

New balance of power in Parliament requires Commission President that "goes beyond partisan lines"

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News

Speculation is mounting that the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE) will be joined by French President Emmanuel Macron's La République en Marche (LREM) Party in the new European Parliament.



Photo Credit: European Parliament Audiovisual

ALDE leader Guy Verhofstadt had courted Macron's LREM in the run up to last weekend's elections, but it appeared that a link-up between the two was unlikely after Macron rebuffed their advances.

But, after the losses suffered in the EU elections by the two biggest groups, the EPP and the Socialists, Macron now seems keen on forming a new centrist-liberal coalition in the new parliament, according to reports.

ALDE, in a recent statement, have called for a European Commission President that goes "beyond partisan lines".

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It said, “The new balance of power in the European Parliament calls for a European Commission President candidate that can build a robust majority way beyond the partisan lines.”

“Our new group will be open to consider all candidates that can gather the support of the political families that will comprise the future governing majority.”

So far, no name has been suggested for any new LREM/ALDE group but, speaking in parliament on election night, Verhofstadt suggested he was optimistic a new group might be formed in the coming days and weeks.

The mainstream political groups, including the EPP, Socialists, Liberals and Greens – arguably the biggest winners in the elections – will now set about the task of trying to form a coalition before parliament officially resumes its work at the start of July.

The ALDE statement comes as a conference of parliament’s political group leaders was taking place on Tuesday, ahead of a European Council informal meeting tonight in Brussels.

Both are being held to discuss the procedure for nominating a European Commission President and the next heads of European institutions.

“The new balance of power in the European Parliament calls for a European Commission President candidate that can build a robust majority way beyond the partisan lines” **ALDE statement**

UK Prime Minister Theresa May will attend the informal dinner with the EU27 leaders and meet with European Council President Donald Tusk later on Tuesday.

Elsewhere, Macron met with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Monday to exchange views about the allocation of positions.

Sanchez will also meet German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who said that “to appoint the Commission president, the European Council must cooperate with the European Parliament.”

This comes as LREM came second in the European elections in France with 22.4% of the votes and 21 seats, while the right-wing populist National Rally party of Marine Le Pen came in first with 23.3% of the votes and 22 seats.

Speaking separately, Paul Taylor, of the Brussels-based Friends of Europe think tank, told this website, “As I predicted, despite a lot of media hype, the nationalist/populist ‘tidal wave’ did not

happen.”

“It was a high tide but no tsunami. Eurosceptics and xenophobes didn’t flood the EU institutions. Salvini won in Italy but lost in Europe.”

“Indeed, we may have seen the moment of peak populism in many countries. The nationalists/populists will have about 25 percent of the seats, split into at least two and possibly still three political groups.”

“They will continue to shout impotently from the side-lines of the European Parliament and have little influence on legislation.”

“It was a high tide but no tsunami. Eurosceptics and xenophobes didn’t flood the EU institutions. Salvini won in Italy but lost in Europe” **Paul Taylor, Friends of Europe**

Taylor, a vastly experienced EU commentator, said, “The atomisation of mainstream European politics continues, with both the major party families (EPP and S&D) suffering roughly equal losses and no longer able to form a majority together.”

“That will hand disproportionate leverage to the liberal/centrist group in which Emmanuel Macron’s En Marche will be the biggest contingent.”

“So, despite narrowly losing at home to Marine Le Pen’s National Rally, Macron remains Europe’s pivotal leader, probably improving his prospect of a second term in France in 2022.”

He added, “The other big message was the Green surge in the wealthier countries of western Europe.”

“Young voters turned out in unprecedented numbers to vote to save the planet. This ecologist message will set one of the top priorities of the EU’s next five years.”

“Carbon taxes, kerosene tax or an air travel levy, and a move away from chemical pesticides and meat production will be high on the agenda.”

“The substantial jump in turnout, with 51 percent average across the EU, will give the EU assembly greater legitimacy.”

“It would be positive if the dispersion of votes among more groups led to more genuine debate in parliament and fewer back-room stitch-ups. But perhaps that’s wishful thinking.”

About the author

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