

The June 2024 European Parliament Elections: A Preview

May 15, 2024

The 27 member states of the European Union (EU) are scheduled to hold elections for the 720 members of the next [European Parliament](#) (EP) between [June 6 and 9, 2024](#). The only directly elected EU institution, the EP represents the bloc's nearly 450 million citizens and has a role in approving most EU legislation. As the EP has [accumulated](#) more power over time, Congress has engaged the EP on certain aspects of U.S.-EU relations, including through forums such as the [Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue](#). Expected electoral gains for parties considered [euroskeptic](#)—that is, critical of the EU or anti-EU to varying degrees—may influence the functioning of the EP and the EU, as well as the conduct of U.S.-EU relations. (See also CRS In Focus IF11211, *The European Parliament and U.S. Interests*, and CRS Report RS21372, *The European Union: Questions and Answers*.)

Possible Election Outcomes and Implications

[Members of the EP \(MEPs\)](#) serve five-year terms and are organized into groups that caucus according to political orientation rather than nationality. A [political group](#) must consist of at least 23 MEPs from a minimum of seven EU countries. In the 2019-2024 EP, there were seven political groups—spanning the political spectrum and including over 200 national parties—and several “nonattached” or independent MEPs. The relative size of the political groups helps determine EP leadership and committee posts.

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IN12361

Table 1. The European Parliament

Political Group	Current Seats	2024 Election Seat Projections
European People's Party (EPP; center right)	177	174
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D; center left)	139	144
Renew Europe (RE; centrist, liberal)	102	85
Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA; greens and regionalists)	72	43
European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR; right wing, euroskeptic)	68	70
Identity and Democracy (ID; far right, euroskeptic)	58	84
The Left (far left and former communists)	37	32
Nonattached	52	88
Total Seats	705	720

Sources: [European Parliament](#) (current seats); [Politico Europe Poll of Polls](#) (election projections), as of May 15, 2024.

Notes: The overall size of the next EP is set to [increase](#) due to EU demographic changes. Nonattached seat projections include likely independent MEPs and MEPs from new or currently unaffiliated political parties that may ultimately join a political group in the new EP.

The center-right EPP and the center-left S&D have tended to cooperate to dominate past parliaments, but no single political group has ever held a majority in the EP, making compromise and coalition-building essential features of the EP. Especially since the 2014 EP elections, [euroskeptic parties](#) have gained seats but have struggled to forge a cohesive opposition. Some euroskeptic parties in the EP are on the right or far right and are nationalist and anti-immigration, whereas others are on the left or far left. Some euroskeptic parties advocate for [EU reforms](#) and greater member state sovereignty rather than an end to the EU or withdrawal from the bloc.

As indicated in **Table 1**, [polls](#) suggest that EPP and S&D will remain the two largest groups in the next EP, while centrist RE and the Greens/EFA are expected to lose seats. Euroskeptic ECR and ID are expected to [gain](#), in part due to [voter concerns](#) about migration, the economy, and certain EU [climate policies](#). Pro-EU groups (EPP, S&D, RE, and Greens/EFA) are projected to retain a combined majority in the next EP, but voting coalitions may vary by policy issue. Increased fragmentation could enable euroskeptic MEPs to [influence EP positions](#) on issues such as migration, climate change, and EU integration and enlargement, especially if [the EPP](#) or other groups embrace similar views. [EPP leaders](#) indicate openness to cooperating with parties to its right that are [pro-Europe, pro-Ukraine, and pro-rule of law](#) (primarily some currently in the ECR group, such as the party of [Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni](#)).

The composition of the political groups, particularly ECR and ID, also could [change](#) in the next EP. Some in ECR and ID reportedly are considering a [possible merger](#), but [rivalries and policy divisions](#) between and within the [two groups](#) (including on attitudes toward Russia) cast [doubt](#) on this option. Some in ECR appear eager to [expand](#) to include the nationalist-conservative Hungarian party led by Prime Minister Viktor Orban, but doing so could prompt other parties to leave ECR due to what they regard as Orban's pro-Russian sympathies and tepid support for Ukraine.

The EP elections may affect the leadership of the European Commission (the EU's executive body). EU member states are required to take the EP election results "[into account](#)" in choosing the next commission president. The EP, which must approve the commission president by a majority vote, maintains that the post should go to the "[lead candidate](#)" of the political group that wins the most EP seats.

U.S. and Congressional Interests

The outcome of the elections could affect EP positions in several areas of U.S.-EU relations of possible interest to Congress, including

- **Trade.** The EP must approve new EU trade agreements, including a potential [U.S.-EU critical minerals agreement](#) (aimed at easing U.S.-EU tensions over U.S. clean energy subsidies in [P.L. 117-169](#), commonly referred to as the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022).
- **Data protection and digital policies.** The EP has played a central role in shaping the EU's approach to [data protection](#), [artificial intelligence](#), and [new digital rules](#). Some in [Congress](#) have expressed [concern](#) about the effects of such policies on U.S. companies, especially U.S. technology firms, doing business in Europe.
- **Ukraine and Russia.** The Biden Administration and the EU have [cooperated](#) in responding to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The EP must [approve](#) certain EU budgetary support measures for Ukraine. Many MEPs [back Ukraine](#), but [concerns exist](#) in the EP about some parties' traditional [ties](#) to Russia and Russia's alleged [attempts](#) to [influence](#) some MEPs.
- **China.** Similar to some U.S. policymakers, [some MEPs](#) are wary about China's rise and concerned with its human rights and labor practices. In 2021, the EP [froze](#) work on ratifying an EU-China investment agreement that U.S. officials [opposed](#). Some MEPs also are [troubled](#) by China's possible [interference operations](#) and alleged [cyberattacks](#).

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