difficult to cross the border.

Lastly, the exit of the UK will put 12 billion euros away from the European budget, and this will reduce the structural funds. However, Malta could attract investments and researchers from the UK in the medical and life sciences.

Any other interesting observations:

Prime minister Joseph Muscat called a snap election for 3 June 2017 following allegations his wife owns an offshore firm in Panama. An inquiry has been launched to find evidence there is a link between Egrant Inc, a firm named in last year's Panama Papers, and Muscat's wife, Michelle. He has said he will step down if such a link is discovered.



NETHERLANDS



Population: 17 million

Current National Government:

Prime Minister Mark Rutte leads a four-party coalition. It took a record 225 days to form the new government.

The coalition could prove fragile as it has just a one-seat majority. It comprises his liberal VVD, the centrist D66 and conservative Christian parties CDA and Christian Union, marking a steer to the right.

Number of MEPs:

29

Current MEP make up:

Christian Democrats 5 seats (EPP)
Democrats 66 (ALDE) 4 seats
Freedom Party (ENF) 4 seats
People's party for freedom and democracy (ALDE) 3 seats
Labour Party (S&D) 3 seats
Socialist Party (GUE/NGL) 2 Seats
Christian Union (ECR) 2 seats
Green Party (Greens/EFA) 2 seats
Party for the Animals (GUE/NGL) 1 seat

Prediction for the EU election:

People's party for freedom and democracy (ALDE) 5 seats
Freedom Party (ENF) 4 seats
Green Party (Greens/EFA) 3 seats
Democracy Forum (New parties) 3 seats
Labour Party (S&D) 3 seats
Socialist Party (GUE/NGL) 2 Seats
Christian Democrats 2 seats (EPP)
Democrats 66 (ALDE) 2 seats
Party for the Animals (GUE/NGL) 2 seats
Christian Union (ECR) 1 seat
Minority Rights (new parties) 1 seat

Likely most important issue in the election:

As with most countries, immigration is frequently cited as the top issue.

Over a third said the state of Member States' public finances (34%), and climate change came third at 31%

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Because of Brexit, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) will relocate in May 2019 from London to Amsterdam

Along with Ireland, Luxembourg and Belgium it is among the EU countries most exposed economically to Brexit – 1.2% of GDP according to the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy.

The Dutch government has said it is in talks with more than 250 companies about moving their operations from the UK to the Netherlands before Brexit.

The economic affairs ministry said it had lured 42

companies or branch offices and 1,923 jobs from the UK last year, as it increases its efforts to gain Brexit business.

In January alone, 80 British citizens in the Netherlands gave up their British nationality to become Dutch nationals, compared with just 19 in the whole of 2015

Brexit seems to have muted the rising populists in

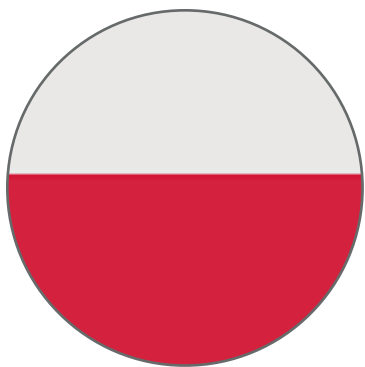
the Netherlands and Geert Wilder's Freedom party lost out in the 2017 elections, whilst pro-European parties made gains.

Any other interesting observations:

King Willem-Alexander became the first Dutch male monarch in more than a century in April 2013 when his mother Beatrix abdicated to end a 33-year reign.



POLAND



Population: 38.4 million

Current National Government:

Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law & Justice; ECR)

Number of MEPs:

51

Current MEP make up:

EPP (22), ECR (19), S&D (5), ENF (2), EFDD (1), independent (3);

Prediction for the EU election:

Tricky; latest opinion polls show a dead heat between Koalicja Europejska (European Coalition - many groupings) and PiS (ECR).

Wiosna (Spring - S&D) is currently polling 3rd.

Kukiz 15' (EFDD), a motley coalition of nationalists, libertarians, M5S-inspired e-democrats is 4th.

Razem (Together - *, possibly GUE/ NGL), KORWiN/ Ruch Narodowy Joint Committee (name TBC, ENF/ EFDD), Teraz! (Now! - ALDE)

are all polling below the 5% threshold.

Likely most important issue in the election:

Internal politics. At the moment, the topics dominating the news are: a culture war between liberals of many shades and PiS, paedophilia in the Catholic Church, the 500+ Programme (effectively, a well-marketed, PiS-introduced welfare payment), and issues surrounding certain military contracts.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

PiS is broadly seen as eurosceptic and sympathetic to Britain, but Brexit won't really have a bearing on Polish politics. Poland has consistently some of the highest levels of support for EU membership of all member states.

Any other interesting observations:

The major force to observe is the potential success (or lack thereof) of the S&D-affiliated Wiosna (Spring) movement, formed by former mayor of Słupsk, Robert Biedroń.

Aside from Wiosna, most significant political parties in opposition to PiS (Platforma Obywatelska - Civic Platform: EPP, Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe - Polish People's Party: EPP, Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej - Democratic Left Alliance: S&D, Zieloni - Greens: GUE/ NGL, .Nowoczesna - .Modern: ALDE) have formed Koalicja Europejska (European Coalition), a united opposition front that, together, might just pip PiS to victory. As it is under the leadership of Platforma Obywatelska, there is significant speculation of a repeat of just such a broad coalition in the parliamentary elections later this year.

PORTUGAL



Population: 10.3 million

Current National Government:

Prime Minister António Costa, the former Mayor of Lisbon, leads a Socialist (PS) minority government in a confidence and supply agreement with Left Bloc (BE), The Communist Party (PCP) and The Greens (PEV). Despite the conservative Social Democratic Party (PSD) winning more seats, Pedro Coelho's government was voted down in parliament by the alliance of left-wing parties. Costa's government pursued an anti-austerity programme that has resulted in steady economic growth that has already paid off at the ballot box. Costa's party won convincingly at the 2017 local elections and his Socialists stand well placed to increase their MEPs in May and to win a general election in October.

Number of MEPs: 21

Current MEP make up:

Socialist Party (PS), S&D, 8 seats
Social Democratic Party (PSD), EPP, 6 seats
Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU), GUE/
NGL, 3 seats
Earth, ALDE, 2 seats

Left Bloc (BE), GUE/NGL, 1 seat
People's Party (CDS-PP), EPP, 1 seat

Prediction for the EU election:

All the available opinion polls suggest that the Socialists are on course for a big win. Choice is not varied in Portugal, as the closest to an anti-EU party would be the Left Bloc, and they are only mildly Eurosceptic. Politico's EU elections projection has the Socialists gaining two seats, one at the expense of the Social Democrats and one from Left Bloc. Considering the size of the Socialists poll lead, a growing economy and António Costa's continued popularity means they could win by even more.

Socialist Party (PS), S&D, 12 seats
+4
Social Democratic Party (PSD), EPP, 4 seats
-2
Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU), GUE/
NGL, 3 seats
0
Earth, ALDE, 0 seats,
-1
Left Bloc (BE), GUE/NGL, 0 seat
-1
People's Party (CDS-PP), EPP, 1 seat
0

Likely most important issue in the election:

Public transport and infrastructure top the list of priorities for Costa's socialists heading into May. A recently announced 10-year National Investment Program is intended to be financed in part by EU funding which Costa hopes to secure through a clear consensus in his leadership. Sitting MEPs are also trying to ensure expected cuts to the EU budget have a smaller impact on Portugal, which

they want negotiated before the elections. Attempting to avoid a 10% cut to their funding, PSD MEP José Manuel Fernandes says the goal is "to improve that."

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Having the oldest diplomatic alliance still in force means that Britain and Portugal's relations have always been strong. As Boris Johnson's aides made sure to point out to him, Britain is Portugal's fourth largest trading partner. The economic relationship centres mostly around cars, with nearly \$4 billion worth of trade in 2016. Portugal have acknowledged that the UK is a "very important client" and therefore uncertainty surrounding Brexit is likely to lead to some nervous voters primarily concerned with maintaining economic success.

Actions are already being taken by the government. In the wake of Parliament rejecting Theresa May's deal, António Costa took the step of announcing that Portugal is to create special airport corridors to facilitate the entry

of British tourists after the UK leaves the EU. The impact of Brexit on tourism in Algarve and Madeira clearly has Portugal spooked. The Costa government appears to be on top of things though, and their lead in the polls reflect this.

Any other interesting observations:

A bad set of results could spell the end for Costa's opponent in the October elections. Rui Rio, as of now leader of PSD, has already faced an internal party challenge and has been widely lambasted by his base. It perhaps comes as no surprise that Costa seems relaxed heading into these elections and beyond. He has already announced several generous spending projects - including €1.3 billion for a second Lisbon airport - before both sets of elections and suggested that the current alliance of left-wing parties should continue, even if PS win outright. The EU parliament results will shed some light on the potential scale of Costa's presumptive victory.



ROMANIA



Population: 19.6 million

Current National Government:

PSD (S&D) - ALDE (ALDE) coalition

Prime Minister: Viorica Dăncilă (PSD) (de facto head of government: Liviu Dragnea (PSD))

The PSD (S&D) is the largest party in the Romanian Chamber of Deputies. The successor to elements of the Romanian Communist Party that overthrew Nicolae Ceausescu in 1989, and having been in power for 17 of the last 29 years, it is generally considered the establishment party in Romanian politics and has been embroiled in successive corruption scandals. After its leader Liviu Dragnea was convicted for corruption and electoral fraud in 2016, it has been criticised by the EU for attempting to decriminalise corruption. Dragnea effectively leads the government, although his conviction makes him ineligible to be appointed Prime Minister.

Since 2017, the left-wing PSD has governed in coalition with the right-wing ALDE party, with opposition led by the centrist PNL (EPP), whose most prominent member, Klaus Iohannis, serves as Romania's President and occupies Romania's seat on the European Council.

2014 European Parliament Election Results: (32 seats)

16 PSD (S&D) (38%), 6 PNL (EPP) (15%), 5 PDL (EPP) (12%), 1 Ind (ALDE) (7%), +4 other
European Parliamentary Group: 16 S&D, 15 EPP, 1 ALDE

2019 European Parliament Election Prediction: (33 seats)

12 PSD (S&D) (28%), 9 PNL (EPP) (23%), 4 USR (ALDE) (11%), 3 ALDE (ALDE) (8%), +3
European Parliamentary Group: 12 S&D, 11 EPP, 9 ALDE, 1 NI

After years of popular protests against the PSD government, there is expected to be a shift towards centrist opposition parties. In 2018 a referendum, supported by the PSD, was held to constitutionally ban gay marriage. Opposition parties, including the USR, encouraged voters to boycott the referendum, framing the referendum as a referendum on the PSD government, and the referendum failed due to having only a 21% turnout. The upcoming elections could also be seen by many voters as a referendum on the PSD government.

This year's European elections will be a first for three new centrist parties, USR, PRO and RO+. The most prominent of these is USR, which is in negotiations to join the ALDE European parliamentary group, and could become its largest member if the negotiations to join the group are successful. However, the existing membership of ALDE of their bitter rivals, the more right-wing pro-government ALDE party, means that they're reluctant to join.

Most important issues in this election:

Corruption remains the largest issue on the domestic agenda and like with the 2018 constitutional referendum, this year's election will likely be treated by voters as a referendum on support for the government. A motion tabled by the opposition in the Romanian Parliament in December titled "Enough! The Dragnea-Dăncilă government, Romania's shame!" illustrates the issues at the top of the domestic agenda. The domestic political crisis will be

SLOVAKIA



Population: 5.5 million

Current National Government:

Social Democracy - Party coalition of SMER-SD (Social Democrats) , SNS (Slovak National Party) and Most-Híd (inter-ethnic political party).

Number of MEPs:

13

Current MEP make up:

5 SMER-SD (Social Democrats)
2 KDH (Christian Democratic Movement)
2 SDKU-DS (Slovak Democratic and Christian Union)
1 OĽaNO (Ordinary People)
1 Nova (conservative political party)
1 SaS (Freedom and Solidarity)
1 SMK (Party of the Hungarian Community),
1 Most-Híd (inter-ethnic political party).

Prediction for the EU election:

It is expected that Slovakia will gain another MEP seat due to the restructuring of the EU. However, it looks as if SaS could gain this or SNS due to increasing euroscepticism. Likewise, SNS and another new party, We are Family may gain up to 3 seats. As such I believe that the result will be:

4 SMER-SD, 2 SDKU-DS, 2 SaS, 2 SNS, 1 We are Family. 1 SMK, 1 KDH, 1 OĽaNO, 1 Nova

Likely most important issue in the election:

The EU bureaucracy as a negative, and environmental issues

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

I believe that Brexit will cause Slovaks to be more eurosceptical and choose more right-wing representatives as MEPs.

Any other interesting observations:

When it comes to national politics in 2020, the current leading party will maintain its power due to polls not currently changing but I imagine there will be more criticism due to the critical juncture of the Slovakian murders in February 2019.

SLOVENIA



Population: 2 million

Current National Government:

First minority government in the history of Slovenia due to the heavily fragmented result the 2018 election produced. Formed by the:

List of Marjan Šarec: Won the elections and set up by former journalist, actor and comedian Marjan Šarec. Socially Liberal and Populist. ALDE (13 seats in the National Assembly)

Social Democrats: Centre-left sister party to Labour, have been coalition partners primarily, and led the government in 2008 under Borut Pahor, the current President of Slovenia. (PES 10 seats in the National Assembly)

Modern Centre Party: Socially liberal party led by former Prime Minister Miro Cerar who were decimated in the 2018 elections. ALDE (10 seats in the NA)

Party of Alenka Braušek: Led by Alenka Braušek, a social liberal and "radical-centre" party who are pro-Eu and associated with ALDE (5 seats in the NA)

Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia: Single issue pensioner's interest party led by Karl Erjavec who have participated within a coalition government since 2004. ALDE (5 seats in the NA) also associated with the European Democratic Party.

and supported by the Left (post-communist successor party) (9 seats in the NA) .

Number of MEPs: 7

Current MEP make up:

Slovenian Democratic Party (EPP): 3 Seats; conservative party led by Janez Jansa, who was accused with corruption. (25 seats in the NA) anti-immigration too.

Christian Democratic Party (EPP): 2 Seats; Christian Democratic Party (7 seats in the NA)

Verjamem (Greens/EFA): 1 Seat; Centre-left party but with no parliamentary representation.

DPPS (ALDE): 1 Seat

SD(PES): 1

Prediction for the EU election:

It's hard to make prediction at the moment due to lack of EU specific polling, but currently the SDS is leading in national polls with around (30-35% of the vote) followed by LMS (10-15%), SD (10-15%), SMC (5-10%), the Left (5-15%), DeSUS (0-5%).

According to politico: Slovenian Democratic Party - 3 seats, List of Marjan Šarec- 2 seats, Social Democrats- 1 seat, Levica- 1 seat, New Slovenia Christian Democrats - 1 seat

Likely most important issue in the election:

According to the Eurobarometer poll, asking what the two most important issues facing Europe are, 58% said immigration, followed by 20% for Terrorism,

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Whilst trust in the EU in Slovenia is at a net negative according to the Eurobarometer survey, a majority of respondents believed that their voice could make a difference in the EU for the first

time ever.

It isn't clear whether Brexit will play an important role in the campaign, although PM Marjan Sarac said that he wasn't very optimistic about the prospects of the Brexit deal in December.[<http://www.sloveniatimes.com/political-overview-winter-2018>]

Any other interesting observations:

This is the first time the List of Marjan Sarec will be standing in the European elections so will be interesting to see what happens.



SPAIN



Population: 46.7 million

Current National Government:

The Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) runs a minority administration. It has a confidence and supply agreement with a number of parties and coalitions, the largest of which by far is Podemos.

Number of MEPs:

Currently 54, expected to be 59 after UK's departure from the EU

Current MEP make up:

17 EPP (16 Partido Popular (People's Party), 1 other);
14 S&D (13 PSOE, 1 Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya);
8 ALDE (1 Partit democrata Europeu Catala, 1 Union, Progreso y Democracia, 1 Ciudadanos, 1 Partido Nacionalista Vasco, 1 other, 3 independent);
5 Greens/EFA (1 EQUO, 1 Bloque Nacionalista Galego, 2 Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, 1 Iniciativa per Catalunya-Verds)

Prediction for the EU election:

There haven't been many polls on the European elections. But examining general election polling since the last European elections would imply we should expect the following:

A fairly large fall in support for the People's Party. Having taken 26% of the vote in 2014, they are on track for something in the 17-19% range. With the increased number of seats overall, this will probably mean only a couple of net losses.

There is little change in support for the PSOE. While polls last year suggested modest gains for the party, it now appears that their share of the vote will probably be down a couple on the 23% they took in 2014. Will probably hold steady in terms of seats.

Podemos had only just been founded in time for the 2014 elections, in which, with hindsight, it did well to take 5 seats. Since then public support for Podemos has gone up and down wildly. As of today, support for Podemos is somewhere in the mid-teens, which although down considerably on its peak is much higher than it was in 2014 – they should double their seat total to 10 at least.

Ciudadanos in 2014 had only just started competing nationally, having its origins in opposing the Catalan independence movement. It therefore took only 3.2% of the vote in 2014, and just 2 seats. In the last five years Ciudadanos has been transformed into a genuine contender to form a government, and is currently polling around 20% - which would mean gaining around 10 seats.

Vox is a new right-wing party, formed by former members of the People's Party – originally in strong opposition to regionalist movements, but recently taking on an anti-immigration agenda. Vox was a newly founded party in 2014, and didn't get any seats. It currently has around 10% support in polls,

and will probably win at least 5 or 6 seats.

A variety of other parties, mostly representing regionalist movements, will probably pick up a handful of seats as well.

A best guess would be

PSOE 14 (=)

People's Party 13 (-3)

Ciudadanos 13 (+11)

Podemos 10 (+5)

Vox 6 (+6)

Others 3 (-17)

Likely most important issue in the election:

The biggest political issue in Spain is corruption, and specifically the ongoing fallout from the corruption scandal that brought down the People's Party government under Rajoy. Eurobarometer research indicates that the public in Spain is understandably much more concerned about corruption than the European public at large.

The other major issue is Catalan independence. The leaders of the abortive declaration of Catalan independence in 2017 will be on trial at the same time as the election campaign, on charges of rebellion, misuse of public funds and sedition. This will be a major issue during the campaign.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

On the elections themselves, pretty limited. While Brexit has opened up debate again about Gibraltar, this debate is largely between the Spanish and British governments, and is a secondary political issue in both publics.

The Spanish public is generally supportive of EU membership, although recent Eurobarometer polls find little public "trust" in the EU.

Observations:

It is possible the next general election will be held on the same date as the European and regional elections. This is because PSOE came to power not through an election, but by forming a coalition after a vote of no confidence in the ruling People's Party.

Any such election will be tightly contested but it is very likely any subsequent government will require the support of at least two of the parties which are now the big four: the People's Party, PSOE, Ciudadanos and Podemos. Even if there is not a general election, in Spain more than other countries, the European elections will be seen as a vote of confidence in the current government.



SWEDEN



Population: 10.2 million

Current National Government:

Minority Social Democratic–Green Party coalition with parliamentary support from the Liberal and Centre parties

Number of MEPs: 20

Current MEP make up:

European People's Party (Christian Democrats): 4

Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats: 6

European Conservatives and Reformists Group: 2

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe: 3

Greens/European Free Alliance: 4

European United Left - Nordic Green Left: 1

Prediction for the EU election:

Sweden's recent general election last September provides a clear and relevant indication of voters' intentions. The historically dominant Social Democrats have experienced their worst, albeit better than expected, result in a century. Emulat-

ing the trends of many other European countries, smaller and more politically radical parties are making gains as a result of the declining centre. The right-wing populist Swedish Democrats benefited most from this, alongside other smaller parties, especially if they were not formally involved in the previous administration's coalition (Valpresentation, 2018).

Transferring this picture to the European elections, one can reasonably expect Sweden to return fewer Social Democrats and more Eurosceptic MEPs. This is not just in the case of the Swedish Democrats, who currently hold 2 of the 20 allocated seats, but also from parties on the left who are sceptical about the EU, such as the Vänsterpartiet (democratic socialists).

Likely most important issue in the election:

Immigration and integration were central themes in the recent general election and will inevitably be a key aspect of the European elections. Sweden has until recently held a generous asylum policy, due to sympathetic left-wing governments and worker shortages. As a result, the country has accepted more refugees, as a proportion of their population, than any other EU member state. This has created a backlash in the country, manifested politically in the growth of the populist Swedish Democrats. Their rise has shifted the agenda of politics to the far right, with most parties adopting tougher stances on immigration, with policies focused on limiting the number of new arrivals and integrating them faster.

On the European level, Swedish MEPs will most likely pursue this agenda by opposing fresh quotas on refugees and supporting efforts to deal with asylum cases closer to EU points of entry.

What effect, if any, will Brexit have:

Negatives

Britain is Sweden's fourth largest export mar-

ket so customs/tariffs etc will have an impact difficulties handling VAT when trading with Britain, custom duties and concern over the indirect long-term impact all factor.

Even if not too high, changes in the way it is done extremely likely so changes to biz models

Likely will have a short term weakened position within the EU as has been a strong relationship between Britain and Sweden- so need to find new partners

Positives

British companies have today invested 300 billion in Sweden, which is 13% of foreign direct investment. Rather than just getting rid, might use Sweden as a gateway for UK based companies e.g. to have a secondary office based in the EU

Any other interesting observations.

There is a possible disillusionment with politics considering no governing coalition for 4 months

Far-right Sweden Democrats, won 17.5 percent in GE- high but not as high as some polls were suggesting. Recently dropped calls to leave EU for changing 'from the inside'.

Kept out by current political maneuvering and coalition/ relationship building. Left bloc: 40.7% Right bloc: 40.3%.

Swedish support for the EU is above average, with only citizens in Luxembourg, Ireland, Germany and the Netherlands having a more positive view of the EU, according to the latest survey.





Initial Observations

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT PORTUGAL'S SOCIALIST "SUCCESS" STORY

JONATHAN HARTY

Our next publication will be a series on essays, providing in depth analysis of EU Member states. Enjoy these tasters from Jonathan Hardy and Imogen Tyreman on Portugal and Equal voting rights, and keep an eye out for our future work.



In sharp contrast to the rest of the Eurozone, Portugal has enjoyed a run of economic growth. Wages are growing and unemployment is falling. Seeing this happen under an openly anti-austerity government has given many European socialists a cause célèbre.

It could be argued that Portugal represents a "fourth way" for European social democrats. In sharp contrast to the approaches taken in the early-2000s by left-wing governments, Portugal's government has aimed to fund pro-growth policies, rigorously pursuing wage hikes and investment in public services as needed.

Prime Minister António Costa, the former Mayor of Lisbon, leads a Socialist (PS) minority government in a confidence and supply agreement with Left Bloc (BE), The Communist Party (PCP) and The Greens (PEV). Despite the conservative So-

cial Democratic Party (PSD) winning more seats, Pedro Coelho's government was voted down in parliament by the alliance of left-wing parties. Costa's government pursued an anti-austerity programme that has resulted in steady economic growth that has already paid off at the ballot box. Costa's party won convincingly at the 2017 local elections and his Socialists stand well placed to increase their MEPs in May and to win a general election in October, a feat not many Socialists parties in Europe will be able to achieve.

Portugal had to endure nearly a decade of slashes to public spending before Costa became Prime Minister. Since gaining power, the PS government has taken several necessary advances in the battle to combat the worst effects of austerity. However, after nearly three and a half years the government has not been able to completely alleviate austerity. In sharp contrast to the type of growth-spurring stimulus that Costa promised in 2015, his party has focussed on limiting the worst effects of austerity by managing the effects of the EU's strict budget regulations. Increased public sector wages and lowered income taxes have all meant that infrastructure and healthcare have not had the kind of investment a Portuguese voter could expect under a socialist-led coalition. These issues top the list of priorities for Costa's socialists heading into the election season. A recently announced 10-year National Investment Program is intended to be financed in part by EU funding which Costa hopes to secure through a clear consensus in his leadership.

Portugal's case highlights the degree to which smaller European nations are limited in their ability to manage their own economies. Sitting MEPs are trying to ensure expected cuts to the EU budget have a smaller impact on Portugal, which they want negotiated before the elections. Attempting to avoid a 10% cut to their funding, PSD MEP José Manuel Fernandes says the goal is "to improve that."

To begin, it is important to understand how exactly Portugal serves as a counter-example to the austerity policies that has been the dominant solution to problems posed to European policymakers for the past several decades. The Eurozone excludes two critical policy tools used to combat economic recessions. The first of these is currency devaluation, which is rendered impossible because members of the Eurozone share a currency, so individual member countries cannot print their



own money during a time of crisis to make their exports more competitive. What's more, the European Central Bank (ECB) — the institution responsible for printing euros — is, according to its charter, tasked solely with keeping inflation rates low. This mandate is in sharp contrast to the Federal Reserve in the United States, for instance, which is tasked with balancing inflation and unemployment. This means that the ECB will not devalue the Euro during crises, even if it would benefit individual member nations to do so.

The second policy tool, fiscal stimulus, is effectively neutered by the Eurozone's Stability and Growth Pact. According to the Pact, Eurozone countries must cap their deficit-to-GDP ratios at 3% and debt-to-GDP at 60%. This leaves very little wiggle room for fiscal stimulus, and in fact, required many periphery states during the Eurozone crisis to take counterproductive measures like cutting spending and raising taxes significantly during recession. Bailouts by core states like Germany have come with strict conditions that typically involve cutting public services and wages drastically. Many economists argue that this practice merely creates a vicious cycle where spending cuts during recession shrink the GDP, which increases the deficit-to-GDP ratio, and consequently necessitates deeper cuts in a perpetual economic contraction.

It is an oversimplification of Portugal's state of affairs to argue that the policies introduced by the PS government constitute a repudiation of austerity politics. In fact, by holding up the Portuguese as a model of anti-austerity, one obfuscates what anti-austerity politics mean in the first place. In this telling of the story, it seems anything short of the government lying supine while Germans in suits write the budget constitutes anti-austerity. More importantly, though, to hold up the Portuguese as a model for future anti-austerity governments in Europe may prove to be a severe political error. Its recovery can be more accurately attributed to external factors that are largely independent of the government's limited policies. Implementing half-way measures in other Eurozone countries that do not share the conditions driving Portugal's recent recovery may not produce such impressive results. In fact, these cases could even provide proponents of austerity exactly the examples they need to show that "there is no alternative" after all.

While Portugal's growth is good news for the average voter heading into the European elections, it is not the consequence of a Costa's "stimulus". The cuts implemented by his government are not enough to create the moral cycle of growth envisioned by the Prime Minister and his government. Instead, Costa's Socialists are trying to put in place a Keynesian recovery within the narrow confines of the EU's deficit laws. Rather than serving as an example of how outlying states in the Eurozone can buck harsh austerity measures and their social costs, perhaps the case of Portugal demonstrates that the fate of smaller European nations — unable to devalue their own currency due to a shared euro or spend to sufficiently stimulate their economies thanks to Eurozone budgetary rules — is very much still controlled by the EU.

Jonathan Harty is a Young Fabian member and contributor to the EU Election project.

VOTING EQUALITY IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

IMOGEN TYREMAN

In the next European Parliament, Germany is likely to increase its power in the institutions. Manfred Weber, the Spitzenkandidat of the European People's Party is likely to become the next President of the European Commission, and Martin Selmayr will remain Secretary General of this institution. Meanwhile, regardless of the fact they are European and not German civil servants, there is no indication that Helga Schmid or Klaus Welle will be moving on from their respective positions as Secretary General of the European Union External Action Service and Secretary General of the European Parliament.

Moreover, Germany currently has 96 MEPs in the European Parliament, the maximum number allowed, and with a population of over 82 million holds significant sway in qualified majority votes in the Council of the European Union, which require 65% of the population of the EU to be represented.

Therefore, it might be surprising to hear that German voters hold much less power than their Maltese, Luxembourgish or Cypriot counterparts. Yet, due to a 2007 manifesto of solidarity adopted by the European Parliament, in which larger member states agreed to be underrepresented in order that less populous states are better represented, this is how the situation currently stands.

This creates a difficult situation, not just because the perceived power imbalance at institutional level appears to be exactly the opposite at voter level. In fact, in the current European Parliament, the Gini coefficient, which measures the inequality in voting power per voter, is calculated to be at 17.5%. In the UK it is just 6.1%.

Of course, our drive to solve this inequality may depend on our view of what the European Union is; is the EU a union citizens of member countries or of European citizens? However, the main argument for us to address this problem is found in the Treaty of the European Union, which states that '[the EU] in all its activities, shall observe the principle of equality of its citizens'.



The difficulty in finding a solution to this issue lies primarily in not wanting smaller states to feel that they are losing power in an organization where they already feel larger members wield too much power. Therefore, options that propose lowering the minimum number of seats from six to three and keeping the maximum number at 96 should not be considered, even if this would offer a much lower Gini coefficient.

Luckily, there are a number of other ways to reduce inequality between voters without threatening the representation of the smallest member states, three of which are considered here.

Two of these options are found in a paper produced by Guntram B. Wolff, the director of Bruegel, and Robert Kalcik, research assistant at Bruegel. The first results in a lower Gini coefficient, whilst the second would bring a lower coefficient of malapportionment (the percentage of seats that need to move to achieve inequality).

The first proposal presented suggests reducing the number of seats in the European Parliament to 639, which gives reduced voter inequality by over three percentage points. In this parliament, eight countries would have the same number of seats as they do now, while France, Italy and Estonia would all receive a larger allocation of seats. The remaining 16 countries would lose seats. However, even those who would lose the most seats.

The second option envisages a parliament of 736 MEPs, 35 fewer than it currently has but 31 more than it will be post-Brexit. This would result in a coefficient of malapportionment of 10.5%, around four percentage points lower than it is now. In this scenario, a third of EU countries would gain seats. Meanwhile, France, the most underrepresented country at present would gain 22 seats. Although seven countries would lose seats, their share of the total seats in the European Parliament would not fall by more than 0.3 percentage points.

Unfortunately, the principles by which the composition of the post-Brexit European Parliament was set specified that no country should lose any seats, so neither of these options could have been adopted.

The remaining option is to introduce transnational lists. This is a recurring discussion in the EU, and was once again brought to the fore when discussing what to do with the seats vacated by British MEPs. Although the proposal for transnational lists was voted down, there is much merit in the idea. Citizens would get a second vote in the European elections, one which would have equal weight no matter where they live. Furthermore, European political parties would be able to fully embrace their roles and present pan-EU ideas that would not be so likely to get lost in national debates. Finally, many believe that transnational lists have the potential to animate European election campaigns, particularly if they are coupled with the direct election of a president of the European Commission.



**OF COURSE, VOTING
POWER IS JUST ONE OF
MANY AREAS WHERE VOT-
ERS REMAIN UNEQUAL IN
THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS**

Of course, voting power is just one of many areas where voters remain unequal in the European elections: rules for voting abroad varies by country, with some not allowing it at all and others only if the citizen is resident in another EU country; voting is compulsory in five member states but not others; some countries have open lists where voters can vote by preference for a given candidate and therefore have more a say than in countries that run closed lists; voting for more than one candidates from rival lists is only allowed in one country; nearly 1 million people with disabilities may find themselves unable to vote and many more will face obstacles to voting. These are all problems the next European Parliament will need to address.

Overall, it is clear that more work needs to be done to ensure the EU abides with the principle of equality of all citizens when it comes to voter equality, and the proposals defined above are a good place to start. However, there is a deeper problem of growing disengagement and disillusionment in the EU, and the next European Parliament has the power to make or break itself as it responds to this challenge.

Imogen Tyreman is a Young Fabian member and contributor to the EU Election project



Want to get involved?

Contact Charlotte at charlotte.norton@youngfabians.org.to to get involved with this project.

Check out our [website](#), facebook and twitter for other projects.

You can join the Fabian Society [here](#) to contribute to our work.

[EMAIL](#)



**YOUNG
FABIANS**

**YOUNG
FABIANS**

MEP Elections 2019
Published by Young Fabians
Edited by Charlotte Norton
Designed by Charlotte Norton