



## THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AFTER BREXIT

The UK is set to leave the EU at midnight CET on 31 January 2020. The resulting departure of British MEPs will reduce the number of seats in the European Parliament from 751 to 705, altering the power dynamics between political parties and increasing the need for cross-party cooperation to form a majority.

### HOW WILL BREXIT AFFECT THE COMPOSITION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT?

According to European Council Decision (EU) 2018/937 (the Decision), the European Parliament will shrink from 751 to 705 members immediately after the UK leaves the EU on 31 January 2020.

Whilst 46 of the 73 seats vacated by British MEPs will be reserved for possible new Member States, 27 seats will be redistributed amongst under-represented Member States to reflect recent demographic changes. France and Spain are set to be the biggest winners, each receiving five new seats, followed by Italy and the Netherlands who will both receive three new seats.

#### Member States in the European Parliament after Brexit

<b>Austria: 19 (+1)</b>	Belgium: 21	Bulgaria: 17
<b>Croatia: 12 (+1)</b>	Cyprus: 6	Czech Republic: 21
<b>Denmark: 14 (+1)</b>	<b>Estonia: 7 (+1)</b>	<b>Finland: 14 (+1)</b>
<b>France: 79 (+5)</b>	Germany: 96	Greece: 21
Hungary: 21	<b>Ireland: 13 (+2)</b>	<b>Italy: 76 (+3)</b>
Latvia: 8	Lithuania: 11	Luxembourg: 6
Malta: 6	<b>Netherlands: 29 (+3)</b>	<b>Poland: 52 (+1)</b>
Portugal: 21	<b>Romania: 33 (+1)</b>	<b>Slovakia: 14 (+1)</b>
Slovenia: 8	<b>Spain: 59 (+5)</b>	<b>Sweden: 21 (+1)</b>

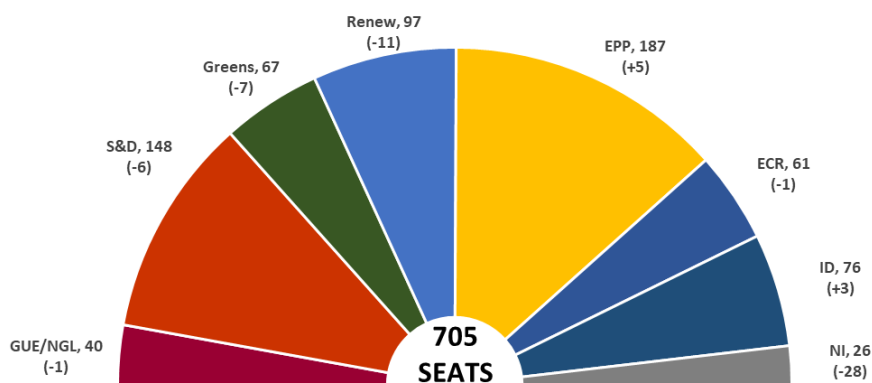
#### Key issues

- The number of MEPs will go down from 751 to 705 with the departure of the United Kingdom from the EU.
- 353 votes will be needed to form a majority in the new European Parliament.
- 27 seats held by UK MEPs will be distributed between 14 Member States. France and Spain will both gain five new MEPs, and Italy and the Netherlands will gain three MEPs each.
- Most political parties will lose seats as a result of these changes. However, the European People's Party (EPP) will gain five seats and the Identity and Democracy Party (ID) will gain three seats.
- As before, there will be no clear majority in the European Parliament. Alliances will need to be made on a case-by-case basis if legislation is to be passed.

The Decision also affects the balance of power between political parties. The greatest advances will go to the right of centre European People's Party (EPP) which will recover five of the 34 seats it lost in the 2019 European Parliament elections. The right-wing Identity and Democracy Party (ID) will also gain three seats, overtaking the Greens as the fourth largest party in the European Parliament, however the departure of the UK's 23 Brexit Party MEPs (who do not sit in one of the recognised political groups) is likely to weaken the wider nationalist opposition to the Commission's pro-European agenda. All other

parties will lose seats; in particular the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), the Greens and Renew Europe (Renew) are set to lose six, seven and eleven seats respectively.

The following fan diagram shows the revised composition of the European Parliament along party lines:



### Political groups in the European Parliament

- S&D – Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
- Greens
- Renew – Renew Europe
- EPP – Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
- ECR – European Conservatives and Reformists
- ID – Identity and Democracy party
- NI – Non-Inscrits

Replacements will also need to be appointed for the chairs of the Fisheries and Legal Affairs Committees, both of which are currently headed by Renew MEPs from the UK. It is possible (but not certain) that new MEPs could assume these roles.

## HOW WILL THE POWER DYNAMICS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CHANGE?

Once the UK leaves the EU, the majority required to pass a resolution in the European Parliament will fall from 376 votes to 353. The two biggest groups – the EPP and S&D – have a combined total of 335 seats, and so the former duopoly of power will still not have an absolute majority. Shifting alliances will remain crucial in what has historically been (and will continue to be) a fragmented Parliament.

Once the new composition takes effect, the larger centrist parties (such as S&D and EPP) will continue to seek alliances with smaller groups (such as Renew and/or the Greens) in order to form a majority and to strengthen the hands of MEPs in their negotiations with the other EU institutions. The Greens will be particularly influential in this regard and will likely use their new influence to steer the European Parliament's agenda leftwards on environmental, social issues and home affairs. On trade and foreign policy, the influence of Renew MEPs is likely to ensure that the centre-right will still dominate the political debate.

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This publication does not necessarily deal with every important topic or cover every aspect of the topics with which it deals. It is not designed to provide legal or other advice.

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