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Alliance building in new European Parliament will be "complex and cumbersome", says EU Think Tank

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News

Europe's political groups are looking to limit the influence of populist and far-right groups, according to European Policy Centre's Janis Emmanouilidis

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Forming new alliances in the new parliament will be “far more complex and cumbersome” than ever before, according to a top EU expert.

Speaking in the wake of Sunday’s European elections, which saw major gains for smaller groups such as the Greens, European Policy Centre’s (EPC) Janis Emmanouilidis said it was “very unlikely” that any of the declared candidates for the commission presidency will end up getting the job.

These include the EPP’s Manfred Weber, a German MEP who was thought in some circles to be the frontrunner to succeed Jean-Claude Juncker.

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In the elections, the EPP clung on to first place with the Socialists again in second place. But both groups suffered losses, mostly to the Greens and Liberals.

On Tuesday, political group leaders in parliament were due to hold their first meeting since the elections. Later in the day, EU leaders are due to meet for dinner.

Ahead of the meetings, Emmanouilidis warned that the new "fragmentation" of parliament would make the task of forming alliances "much more complex and cumbersome" than at the last EU elections five years ago.

He told a post-elections debate on Monday, "Three things now need to be resolved, including the formation of new groups and alliances in the parliament."

"The task of coalition building in parliament will be difficult this time because parliament is more fragmented after these elections."

"The two big parties lost seats and there is no longer a clear majority as was the case in 2014."

> "The task of coalition building in parliament will be difficult this time because parliament is more fragmented after these elections" **Janis Emmanouilidis, European Policy Centre**

Emmanouilidis, director of studies at the EPC, predicts, though, that a coalition consisting of three or four groups, including the Greens and Liberals, will emerge from the talks that have already started.

The aim, he says, will be to ensure that the influence of anti-EU forces and far-right groups will be kept to a minimum. "This is going to take some time though," he cautioned.

"The groups involved in these talks will have to find some common ground on policy and personnel issues, which is arguably the most difficult thing to resolve."

Agreement will also have to be found for heads of the five EU jobs now up for grabs: the presidencies of the commission, council and parliament as well as for the European Central Bank and the new High Representative.

He said, "There will have to be compromise on all sides."

"At present, though, it is hard to see who is going to steer this process. The last time it was France, but it will be more complex this time."

On the Spitzenkandidaten process, Emmanouilidis said, “I would not bet on any of the current candidates getting the job.”

> “I think someone whose name has not even been mentioned yet is more likely to come through. At present, there is a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability and many variables”
> **Janis Emmanouilidis, EPC**

He added, “I think someone whose name has not even been mentioned yet is more likely to come through. At present, there is a lot of uncertainty, unpredictability and many variables.”

The European People’s Party (EPP) remains the largest group with 180 seats (down 37), followed by the Socialists and Democrats with 146 seats (down 41).

The two main groups lost their combined majority for the first time. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats ended with 111 seats (up 42), and the Greens with 69 seats (up 15).

The three Eurosceptic political groups won a combined total of 174 seats – the European Conservatives and Reformists group won 59, the Europe of Nations and Freedom group won 71, and the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group won 44.

New parties won 33 seats, and the European United Left–Nordic Green Left 40. Overall turnout was at 51%, the highest in 20 years.

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at the The Parliament Magazine

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