



E3G

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European Elections 2014

What next for climate and energy in Europe?

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Highlights

Between 22-25 May 2014, EU citizens will vote in the European Parliament elections. As well as electing 751 MEPs to the European Parliament, the elections will influence the make-up of the EU executive. This briefing examines the likely outcomes of the elections and the impact on EU responses to climate and energy issues, to identify key narratives and upcoming interventions for civil society groups.

- **Next European Parliament unlikely to be strongly anti-climate.** Ideological divisions and poor voting records mean more Eurosceptic MEPs are not a huge threat to strong majority support for progressive climate and energy agenda
- **Greater risk is climate sceptics in EU executive.** Role for civil society to engage with national governments and new MEPs to mainstream climate as priority for high-level appointments - and avoid a Commission President who is hostile to climate action

Key issues at play:

- > Relevance of EU to European citizens and role of the EU in the world today
- > Voter disillusionment and lack of trust in political elites (especially among young people)
- > Democratic deficit of EU institutions and corporate influence, with heightened risk of inadequate representation of EU politics and citizens due to low voter turnout
- > Rise of extreme-right populist groups across EU
- > Direction and vision for EU for next 5 years – including influencing progressive climate and energy agenda in Brussels through 2030 climate and energy package, 2015 global climate deal and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)
- > Longer-term implications for the future of the European project
- > The make-up of the next Commission is particularly important for the UK in the context of David Cameron's strategy for EU reform and renegotiating UK membership.

Next European Parliament (EP)

Likely outcome: Don't expect a vehemently anti-climate Parliament. A greater number of Eurosceptic MEPs is more likely to motivate a grand coalition of centrist support for climate action, while fringe parties have consistently low turnout for European Parliament votes.

- > Likely to be a **tight race between the centre-right European Peoples Party and the Socialists & Democrats**. While substantial gains for populist parties are expected (from around 130 seats now to over 200) they will fall far short of a majority in the Parliament.
- > **Eurosceptic parties will have limited impact on parliamentary business due to ideological and organisational divisions**. Populist parties are split between far left and extreme right, and even those with similar positions are unable to form partnerships – see Farage's rejection of an alliance with the French Front National. The lack of a united voice means the Eurosceptic influence in the Parliament should not be overestimated.
- > There has been a **consistently strong majority** in the Parliament supporting progressive climate, energy and environment legislation from socialist, centre-right and green MEPs. Because of this, there have been **no close votes** on environment, climate or energy. This grand coalition of broad support for climate action is likely to remain post-election.
- > A greater number of Eurosceptic MEPs is likely to create a **more vocal Parliament**, but the **biggest impact will be on national politics** in countries with a strong populist upsurge (predicted to be UK, France, Italy). In the UK, success for UKIP may push Conservative positions further right in the run-up to the General Election in May 2015.
- > Recent [forecasts from Pollwatch2014](#) show that the number of seats for the UK Conservatives' breakaway group – the European Conservatives and Reformists – may fall short of the minimum required to form a parliamentary group, reducing their influence.¹

Things to influence:

- > **Mainstream climate as priority for new MEPs** across range of upcoming votes
- > **Composition of parliamentary committees**. Which MEPs join committees as members and chairs is subject to negotiations between parliamentary groups in June. Linda McAvan, the Labour MEP for Yorkshire and the Humber seeing re-election, may be in line to chair the Environment Committee – engaging with Labour could help push this
- > **The next President of the European Parliament** will be elected at first EP plenary session on 1-3 July. Engaging with political parties could deliver another useful voice representing the EU externally

High-level appointments

Following the European elections, there will be a series of high-level appointments including new President of the European Commission, President of the European Council and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

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¹ <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1dc4fa80-d772-11e3-a47c-00144feabdc0.html#axzz31J6xgzPC>

Commission President – For the first time, candidates for the head of the EU’s executive body have been put forward by the Parliament’s political groups. The successful candidate will need the support of at least 376 MEPs, most likely from a grand coalition of different groups, and support from a qualified majority from the EU Heads of State and Government.

On 27 May, both leaders of the European Parliament’s political groups and Heads of national governments will meet in Brussels to discuss their choice for the Commission presidency. Negotiations between the Parliament groups and the Heads will continue throughout June up to a decision by Heads at June Council. MEPs will then formally adopt the new President in a mid-July plenary.

The two main candidates for Commission President come from the two largest political factions:

- > **Jean-Claude Juncker (European Peoples Party)** – Former prime minister of Luxembourg who is popular with many European Heads. After saying he would scrap the Eco-Design Directive in his campaign, he has come under pressure from energy efficiency campaigners and conceded that he will clarify his position.
- > **Martin Schulz (Party of European Socialists)** – Current EP President. Could be blocked by European Council as he is unpopular among EU Heads – a red-line for Cameron. Merkel is currently trying to ensure that he does not chair the discussions of the EP political groups for next Commission President as part of his current mandate.²

However, EU national leaders could also put forward their own candidates, including centre-right **Christine Lagarde**, or Socialist **Pascal Lamy** (who would not carry a positive climate agenda). Alternative EPP candidates to Juncker are Polish PM **Donald Tusk** (hostile to climate action) or Irish PM **Enda Kenny**, while former Italian PM **Enrico Letta** and **Helle Thorning-Schmidt**, the Danish PM (who was a progressive voice for climate in the EU 2030 Council discussion in March) have also been mentioned as options.

Council President – The Council President is appointed for a two and half year term starting on 1 December, renewable once. Appointments require a double majority in the European Council but not confirmation from the Parliament.

The Council President, currently Herman van Rompuy, has an important role shaping the agenda for the Council meetings attended by the Heads of State and Government. This can dictate the pace of decision-making. For example, the framing of a ‘first policy debate’ on EU 2030 at March Council undermined hopes for an early decision on the package.

Contenders include **Mario Monti** or **Enrico Letta**, both former Italian PMs or **Dalia Grybauskaitė**, who is up for re-election as Lithuanian president this month. Other suggestions are **José Manuel Barroso**, current Commission President, and **Anders Fogh Rasmussen**, outgoing NATO Secretary General.

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² <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/europa-wahl-merkel-will-martin-schulz-ausbremsen-a-968821.html>

President of the European Parliament - The next President of the European Parliament will be elected at the first EP plenary session on 1-3 July – likely as a result of leadership politics between senior MEPs. This is a similar role to the speaker in national parliaments, with responsibility for chairing EP plenaries and conferences between political group leaders. The President also addresses the European Council prior to each of its meetings, stating the EP's viewpoint on the subjects on the agenda.

High Representative – The EU foreign policy chief is one of 28 commissioners, but the role's special status means the European Council will nominate a candidate in June by qualified majority, subject to EP approval in the autumn.

After taking a prominent role commenting on the Ukraine crisis, Polish foreign minister **Radoslaw Sikorski** could be nominated, although there is **no stand-out candidate**. If no socialist receives the other high-level appointments, this may go to **Martin Schulz**, Dutch foreign minister **Frans Timmermans** or the current Czech commissioner **Stefan Füle**.

College of commissioners – The new Commission President defines the College of commissioners' political guidelines and determines its internal organisation by assigning duties to the various commissioners who are nominated by national governments in August, upholding the convention of one commissioner per Member State. Political wrangling will revolve around possible revisions to the Commission structure, national candidates and which portfolio is allocated to each Member State. In September, the EP will hold hearings of nominated commissioners before voting to approve the new College in late October. The new commissioners are scheduled to take office on 1 November.

Things to influence:

- > **Highlighting climate issues as a top priority for the new Commission's mandate.** New MEPs should raise tackling climate change in individual Commissioner hearings across the board.
- > **Not having any climate deniers in the College** who could compromise a progressive agenda if climate is successfully mainstreamed across portfolios. MEPs involved in Parliamentary hearings in September should prioritise candidates' climate record as key factor for approval.
- > **Influencing Cameron's vote against climate sceptics for high-level appointments** – Nominating candidates receptive to Conservatives' European reform agenda should not come at the expense of allowing climate sceptics to be chosen by EU Council.
- > **Getting a more progressive energy commissioner.** Current energy commissioner Günther Oettinger has been a block on climate ambition: most recently he advocated a 35% target for GHG reductions within EU2030. Some commentators have read Poland's energy union proposals as a first move in trying to secure the role for a Polish candidate.
- > **UK candidate for commissioner**, selected by David Cameron, and the portfolio allocated to the UK. Self-defined Eurosceptic Peter Lilley has voiced interest in the role, while Owen Paterson (both Euro- and climate-sceptic) has also been mentioned as a

possibility. While Nick Clegg is keen to pushback against a Eurosceptic choice, the Lib Dems cannot veto the Prime Minister's decision. However, a candidate with less hardline views on Europe – such as Andrew Mitchell or Andrew Lansley – may stand the UK in better stead to get a high-profile portfolio. The UK's preference is for Internal Market, but as this is unlikely to go to a non-Eurozone country, there are rumours that the UK may be considering a push for Energy. The energy commissioner will influence outcomes of the energy security debate, with risks of a pro-shale push from the UK.

European climate governance: Future of DG Clima

The creation of a separate Commission body to focus on climate has not served to push through ambitious climate action at European level. DG Clima has lacked influence due to limited budget and capacity, and it would make sense to merge with a larger department. Additionally, it has become wedded to prioritising the success of the EU ETS, to the detriment of ambition levels for the 2030 climate and energy package.

Changing EU climate governance could shake up the politics of climate and energy in Europe. This will be a debate to influence under the next Commission President. Options for reform include:

- > Climate Change Act for Europe – would ensure more transparency and accountability
- > Moving DG Clima to DG Energy – increased capacity within bigger department but risks being swamped by energy agenda or sidelined by a climate-sceptic energy commissioner
- > Moving DG Clima back to DG Environment – lower risk strategy, as could counter a less progressive DG Energy, but would lack impact of merging climate and energy portfolios
- > Strip DG Clima of some of its duties by merging Energy and Digital agenda issues – creating a new independent body advising the European Commission on tackling climate change (similar to the UK Climate Change Committee)

The impact of such a decision would of course be highly dependent upon the appointed commissioner and could create as many hurdles as it could open opportunities for the climate and clean energy agenda. E3G will provide more detailed briefings as the process develops under the next Commission President.

Timeline

22-25 May: European Parliament Elections across the 28 Member States

27 May: Main European parties meet to discuss Commission presidency; Heads take stock of elections results, convened by Herman Van Rompuy

June: Parliament groups start informal negotiations with EU Council on next Commission President; negotiations for EP groups and committees

26-27 June: Nomination of Commission President and High Representative at EU Council

1-3 July: EP votes on President of the European Parliament

14-17 July: EP votes on European Council's nomination of Commission President

Summer 2014: New Commission President nominates the College of commissioners

September 2014: EP scrutinises nominated commissioners through individual hearings

October 2014: New Commission is hoped to be confirmed by the European Parliament

1 November 2014: Target date for new Commission to take office

1 December 2014: Start of next European Council presidency