

European Elections Mathematics

Five-hundred-million European citizens are entitled in the member states to vote for candidates who will directly represent them in the European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg. The European Parliament has been deeply involved in the internal EU decision-making processes in recent years through treaty changes and its role and influence have grown remarkably in its relationship to the other European institutions especially since the Lisbon Treaty. Traditionally, the European Parliament has had a veto right on the European budget. Today it means that “whoever controls the EP’s majority has significant budgetary tools at their disposal to shape the EU’s priorities, as well as its policies (by, for example, limiting the funds available to various areas of foreign and development policy).”¹ The political resolutions of the European Parliament even make headlines: it happened especially in Hungary when the Sargentini report was approved in September 2018 and the EP initiated the triggering of the Article 7 procedure against the country’s government because of undermining the rule of law and the backsliding of democracy.

After the elections, the new European Parliament will make crucial political decisions when voting in favour or against the candidate of the European Council for the position of the President of the new European Commission and to accept or refuse the candidates to be the next Commissioners after serious hearing procedures. Regarding the elections of the President of the European Commission, Manfred Weber, the *Spitzenkandidat* of the centre-right European People’s Party has relatively good chances to win the race (and if, for example, the Heads of States and Governments do not look for an alternative statesman or stateswoman outside the criticised lead candidate system, like Michel Barnier, the Brexit negotiator). Weber’s major rival is the current First Vice President of European Commission, Frans Timmermans, as the nominee of the centre-left Party of the European Socialists.

Populism as the new emerging challenge² makes the forthcoming European elections different to any former European-wide contests. “The 2016 Brexit referendum shows the mobilising power of a rejection of the status quo in the current political climate” — reminds us *Dennison* and *Zerka* in their analysis published by the European Council of Foreign Relations³. There is a common fear that if populist parties move to the centre of European political life, they can paralyse key processes inside the European institutions, they will be able to block reforms in the Euro-zone and to undermine common migration policy measures. They could also hamper the Article 7 mechanism, which is designed to defend the rule of law in member states (currently the procedure has been also triggered against the Polish government).⁴ Although

¹ https://www.ecfr.eu/specials/scorecard/the_2019_european_election#_ftn2

² Latest results of Eurobarometer:

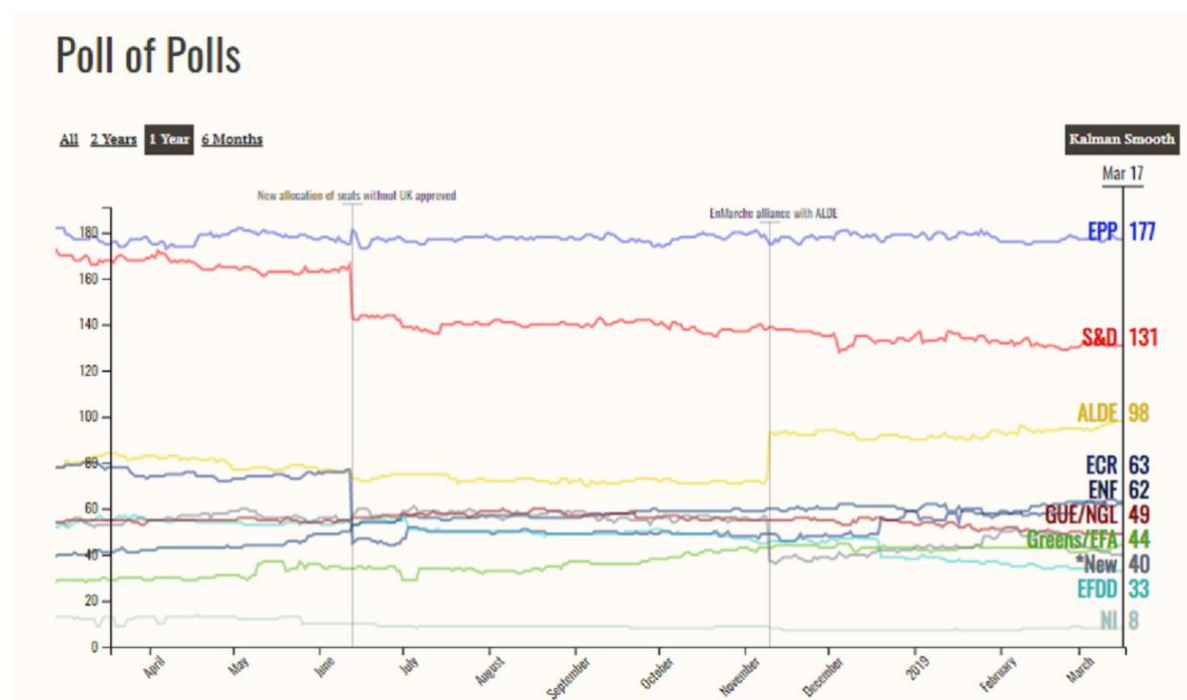
<http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/index#p=1&instruments=STANDARD>

³ Dennison-Zerka (2019)

⁴ EU deploys Article 7 against Poland & Hungary for democratic backsliding. The Yale MacMillan Center (September 17, 2018)

European populist parties are ideologically often divided, they could end up cooperating with each other, limiting the EU's capacity to preserve core European values. Consequently, "underestimating the importance of this election could have a high cost for liberal internationalists across the EU" – argues the ECFR study.

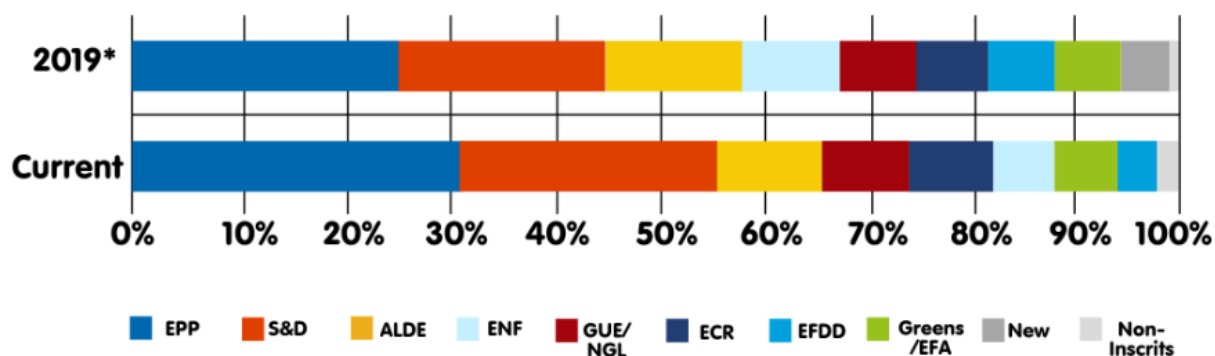
Anti-European, populist political parties will win a significant amount of seats in the next European Parliament. Nevertheless, the current political mood in the member states forecasts that their European-wide success at the elections is not a likely outcome. The charts below show the number of seats for each Euro-party group in the European Parliament.⁵ The poll's model was based on the new post-Brexit allocation of 705 mandates, so it does not include the United Kingdom. This way we can also assess the impact of Brexit on the different party groups in the European Parliament.



Aggregation results after using a new aggregation model for the EP Election, March 2019. Poll of Polls (<https://pollofpolls.eu/EU>)

According to the latest data, the EPP will remain the biggest party family in the European Parliament with a forecasted 177 seats, followed by the centre-left SED. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats will prospectively step on the third place, foregoing the European Conservatives and Reformists. The Europe of Nations and Freedom will gain around the same number of seats as the Conservatives, forming a new power group. They would be followed by the United Left-Nordic Green Left and the Greens.

EU27 MEPs' projected share of seats in the EP now and after the 2019 election



Among 29 seats for new parties in 2019, 50 per cent can be considered EU-sceptic or far-right.
* according to Poll of Polls projections, 3 January 2019

Resource and more figures: https://www.ecfr.eu/specials/scorecard/the_2019_European_election#_ftn2

The results in the survey published by the journal Politico⁶ show a similar picture: the EPP, the S&D and ALDE will be the strongest party families in the European Parliament, possessing more than half of the total 705 seats.

PROJECTION OF THE NEXT EU PARLIAMENT

Click on one or more parties to build a coalition. | Last updated 03 April 2019

VIEW MEP SEATS BY REGION:

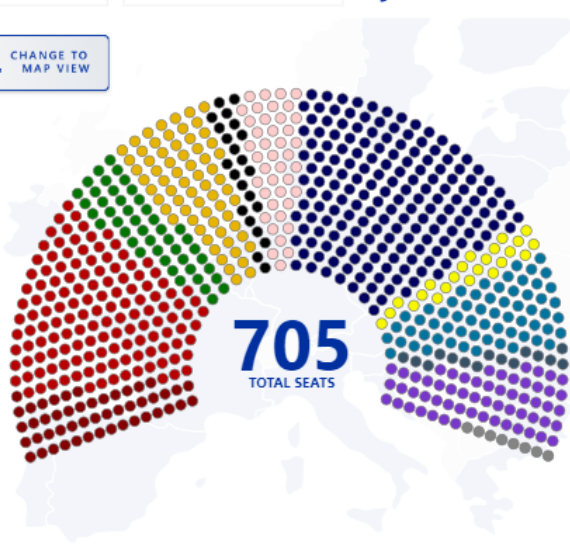
Mind

VIEW MEP SEATS BY COUNTRY:

Mind

RESET ALL

CHANGE TO
MAP VIEW



Seats by group and change compared to present:

European People's Party (EPP)	177	42
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)	137	51
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	66	2
European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	62	11
Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)	59	24
European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)	49	2
The Greens/ European Free Alliance (Greens-EFA)	46	6
New parties	41	41
Five Star Movement's Group	23	23
La République en marche	22	22
Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)	15	27
Non-attached Members	8	15

This is a projection for the next European Parliament based on an aggregation of national polls and an algorithm that forecasts each party's election result. The total number of seats will decrease from 751 to 705 due to the U.K.'s withdrawal from the EU. For more on the methodology, click here.

POLITICO

⁶ <https://www.politico.eu/2019-european-elections/>

By countries:

PROJECTION OF THE NEXT EU PARLIAMENT

Click on one or more parties to build a coalition. | Last updated 03 April 2019

VIEW MEP SEATS BY REGION:

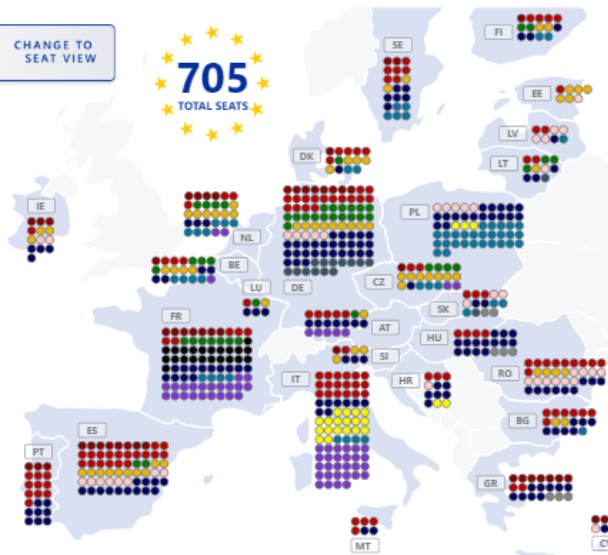
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VIEW MEP SEATS BY COUNTRY:

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RESET ALL

CHANGE TO SEAT VIEW



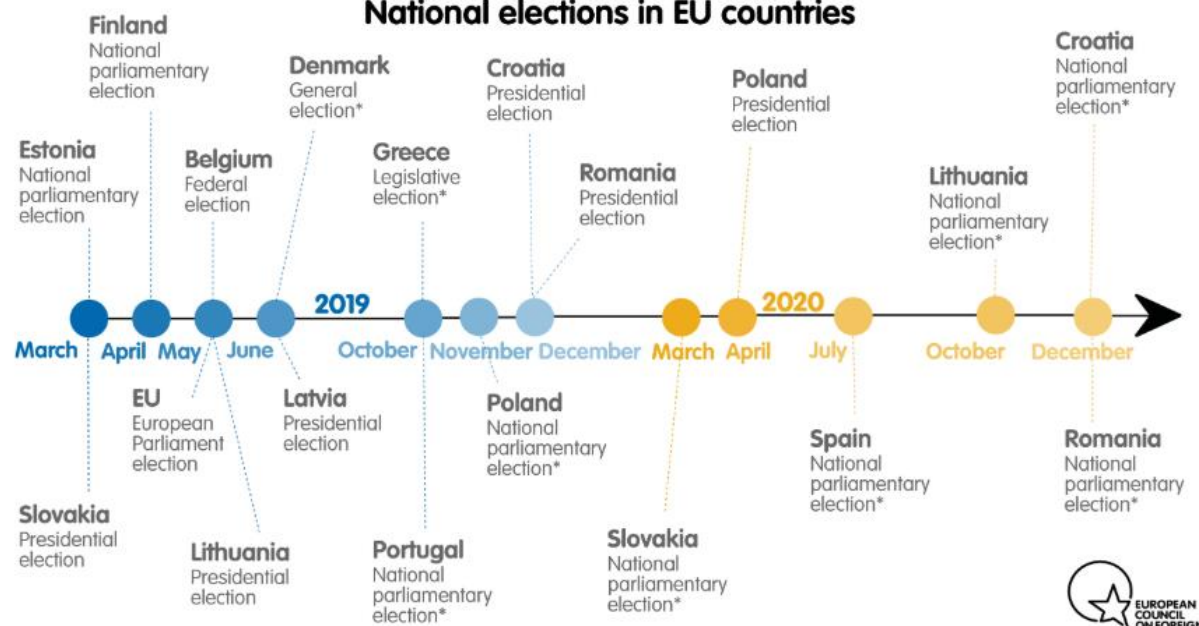
Seats by group and change compared to present:

European People's Party (EPP)	↓	177	42
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POLITICO

National elections in EU countries



Resource: https://www.ecfr.eu/specials/scorecard/the_2019_European_election#_ftn2

According to the survey results conducted in February 2019⁷, a possible anti-European coalition of the right and far right parties (Rassemblement National, Greek and Hungarian nationalists, Alternative for Germany, Italy's League) seemed to gain around ten percent of the seats in the European Parliament. A wider alliance with further Eurosceptic parties like the Law and Justice - *PiS* (Poland), the Swedish Democrats and the Danish People's Party would raise their share to almost twenty percent: these parties are affiliated with the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR). At the moment, it is unclear whether Fidesz will leave the EPP⁸, or it will be expelled following the suspension of the party. As Viktor Orbán argued, "the conventional division of parties into those of the right and of the left will be replaced with a division between those which are pro-immigration and those which are anti-immigration". This framing encourages right-wing parties "to strengthen their sense of internal unity and to reach out beyond the core anti-EU electorate."⁹

Far right and conservative Eurosceptic politicians share some basic ideas on migration policy, the rule of law and the claim to give back competences to the member states. The social, economic and political fear generated on migration in many European countries proves the mobilising power of this phenomenon. "If the nationalists' focus on migration is well chosen, this is because the issue not only resonates with voters but also demonstrates the divides within the much larger pro-European camp. It seems that most European voters would prefer to reduce immigration, but they differ on how, and to what extent, they should do so" – states Dennison-Zerka. However, until nationalists and conservative Eurosceptics disagree on key foreign policy issues - like the pro-Russian Le Pen, supported by Matteo Salvini, in contrast to anti-Russian *PiS* leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski -, they will have a limited power of influence in the international arena.

According to the following assumption, if far right, Eurosceptic and far left parties - the German *Die Linke* and the French *La France Insoumise* - cooperate with each other in significant political matters, the non-populists traditional mainstream forces would face an "anti-establishment" alliance. The concept of cooperation between the far right and the far left might look realistic: they have supported each other in the European Parliament when voting on resolutions about the politics of the Russian Federation, and also regarding free trade agreements. However, most far-left MEPs voted in favour of the Sargentini Report.

Speaking about numbers, the Vote4Values elections tracker of the Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties) elaborated election calculations following divergent scenarios.¹⁰ The tracker is based on data from Politico's poll of polls website and has been updated regularly. Referring to anti-values parties or political groups, they mean parties that are undermining the basic values of the rule of law, pluralist democracy and/or fundamental rights.

⁷ Dennison-Zerka (2019)

⁸ Dennison-Zerka (2019)

⁹ *May's elections to the European parliament could be fatefully decisive* Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán Viktor (January 11, 2019). Referred by Dennison-Zerka (2019)

<http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/news/may-s-elections-to-the-european-parliament-could-be-fatefully-decisive>

¹⁰ *The #Vote4Values Elections Tracker 2019*. <https://www.liberties.eu/en/news/vote-4-values-tracker/17019>

Compared to data in February, the results showed a somewhat more positive outcome in March. The two big party families, the EPP and the S&D will definitely form the two main political groups in the next European Parliament. Nevertheless, the number of seats gained by anti-values MEPs would be around 23% of the total number of the Members of Parliament (*Figure 1*).

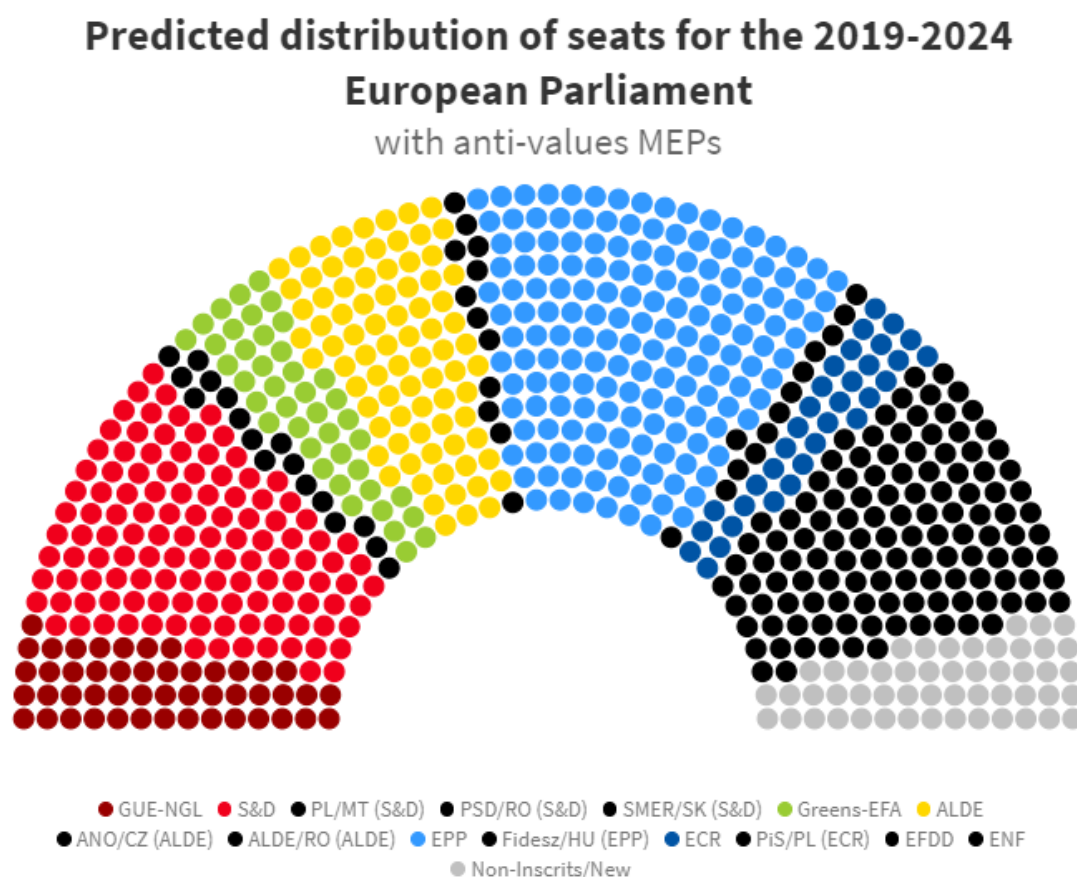


Figure 1

As for the non-attached MEPs (whose national parties have not joined any European political group), some of them belong to parties that can be considered anti-values: the Greek Golden Dawn, *Jobbik* from Hungary, the German *NPD* and the Spanish *Vox*. If anti-values MEPs from the EPP, S&D, the Liberals (ALDE), and the ECR break away from their party families, or they would be excluded, a new political group of anti-values exiles would have 69 seats based on *Figure 2*. Meanwhile *Figure 3* shows what would happen if potential anti-values exiles were to ally with the EFDD and the ENF, forming an “anti-values super-group.” In this scenario, the anti-EU group would already have 164 seats. This hypothetical political coalition would represent a remarkable strength, although their politicians would still occupy less than 30% of the seats.

Predicted distribution of seats for 2019-2024 European Parliament

if EPP, ALDE, ECR, S&D expelled their anti-values parties and these parties formed a new group of anti-values exiles

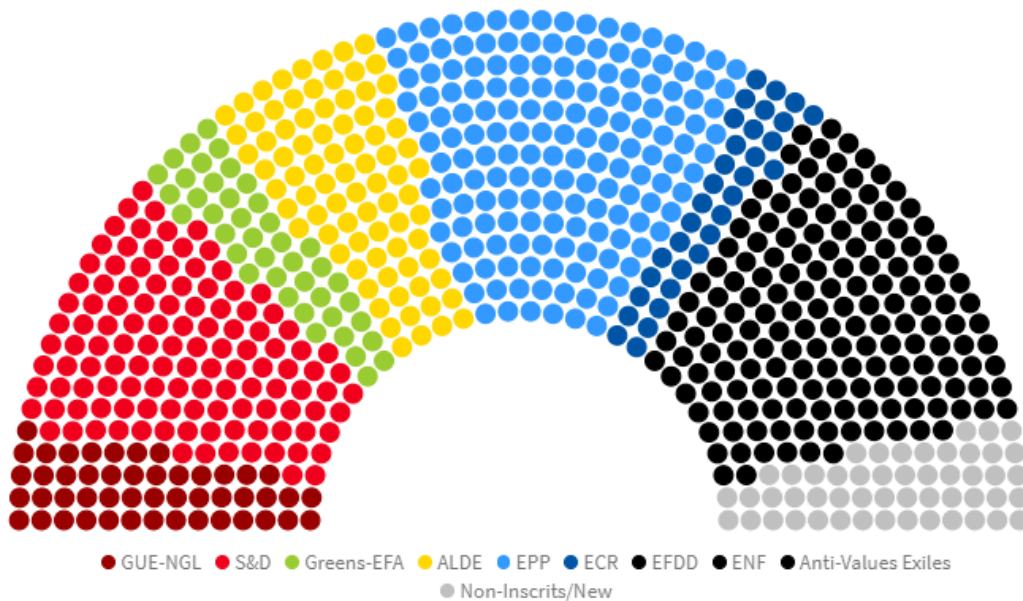


Figure 2

Predicted distribution of seats for 2019-2024 European Parliament

if ENF, EFDD and the anti-values parties from EPP, ALDE, ECR, S&D were to join together to form a new anti-values supergroup

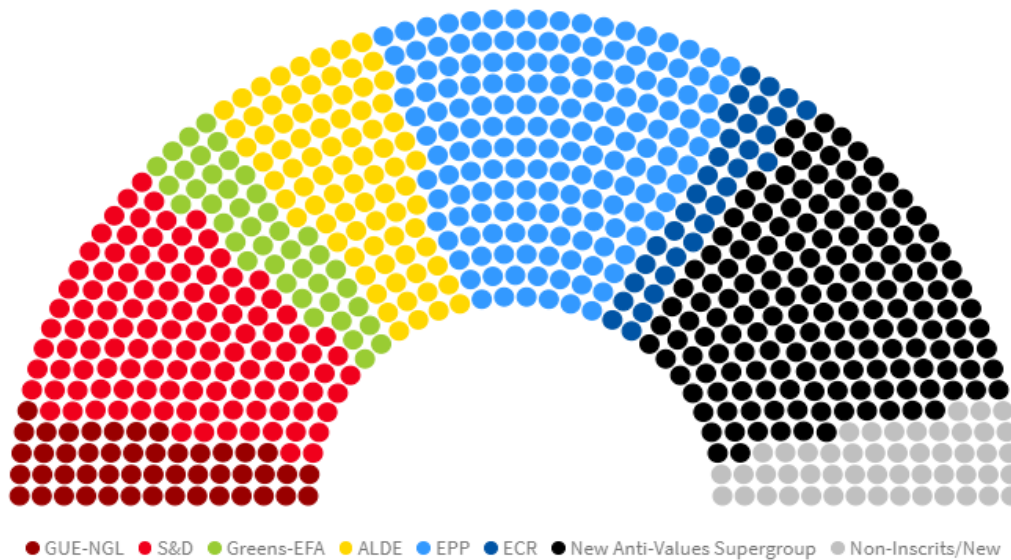


Figure 3

In the next European Parliament the EPP and the S&D groups will not have a majority of the seats together. According to the next chart (*Figure 4*), in case they expel their anti-values MEPs, the two Euro-group will still have a majority with the liberal ALDE.

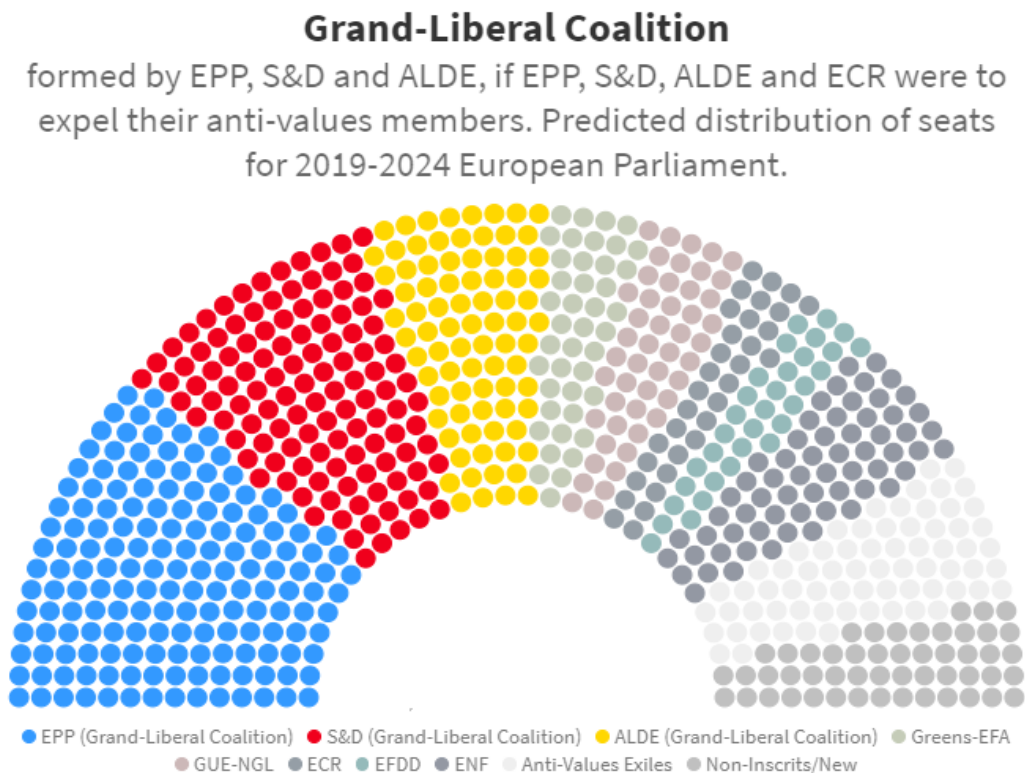


Figure 4

The next hypothetical pro-values coalition would involve the EPP, the S&D, the Greens and the far left GUE-NGL with a majority of around 22 seats. This number could increase to a majority of 56 in case the Greens-EFA group would also join them. Indeed, it seems to be impossible for a pro-values coalition to gain majority without the EPP.¹¹

Anti-values coalitions are also possible. We have seen the Austrian example, where the centre-right *ÖVP* formed a coalition with the extreme-right wing party *FPÖ*. In the European Parliament the *ÖVP* is a member party in the EPP, while the *FPÖ* belongs to the ENF that is considered as anti-values: in case the national pattern is copied at the European level, it can lead to the creation of an anti-values coalition. If the EPP and the ECR would cooperate with parties like the ENF and the EFDD, their anti-values MEPs probably could keep their positions. At the same time, the fact that the EPP and the ECR groups contain Poland's political rivals makes such cooperation difficult. But even if these four groups were to work together, it would not be enough to reach a majority - although only short of 20 MEPs. However, if anti-values MEPs from ALDE and the S&D join the EPP, the ECR, the EFDD and the ENF coalition, there would be a slight majority of nine according to the polling data (*Figure 5*).¹²

¹¹ <https://www.liberties.eu/en/news/vote-4-values-tracker/17019>

¹² <https://www.liberties.eu/en/news/vote-4-values-tracker/17019>

Conservative-Anti-Values Coalition

formed by EPP, EFDD, ENF, ECR and anti-values members from S&D and ALDE. Predicted distribution of seats for 2019-2024 European Parliament.

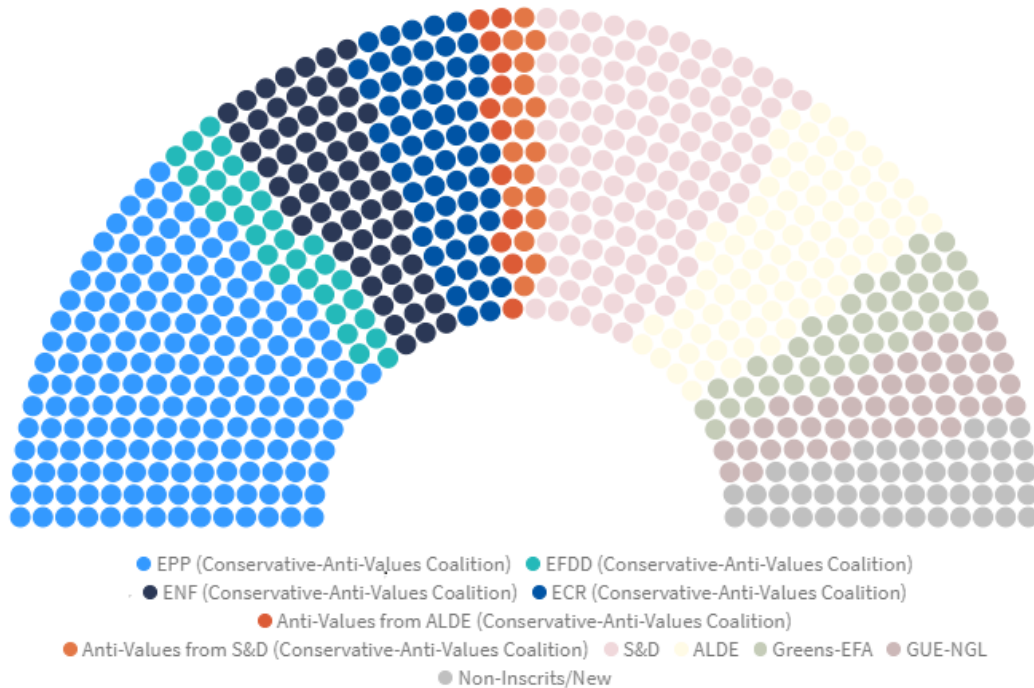


Figure 5

In the last weeks, we have followed news and heard rumours about the formation of fresh or renewed anti-European political party groups at European level. Especially Matteo Salvini, the leader of the Italian *Lega* has urged for a wide alliance of right wing and extreme right wing parties in order to make the populist-non-populist divide the only political cleavage at European level. Again, the participation of Orbán's *Fidesz* in a new "Populist International" and its political group or groups in the European Parliament remains unclear. The most plausible dilemma to be faced, beyond all potential scenarios, is still the question, whether a broad ideological co-operation of all anti-European political groups and parties would significantly influence and block the decision-making processes inside the next European Parliament.¹³ At the moment the overwhelming break-through of populism at the European elections looks to be quite unlikely. Nevertheless, political trends might reverse and there were too many negative surprises happening in European and world politics in the recent years...

¹³ <https://www.liberties.eu/en/news/vote-4-values-tracker/17019>