

24 - 28 June 2024

I. Political and Policy Developments

1. EU leaders reach deal on top jobs and strategic agenda
2. S&D, Renew and Greens elect their leadership
3. European far-right in turmoil
4. Governments mull Commission candidates, portfolios
5. French far-right poised for significant gains as snap elections begin

II. Key institutional milestones

I. Political and Policy Developments

1. EU leaders reach deal on top jobs and strategic agenda

On 27 June, EU leaders reached a deal on the top jobs package and Strategic Agenda for 2024-2029.

Top jobs

Ursula von der Leyen was appointed as Commission President, Portugal's António Costa as Council chief, and Estonia's Kaja Kallas as High Representative. Costa will serve a 2.5-year term, with the possibility of re-election.

The deal was driven by leaders from the European People's Party (EPP), the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and Renew Europe, and approved by most leaders. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán were notable exceptions. Meloni abstained on von der Leyen and opposed Costa and Kallas, while Orbán supported Costa, abstained on Kallas and rejected von der Leyen.

Von der Leyen will now focus on getting enough support among political groups ahead of her confirmation vote in the European Parliament, expected on 19 July. She will need 362 votes, which might be challenging without the support of MEPs from outside the EPP-S&D-Renew coalition.

Expanding her support base will be a complicated endeavour for von der Leyen: the Greens are seen as the main option, but that would cause rumblings among some EPP delegations. Getting a proportion of the ECR, namely Meloni's 24 MEPs, to back von der Leyen is also a possibility - Meloni is understood to be negotiating her support in exchange for a vice-presidency with a heavy portfolio for the next Italian Commissioner. Getting Meloni's support would however put von der Leyen at odds with the S&D and Renew, who have repeatedly said that cooperation with the far-right would be a red line.

Strategic agenda

EU leaders also adopted the [European Council Strategic Agenda](#) for 2024-2029. The agenda focuses predominantly on competitiveness and security. Key priorities include:

- Deepening the Single Market, especially in energy, finance, and telecommunications.
- Completing the Capital Markets and Banking Union.
- Promoting innovation in key technologies like AI, quantum tech, 5G/6G and semiconductors.
- Achieving the green and digital transitions, aiming for climate neutrality by 2050.
- Reducing bureaucratic burdens and simplifying administrative procedures.
- Promoting better regulation, digital government, and support for SMEs and startups.
- Invest in research, innovation, and dual-use technologies.
- Strengthening democratic resilience, fighting disinformation, and ensuring responsible tech governance.
- Strengthening EU defence capabilities and reducing strategic dependencies.

2. S&D, Renew and Greens elect their leadership

The Socialists and Democrats (S&D) [re-elected](#) Spanish MEP Iratxe García Pérez as president and appointed 10 vice-presidents, including Mohammed Chahim (Netherlands), Christophe Clergeau (France), Camilla Laureti (Italy), and Gaby Bischoff (Germany). García committed to advancing a social market economy and achieving climate neutrality through the Green Deal.

Renew [re-elected](#) French MEP Valérie Hayer as president and named Ireland's Billy Kelleher as first Vice-President. The group welcomed three new MEPs - Nikola Minchev and Hristo Petrov from Bulgaria, and Eugen Tomac from Romania - increasing its membership to 75. Despite these additions, Renew still trails the ECR, which has 83 MEPs.

After electing Germany's Terry Reintke and the Netherlands' Bas Eickhout as presidents last week, the Greens [elected](#) six vice-presidents, including Lithuania's outgoing Environment Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius, France's Marie Toussaint, and Germany's Sergey Lagodinsky. They also welcomed Volt's five federalist MEPs, raising their count to 53.

The ECR moved its constituent assembly from 26 July to 3 July due to internal splits.

3. European far-right in turmoil

The European far-right landscape is in ferment. Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán is attempting to form a new group with Czechia's ANO and Slovenia's SDS. He has also courted, unsuccessfully, Poland's PiS, the second biggest ECR delegation; PiS decided to stay in the ECR after securing top positions, including a vice president post and the secretary-general role. PiS is reportedly pushing for admitting Orbán's Fidesz and Le Pen's Rassemblement National into the ECR, an issue that the group's leadership is likely to discuss in the near future.

Meanwhile, Germany's far-right AfD is preparing to launch a new political group, "The Sovereignists," but postponed the announcement to 2 July. Reports indicate that some factions within the AfD are concerned about being linked to extreme nationalism, prompting the party to re-examine the group's list of future members.

4. Governments mull Commission candidates, portfolios

European governments are in the process of choosing their commissioner-candidates, with an eye on specific portfolios.

French President Emmanuel Macron plans to nominate outgoing Commissioner Thierry Breton for a major economic portfolio. This move may be contested by the far-right RN if they win the snap election, with RN leader Jordan Bardella promising to nominate a commissioner focused on French interests if he becomes PM.

Italy's foreign minister Antonio Tajani said Italy is aiming for a vice-president role in the next Commission, suggesting Raffaele Fitto, the current Minister for European Affairs, as a strong commissioner candidate.

Ireland has nominated outgoing finance minister Michael McGrath for commissioner. With extensive experience as Ireland's governor in the IMF, World Bank, and European Investment Bank, McGrath is a strong candidate for an economic portfolio. Jack Chambers, former transport and environment minister, will replace McGrath as finance minister.

Belgium's Didier Reynders is set to return as justice commissioner after failing to become Council of Europe president. Speculation suggests he may seek another term as commissioner, having previously expressed interest in staying if he did not win the Council of Europe election. His party MR delivered a strong performance at the last national elections, coming out on top in Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital region.

5. French far-right poised for significant gains as snap elections begin

The first round of France's snap legislative elections began this week, with results expected on June 30. Projections show the far-right National Rally (RN) nearing an absolute majority, potentially securing up to 270 seats, just shy of the 289-seat threshold. The leftist alliance 'Popular Front' and Macron's bloc are polling significantly lower, with 155 and 125 seats, respectively.

France's election system allows candidates to advance to the second round if they receive at least 12.5% of registered voters' support. This setup increases the likelihood of three-way contests, which is likely to benefit RN.

II. Key institutional milestones

Date	Event
30 June	French legislative elections: 1st round
1 July	Beginning of Hungarian Presidency
3 July	ECR constituent meeting
4 July	ID constituent meeting
7 July	French legislative elections: 2nd round
16-19 July	European Parliament first plenary session
19 July (exp)	European Parliament vote on Commission President
22-25 July	Formation of European Parliament committees



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