

# EPFMA Bulletin



88 · September 2024

European Parliament Former Members Association

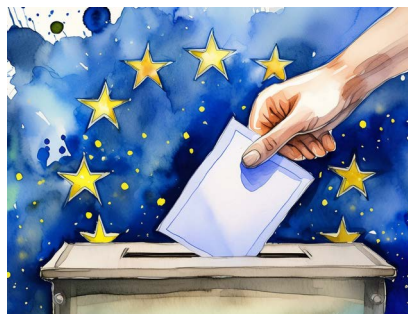
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75th anniversary of the Council of Europe

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You get what you vote for

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Cover: Laurie DIEFFEMBACQ © European Union 2024 - Source : EP

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The Editorial Board would like to thank all those members who took the time to contribute to this issue of the FMA Bulletin. We would like to draw your attention to the fact that the decision to include an article lies with the FMA Editorial Board and, in principle, contributions from members who are not up-to-date with the payment of the membership fee will not be included. Due to the long time lag between the call for contribution and the publication, some articles may be outdated.

The FMA Bulletin is published by the European Parliament Former Members Association (FMA) with the assistance of the European Parliament. However, the views expressed in articles represent the views of contributing FMA members or guest writers and do not necessarily represent the views of either the European Parliament nor the FMA. Similarly, any advertisement does not imply an official endorsement by the FMA or Parliament.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

As we reflect on the outcome of the recent European elections, it is evident that the political landscape of the European Parliament is being shaped by the emergence of new parties.

In the June 2024 elections, 13 countries saw an increase in turnout compared to 2019 while turnout declined in 14 countries. Countries that joined the European Union after 2004 tended to have a lower turnout than those that were members before 2004.

The overall turnout in 2024, at 50.97 %, was the highest in 30 years but only a modest increase on 2019 (at 50.66 %). However, it shows that the participation rate for the European elections may be stabilising above 50 %.

Social exclusion and a lack of involvement and participation in society are evident everywhere. However, it cannot be said that citizens are not participating in the democratic process or are refusing to delegate power to elected representatives.

The European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) has provided a comprehensive evaluation of the elections in this Bulletin. This analysis includes insights into the election results, Parliament's new Bureau, and the newly formed committees, clarifying the implications for the forthcoming legislative term.

The recent elections also present a valuable opportunity for our Association to engage with new MEPs, share our experiences, and contribute to the ongoing development of our shared European project. After all, we at the FMA are committed to fostering dialogue and collaboration among former and current parliamentarians.

In this context, we are thrilled to announce the success of our recent recruitment campaign, which has led to a notable number of outgoing MEPs joining the Association. Nearly 130 outgoing MEPs have applied for membership. For those who have not yet joined but are seeking guidance on membership, we encourage you to consult our Handbook for outgoing MEPs or to reach out to our secretariat, whether you would like to make an inquiry or arrange a meeting.

We were also delighted that FMA Vice-President Monica Baldi and FMA Secretary-General Elisabetta Fonck attended the medal award ceremony for outgoing Members in Strasbourg on 15 July. Their presence fostered important connections with potential new members and strengthened the Association's outreach efforts. An overview of the outcome of the FMA's recruitment campaign is included in this Bulletin.

The theme of this edition of the Bulletin is 'You get what you vote for' and it features insightful articles on important topics such as fake news and disinformation, economic policy in the context of the 2024 European elections, voter abstention and the impact of external factors, such as China, on the elections. It also contains political analysis on the role of the newly elected European Parliament, France's representation in the EU Council, and reflections on the first European elections without the UK.

In this issue, we also highlight recent significant events. We were honoured to host the Librorum online event 'Il Parlamento europeo' with Andrea Manzella on 3 July. His insights into the European Parliament's evolution were well received by over 100

participants and greatly enhanced our understanding of the EU's parliamentary dynamics.

In addition, Teresa Riera Madurell shares her and Miguel Ángel Martínez's experience of participating in the meetings of the European Association of Former Members of Parliament (FP-AP), in particular the meeting in Austria in May that celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe.

Looking ahead, we are excited about our workshop on 17 and 18 October 2024 on the development of the European Parliament, organised in collaboration with the European University Institute, and the upcoming visit to Hungary from 23 to 25 October 2024. There was great interest in participating in the visit, and 28 members of the Association will be part of the delegation.

Finally, our annual December events on 3 and 4 December 2024 will feature the distinguished speaker Herman Van Rompuy and provide an excellent opportunity for meaningful dialogue.

As we move forward, let us stay committed to advancing the core values and principles of the EU.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement with our Association. I also extend a warm welcome to all our new members, and I look forward to our ongoing collaboration and to celebrating our future achievements.

With my very best regards,

**Dr. Klaus Hänsch**  
FMA President

## Key facts July session

### Parliament confirms the list and size of its committees and delegations

(July session - P10\_TA(2024)0001 and P10\_TA(2024)0002)

MEPs approved the proposal on the number of members in Parliament's 20 committees and four sub-committees, as well as its 48 standing delegations. Committees meet in public (unless the rules dictate otherwise). Their work revolves around drawing up, amending, and voting on legislative proposals and own-initiative reports, as well as holding debates with Council and Commission representatives, hearings with external experts, and organising fact-finding missions. They will play a crucial role in the upcoming hearings of Commissioners-designate.

### Newly elected Parliament reaffirms its strong support for Ukraine

(July session - P10\_TA(2024)0003)

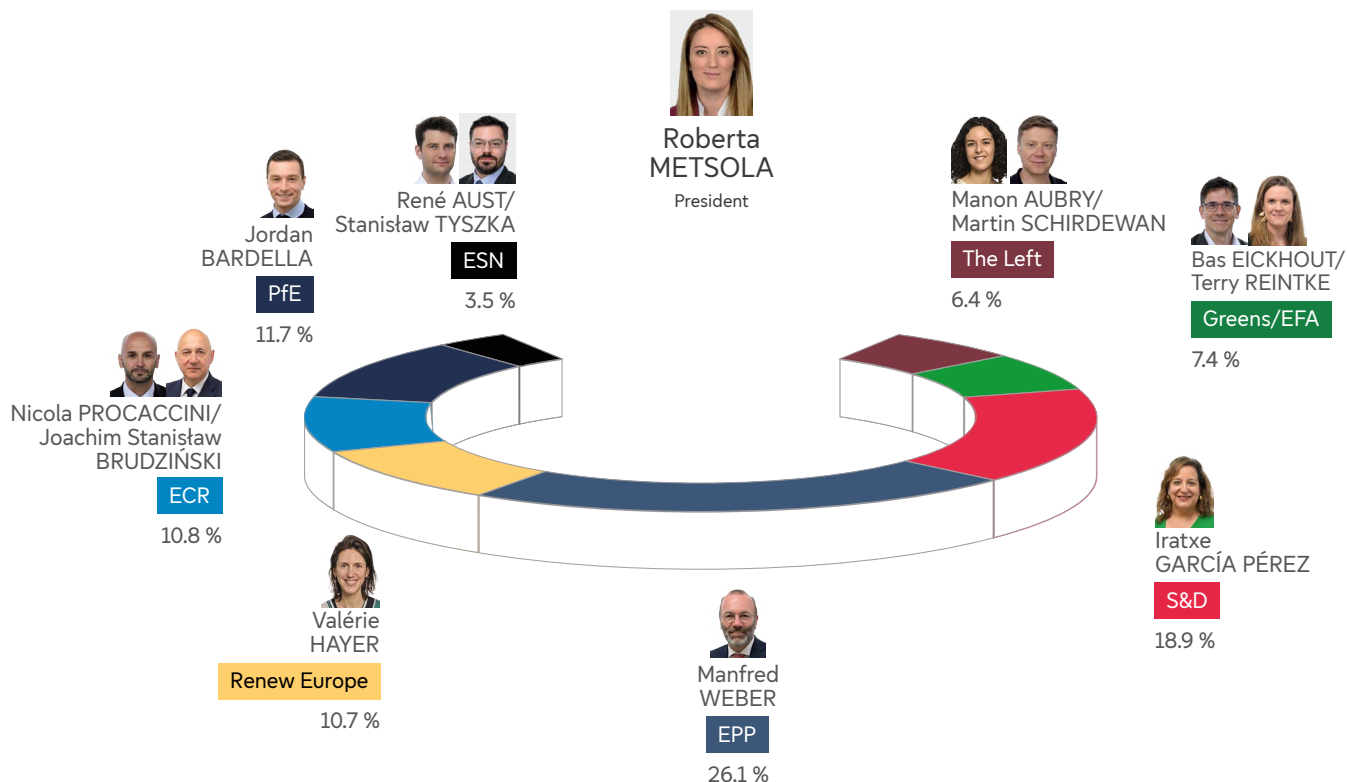
With Russia's war against Ukraine raging on, Parliament reconfirmed on Wednesday its view that the EU must continue to support Kyiv for as long as it takes until victory. The resolution, which sets out the newly-elected European Parliament's first official position on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, restates the continued support of MEPs for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. It calls on the EU to maintain and extend its sanctions policy against Russia and Belarus, monitor and review its effectiveness and impact, and systematically tackle the issue of sanctions circumvention by EU-based companies, third parties, and third countries.

### Parliament re-elects Ursula von der Leyen as Commission President

(July session - P10\_TA(2024)0004)

With 401 votes in favour, the European Parliament elected Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission in a secret ballot on 18 July. This will be Ursula von der Leyen's second term as Commission President. She was first elected by MEPs in July 2019. Parliament is currently composed of 719 MEPs, so the necessary majority was 360 votes. The vote was held by secret paper ballot. 401 MEPs voted in favour, 284 against, and 22 cast blank or invalid votes. Ahead of the vote, Ursula von der Leyen presented her political priorities for the next five years during a debate with MEPs.

## EP Conference of Presidents



The graphic indicates the voting weight of each group as of 1 August 2024, and shows the seating of the group leaders in the Conference of Presidents. In addition, 4.5 % of Members are non-attached (NI), and the President may invite one of them to participate in the Conference of Presidents, without the right to vote.

# EP Bureau

## President



## Vice-Presidents



## Quaestors



EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service

# EP Conference of Committee chairs

## Chair



## Standing Committees and Sub-Committees



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## AT A GLANCE

### Infographic

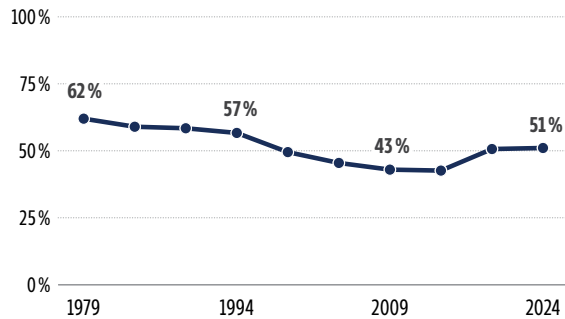


European Parliament

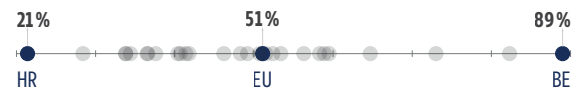
## Members of the European Parliament, 2024–2029

In June 2024, European citizens voted for their representatives in the European Parliament for the next five years, to defend their interests in the EU. This year's election saw turnout of 51.1%, slightly higher than the previous election in 2019 (50.7%). The number of political groups has increased from seven to eight at the start of the new term. Half of the elected Members (MEPs) elected are new to the European Parliament. Women now make up 38.5% of all MEPs; this share is 2.1 percentage points lower than in the previous term (40.6%), the first significant drop since direct elections started in 1979.

### Trend in turnout at EP elections



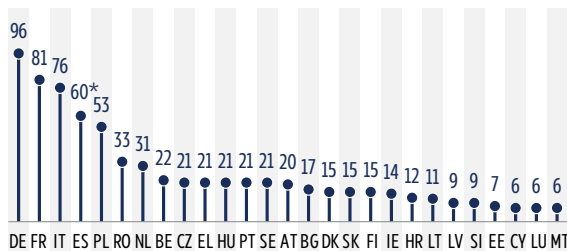
### Turnout at EP elections 2024–2029



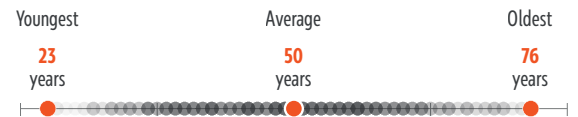
In 16 Member States, turnout was **below the EU average** (IE, ES, IT, NL, SI, EL, PL, FI, EE, PT, CZ, SK, LV, BG, LT and HR)

In 11 Member States, turnout was **above the EU average** (BE, LU, MT, DE, HU, CY, DK, AT, SE, RO and FR)

### MEPs by Member State\*

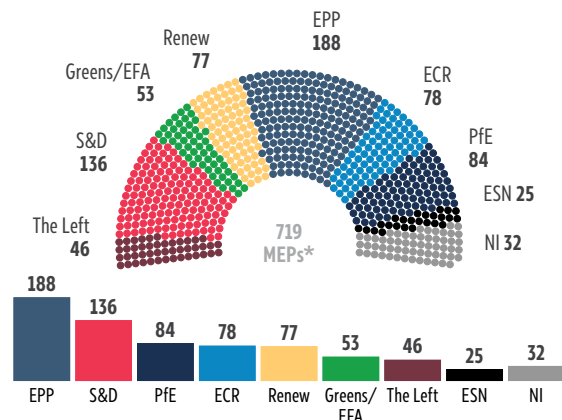


### Age of MEPs



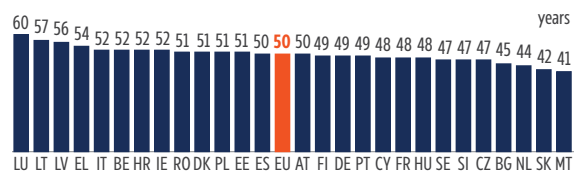
The youngest MEP is 23 years old and the oldest is 76. The average age of MEPs is 50 years. The biggest concentration of MEPs (116) is in the age group between 40 and 44 years.

### MEPs by political group

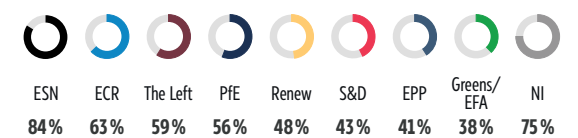


\*Spanish authorities have not yet notified Parliament of the Member elected to one seat, therefore the total does not reach the 720 provided for in EU law.

### Average age of MEPs by Member State

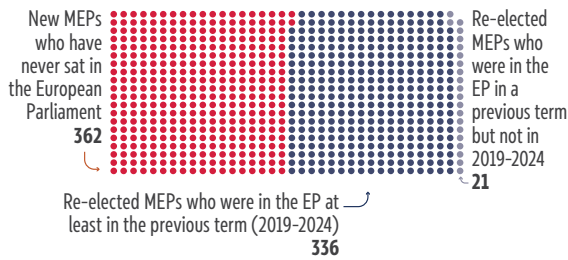


### Share of new MEPs by political group

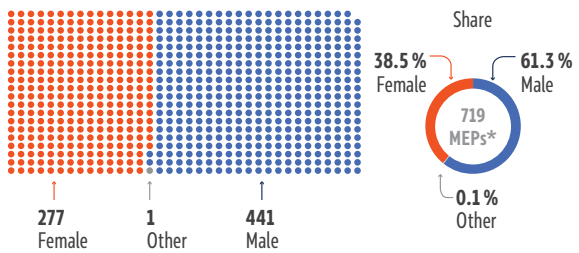


New MEPs = those who have never sat in the EP

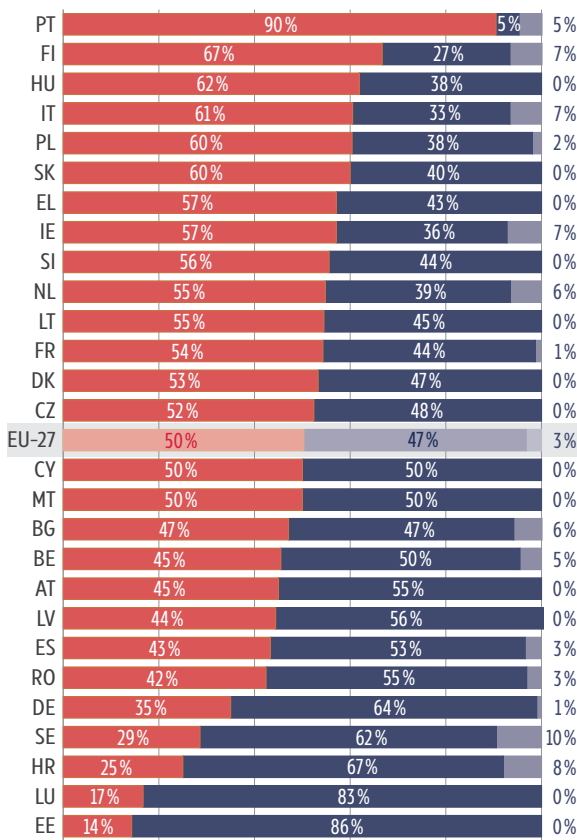
## New and re-elected MEPs



## Gender of MEPs

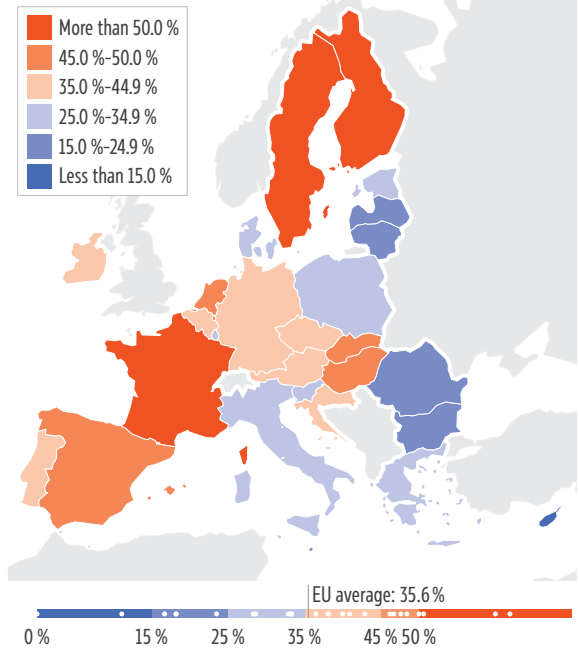
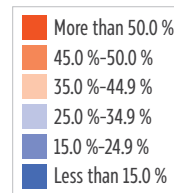
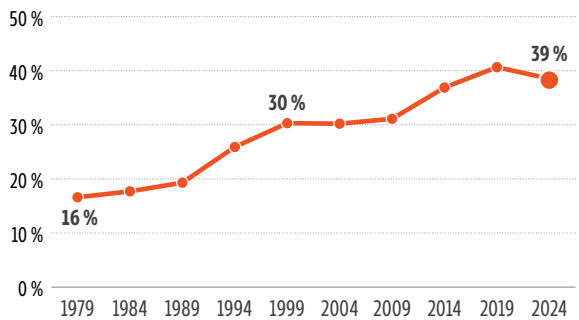


## Share of new MEPs by Member State



■ New MEPs who have never sat in the European Parliament  
■ Re-elected MEPs who were in the EP at least in the previous term (2019-2024)  
■ Re-elected MEPs who were in the EP in a previous term but not in 2019-2024

## Female MEPs in the European Parliament



Women make up 38.5 % of all MEPs. While female representation in the EP has more than doubled since the first direct elections in 1979, in 2024 the share of women has decreased by 2.1 percentage points.

**Notes:** Calculations are based on a total of 719 MEPs, due to missing data on one Spanish MEP.

**Country codes:** Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Czechia (CZ), Denmark (DK), Germany (DE), Estonia (EE), Ireland (IE), Greece (EL), Spain (ES), France (FR), Croatia (HR), Italy (IT), Cyprus (CY), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Hungary (HU), Malta (MT), Netherlands (NL), Austria (AT), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Romania (RO), Slovenia (SI), Slovakia (SK), Finland (FI), Sweden (SE).

**Political groups:** Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (EPP), Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D), Patriots for Europe Group (Pfe), European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), Renew Europe Group, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA), The Left Group in the European Parliament - GUE/NGL, Group of Sovereign Nations Group (ESN) and Non-attached Members (NI).

**Data source:** data supplied by Members' Administration Unit. Extraction date: data were extracted on 18 July 2024.

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# UPCOMING EVENTS



## ACTIVITIES

17-18  
OCTOBER 2024

### FMA Collaboration with EUI (European University Institute)

On 17 and 18 October, a Round table on the future of the Parliament after the 2024 elections is organised with FMA and EUI. More information about the speakers and how to register for this event will follow soon via mail.

23-25  
OCTOBER 2024

### FMA Visit to Hungary

From 23 to 25 October 2024, the FMA will visit Hungary on the occasion of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Delegation will be led by FMA President Klaus Hänsch. Registrations are now closed.

3-4  
DECEMBER 2024

### FMA Annual Events

On Tuesday 3 December the FMA Cocktail Reception and Annual Dinner will take place in the Members' Restaurant of the European Parliament. The following day, the Annual Seminar will be preceded by Librorum. The Get-Together Lunch will close the FMA Annual Events on Wednesday 4 December.

## FMA ANNUAL EVENTS

3 DECEMBER 2024 | 18.30 - 21.30 (CET)

18.30 - 19.30 Annual Cocktail Reception

19.30 - 21.30 Annual Dinner

*President Herman Van Rompuy, President of the Chamber of Representatives (2007-2008), Prime Minister of Belgium (2008-2009), President of the European Council (2009-2014), will be our guest speaker at the Annual Cocktail Reception and Dinner on 3 December at the European Parliament in Brussels.*

This event is only open to FMA Members and Invited Guests. Registration will soon open via mail.



4 DECEMBER 2024 | 10.00 - 13.00 (CET)

10.00 - 11.00 Librorum

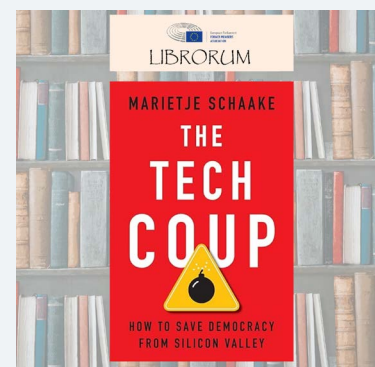
*FMA Member Marietje Schaake will present her newest publication 'The Tech Coup: How to Save Democracy from Silicon Valley' at the hybrid Librorum event.*

11.00 - 13.00 Annual Seminar

*The subject and the invited speakers will soon be communicated.*

*Both events will be livestreamed and can be followed in the room and online with interpretation in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian.*

After the Annual Seminar, all FMA Members are welcome to participate to the FMA Get Together Lunch in the Members' Restaurant from 13.00 to 14.30.





# FMA AT WORK

## MEMBERS OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



Klaus  
HÄNSCH



Monica BALDI



Jean-Pierre  
AUDY



Teresa RIERA  
MADURELL



Michael  
HINDLEY



Miguel Angel  
MARTÍNEZ  
MARTÍNEZ



Edward  
McMILLAN-  
SCOTT



Manuel PORTO



Godelieve  
QUISTHOUDT-  
ROWOHL



Paul RÜBIG

## — FMA BUREAU

President: **Klaus HÄNSCH**

Vice-President: **Monica BALDI**

Treasurer: **Jean-Pierre AUDY**

Secretary: **Teresa RIERA MADURELL**

### LIST OF MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

#### **FMA Bulletin Editorial Board:**

Ms Baldi (Chair), Mr Audy, Mr McMillan-Scott, Ms Riera Madurell and Mr Rübig.

**EP to Campus:** Mr Hindley (Chair), Mr Porto and Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl.

**Relations with Budgets Committee, DG Finance:** Mr Audy.

**Dinner Debate:** Ms Baldi.

#### **Delegates to the Bureau of the European Association of Former Members (FP-AP):**

Mr Martínez Martínez and Ms Riera Madurell. If necessary they will be substituted by Mr Audy.

**FMA Communication:** Ms Baldi (Chair) and Mr Hindley.

#### **Delegates to the Annual General Assembly, seminars and colloquies of the FP-AP:**

Mr Audy, Mr Martínez Martínez and Ms Riera Madurell. Besides the FMA delegates or their substitutes and in agreement with the European Association, other FMA Management Committee Members may participate in the annual seminars or colloquies at their own expense.

#### **Relations with Former Members Associations outside Europe:**

Mr Martínez Martínez (Chair), Mr Audy, Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl and Ms Isabella De Martini (FMA Member with advisory role).

**Annual seminar and relations with think tanks, policy institutes and foundations:** Ms Riera Madurell (Chair), Ms Baldi, Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl and Mr Rübig.

**Archives:** Ms Baldi.

#### **Working Group on Democracy Support and Election Observation:**

Mr McMillan-Scott (Chair), Mr Hindley, Mr Martínez Martínez and Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl.

**Relations with the House of European History:** Mr Martínez Martínez.

**Relations with the European University Institute (EUI):** Ms Baldi.

# FMA ACTIVITIES

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EPFMA  
PEAAD



# FORMER MEMBERS' NETWORK

## 75 YEARS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

From 2 to 4 May 2024, I visited Graz (Austria) with my colleague Miguel Angel Martínez to attend the celebrations marking the Council of Europe's 75th anniversary. This intergovernmental organisation, comprised of 46 European states, was founded by the Treaty of London on 5 May 1949.

The idea was born of the European Movement the previous year, during the Hague Congress, which was presided over by Winston Churchill together with Paul Ramadier; a socialist and former Prime Minister of France, Paul van Zeeland, a Christian democrat and former Prime Minister of Belgium, and Salvador Madariaga, a minister and ambassador during Spain's Second Republic, who at the time was exiled in Oxford and was later to become President of the Liberal International. This resulted in the great political families of Europe's post-war democracies making a joint appeal to European citizens to rebuild Europe on the basis of the principles of liberty and democracy, and proposing the establishment of the Council of Europe.

At the formal commemoration at the historic University of Graz, the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, highlighted the organisation's main fields of action: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. She stated that the organisation aimed to forge a closer union between its members, safeguard and promote the shared principles and values that make up our common heritage, and boost economic and social progress in its Member States, setting out its achievements over the past 75 years.

**"A the formal commemoration at the historic University of Graz, the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, highlighted the organisation's main fields of action: human rights, democracy and the rule of law."**

After some introductory remarks by Edgar Mayer, former Member of Parliament and former Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and current president of Austria's FP-AP delegation, there followed speeches by Reinhard Rack, Professor at the University of Graz, former MP (Austria) and former MEP; Renate Kicker, Associate Professor at the University of Graz, former member of the Council of Europe Anti-Torture Committee; and Sarah Breslin, Director of the European Centre for Modern Languages. The poignant event was brought to a close by Walter Schwimmer, FP-AP President and former Secretary General of the Council of Europe. The Governor of Styria then offered a dinner for all participants.

A delegation from Ukraine was present at the events and Serhiy Taruta, President of the Ukrainian Association of Peoples' Deputies, took part in the captivating 'Ukraine 2024' round-table discussion, which took place first thing in the morning and provided attendees with first-hand information on the situation in Ukraine.



Group picture of FP-AP Members at the Graz meeting from 2-4 May 2024. © FP-AP

Participants in the discussion also included Walter Schwimmer, FP-AP President; Dario Rivolta, former Member of the Italian Parliament and FP-AP Vice-President; and Kristina Ojuland, the former Foreign Minister of Estonia.

Graz was chosen to host this event as the city is also home to the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe, an institution that strives for excellence and innovation in language learning and helps European citizens learn languages more effectively.

**"Graz was chosen to host this event as the city is also home to the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe, an institution that strives for excellence and innovation in language learning and helps European citizens learn languages more effectively."**

Sarah Breslin, the centre's Executive Director from Scotland, gave us a tour of the centre, allowing us to see how well-equipped it is and to understand the centre's role as a trailblazer in language learning and teaching.

She outlined the centre's aim to transform language learning across Europe and advocated for differentiated approaches tailored to students' needs and their linguistic contexts.

She also discussed its methodology, which seeks to make the most of the richness provided by the linguistic diversity of the students, which, in turn, places citizens' rights,



Handover FP-AP Presidency from Mr Walter Schwimmer to Mr Filippo Lombardi  
© FP-AP

democracy and human rights at the centre of learning and promotes linguistic and cultural diversity in the pursuit of high-quality education.

**Teresa Riera Madurell**  
*S&D, Spain (2004-2014)*  
[trierama@gmail.com](mailto:trierama@gmail.com)

We were gifted a copy of 'The funniest, one and only multilingual joke book,' which was published on 26 September 2023, the European Day of Languages. On opening the book, I found some jokes in my native language - Catalan. Catalan is the official language of Andorra, which is a member of the Council of Europe.

The day ended with an FP-AP meeting, which saw the appointment of the new FP-AP President, Filippo Lombardi from Switzerland, and of the new Bureau members.

We returned home with the satisfaction of having taken part in an excellent and productive day of work.

## OUR PARLIAMENT

In announcing a book on the European Parliament at the start of a legislative term, one should be looking forward to the future, rather than back at the past. The EP President Klaus Hänsch did precisely that when pointing to ‘democracy being tested by digitalisation’ and decrying the ‘paradox of those who insist they want to uphold their own sovereignty, and yet who yield that sovereignty to algorithms’. Enrique Barón Crespo did so too when mapping out the tricky yet inevitable challenges the EU would face in the field of foreign policy and defence. Monica Baldi, Carlo Corazza, Michael Hindley, my co-author Nicola Lupo and several others have done the same in their works on a range of topics in that vein.

The new Parliament, by immediately embracing the path of progress taken in the last parliamentary term, is clearly following the same lines. From the outset, it has shown a rock-solid commitment to the idea of ‘continuity’. That continuity was precisely what the opponents of Ursula von der Leyen’s re-election had in their sights as part of a campaign that saw their defeat in the elections. Parliament, on the other hand, even before the election of the President of the Commission, wanted

to reaffirm that continuity by doing two things: one organisational, the other political. Organisationally, the decision was taken to establish a ‘cordon sanitaire’ to exclude extreme right-wing groups from Parliament’s governing bodies and its committees. This certainly ran counter to the parliamentary rule of equality among Members, but it was needed constitutionally. The overriding need was for clear lines to be drawn in respect of anyone wanting to halt Europe’s progress towards unity, or in other words to quash the EU’s ‘raison d’être’.

The other nifty decision – the political one – came in the first resolution adopted by the new Parliament, on 17 July, entitled ‘The need for continued EU support for Ukraine’. In the resolution, Parliament expressed its active support for ‘the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine’. It reaffirmed that Ukraine’s accession to the EU ‘represents a geostrategic and democratic opportunity and an investment’ for the EU as a whole. And it stated that ‘Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine is part of a broader set of objectives against the West, against our democracy and our values’. Ursula von der Leyen’s election thus followed those two pre-established

parliamentary approaches: the one organisational, the other political. But it also had a greater intrinsic value.

That was because, quite apart from the coalitions it coalesced, it meant the continuation of a constitutional process – and not just a political understanding. The achievements of the last parliamentary term are known to all, and have become part of EU history. From the idea of joint debt to counter the financial crisis, to SURE to combat unemployment; from the joint purchase of vaccines, the curbing of speculation on the pandemic, and even creating a politico-military agreement against aggression. But their greatest import is that, taken as a whole, those policies have shown that decisions can be made at the heart of the Union without this being done in a manner that overrides the sovereignty of the 27 Member States.

In a strange way, it was the sovereignty of Europe that made national sovereignty tangible and viable. Those who were saying ‘no’ to continuity under ‘Ursula rule’ were thus not opposing a political set-up, but rather a constitutional way of governing: it was something that could really have led to far-reaching change in the Treaties. Fortunately, the ‘no’s did not prevail. The incoming Parliament has embraced the continuity that is also a constitutional fact. The new Commission is about to take shape, and there will be no more ‘cordons sanitaires’. The women and men who join it, following strict scrutiny by Parliament, will have to govern ‘in the general interest of the Union’. There is still hope in Europe.

**Andrea Manzella**  
PES, Italy (1994-1999)  
[an.manzella@gmail.com](mailto:an.manzella@gmail.com)



# EP TO CAMPUS PROGRAMME

## TEACHING AND LEARNING EU: CHALLENGES FOR UKRAINE

UNIVERSITY CHERNIHIV COLEHIUM, UKRAINE | 23 MAY 2024 | ONLINE

Chernihiv is one of the largest cities with nearly 285,000 inhabitants in the north of Ukraine. Chernihiv is currently a garrison town but within the current Russian war against Ukraine (end of May 2024) it still obviously lacks air defense systems.

At the beginning of the full-scale invasion in February-March 2022, for example, 27 of the 34 schools of the city had already been damaged; two of them are destroyed. Despite the ongoing destruction caused by the Russian attacks, the university conducted a study in 2022/23 on the European orientation of the population in the northern border region and of Ukrainian refugees under the direction of Prof. Marina Keda. The results were presented at the two-day conference. Incidentally, the conference took place entirely as a Zoom event, as all 55 participants had to stay in safe spaces.

The results of the study show that 60% of respondents in the northern region are convinced Europeans, 24% do not feel European and 16% are undecided. Among the Ukrainian refugees surveyed, 82% feel European, and among 18-24-year-olds the figure is as high as 94.6%. Incidentally, nearly 7,8% of refugees say that they do not want to return to Ukraine and 33% have not yet decided.

The longer the war lasts – the less refugees will come back home, - which, according to Prof Keda, would pose a significant problem for the demography of Ukraine. The discussion centered on the question of cultural identity under the dictates of war and how Ukraine can contribute to the European education system, the “Bologna Process”.

Ukraine’s cultural identity is not only jeopardised by the war and the massive destruction of cultural and educational sites, but also by Russification in the territories occupied by Russia. In addition to the excellent contributions by the participating researchers, the contribution by Stsiapan Stureika, who is working in the diaspora in Vilnius to establish an exile university for Belarus in order to maintain and further develop the European orientation of the European cultural identity that has been completely eliminated in the country itself, was of particular interest in this context.

This example shows that “Europeaness” and the building of cultural bridges for Ukraine and other countries of Central/Eastern Europe threatened by Russian imperialism are a valuable building block for a better future.

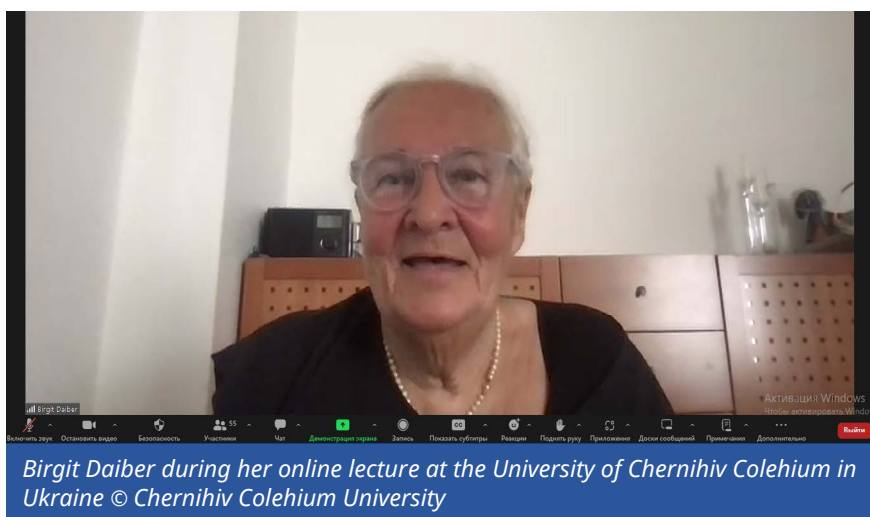
**“Europeaness and the building of cultural bridges for Ukraine and other countries of Central/Eastern Europe threatened by Russian imperialism are a valuable building block for a better future.”**

In my contribution, I have focused on the difficult and complex history of the European Union. Starting with the idea of a united political Europe, which was conceived in the cellars and prisons by resistance fighters as a peace project against Nazi rule over Europe, through the long period of mainly economic unification processes to the political union, which is still a construction site.

I also mentioned the specific and complex organizational structure and the need to find compromises at the European political level.

My recommendation to academics is that the funds made available for Ukraine’s accession process should also flow into cultural and educational initiatives and that universities and cities could also participate in specific EU programs (e.g. Research Framework Program or Interreg, etc.) during the accession process.

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*Birgit Daiber during her online lecture at the University of Chernihiv Colehium in Ukraine © Chernihiv Colehium University*

# NEWS FROM FMA MEMBERS

## ACER'S HISTORY AND PURPOSE PROVE ROBERT SCHUMAN'S VISION

Elected MEPs are free to have new ideas, and at the same time, they follow the agenda carved out by the macro trends phasing in and out, and work on the issues within the limits of the rules laid down by their predecessors. Due to the time it takes to implement EU decisions, it is a luxury to be able to follow closely one single issue over time, having a real opportunity to shape it.

Elected in 2004, I knew one thing. I wanted to work on something important for all: Energy. I had the good fortune to learn from two champion MEPs who had retired from the EP (Rolph Linkhorn and Adam Gordon). I was able to work as a shadow rapporteur on many energy-related files, one of which was the ACER Regulation (EC)713/2009. Since then, EP ITRE and ACER have a contact group to follow progress together. Based on this work, I was trusted by the EP to be one of the two MEPs on the ACER Board in 2018. I served first as a member and as a vice-chair, and now, as chair for 2024-25. We are a team of former MEPs: Paul Rübiger, member and in the past, Romana Jordan chair, with Rebecca Harms and Britta Thomsen, alternates).

ACER was born in a fire of different opinions, underpinned with significant power. The name ACER archives this conflict and the compromise. Compared to other agencies, ACER is not the "European" Energy Agency, but "only" the Agency of Cooperation of Energy Regulators. It has two equally important boards: one for the Cooperation of the National Energy Regulators that works on the common rules and standards and the other, the Administrative Board that secures the agency's overall functioning, starting with the annual and multiannual work programmes and adequate working conditions. Over the last fifteen years, the European Energy Union has been established (based on the Solidarity

article of the TFEU), and numerous pieces of legislation have passed<sup>1</sup>, such as REMIT I and II<sup>2</sup>, the ACER regulation revision, finished in 2019, and several Council Recommendations in 2023<sup>3</sup>.

ACER has welcomed new tasks and operates in a challenging environment with limited resources.

Over recent years, the Agency has undergone many changes, navigated and steered closely by the Administrative Board. As for many other organisations, the COVID period required many changes in work processes and their rapid digitalisation, as well as adjustments in working patterns. Just after, the first truly global energy crisis for many decades evolved in 2022 and put the Agency in the centre of the EU response and in the political and public spotlight. This crisis showcased the immense value and resilience of Europe's uniquely integrated energy market.

1 They represent the three key pillars of the Agency's work: the EU electricity market design, the framework for decarbonising gas, and energy market integrity and transparency.

2 The Agency has recently significantly increased its monitoring activities to track the energy crisis aftermath (e.g. price drivers; security of EU electricity supply) and especially to provide its expertise, data, and insights to the EU institutions and Member States on a wide range of topical issues (inter alia by providing an assessment of the 400+ measures adopted by Member States to cope with the energy crisis).

3 The Council assigned to ACER (e.g. daily preparation and publication of LNG price assessment, and daily assessment of the Gas Market Correction Mechanism)



*Edit Herczog and Britta Thomsen (alternate) at the ACER AB Board meeting of 25 June 2024.*

At the same time, the Union's energy system is facing the most profound changes for decades, with more challenges and opportunities than ever before. The clear decarbonisation pathways and the need for increased flexibility in energy systems are just a few of the new tasks that are coming ACER's way. ACER's history, from its foundation, follows the pattern condensed into a single sentence by Robert Schuman on 9th May 1950;

**"Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity."<sup>4</sup>**

I am proud to be a part of this mission to bring light, warmth, and competitiveness to all Europeans.

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4 On 9 May 1950, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposed to European countries the creation of an institution to jointly manage coal and steel resources. He made his declaration at the Quai d'Orsay

# FMA RECRUITMENT CAMPAIGN

## FMA WELCOMES ALMOST 130 NEW MEMBERS

To outline the work of the Association, FMA Vice-President Monica Baldi and FMA Secretary-General Elisabetta Fonck, participated on Monday 15 April 2024 in the [Flag Raising Ceremony on the Louise Weiss Parvis](#) and the [Medal Award Ceremony for Outgoing MEPs](#). From 15.00 to 16.00, an informal meeting was organised with Outgoing MEPs.

FMA Vice-President Monica Baldi and Association representatives also participated to the information session for Outgoing MEPs organised by the EP Taskforce for departing MEPs on Wednesday 6 March 2024 in Brussels. A second session was organised on Tuesday 23 April 2024 in Strasbourg.

Thanks to all actions linked to the FMA recruitment campaign, the FMA recruited almost 130 new Members.

The Former Members Association has published a *'Handbook for Outgoing and Former MEPs - A legacy of experiences to continue building the EU'* which provides practical assistance to Members leaving the Parliament and former MEPs.

Our aim is to provide contacts in the European Parliament for administrative and legal matters relating to the transition from membership to post-parliamentary life.

A digital version of the Handbook is available in English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Polish. Should you be interested in the Handbook, please contact the FMA Secretariat via [FormerMembers@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:FormerMembers@europarl.europa.eu).



*Info-session for Outgoing MEPs on 23 April 2024 in Strasbourg.*



*FMA Vice-President Monica Baldi, former EP Vice-President Rainer Wieland and FMA Secretary-General Elisabetta Fonck in Strasbourg.*



*FMA Vice-President Monica Baldi with MEP and Quaestor of the European Parliament Fabienne Keller.*

Want to know more about the Association and see what former MEPs experience as a Member of the Former Members Association?

Discover it here!



*Cover of the FMA Handbook*





## PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE

by **Monica Baldi** and **Michael Hindley**, published by EUI and FMA



PARTICIPATION IN EUROPE

A year before the 2024 European elections the FMA organised a conference in Florence entitled 'Can the EU learn from experience?' in collaboration with the European University Institute (EUI) and the Historical Archives of the European Union (HAEU). 'Participation in Europe' is a collection of key texts from the event published with further contributions from a wide range of experts, academics and, crucially, young people with lived experience of the benefits of programmes such as EP to Campus and Erasmus+. This publication is coedited by FMA Vice President Monica Baldi and Management Committee Member Michael Hindley who has also been co-ordinating the EP to Campus programme.

The publication is an object lesson in inter-generational dialogue between young citizens and emerging leaders on one hand and experienced legislators, policy-makers, academics and archivists on the other with the latter focusing on key moments in

the development of the European project. High school students, meanwhile, used the project to seek out family photos and artefacts from as far back as WWI bringing personal and family history to bear in discussions about learning from the past.

Political differences are set aside by former MEPs in the interests of promoting common European values. However, critical reflections are plentiful, including a comparison from Marco del Panta (EUI Secretary General) between the austerity policies introduced in response to the 2007/8 financial crisis and the more recent 'Next Generation EU' financial plan launched to address the crises provoked by the pandemic. The economist George Papaconstantinou (who was briefly an MEP and then a Finance Minister in the Greek government during the crisis) continues this thread with his own painful insights into lessons learned too late. He is now a Professor at the EUI School of Transnational Governance where he uses his experiences to teach students and train policy professionals about the constraints and dynamics of decision-making in 'pivotal crisis moments'.

The testimony from Italian High School student Mathilde Paoli on 'Searching for European Citizenship in the holdings of the HAEU' offers a powerful rationale for further integration, with statements gathered from her peers affirming the added value of European citizenship; "...it means being part of a community, sharing strong values and facing problems together towards a better future." Another student, Riccardo Debrilli, writes

about an illuminating keynote given by a former colleague, Richard Corbett, to Masters students at Luiss University in Rome, and former Erasmus students reflect on the transformative experiences that have shaped their lives, opening doors to new ways of thinking about the world as well as offering transferable skills, practical knowledge and invaluable networks.

Citizen engagement through education and culture is seen as key to fostering a sense of European identity and belonging although Member State competency and rampant nationalism has limited efforts. However, outreach programmes organised by the EUI, the HAEU and EP to Campus are making successful inroads at all levels of education as can be evidenced by this publication. Meanwhile the Erasmus+ programme goes from strength to strength along with the more recent European Solidarity Corps and the CERV (Citizens, Equality Rights and Values) initiative. It is all the more sad, therefore, that the UK is no longer a participant in these programmes which promote the people to people dialogue that is so important for peaceful co-existence. Pro-European British former members live in hope that our youth will one day be able to fully participate in these programmes.

**Julie Ward**

*S&D, United Kingdom (2014-2020)*  
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## THE MONETIZATION OF DATA

by **Michael Detjen** and **Rudolf Tillig**, published by Frank & Timme Verlag



Communication-hungry computer users hailed the arrival of platforms like Skype as a blessing. At long last, you could bypass local phone charges to call and send text messages – soon to be followed by multimedia messages – to people all over the world at virtually no cost and with next to no formalities involved. WhatsApp then turned the cyber world on its head again.

More recently, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have once again revolutionised the way we communicate, making it easy for us to share, react to and comment on posts, images and videos.

Behind this shiny exterior, however, lay the true purpose, which went unnoticed by most users. Those who were aware of the implications often brushed

them off by saying things like, 'Well, I have nothing to hide'. After all, the cold fact of the matter was that the only alternative to going along with the 'data protection rules' was to opt out of global communication entirely. In many ways, this dilemma persists today. This has given rise to international tech giants, who have managed to get their hands on almost anything that might somehow be spun into money.

Michael Detjen and Rudolf Tillig tackle this uncomfortable topic in their paper 'The monetization of data: why individual property rights are urgently needed', published in the edited volume *Digitalisierung und Digitalität*. They see a blatant power imbalance – often a feature of capitalist systems – in which users are fobbed off: they can communicate largely for free (for the time being!) so long as they offer up almost all their personal data. They compare the current situation with the struggle of the workers who rose up against factory owners in the 19th century, and in that spirit call for appropriate financial solutions for the sale of personal data to third parties. The authors leave the question of exactly what form this would take unanswered but imply that it can hardly be done on an individual basis given the power imbalance between data owners and data users.

They call for a 'labour movement 2.0', this time to negotiate the value not of physical labour but of personal data, and to reach an agreement on collective schemes.

This 'data heist' is now happening in an unfathomable number of places – with social media, online marketplaces and even some car manufacturers like Tesla all at it – making this topic more pressing than ever. According to Tillig and Detjen, property rights, data protection rights and copyright are being violated the world over. Action will be needed from both individuals and politicians to nip things in the bud once and for all. Regulations will only be effective if they are implemented supranationally e.g. under a UN Global Compact or at least at EU level. With AI systems advancing at a fast clip, there is no time to lose. The inevitable negative consequences need to be minimised and the value of the individual redefined, taking general human rights into account. The paper comes just in the nick of time.

### **Dr Paul Rübige**

*EPP, EPP-ED, EPP, Austria  
(1996-1999, 1999-2009, 2009-2019)  
office@paulruebig.eu*

# IN MEMORIAM



## Sérgio RIBEIRO

☞ 29 April 2024

*GUE/NGL, Portugal (1990-1999, 2004-2005)*

He served as a Portuguese Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Ribeiro represented *Coligação Democrática Unitária (PCP-PEV)*.



## Marie-Françoise GARAUD

☞ 22 May 2024

*NA, France (1999-2004)*

She served as a French Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Ms Garaud represented *sans étiquette*.



## Josep E. PONS GRAU

☞ 12 June 2024

*PES, Spain (1986-1999)*

He served as a Spanish Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Pons Grau represented *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*.



## Frederik A.A. WILLOCKX

☞ 15 June 2024

*PES, Belgium (1994-1999)*

He served as a Belgian Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Willockx represented *Socialistische Partij*.

# IN MEMORIAM



## **Richard J. COTTRELL**

☞ 18 July 2024  
*ED, United Kingdom (1979-1989)*

He served as a British Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Cottrell represented the *Conservative and Unionist Party*.



## **Inés AYALA SENDER**

☞ 25 July 2024  
*S&D, Spain (2004-2019)*

She served as a Spanish Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Ms Ayala Sender represented *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*.



## **Pedro MARSET CAMPOS**

☞ 7 August 2024  
*GUE/NGL, Spain (1994-2004)*

He served as a Spanish Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Marset Campos represented *Izquierda Unida*.



## **Predrag Fred MATIĆ**

☞ 23 August 2024  
*S&D, Croatia (2019-2024)*

He served as a Croatian Member of the European Parliament. At the national level, Mr Matić represented *Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske*.

## YOU GET WHAT YOU VOTE FOR



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# BUILDING EUROPE'S FUTURE

The European Union has gone through an extremely turbulent period in the last 5 years: from the COVID pandemic to Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the resulting energy shock, inflation and rising interest rates, the growing impact and urgency of addressing climate change, and accelerated digitalisation.

Thanks to the EU's coordinated and determined action on very different fronts, from health to finance, to security and defence, we have been able to overcome the different challenges that have presented themselves, showing once more that together we are stronger. The EIB Group has played a key role in mobilizing resources to invest in our shared priorities and the changing political and economic landscape will require us to continue to invest at a massive scale in the coming years.

**"We have agreed that support to climate action will remain the EIB Group's first priority. We will continue to commit over half of the Group's annual financing to climate action and support at least €1 trillion in green investments until 2030."**

This has been the unanimous message coming from European leaders, who want the EIB Group to play an even more important role in closing Europe's investment gap, to strengthen productivity, social and territorial cohesion, climate action, peace, security, and open strategic autonomy - and to respond to global challenges and reinforce the EU's voice in the new geopolitical context.

These objectives are translated into a [Strategic Roadmap](#) with eight top priorities that has recently been endorsed by the finance ministers of the 27 Member states.



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We have agreed that support to climate action will remain the EIB Group's first priority. We will continue to commit over half of the Group's annual financing to climate action and support at least €1 trillion in green investments until 2030.

Not only because it's the right thing to do, as we all want a liveable planet for ourselves and our children, but also because it is the smart thing to do, to lower energy bills for households, increase the competitiveness of European companies and shield our economies from the energy price shocks that we saw in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

We also agreed that the EIB Group will step up its support for digitalization and new technologies, with the launch of a dedicated "Strategic Tech-EU" fund

to finance areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, microchips, and life sciences. That's because we all know that our future prosperity hinges upon innovation and productivity growth, which require a substantial increase of our investments in the technologies of the future.

The list of priorities also includes stepping up support to agriculture and the bioeconomy. European farmers know already that they can rely on the bank of the European Union. From [irrigation projects in Greece](#), to facilitating access to financing [for Romanian agriculture](#), the EIB Group has already developed considerable expertise in this area, with more flagship initiatives still to come.

And, of course, we are determined to contribute to a modern Cohesion policy, the third leg in the three "C" triangle, together with Climate and Competitiveness.

**Cohesion means bringing opportunity where talent is,** and this is why our shareholders agreed that the EIB will continue devoting almost half of its annual financing for projects in EU regions where per-capita-income is lower.

This is not just sound policy, critical to address economic challenges such as skills shortages, but also good politics, as inequality of opportunity is a recipe to voter resentment.

The need for equity and fairness doesn't apply only between member states, but also within member states. Hence, we have agreed with our shareholders to redouble our efforts to support investment in social infrastructures, such as healthcare, education and training, and housing, all of which are among the key challenges common to all Member states.

Obviously, none of these goals can be achieved in an environment of insecurity. The shifting geopolitical sands have added to the urgency of boosting support for Europe's defence and security. After extensive consultations with our key stakeholders, the EIB [has already revamped its framework](#) for lending for dual-use technologies and infrastructures, while safeguarding its financing capacity, as per the unanimous mandate given to us by EU leaders.

The EIB Group is fully committed to accelerate the deployment of financing and advisory services

that will strengthen European deterrence capabilities – ranging from [ports for our navies](#), to [drones](#) and [satellites](#) for reconnaissance. But security extends well beyond that: it also preserves peace and prosperity in our neighbourhood, and the adaptation to our warming planet.

### **“The shifting geopolitical sands have added to the urgency of boosting support for Europe's defence and security.”**

Beyond our shores, the EIB Group will focus its activities on Ukraine and a successful enlargement process, as well as impact-driven interventions in Europe's neighbourhood. Europe is not alone in the world, and that's why investments in Africa, our neighbouring continent and other projects promoted by the EU's Global Gateway initiative will be supported, as concrete contributions to our collective well-being.

Moreover, as the financial arm of the EU, the EIB Group will play a much more active role going forward in introducing novel financial instruments that will serve as building blocks to deepen our capital markets union.

No government in Europe – whether left, right, or centre – is happy when our most promising innovators are leaving Europe because they cannot secure financing to scale-up their business locally.

Going forward, **we must do more to put Europe's capital to work**, and this requires completing our single market, and forging a proper capital markets union.

The areas mentioned above will guide investment decisions in the years ahead. Their unanimous approval by the EIB's shareholder governments highlights that despite the noise of often tense election campaigns, European governments can stay united in their diversity, and committed to building a common future, in a spirit of unity, determination and solidarity. Crucially, the consensus reached shows that politics won't stand in the way of good policy. The EU has been able to navigate troubled waters since its creation. We have been able to tackle unprecedented challenges in recent years. Together, we will also succeed in whatever the future may bring, consolidating Europe as a beacon of peace, prosperity and human rights in the emerging new world.

**Nadia Calviño**  
*President of the European Investment Bank*



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# FOREIGN INFORMATION MANIPULATION AND INTERFERENCE (FIMI) TARGETING THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2024

On June 6-9 2024, hundreds of millions of Europeans headed to the polls to cast their vote in the elections to the European Parliament. For Europeans, this is a crucial exercise of their fundamental democratic rights. However, for various hostile external actors, this presents a window of opportunity to undermine democracy and its processes. One of the most frequently used tactics is foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), aiming at eroding European values, sow distrust and polarise the social discourse.

As highlighted by HR/VP Josep Borell ahead of the European elections, *“We need to protect this election process and more broadly European public debate from malign foreign actors, who want Europe to fail.”* To do so, it is important to understand that FIMI activities targeting elections is a long process that starts well before the actual voting.

It is a comprehensive, long-term process of interference, fuelling harmful, deceptive narratives and poisoning the public debate – all this before, during and after the Election Day.

**“As highlighted by HR/VP Josep Borell ahead of the European elections, “We need to protect this election process and more broadly European public debate from malign foreign actors, who want Europe to fail.”**

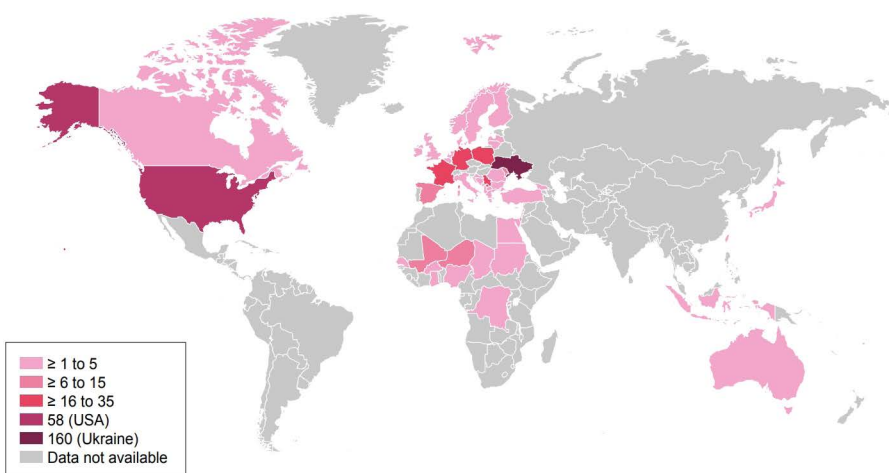
Building on lessons learned from previous European elections, EEAS’ work to support the European Parliament in their efforts to secure the integrity of 2024 European elections started back in 2019 with most of the activities addressing FIMI having taken place continuously ever since.

EU’s FIMI Toolbox, covering four key areas from situational awareness to diplomatic responses, provides a wide range of instruments that, used in unison, constitute a robust and comprehensive framework for tackling FIMI, including during elections.

As put forth in the [Council Conclusions](#) on democratic resilience, the Toolbox contributes significantly to a comprehensive approach by ensuring coordinated responses and strengthening the overall resilience of the EU. On this basis, EEAS’ activities around elections rest on four important pillars: increased situational awareness, enhanced awareness-raising and resilience-building, stronger inter-institutional cooperation and preparedness, and increased cooperation with EU Member States, including via the Rapid Alert System ([RAS](#)).

## Key Observations

In the months leading up to the vote, the Russian FIMI ecosystem tried to systematically and repetitively pollute the information space to disseminate narratives discrediting and promoting specific candidates or parties, undermine the legitimacy of the electoral process itself, and promoting distrust in elections as such.



Countries targeted by FIMI incidents observed by the EEAS in 2023 © 2nd EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats, 2024



In a series of articles published by the [EUvsDisinfo](#) website, the EEAS exposed key tactics, techniques and procedures employed by pro-Kremlin manipulators and disinformation outlets to interfere with the European Parliament elections. Attempts were made to [smear leaders](#); [sow distrust, doubt, and division](#); [flood social media with falsehoods trying to turn the public against Ukraine](#); [project Russia's own shortcomings onto the EU to distract from the reality of Putin's Russia](#) and finally to [dismiss the results and drive wedges](#).

Throughout the European elections period, the EEAS, together with the European Commission and the European Parliament, detected no major information manipulation attempt, capable of disrupting or posing a significant threat to the elections in the days leading up to vote, the key voting days of 6-9 June, or the immediate post-elections phase. Nevertheless, as expected and prepared for, an increase in FIMI incidents during this period was observed. The Russian FIMI ecosystem increased its activity reaching the peak during the weekend of 6-9 June or 72 hours before the closing of the polling stations. This is fully in line with the findings presented in the [2nd EEAS Report on FIMI Threats](#).

During the days of the vote, pro-Kremlin [Doppelgänger campaign](#) increase its activities to attempt and influence the European elections by impersonating reputable media outlets, publishing and amplifying articles disseminating polarizing content designed to exploit political tensions in Member States, promote Euroscepticism, and undermine specific political entities and governments while



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**“Throughout the European elections period, the EEAS, together with the European Commission and the European Parliament, detected no major information manipulation attempt, capable of disrupting or posing a significant threat to the elections in the days leading up to vote, the key voting days of 6-9 June, or the immediate post-elections phase.”**

purportedly supporting others. These European elections were an important test for our resilience and preparedness for FIMI and disinformation. EU institutions were very well prepared thanks to [excellent inter-institutional cooperation](#), which allowed for a robust situational awareness, shared information and systems in place in case of need for coordinated action against any larger scale interference attempts. Disinformation actors and networks invest in long-term efforts to erode trust in institutions and democratic processes and distort the public debate.

The EEAS will therefore continue to counter and prevent information manipulation, in close collaboration with EU institutions, Member States, and partners, as well as the wider community of FIMI-defenders in the civil society, including the recently-created [FIMI-ISAC](#).

**Stefano Sannino**  
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# WHO WILL REPRESENT FRANCE IN THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL?

France is currently experiencing an unprecedented political situation that is likely to have unexpected repercussions with regard to its representation in the European Council.

The question is who will represent France in the European Council?

The current representative of the French Republic in the European Council is the President of the Republic, in accordance with a practice dating back to President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who created the European Council in Paris on 10 December 1974 as a means of replacing the hitherto 'European summits'.

At the time, European Summits were made up of Heads of State and Government, and when President Giscard d'Estaing was asked who was the Head of State, he replied: 'I am the Head of the Government because I preside over it'.

However, the democratic principles of the European Union now require that the representatives of the Member States in the European Council be democratically accountable, which is not the case for the President of the French Republic. The democratic requirements of the European Union are set out in Title II (provisions on democratic principles) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and, with regard to the European Council and the Council, the second paragraph of Article 10(2) TEU states that: 'Member States are represented in the European Council by their Heads of State or Government and in the Council by their governments, themselves democratically accountable either to their national Parliaments,



or to their citizens'. Moreover, Article 67 of the French Constitution stipulates that the President of the Republic 'shall incur no liability by reason of acts carried out in his official capacity': This article confirms an age-old principle that Heads of State are not liable for their actions, which has been passed down to us from previous republics and even from the monarchy: 'The king can do no wrong'.

There are two exceptions to this general principle of non-liability: prosecution before the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity (Article 53-2 of the Constitution) and impeachment by Parliament in its capacity as High Court (2/3 majority of the members of the House involved) '... on any grounds other than a breach of his duties patently incompatible with his continuing in office' (Article 68 of the Constitution), which therefore does not apply to political acts.

Consequently, as the President of the Republic is not democratically accountable either to the national

Parliament or to the citizens, he cannot, in my opinion, represent France in the European Council. As the French Constitution currently stands and in line with the democratic requirements of the functioning of the EU, only the Head of Government, i.e. the Prime Minister, who, together with his government, is democratically accountable to the National Assembly, can represent the French Republic in the European Council.

Anecdotally, the French Republic has been represented in the European Council by its President without interruption since the inception of the European Council on 10 December 1974, except during the three periods of cohabitation (1986-1988, 1993-1995, 1997-2002) during which time we witnessed the unique situation where France attended European Council meetings and, therefore, the press conferences that followed, with two representatives: the Head of State and the Head of the Government.

Historically and politically, no one has ever wanted to challenge this practice in France. However, three major political developments have taken place since the time of the cohabitations, when France attended the European Council with two representatives:

- since the Lisbon Treaty of 2009, a State can be represented at the European Council by only one person: Who shall said person be? The President of the Republic or the Prime Minister?
- the result of the European elections in France on 9 June 2024 encompasses a message of desire for new, less federalist European policies: How, politically speaking, can the French Head of State, who is not subject to any form of democratic scrutiny, continue to take decisions within the European Council without taking into account the result of the European elections in France?

**“As the President of the Republic is not democratically accountable either to the national Parliament or to the citizens, he cannot, in my opinion, represent France in the European Council.”**

**Jean-Pierre Audy**  
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- the European Council deals with a wide range of issues (agriculture, industry, trade, energy, budget, borders, immigration, security, etc.) which are the responsibility of national governments and which can no longer be described, in the case of France, as ‘foreign affairs falling within the exclusive remit of the President of the French Republic’.

So who will represent France in the European Council? Let’s hope that the holders of the two highest political offices in the French Republic will be able to propose and find a solution. European affairs are no longer foreign affairs.



# THE FIRST UK ELECTION SINCE LEAVING THE EU

Labour won 412 out of the 650 seats in the House of Commons, while winning just 34% of the votes. Britain's electoral system (plurality in single-member constituencies) always produces a disproportionately large number of seats for parties with the most votes. This time it was particularly acute because of the massive collapse of the Conservatives' share of the vote (to just 24%, giving them 121 seats) as well as by the unusually large number of votes going to smaller parties – the Liberal Democrats, Reform UK (the successor party to UKIP), the Greens, and some Independents standing on a pro-Gaza platform. Of these, only the Liberal Democrats gained a significant number of seats (72), in part because of Labour supporters “lending” them their vote in constituencies where they had the better chance of defeating the Conservative candidate. In the context of the rise of far-right parties across Europe, it was notable that Reform UK got 14% of the vote (though only 5 seats). In Scotland, the independentist SNP collapsed to just 9 seats.

Back in 2019, the Conservatives had won a clear majority of seats with 43% of the vote - while 53% had voted for the various parties that demanded a new referendum which could have stopped Brexit. This time some 60% voted for those parties. Over four-fifths of the new MPs opposed Brexit in the 2016 referendum. In this new Parliament, the natural pre-disposition of most MPs towards Europe is positive.

But that doesn't mean Britain's application to re-join the EU will be in the post any time soon.

**“Back in 2019, the Conservatives had won a clear majority of seats with 43% of the vote - while 53% had voted for the various parties that demanded a new referendum which could have stopped Brexit. This time some 60% voted for those parties.”**

In the election campaign, Brexit was the elephant in the room. The Conservatives didn't dare mention their “achievement”, because the public now views Brexit as a mistake (some polls indicate over 60% would vote to rejoin if a referendum were held now). Labour didn't mention it because it was still afraid of losing votes in some traditionally Labour areas that had supported Brexit. Labour made no commitment to rejoining the EU and said that it had no plans to join the customs union or the single market.

What Labour did say was that it will seek “an improved and ambitious relationship with our European partners”. Specifically, it will seek to:

- Reduce barriers to UK-EU trade caused by the shortcomings in the Trade Agreement negotiated by Boris Johnson. This would involve, inter alia, a veterinary agreement, mutual recognition of professional qualifications, visa exemptions for touring performers (notably musicians and actors) and regulatory alignments.



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- Become Associate or Observer member of some EU agencies, such as Europol.

- Negotiate a security agreement with the EU. This could be of great significance in view of the situation in Ukraine and especially if Trump is reelected in the USA. It would include security in the widest sense: not just military cooperation but sanctions, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, fighting traffickers, combatting climate change, and more.

- Build on the shared commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, by cooperating on climate and energy questions (presumably including cross-border energy interconnectors, and the carbon border adjustment mechanisms).

But the realities of government may force Labour to go further. The biggest challenge it faces is the economy and the catastrophic state of public finances.

With debt and taxes at levels not seen since the 1940s, the election campaign was characterized by debates on whether it might be possible to spend or save an extra £3 billion here or £4 billion there.

These figures are dwarfed by the £40 billion a year of lost tax revenue which has been caused by Brexit. Similarly, if Labour wants to boost economic growth, it cannot ignore the lost trade, the extra costs on businesses, and the 5% loss to GDP caused by leaving the single market.

If reality forces the Labour government to go further and seek to align fully with single market standards, or rejoin the customs union, it will find that this is popular.



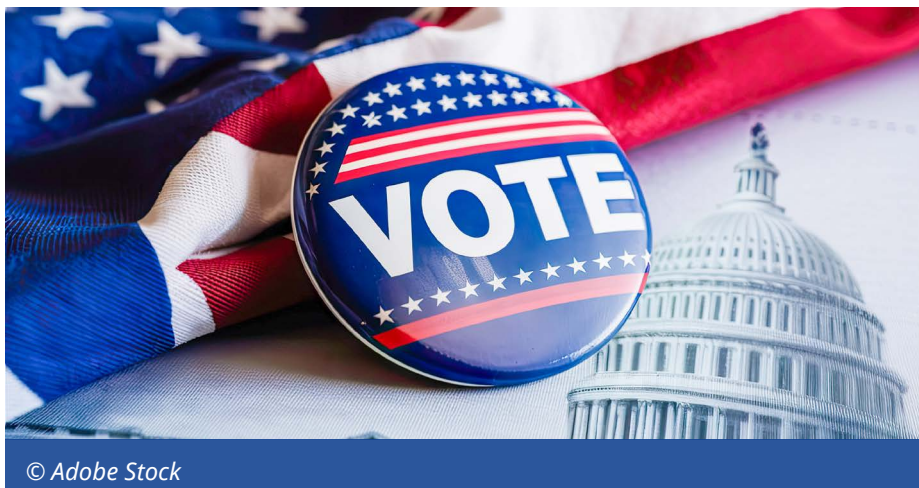
**“The silence on Brexit in the election campaign avoided it becoming a high-focus partisan issue between the two main parties, which might have entrenched existing attitudes.”**

The silence on Brexit in the election campaign avoided it becoming a high-focus partisan issue between the two main parties, which might have entrenched existing attitudes. Instead, the silence on this issue may have made it easier for public opinion to continue its relentless shift in favour of rejoining the EU. If so, smaller steps should certainly be easier.

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# EUROPE'S LESSONS FOR AMERICA'S ELECTION – A VIEW FROM WASHINGTON



In states that will determine the outcome of this election like Pennsylvania or Michigan, voters will have to answer the question, “are you better off now than you were four years ago?” If enough voters answer no, then Harris, like an incumbent President, will suffer the political consequences.

Flowing directly from this palpable restlessness by the voting public, is an electoral atmosphere in which extremist messages and parties, purporting to offer simple solutions to complex problems, resonate and take hold. If the cost is the erosion of democratic institutions, but the benefit is a society that seems to offer economic and physical security, then more and more citizens are willing to pay that price. In Europe, that message was often built around immigration and displacement theory, and the same is true in the United States.

**“Flowing directly from this palpable restlessness by the voting public, is an electoral atmosphere in which extremist messages and parties, purporting to offer simple solutions to complex problems, resonate and take hold.”**

Almost half the world’s population, from Bangladesh in January to Ghana in December, will have the opportunity to vote in 2024. Over 60 countries, plus the European Union, are opening the polls to their voters, and more than 1 billion people around the world have already cast a vote this year. The changes implemented in 2024 by citizens across the globe will reverberate for generations to come and recurring themes already are becoming clear, especially for like-minded representative democracies such as Europe and the United States. These lessons learned include that incumbency, no matter what your political persuasion, no longer serves as an advantage, quite the opposite. As well as that we take the health of our democratic institutions for granted at our own peril. And finally, foreign actors and disinformation have now become a routine aspect of the electoral process.

We saw in European Union, the United Kingdom, and France that a large percentage of the voting public went to the polls with a profound sense of government failure.

Global uncertainty, driven by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the war in Gaza, and economic instability, are being translated into voter discontent. It is the incumbent political leader or party that is being held responsible, often resulting in the empowerment of fringe or extremist political voices, even if they fail to win a majority of seats or are unable to form coalitions to govern.

In the United States, Joe Biden as the incumbent President faced near-certain election defeat before withdrawing from the race. Vice President Kamala Harris, as the Democratic Party’s new standard bearer, is now walking the tightrope of embracing certain policies of the Biden Administration that resonate with voters, while distancing herself from others. The Trump campaign, meanwhile, is running against her as if she had been President for the past three years.

Whereas in the past, fringe ideology was relegated to the peripheral of our political discourse, it now has taken firm root in the politics of western democracies as normalized and tolerated political dogma. Often included in this mindset is an acceptance of political violence as a means to an end. As we enter the final stretches of the election season in the United States, threats of violence against candidates for office, election administrators, and

even polling place volunteers, have reached unprecedented levels. These frightening patterns are coupled with an increased number of voters having doubts about the integrity of our electoral system and the sanctity of our votes cast – the most fundamental institutions of a representative democracy. As we have seen in abundance during June’s EU Parliamentary elections, nefarious foreign actors such as Russia, North Korea, Iran and China, have successfully utilized social media to add fuel to the above fire of discontent.

**“We all are subjected to an unchecked soapbox for altered images, unfiltered propaganda, falsified narratives, and AI-generated voice-overs, and only an educated and discerning voting public can serve as antidote.”**

During a very contentious debate in the U.S. Congress regarding additional aid to Ukraine, Russia’s disinformation messages were so successful that a number of current Members of the House of Representatives quoted verbatim what Russian actors had disseminated via social media. We all are subjected to an unchecked soapbox for altered images, unfiltered propaganda, falsified narratives, and AI-generated voice-overs, and only an educated and discerning voting public can serve as the antidote.

However, not all lessons learned from Europe’s elections are disheartening: citizens are engaged, they take the responsibility that comes with citizenship seriously, and they view their vote as a means to create a bulwark against anti-democratic movements. It appears quite likely that the November election in the United States will, as was the case in the EU in June, produce the highest voter turnout in a generation. And that may be the most important message of the unprecedented year of elections that 2024 has been thus far.

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The **Former Members of Congress Association (FMC)** is the premier nonprofit focused on the work of Congress, involving former and current Members of Congress in its work – all on a bipartisan basis. The mission of FMC is to advocate for representative democracy, at home and abroad. This work includes civic education for high school/college students, legislative strengthening, and connecting those being represented with those representing them.

The **Former Members Association (FMA)** works in close cooperation with FMC. FMA Board Members Mr Martínez Martínez (Chair), Mr Audy, Ms Quisthoudt-Rowohl and FMA Member with advisory role Ms Isabella De Martini ensure good cooperation and maintain contacts.



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# TRADE IS BASE FOR FIGHTING POVERTY

There is no doubt that EU-China relations are facing many challenges during the period of the current European Parliamentary term – 2024 to 2029. Equally, a new European Commission inherits a series of policies connected to digital sovereignty, de-risking and strategic autonomy in the context of some of the measures that are being pursued by the European Union towards China. Geo-political tensions are omnipresent.

Undoubtedly, the EU-China relationship is a very complex one. There are clearly though some similarities in how economic development has transpired both at a Chinese and at an EU level. The European Union is an open economy with a population comprising 449 million people where an internal market with the free movement of goods, services, people and capital operates. This approach of openness and transparency delivers stronger levels of investment into the EU in accordance with rules based international mechanisms such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Global engagement has been a key driver too in the delivery of growth, jobs and higher levels of competitiveness for China. Businesses and investors want stronger levels of certainty and predictability so as to guarantee the existence of a more pro-friendly business environment. The optimum way to deliver such a business climate is through structured national and agreed international rules and processes.

In 2023, China was the EU's second largest trading partner for goods with bilateral trade reaching €739 billion Euro. In 2023, EU exports to China totaled a value of €223.6 billion euro and EU imports from



China amounted to €515.9 billion. From the perspective of the European Union, this trade deficit is not acceptable. Greater levels of market access for European companies to sell products, goods and services into the Chinese market must be provided as this would, in part help to reduce the trade deficit that exists from the EU side. The EU should be negotiating about broader market access issues with China. The European Union should not be talking about the principle of reciprocity alone when it comes to EU-China trading issues as the term 'reciprocity' is simply too contractual a term to use. Market access is a very key issue in the context of the governing rules for EU exports into China.

The business and investment environment in China must improve if higher levels of confidence from EU investors is to be obtained. It should be re-called that EU foreign investment levels into China fell by 29% in 2023 compared to the year 2022. That said, as a general rule, increasing EU export led growth into the Chinese economy – the 2nd strongest economy in the world – can play a key role in improving the broader economic performance of the European economy itself. One of the greatest challenges globally is to build the green and digital transition and to do so in an environmentally and sustainable manner. European and Chinese companies as well as research, educational and public bodies can work more closely together to drive this green and digital transition.

**“Greater levels of market access for European companies to sell products, good and services into the Chinese market must be provided as this would, in part help to reduce the trade deficit that exists from the EU side.”**



Technical advances can deliver cleaner energies that can support the broader sustainability agenda.

The digitalization of the industry and smart city sectors should be built around internationally agreed standards. We can all do more to develop higher levels of agricultural production – an issue of such importance - as the world population is growing so quickly. European science and innovation based programmes should be open to participation from Chinese researchers. Equally, Chinese based science schemes should be open to participation from European researchers. It is through openness and international co-operation that higher levels of innovation will materialize.

This will help tackle key global challenges facing our societies such as serious health diseases and climate change. The members of the Industry, Technology, Research and Energy (ITRE) committee of the European Parliament, the European Commission and EU governments over the next few years are going to hammer out the rules related to international participation in FP10 – the next EU research programme that will run for the next financial framework period 2028-2034.

Geo-political tensions are clearly there and they are not de-escalating.

The European Union and China need to negotiate through areas of disagreement and do so under an international rules-based order.

Both the EU and China should strive to maintain policies that promote open trade and investment.

It is to be welcomed that there have been higher levels of personal engagement in recent times between EU and national European member state leaders with the Chinese government. Direct face-to-face dialogue is very important if our differences are to be overcome and such high-level meetings should continue in the coming months and years ahead.

**“One of the greatest challenges globally is to build the green and digital transition and to do so in an environmentally and sustainable manner. European and Chinese companies as well as research, educational and public bodies can work more closely together to drive this green and digital transition.”**

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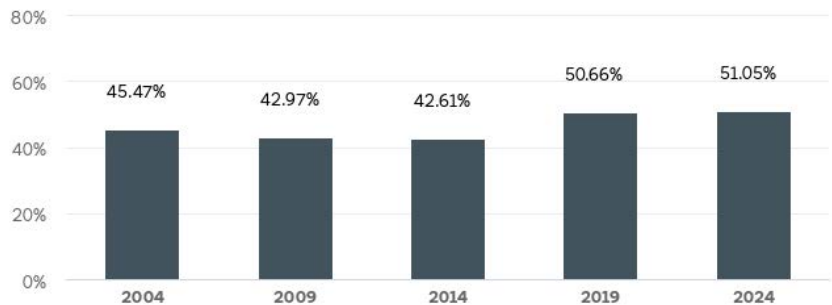
# THE PARLIAMENT 2024 REFORM

Between 6 and 9 June 2024, nearly 51% of the 360 million eligible citizens went to the polls to elect 720 Members of the European Parliament. Just 0.5 percentage points more than in 2019 (50.5%) but the highest voter turnout in 30 years. The new Parliament, which officially started on 16 July 2024, will operate under a new set of internal rules which were the result of a year's intensive work. On Wednesday 10 April 2024, the Members of the European Parliament approved by 429 votes to 148 with 47 abstentions, the report implementing the recommendations of the working group on the 'Parliament 2024 reform'<sup>1</sup>. The new rules entered into force on 16 July 2024 at the start of constitutive plenary session of the new Parliament.

They are the result of the work of the 'Parliament 2024' Working Group on Parliamentary Reform which was established by the Conference of Presidents (CoP) in January 2023 on a proposal by Parliament's President, Roberta Metsola. It was composed of representatives of all political groups, to implement reforms before the forthcoming European Parliament elections. The objective of the working group was to strengthen Parliament's internal working methods as well as its institutional role.

All during 2023, the working group examined ideas on how procedures could be improved to make Parliament more efficient.

<sup>1</sup> European Parliament press release, ["Parliament 2024": a more modern and efficient Parliament after the elections](#), 10 April 2024.



Source: Provided by Verian for the European Parliament



Turnout European Elections by year © EP 2024

In line with the mandate established by EP group leaders, the working group looked at possible improvements in the areas of legislation, scrutiny, budgetary functions and budgetary control and reform of the plenary sessions.

A significant part of the reforms seek to facilitate the legislative procedure, by expediting the attribution of files to committees, and reforming the system for dealing with overlaps of competences between committees, in particular clarifying the situation of opinion-giving committees.

**"Between 6 and 9 June 2024, nearly 51% of the 360 million eligible citizens went to the polls to elect 720 Members of the European Parliament. Just 0.5 percentage points more than in 2019 (50.5%) but the highest voter turnout in 30 years."**

Concerning the reform, it is reported that President Metsola said<sup>2</sup>: *"Since my election, I have made modernisation of the European Parliament one of my main goals. We have worked hard on these measures that will make this House more efficient. Once implemented, these reforms will allow the European Parliament to be on a much stronger footing starting from the next mandate."*

On top of the existing joint committee procedure, in the case of vastly cross-cutting issues, and as a last resort, the CoP could propose the setting-up of a temporary legislative committee to deal with a specific proposal for a legally binding act or a pre-legislative strategic document. Use of the urgent procedure in plenary will be limited to clearly justified cases, but committees will have greater possibilities to adopt their positions using simplified or accelerated procedures.

<sup>2</sup> European Parliament press release, [EP leaders engage in a reform for a more modern and efficient Parliament](#), 7 December 2023.

All proposals with budgetary implications will undergo a specific budgetary assessment, to ensure that Parliament uses its legislative and budgetary powers as effectively as possible, in a mutually reinforcing way. In addition, the Budgetary Control Committee will have to be involved in consideration of any proposals involving non-traditional (i.e. 'off-budget') financial instruments, with a view to anticipating the discharge procedure concerning them. With the reform a new format for 'special scrutiny hearings' is established.

Its aim is to enable Parliament 'to question one or more Commissioners, on an issue of major political importance'. Such a hearing can be convened by the CoP at short notice, will normally be held in public, and could lead to written recommendations. Furthermore, during plenary sessions, a special scrutiny session, without a pre-determined topic, will be held with the Commission President or selected Commissioners.

**“All proposals with budgetary implications will undergo a specific budgetary assessment, to ensure that Parliament uses its legislative and budgetary powers as effectively as possible, in a mutually reinforcing way.”**

A new format for plenary debates on specific matters of interest to the EU will conclude with the adoption of a statement by Parliament. Calling of ad hoc plenary part-sessions to debate matters of significant political importance will be simpler, but without voting sessions.

For the changes relating to interinstitutional cooperation to be implemented, the 2010 framework agreement between the Parliament and the Commission will have to be revised, a procedure already initiated by the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola.

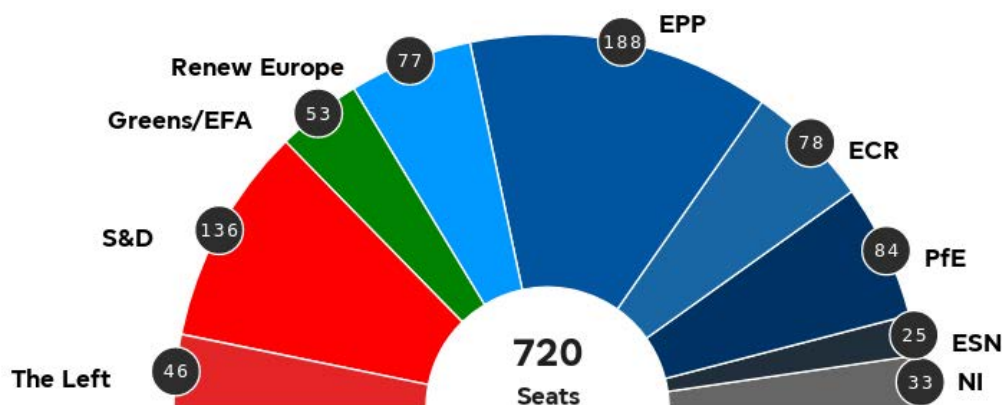
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*This article is largely based on an 'At a glance' note, written by R. Manko, EPRS, European Parliament, April 2024.*



Source: Provided by Verian for the European Parliament





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