

2019 European elections 'could be the most decisive yet' on future of EU

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News

The next European elections could see a “flattening out” of the centre and further fragmentation of party support, according to a new report.



Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual

It predicts that the centre-right EPP will still be the largest party, as it has been for the past 20 years.

The “real battle” lies between the S&D and ALDE to be the second-largest party and the main opposition to the EPP.

However, the report, compiled by Brussels-based marketing and communications consultancy FleishmanHillard, says this is dependent on French President Emmanuel Macron’s En Marche

maintaining their momentum and aligning themselves with ALDE.

The authors write, "This is still uncertain as Macron's approval rating has been waning among his electorate, despite his idealistic visions for reform both at home and in the EU."

One of the features of the elections in May will be the reduction in MEP seats as the UK will not be taking part. The UK currently has 73 seats in the European Parliament and 27 of these will be redistributed to other countries.

Report authors Niamh Griffin and Cillian Totterdell say that the loss of 18 British MEPs from ECR group will make a "big difference" to their party strategy and "threatens their very existence."

The pair predict, "They may not be able to achieve the requirements to maintain their status as a party in the European Parliament."

The report, 'Countdown to the European 2019 elections: the outlook so far', also says that the EFDD "faces a similar threat" with the loss of 18 Ukip MEPs.

"The S&D group faces losses not just from British Labour MEPs but also from social democrats in France, Italy and Germany"

Griffin and Totterdell say, "This potential fragmentation of the right might result in like-minded MEPs from the ECR, EFDD and ENF forming a new party which could threaten the centre-ground."

They go on, "But a right-wing Eurosceptic group like this would probably be too much for many moderate MEPs in the ECR who might consider joining the EPP to avoid this."

"The S&D group faces losses not just from British Labour MEPs but also from social democrats in France, Italy and Germany, if they follow the trend of parliamentary elections in those countries over the past year. This will make it harder for agreements to be reached and for new alliances to be formed between the EPP, ALDE and S&D."

Griffin and Totterdell conclude, "All of this fragmentation and instability causes uncertainty for policymaking in the next mandate, therefore voting this time round is even more important."

The pair also point out that past European elections have been marked by public apathy in many parts of the EU.

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"There are many reasons for this, including that it is perceived that there may be less at stake by voting for fringe parties. There is also less of a need to vote strategically in European elections and it could be argued that these votes are more representative of voters' actual preferences when compared to votes in national elections."

The report says, "A lot has happened in the EU since 2014. European policies and the EU itself have become national issues, the consequences of which can be seen in France, Italy, Poland and Hungary."

"One outcome of the UK's vote to leave the EU is that the debate and negotiations since then have

been a sort of revision lesson for us all on how much EU policy affects our daily lives.

“The European Commission is engaging in citizens’ dialogues on different policy areas and ‘Future of Europe’ debates are taking place across Europe encouraging us think about what we want from the EU.

“The European Union has never been a more salient issue for its citizens. Perhaps the 2019 elections will be fought on European issues and could be the most decisive election yet on the future of the Europe.”

About the author

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