

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Extract from:

Yves Bertoncini and Thierry Chopin,
“Faces on divides: the 2014 May European elections”,
Studies & Reports No. 104, Notre Europe –
Jacques Delors Institute, April 2014.

The European elections of 22-25 May 2014 will lead to the election of 751 MEPs (74 of them from France), called on to represent some 507 million Europeans. They represent a major democratic event for European citizens, and will be centred around three series of political issues.

1. MEPs exercising their powers within a partisan framework

- European citizens are called on to directly choose the people who will embody the EU within the EP until 2019; they can also influence the choice of the next President of the Commission and the distribution of responsibilities within the College of Commissioners (*pages 14 to 24*).
- The MEPs elected in May 2014 will have substantial decision-making powers (90% of EU legislative powers), powers that the current MEPs have used extensively. They will have to define the EU’s contribution to resolving the crisis, the evolution of the EU’s basic values (euro, free movement, etc.) and the nature of its international interventions (trade, Russia, etc.) (*pages 24 to 38*).
- The new MEPs are called on to join the 7 or 8 political groups (Christian-Democrats, Liberals, Socialists, Greens, Radical Left, etc.) that structure EP functioning and the content of its decisions, based on a logic of compromise (*pages 38 to 46*).

2. MEPs forming variable-geometry majorities

Since MEPs do not have to support a government, they can form three types of “variable-geometry majorities”, which is insightful to analyse by presenting the votes cast by the French and European MEPs on about 20 key issues:

- “Consensus majorities” (almost 40% of votes analysed by VoteWatch Europe) including MEPs from most political groups, including the French FN and Front de gauche, on issues such as GMOs or the Financial Transaction Tax (*pages 47 to 60*).
- “Grand-coalition majorities” (almost 30% of votes analysed by VoteWatch Europe) mainly including MEPs from the EPP (UMP and centrists) and S&D (PS) groups, on relatively diverse issues such as the banking union, EU budget and reform of the CAP (*pages 60 to 71*).
- “Confrontation majorities” (almost 30% of votes analysed by VoteWatch Europe) opposing MEPs from centre-right and centre-left coalitions, especially on economic, social and environmental issues such as transatlantic trade negotiations, the extension of maternity leave or the taxation of activities that pollute (*pages 71 to 80*).

3. New political balance of power between the future MEPs

- The balance of power in the new EP will be largely determined by the results of the eight countries with the highest populations in the EU (or “Swing states”) as well as through the relative evolution in scores in relation to 2009 (*pages 81 to 85*).
- Opinion polls carried out for the past six months indicate that the EPP and S&D groups are significantly ahead (a little over 200 seats apiece), but also point to a particularly unpredictable tussle to decide which of the two groups will lead, with EPP losing ground and S&D gaining it (*pages 85 to 87*).
- Liberals and radical left could vie for third place, while Europhobic right and far-right formations should see a sharp increase in terms of seats, without however occupying a central place within the EP (*pages 87 to 89*).
- The balance of power between national delegations is set to evolve within the main political groups: for example, the British could become the largest delegation within the S&D group, the Poles the largest within the ECR

group, whereas the French delegations within the EPP, S&D and Green groups are set to see a loss of influence (*pages 89 to 94*).

- A grand right-left coalition could occur for the nomination of the President of the Commission and its members, whereas variable-geometry coalitions with a more left-wing influence is set to form for all votes cast during the 2014-2019 period (*pages 94 to 97*).

It is ultimately the vote of Europeans that will determine the partisan balance of power, on the basis of which the content of EP's legislative and budgetary decisions will be defined, from 25 May 2014 onwards for the five years to come.