European Elections 2019: An overview

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Just nine months before the next European elections, the political field seems wide open. The composition of the new Parliament will be considerably different, both in terms of numbers and ideologies.

The number of seats will shrink by 73, following the UK’s exit from the EU, dropping to 705. 27 of the seats that will be vacated by the British deputies will be distributed to 14 member states, while the rest will be reserved for future enlargement. The big winners of this seat re-allocation are France and Spain, who will gain five seats each, while Italy and Netherlands follow with three seats. Ireland will increase its MEPs from 11 to 13. Sweden, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Slovakia, Croatia, Estonia, Poland and Romania will bolster their national delegations with one seat. It will be interesting to see how this re-allocation of seats will affect the political balance in the chamber.

Another decisive factor for the future Parliament will be the new political groups. So far, French President Emmanuel Macron has stayed mum about how his En Marche party will stand in the elections. Whether he will start a new parliamentary group or will join an existing one remains a
Populism, anti-EU and anti-immigrant parties are on the rise in Europe, a fact that is reflected at a national level. Does this mean typically smaller groups in the European Parliament, such as EFDD and ENF will gain more seats and become much more powerful in the Parliament, thus considerably changing the decision making process? Moreover, Sweden, Latvia, Luxembourg, Finland, Estonia, Belgium and Denmark will hold national elections before May 2019, and it remains to be seen whether the results at a national level will be reflected to a European level or not.

The size of the Parliament is not the only novelty that will be introduced in the next mandate. Earlier this summer, the MEPs backed a modernised EU electoral law, seeking to strengthen the EU citizens' participation in the forthcoming elections in May 2019. The new electoral law introduces a mandatory threshold for constituencies with more than 35 seats, among other things and foresees penalties to prevent double voting. It also includes a provision according to which the European political parties should be visible in all EU member states.

Given the massive changes ahead, the next year’s elections will be significantly decisive for the future of the EU, especially bearing in mind that the new Parliament and Commission will have to deal with a number of challenges, such Brexit, the future EU enlargement in the Balkans and immigration.

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**About the author**

Ifigenia Balkoura is editor of the **European Union and Public Affairs Directory** [6]

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