

22-26 April 2024

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I. Political and Policy Developments

1. ECR group adopts campaign manifesto; decides not to pick lead candidate

The centre-right European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group adopted its [election manifesto](#) on 23 April during the last plenary session of this European Parliament's mandate. The ECR decided not to elect a lead candidate, arguing that it should be the prerogative of Member States, not of political groups, to appoint a Commission president.

In its manifesto, the ECR calls for upholding nation state sovereignty and rejects any unnecessary centralisation of power in Brussels. It advocates for a balanced approach to sustainability, emphasising the need to reconcile climate action with economic prosperity. It further calls for a comprehensive review of the current Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Farm to Fork Strategy. Finally, the ECR supports the scaling up of investments in digital technologies such as AI, 5G/6G and quantum computing.

The ECR manifesto is expected to feed significantly into post-election negotiations, as the party is likely to emerge as a key player in the next mandate due to its growing popularity.

2. Top Jobs developments: new names to succeed von der Leyen; EPP eyes agriculture commissioner position; uncertainty looms over Ribera and Sanchez's future

Commission President Ursula von der Leyen continues to face widespread backlash in Brussels due to scandals such as 'PfizerGate', which have significantly damaged her public image. These controversies have reinforced speculations that her political group, the European People's Party (EPP), may be considering alternative candidates should she fail to secure a second term. Currently, Romania's President Klaus Iohannis and Croatia's PM Andrej Plenkovic are popular contenders in Brussels, as both are heavyweight figures within the EPP. Other potential options include Italy's former PM Mario Draghi, along with high-ranking EU officials such as Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton, European Parliament chief Roberta Metsola and European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde.

On 24 April, the leader of the EPP, Manfred Weber, announced that the party would prioritise securing the next agriculture commissioner portfolio. Weber emphasised that an EPP agriculture commissioner would advocate for a 'Green Deal 2.0', aiming to harmonise the green transition with socio-economic concerns while ensuring the continued involvement of farmers and the industry.

Spain's Vice PM and Minister of Ecological Transition, Teresa Ribera, was selected to lead PM Pedro Sánchez's Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) in the EU elections. As a candidate, Ribera has pledged to advocate for ambitious climate policies and to defend the Green Deal. Her nomination has sparked speculation that she may be Spain's choice for a Commission portfolio, likely focusing on the Green Deal. However, Ribera's position may now be in question, as Sánchez has threatened to step down amid a corruption case involving his wife. If Sánchez resigns and calls for a snap election, current forecasts suggest that the centre-right opposition would have a strong chance of forming a government. Additionally, Sánchez's potential resignation has fueled speculation that he could be appointed as the next President of the European Council, a role traditionally held by a socialist leader.

3. New foreign affairs interference scandal hits German far-right lead candidate

MEP Maximilian Krah, the lead candidate for the German far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in the EU elections, is currently under investigation regarding ties between his office and China.

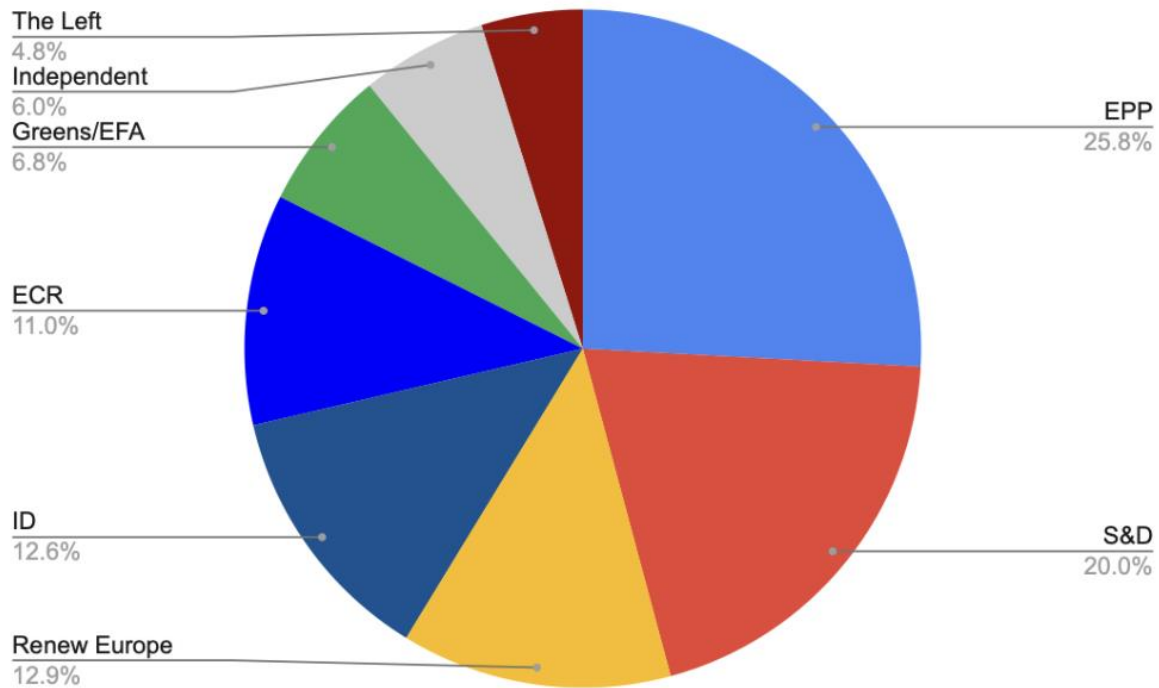
On 23 April, the German public prosecutor's office arrested Krah's Chinese-German parliamentary assistant Jian Guo, whom they suspect of working for the Chinese secret service. German prosecutors allege that Guo has been sharing information about negotiations and decisions in the European Parliament with Chinese intelligence.

While Krah denies any prior knowledge of Guo's activities, this new scandal is likely to add to the backlash the AfD is already facing over its suspected ties with other foreign powers.

4. European Parliament releases timeline for new EU institutional leadership

The European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) has [published](#) a timeline outlining the key political events surrounding the EU elections and the selection of the new EU leadership. Of particular note, the EPRS anticipates that the election for the next Commission President will take place 16-19 September.

II. Latest Projections



1. **European People’s Party (EPP):** 176 seats
2. **Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D):** 136 seats
3. **Renew Europe:** 88 seats
4. **Identity and Democracy (ID):** 86 seats
5. **European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR):** 75 seats
6. **Greens – European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA):** 46 seats
7. **Independent:** 41 seats
8. **The Left (GUE/NGL):** 32 seats

Source: [Politico](https://www.politico.com) (24/4/2024).

III. Key institutional milestones

Date	Event
22-25 April	European Parliament last plenary session
23 April	ECR election manifesto
6-9 June	EU elections
17 June	European Council on 2024-2029 strategic agenda / top jobs appointments
27-28 June	European Council on top jobs appointments
1 July	Beginning of Hungarian Presidency
July	Formation of new European Parliament
16-19 July	European Parliament first plenary session
16-19 September	Election of President of the European Commission



September	Formation of new European Parliament committees
October-November	European Commissioner-candidates hearings
1 December	New European Council President takes office
16-19 December	European Parliament vote on the investiture of the new Commission