

8 - 12 July 2024

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I. Political and Policy Developments

1. von der Leyen in talks with political groups ahead of crunch vote

Outgoing Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is negotiating with political groups to secure support for her reelection bid. She will need the vote of at least 361 out of 705 MEPs to secure a second term. The outcome is relatively uncertain, due to dissent within her 400-seat centrist majority, particularly within Renew Europe, making the support of MEPs from other political groups essential.

The Greens look like the main option for von der Leyen. Negotiations are “progressing well”, according to the Greens co-leaders Bas Eickhout and Terry Reintke, who added that the group will decide only once von der Leyen presents her priorities on 18 July. A formal alliance with the Greens would however be politically tricky for von der Leyen, as some EPP delegations are wary of making concessions on green policies.

This week von der Leyen also met with other political groups, including her own European People’s Party (EPP), the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and Renew. She promised the EPP the Agriculture Commissioner post and assured the S&D and liberals of her commitment to the Green Deal and her refusal to ally with the far-right.

Von der Leyen is scheduled to meet the other political groups next week. The meeting with the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), taking place on July 16, will be closely watched.

2. Political groups strike deal on European Parliament committees

Political groups reached a preliminary deal on the chairmanship of committees in the new European Parliament. These positions will be formally voted on during the constitutive meetings of each committee in the week of July 22.

The EPP secured the chairmanship of seven committees, including Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Industry (ITRE). They also obtained the Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs (LIBE) chairmanship through a backdoor deal with the ECR, who in exchange received Agriculture (AGRI). The S&D gained four chairmanships, including Environment (ENVI), Economic and

Monetary Affairs (ECON), and International Trade (INTA). Renew will chair Development (DEVE), Legal Affairs (JURI), and the Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE).

The Greens will retain the chairmanship of Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO), and the ECR of the Budget (BUDG) committee. Patriots for Europe (PfE) claimed Transport and Tourism (TRAN) and Culture and Education (CULT), but most political groups have committed to a 'cordon sanitaire' against them, making it likely their chairmanships will be voted down.

Political groups also reached a tentative deal for dividing the European Parliament's 14 vice-presidencies (the EPP is set to secure the presidency, with Roberta Metsola as their sole candidate). The S&D is in line for four vice-presidencies, while Renew and ECR would each get two, with the Greens and the Left receiving one each. Although PfE is entitled to a vice-presidency, they are likely to be blocked by other groups. The European Parliament will vote on the deal on July 16.

3. Far-right landscape in flux

Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán's Patriots for Europe (PfE) became the third largest group in the European Parliament. The group now has 84 MEPs from 12 Member States, including France's National Rally (RN) and Italy's Lega, absorbing the Identity and Democracy (ID) group. This puts them ahead of the ECR, which is down to 78 MEPs after Spain's Vox joined PfE. During the meeting, PfE elected RN leader Jordan Bardella as its president and appointed six vice-presidents, including Italy's ultra-nationalist politician Roberto Vannacci (Lega). Vannacci's appointment sparked a rift between RN and Lega, with RN demanding Lega select a new candidate for vice-president.

On July 10, Germany's AfD launched its own far-right group, Europe of Sovereign Nations. The new group includes 25 MEPs, featuring 14 from AfD, and three each from Poland's Konfederacja and Bulgaria's Revival Party. To avoid close association with extreme nationalist views, AfD prevented controversial MEPs like Poland's Grzegorz Braun and Slovakia's Milan Mazurek from joining the group.

4. Sweden nominates commissioner candidate; Kyriakides renounces second term

European governments are currently selecting their commissioner-candidates. This week, Sweden nominated outgoing EU Affairs Minister Jessika Roswall. Roswall expressed interest in a wide range of issues, including Ukraine, competitiveness, climate, and crime.

Sweden joins seven other countries that have already nominated candidate-commissioners:

- **Estonia:** Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, already appointed as High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs as part of the European Council's top jobs deal.
- **Spain:** Outgoing Energy Minister Teresa Ribera, who has expressed interest in a portfolio related to the Green Deal.
- **Slovakia:** Outgoing Green Deal EVP Maroš Šefčovič, reportedly eyeing an industry or energy portfolio.
- **Latvia:** Outgoing Trade EVP Valdis Dombrovskis, reportedly aiming for an internal market post.

- **Finland:** MEP Henna Virkkunen, reportedly eyeing a security and competitiveness related portfolio.
- **Ireland:** Outgoing Finance Minister Michael McGrath, expected to secure an economic portfolio.
- **Slovenia:** Former Court of Audit President Tomaž Vesel; portfolio unclear.

This week Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides announced she will not seek a second term, fuelling speculation that Belgium’s Health Minister Frank Vandenbroucke and Maltese Health Minister Chris Fearne could be frontrunners for the health post, should they be appointed by their governments.

5. French parties seek compromise on future government

Government negotiations in France are likely to prove very challenging, after the inconclusive parliamentary election results. No party or coalition is near the 289-seat threshold for an absolute majority. The left-wing coalition NFP leads with 182 seats, followed by President Macron’s centrist coalition with 168 seats and Le Pen’s far-right RN and its allies with 143 seats.

NFP leaders are in tense negotiations to nominate a left-wing Prime Minister, but Macron has so far refused to grant them a free hand. He has neither called on the NFP to form a government nor accepted outgoing PM Gabriel Attal’s offer to resign. Instead, Macron announced he would appoint a new premier only after a “solid, necessarily plural majority” takes shape.

Macron is seeking a cross-partisan coalition that excludes both the RN and far-left members of the NFP, such as France Unbowed. However, it is unclear whether his calls for a centrist coalition will materialise. The centre-left PS has ruled out joining a centrist government, and the centre-right LR is internally split. MPs will elect the president of the National Assembly on 18 July.

II. Key institutional milestones

Date	Event
16-19 July	European Parliament first plenary session
18 July	European Parliament vote on Commission President
22-25 July	Formation of European Parliament committees
July-August	Commission President receives commissioner-candidates
2 September	Presentation of organigramme & mission letters
20 September	European Parliament sends questionnaires to Commission
29 September	Commissioner replies to questionnaires
30 September - 4 October	European Commissioner-candidates hearings
21 October	European Parliament vote on the new Commission
1 November	New European Commission takes office
1 December	New European Council President takes office