

20 - 24 May 2024

## I. Political and Policy Developments

1. ID expels AfD, fuelling speculation around right wing alliance
2. EU lead candidates meet for debates in final stretch of election campaign
3. Race for next Commission jobs intensifies
4. New Dutch coalition struggles to find Prime Minister; Renew considers exclusion of Dutch liberals
5. Latest Eurobarometer shows Europeans want more defence cooperation

## II. Latest Projections

## III. Key institutional milestones

### I. Political and Policy Developments

#### 1. ID expels AfD, fuelling speculation around right wing alliance

The ID group expelled Alternative for Germany (AfD) following the [controversial comments](#) of its lead candidate, Maximilian Krah, on the SS and World War Two. ID's move follows calls from Le Pen's National Rally (RN), the Danish People's Party (DF) and Italy's Lega demanding the party's exclusion. Although Krah resigned from the party's leadership and stated he would no longer make public appearances, he remains the AfD's lead candidate at present.

AfD's exclusion could facilitate a rapprochement between the ID, the ECR and the EPP after the elections, also considering that the relative majority of leaders sitting in the European Council are affiliated with these political groups.

AfD's expulsion comes after [Europa Viva 24](#), a summit organised by the Spanish conservative party Vox on 18-19 May which featured prominent politicians including Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, France's Marine Le Pen, and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Argentina's President Javier Milei also attended the event.

During the summit, Meloni denounced the "madness of the EU Green Deal," while Le Pen focused her speech on migration issues. Orbán also focused on migration and called on patriots to "occupy" Brussels in the next term. The question of conservative unity was also on the table, with Meloni stressing the need to unite parties "compatible in their vision" and Le Pen recognising "common points" with Meloni.

#### 2. EU lead candidates meet for debates in final stretch of election campaign

As the EU election campaign approaches its end, EU Commission presidential hopefuls gathered for two EU elections debates this week. The [first one](#), hosted by the think-tank Bruegel and the Financial Times (FT) on 21 May, focused on economic issues. The [second](#)

[debate](#), organised by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) on 23 May, covered a broader range of issues, from economy to climate and technology.

During the Bruegel-FT debate, outgoing Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that she will work for a “leaner” EU budget, vowed to complete the capital market union and stressed that defence will be a priority in the next mandate. Renew Europe’s Sandro Gozi and Nicolas Schmit from the Party of European Socialists (PES) also considered the completion of the capital market union to be a priority. All candidates shied away from addressing green policies: only Gozi, who was particularly assertive during the debate, mentioned climate policy, in the context of linking access to EU financial instruments with good behaviour.

The EBU debate was shaped by intense discussions around a potential right-wing coalition. Schmit and Gozi attacked von der Leyen on a potential alliance with the ECR and ID. The Commission President reiterated her three criterias for collaboration: being pro-European, pro-Ukraine and pro-rule of law and she stated that Italy’s PM Giorgia Meloni fulfilled these requirements. However, von der Leyen warned she would be working with individual member parties rather than political groups as a whole, meaning that she might seek support of individual national delegations rather than the whole ECR political group. von der Leyen rejected the possibility of working with ID and parties such as France’s National Rally (RN).

During much of the debate, von der Leyen maintained a defensive stance, highlighting her positive record in safeguarding the rule of law, regulating digital platforms and setting up the Green Deal. She attracted criticism from the European Greens’ Terry Reintke, who accused conservatives and liberals of killing the Green Deal.

Reintke, Schmit and Walter Baier from the European Left took a stance against austerity policies, with Schmit calling for investments to decarbonise Europe’s economy, and Baier stressing the need to put money at the heart of social justice.

### **3. Race for next Commission jobs intensifies**

Speculation is mounting on the composition of the next Commission. Currently, only Spain and Slovenia have confirmed the names of their candidate commissioners: Spanish Deputy PM Teresa Ribera is expected to take a senior green policy-related portfolio, while Tomaz Vesel, a former president of Slovenia’s court of auditors, might be a candidate for a finance or competition related position.

Prominent figures such as Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas and Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo are rumoured as potential candidates for a senior Commission post. The name of former ECB president and Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi has also been thrown into the mix, with French President Macron reportedly pushing for Draghi to get a senior post in Brussels.

Several outgoing commissioners might be re-appointed, including Maroš Šefčovič, Executive Vice President for the European Green Deal; Valdis Dombrovskis, Executive Vice President for Trade; Thierry Breton, Internal Market Commissioner; and Margaritis Schinas, Vice President in charge of the European Way of Life portfolio. Šefčovič and Breton could land

industry-related portfolios, Dombrovskis is reportedly eyeing an internal market post, while Schinas could deal with defence or migration policy.

Prominent commissioners such as Margarethe Vestager, the Executive Vice President for digital and competition policy; Virginijus Sinkevičius, Environment Commissioner and Janusz Wojciechowski, Agriculture Commissioner, are unlikely to stay in Brussels as their parties are no longer in government.

#### **4. New Dutch coalition struggles to find Prime Minister; Renew considers exclusion of Dutch liberals**

Dutch parties are still negotiating on who will be the new Prime Minister. A [coalition agreement](#) was reached between Geert Wilders' far-right Party for Freedom (PVV), 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), but there is still no agreement on the new government leader.

During a debate in Parliament, Wilders informed Dutch MPs that negotiations were likely to take several months, possibly extending until September. This delay comes after Ronald Plasterk, a former Education Minister from the Labour Party (PvdA) who had been considered for the position, withdrew from the race following allegations of involvement in a medical patent fraud. Names currently circulating for the top job include Mona Keijzer, who ranked second on BBB's list; Kim Putters, a former Labour member of the Senate; and Rotterdam's labour mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb.

The prospect of seeing a PVV-led government is creating shockwaves in Brussels. Valérie Hayer, the President of Renew Europe, stated that VVD's decision to join forces with the PVV was unacceptable. Renew is set to discuss on 10 June whether to exclude VVD's five MEPs from the group. The exclusion of VVD would negatively affect the group's chances of maintaining its position as the third-largest political group, in the face of growing competition from the ID and ECR groups.

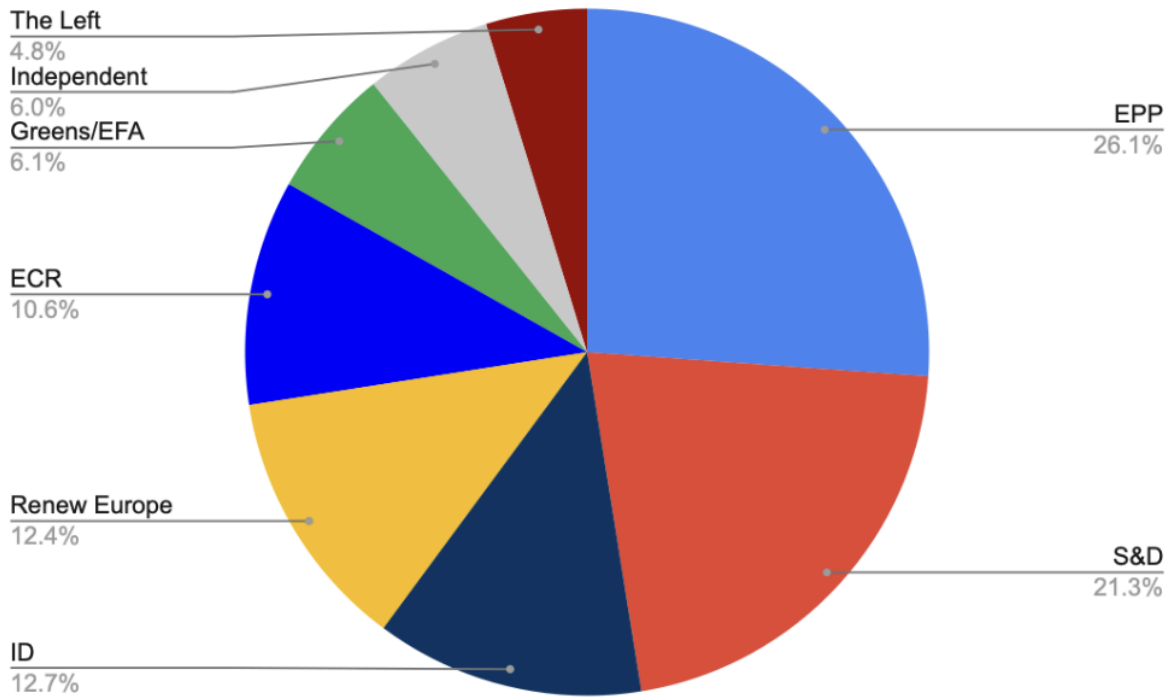
#### **5. Latest Eurobarometer shows Europeans want more defence cooperation**

On 23 May, the European Commission [published](#) the latest version of its Eurobarometer.

The survey, which polled nearly 27,000 people across the EU, finds defence and security (34%) as key priorities for EU citizens, followed by climate and the environment (30%), health (26%) and economy and migration (both at 25%). 77% of the respondents support a common defence and security policy among Member States.

The survey also reveals that 74% of Europeans feel as EU citizens, the highest level ever recorded. Trust in the EU is trending upwards at 49%, while only 33% of respondents trust national governments. Six in ten EU citizens say they are optimistic about the future of the EU.

## II. Latest Projections



1. **European People's Party (EPP):** 175 seats
2. **Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D):** 143 seats
3. **Identity and Democracy (ID):** 85 seats
4. **Renew Europe:** 83 seats
5. **European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR):** 71 seats
6. **Greens – European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA):** 41 seats
7. **Independent:** 40 seats
8. **The Left (GUE/NGL):** 32 seats

Source: [Politico](https://www.politico.com) (22/5/2024).

### 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