

## Surfing the Green Wave in Europe: The new kingmakers

Written by Lorna Hutchinson on 27 May 2019 in News  
News

The Greens were riding the wave of success in the European elections last night, having notched up impressive gains.



**Ska Keller and Bas Eickhout | Photo credit: European Parliament Audiovisual**

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Campaigning on a platform of climate action and social justice, the Greens appear to have struck a nerve, particularly with younger voters, on the urgency of climate change and they expressed their delight at the issue now being “taken seriously.”

The Greens will now have 69 seats in the new Parliament, up from 50 in the last five-year mandate.

Dutch Greens MEP Bas Eickhout said, “We thank the voters who are asking for change and a green transition in a socially just way. We have performed better than the polls predicted.”

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His fellow Greens MEP and group co-leader Ska Keller agreed, saying, “It’s been really amazing. We see that it works to have a positive vision for the European Union.”

As the two biggest groups in Parliament, the centrist EPP and S&D both haemorrhaged seats, though the EPP managed to hang onto pole position with 182 seats, while the liberals chalked up substantial gains, securing 109 seats, up from 69.

Eurosceptic parties, meanwhile, made some headway across Europe, with Marine Le Pen’s National rally pushing Emmanuel Macron’s La Republique en Marche into second place and Nigel Farage’s Brexit Party clinching top place in the UK’s election results, taking almost 32 percent of the vote.

Nevertheless, in Brexit Britain, pro-remain parties outperformed their pro-leave counterparts, securing 37 and 33 seats, respectively.

"We thank the voters who are asking for change and a green transition in a socially just way. We have performed better than the polls predicted" **Bas Eickhout, Greens MEP**

With the results now in and Europe digesting the news that the centrist ‘old guard’ is no longer exclusively top of the pile, attention now turns to coalition possibilities and the soon-to-be-vacant position of European Commission President.

S&D and ALDE’s Spitzenkandidaten, Frans Timmermans and Margrethe Vestager, appeared on Sunday night to be openly courting the Greens for a possible alliance, making no bones of the fact that both groups had a shared vision with the Greens - that of social justice and prioritising the climate crisis.

Vestager said, “You see the winds [of change] of the Greens – that is real. New coalitions can be built and we can show change by having the first gender-balanced Commission.”

“A coalition can be built by those who want to do something. There is room for talk in the coming days.”

“People want us to tackle the climate crisis and social justice. I repeat my proposition to work with other progressive forces in this Parliament” **Frans Timmermans, S&D Spitzenkandidat**

Timmermans, said that though his group had shed seats, dropping to 147, this meant that the S&D

had to be “humble” but also optimistic.

“People want us to tackle the climate crisis and social justice. I repeat my proposition to work with other progressive forces in this Parliament,” he said, adding, “there is a possibility of a majority without the EPP.”

The Greens, for their part, said that what they were looking for in a new Commission President was a candidate who focused on climate action, social justice and democracy, adding that the new President “needs to deliver change.”

### **About the author**

Lorna Hutchinson is a reporter and sub-editor at The Parliament Magazine

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