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I. Political and Policy Developments

1. Political groups criticise exclusion from EU elections debate

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU), responsible for overseeing public service media across the European Broadcasting Area, faces criticism for its exclusion of three political parties from the upcoming [Eurovision debate](#) scheduled for 23 March in Brussels.

The regionalist European Free Alliance (EFA), the conservative European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), and the far-right Identity and Democracy (ID) will not be participating in the debate due to their failure to nominate a lead candidate. Both EFA and ID have voiced discontent over this decision and have called upon the EBU to reconsider its stance. ID, in a letter addressed to European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, accused the EBU of inconsistency in its application of rules, highlighting that political groups like the Greens and Renew Europe were invited despite having multiple candidates.

2. Spanish deputy PM wants top Commission position; Maltese EU Commission hopeful quits; Danish PM rules herself out from top EU positions race

In a recent interview, Spanish deputy Prime Minister and Environment Minister Teresa Ribera expressed her disinterest in serving as a Commissioner unless she possessed “real strength in political and economic terms”. Specifically, Ribera is keen on acquiring a portfolio related to the Green Deal, which she is eager to advocate for in Brussels. As part of her bid, Ribera suggests the establishment of a senior commissioner role that consolidates three portfolios: climate, environment and energy. Given her strong environmental credentials, Ribera is widely regarded as a favourable candidate to oversee the Green Deal in Brussels.

Maltese Deputy Prime Minister and former Health Minister Chris Fearn, previously viewed as a popular contender for the health commissioner role, resigned on 10 May amidst allegations of misappropriation and fraud. Fearn had been under increasing pressure,

including from EU circles, particularly after MEPs from the European Parliament's Environment Committee (ENVI) announced their refusal to support a candidate facing criminal charges. Former S&D MEP Miriam Dalli, a senior figure with extensive experience in energy and environmental issues, is anticipated to assume Fearne's role.

During the Copenhagen Democracy Summit, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen confirmed to journalists she has no intention of succeeding Charles Michel as European Council president.

3. Interference and disinformation rising as key issues ahead of EU elections

The issue of foreign interference remains a primary concern in the lead-up to the EU elections. A recent [survey](#) conducted by the Central European Media Observatory reveals that over a third of respondents from Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia see influence from foreign countries as a significant issue. Among these nations, Poles express the highest level of apprehension regarding foreign influence (55%), followed by Hungarians (38%), Czechs (35%) and Slovaks (31%). The perceived origin of this interference varies across countries: while Poles, Hungarians and Czechs point to Russia as the primary source of foreign interference, Slovaks consider EU institutions to pose a greater threat than Moscow.

Recent reports indicate that Commission Vice President Věra Jourová, responsible for values and transparency, cautioned her fellow Commissioners about the increasing likelihood of disinformation attacks promoting Russian and Chinese narratives targeting the EU in the lead-up to the elections.

4. ECR Vice President wants alliance with EPP without von der Leyen; influential S&D MEP says group can work with ECR

Swedish MEP Charlie Weimers, Vice-President of the ECR, has declared his endorsement for a coalition agreement with the EPP, resembling Sweden's governing coalition, albeit without Ursula von der Leyen as Commission President. He criticises von der Leyen for pursuing policies that he believes are detrimental to Sweden.

Sweden's governing coalition consists of EPP affiliated parties the Moderates, the Christian Democrats and Renew Europe affiliated Liberals. Although his party, the right-wing Sweden Democrats, do not hold ministerial positions, they provide support to the government in exchange for implementing stricter migration policies. By advocating for this model, Weimer likely prioritises securing significant concessions from the EPP. Weimers' remarks come shortly after von der Leyen declined to dismiss the possibility of cooperation with the ECR during the Maastricht Debate.

Meanwhile, Italian MEP Paolo de Castro recently stated that his group, the Socialists and Democrats (S&D), could potentially work with the ECR. He highlighted key agriculture files, such as the Geographical Indications regulation and the CAP reform, on which both groups have previously worked together. A former Agriculture Minister, de Castro is a prominent figure in Brussels, having served as an MEP since 2009 and chaired the Agriculture Committee (AGRI) from 2009 to 2014. His stance notably diverges from his group's official position of not

collaborating with the ECR, which was recently reaffirmed in a [joint letter](#) signed with the Greens, Renew Europe and The Left.

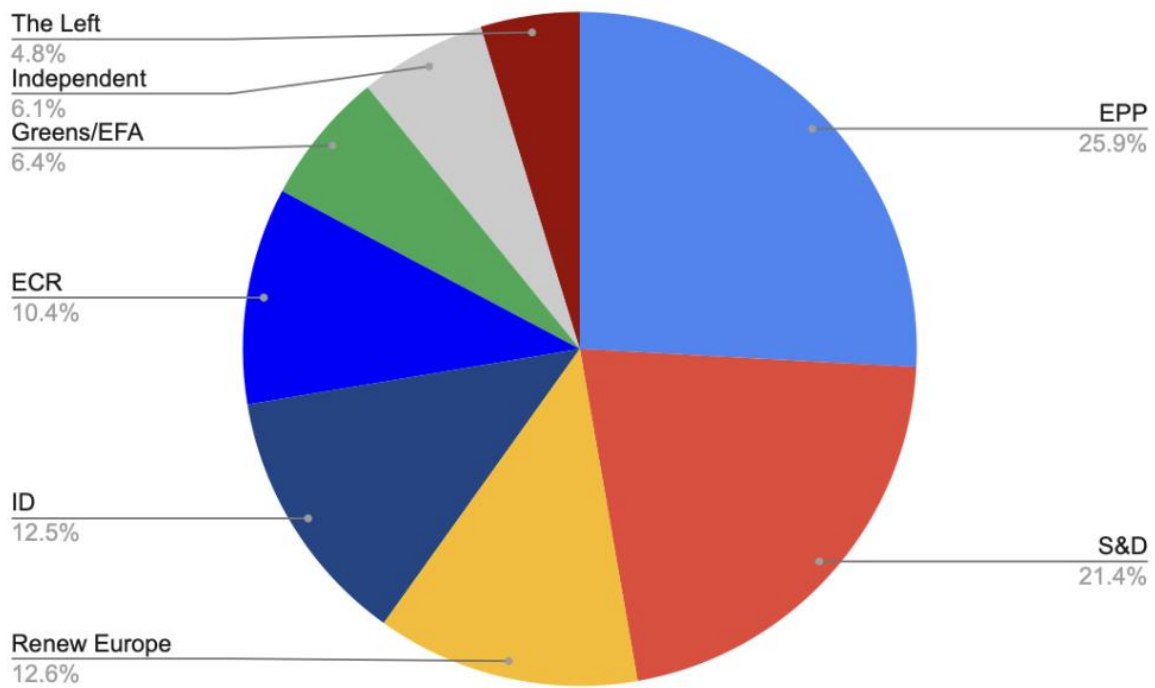
5. Right-wing coalition agreements in the Netherlands and Croatia; socialists score victory in Catalan elections

In the Netherlands, leader of the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV), Geert Wilders, reached a [coalition agreement](#) with outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte's centre-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), the centrist New Social Contract (NSC) and the agrarian Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB), following six months of negotiations after the November 2023 general elections. The coalition agreement outlines plans to combat migration and reverses measures aimed at limiting nitrogen emissions, which sparked protests among farmers. Despite the opportunity to assume Rutte's position as prime minister, Wilders opted to prioritise advancing his agenda. The four parties are set to present their agreement to parliament on May 22nd, with the prime ministerial candidate likely tasked with finalising the remaining government positions. Ronald Plasterk, a former Education Minister from the Labour Party (PvdA), is emerging as a probable choice for the prime ministerial role. Plasterk has distanced himself from the PvdA in recent years and has aligned more closely with Wilders.

In Croatia, incumbent centre-right Prime Minister Andrej Plenković was formally reappointed for a third term on 10 May. Plenković secured his reappointment through a coalition agreement with the far-right Homeland Movement (DP), which gained prominence as a kingmaker following inconclusive parliamentary elections in April. Plenković's negotiations to form a new cabinet are ongoing, and to accommodate his coalition partner, he is expected to adopt a stricter stance on issues such as migration and the country's ethnic Serb community.

In Spain, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's Socialist Party (PSOE) emerged victorious in Catalonia's parliamentary elections on May 12th, securing the most seats and dealing a blow to pro-independence parties, which, for the first time in decades, do not hold a parliamentary majority. The PSOE list, led by Salvador Illa, has already garnered support from the left-wing Sumar party but would require backing from another party, likely the pro-independence leftist Esquerra Republicana, to form a government. Meanwhile, pro-independence leader Carles Puigdemont, whose party secured second place, insisted that PSOE allow him to establish a minority independence government. Puigdemont holds significant influence in Madrid, as his party is part of Sánchez's ruling coalition.

II. Latest Projections



1. **European People's Party (EPP):** 174 seats
2. **Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D):** 144 seats
3. **Renew Europe:** 85 seats
4. **Identity and Democracy (ID):** 84 seats
5. **European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR):** 70 seats
6. **Greens – European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA):** 43 seats
7. **Independent:** 41 seats
8. **The Left (GUE/NGL):** 32 seats

Source: [Politico](https://www.politico.com) (15/5/2024).

III. Key institutional milestones

Date	Event
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
16-19 July	European Parliament first plenary session
22-25 July	Formation of European Parliament committees
16-19 September (exp)	European Parliament vote on Commission President
October-November	European Commissioner-candidates hearings
1 December	New European Council President takes office
16-19 December (exp)	European Parliament vote on the new Commission