



Poll Predicts Rise of Anti-EU Sentiment at 2019 European Parliament Elections

26 July 2018

Eurosceptic parties are likely to experience a significant boost in electoral popularity – swelling their representation by some 60% – at the May 2019 European Parliamentary elections, according to a survey poll conducted recently by Thompson Reuters.

The poll reveals that the EFDD, an anti-EU grouping of MEPs, is likely to expand by some 45 seats, despite its post-Brexit loss of 19 UKIP politicians. Similarly, the hard-right bloc led by Marine le Pen is predicted to nearly double in numbers – from 35 to 63 – owing to the growing support at the Italian ballot box for The League, a long-time Eurosceptic party.

However, a significant decline in the traditional left and right in France is likely to translate to a boost for the liberal ALDE grouping of MEPs, contingent on centrist French President Macron's group joining ALDE's ranks after the election – a much mooted possibility. According to the poll, the loss of UK members from the parliament (seats will drop from 751 to 705 on Brexit) means a considerable realignment in political geography, with the centrists displacing the European Conservatives and Reformists (co-led by UK Conservatives) as the third largest bloc in the Parliament. Moreover, the centre right EPP will, in a reduced chamber, remain the largest grouping but will narrow its lead over the S&D, the centre-left bloc, which will remain the second most influential grouping.



Commission Proposes Rerouting Post-Brexit Irish Maritime Freight to Benelux Ports, Sparking French Objections

08 August 2018

In a series of internal proposals – collectively known as ‘Brexit preparedness’ – the Commission has advocated that the EU’s strategic [North Sea-Mediterranean shipping corridor](#) be realigned to link Ireland with ports in the Netherlands and Belgium. Presently, the corridor commences at Edinburgh, routing freight through Ireland and on to Liverpool, Southampton, Felixstowe and Dover, crossing the channel to Calais and the Benelux ports of Zeebrugge, Antwerp and Rotterdam. While a spokesperson for the Commission insisted the plan would ensure “clarity and continuity...to guarantee the connectivity of Ireland with mainland Europe”, the post-Brexit revision would however entail cutting out landings at French ports, thereby denying France the considerable EU funding available to facilitate port capacity building and infrastructure upgrades.

Press speculation suggests that the proposal is designed to prevent Irish fisheries and fresh food produce from entanglement in UK customs mechanisms in the event of a ‘no-deal’ Brexit. The plan was released amid warnings over serious bottlenecks and congestion in Northern France should customs barriers be imposed on vessels crossing the channel, delays potentially compounded by French port workers undertaking disruptive industrial action.

Significant French disapproval has been registered against the proposal. For example, French trade bodies such as The Union des Ports de France have argued that the Ports of Cherbourg and Roscoff are geographically closer to Ireland, while rail operator SNCF has unequivocally stated its wish for the UK to remain within the North Sea- Mediterranean corridor to leverage the existing strategic high-speed rail connections linking London, Paris, Amsterdam and Lille. Enactment of the proposal however is contingent on its agreement by the European Parliament and Council, and additionally dependent on the Brexit Negotiations, in that it would take effect from the end of the 21 month transition period or on 30th March 2019 (in a ‘no-deal’ scenario).





Environmental Coalition to Campaign on Fisheries White Paper

01 August 2018

A coalition of environmental pressure groups and NGOs has pooled resources to launch a campaign to ensure to a focus on sustainability in post-Brexit fisheries management. The group – which includes NGOs the Marine Conservation Society, the RSPB and Greenpeace – aim to influence the currently ongoing fisheries White Paper consultation, with emphasis on science-led, transparent criteria to underpin future fisheries management.

Prime Minister to Step-up ‘no deal’ Contingency Planning

08 August 2018

In an [open letter](#) addressing the Tory grassroots, Theresa May reflected that Brexit negotiations had “reached an impasse”, with the future UK-EU relationship in terms of customs and trade agreements and the Northern Ireland/Ireland ‘backstop’ proposal as the primary catalysts for the current situation.

Amid concern across the political spectrum of a total breakdown in negotiations could be imminent, press reports have indicated that the PM will call an early-September summit meeting of senior cabinet ministers to put plans in place for a ‘no deal’ Brexit. With a renewed focus on contingency planning, May has instructed officials to draw up a [series of 70 proposals](#) simulating and advising on the possible effects of ‘no deal’ across the economy ahead of the likely November deadline for concluding Brexit negotiations. .

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt Calls on Paris and Berlin to Assist in Breaking Brexit Deadlock

31 July 2018

Ahead of a crunch meeting in Paris with French foreign minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt has strongly criticised the EU’s approach to the ongoing Brexit negotiations. Hunt – who was appointed to the role on 9 July – warned that the approach adopted by EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier could potentially result in a “breakdown in relations between Britain and European countries”. Indeed, Hunt continued, a ‘no-deal’ Brexit scenario would “change British public attitudes towards Europe for a generation”.

The Foreign Secretary predicted that such a situation would entail “profound economic consequences” for the EU, given that multiple French and German firms finance themselves and do business through the City of London, which enjoys a pre-eminent position as the EU’s financial services capital. Hunt therefore called upon Germany and France – seen as important EU powerbrokers – to deliver a “strong signal” to the EU negotiating team that future intransigence preventing a “pragmatic and sensible outcome” could result in the possibility of no deal “by accident”.



Dates for the diary



- 16-17 August 2018: Brexit negotiation round between EU and UK officials
- 20 August 2018: **European Parliament returns from recess to prepare for Strasbourg Plenary session (10-13 September)**
- 30-31 August 2018: **Informal meeting of EU Foreign Affairs Ministers, hosted by the Austrian Presidency**
- 5 September 2018: House of Commons returns from summer recess
- 12 September 2018: **DEFRA consultation on ‘Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations’ White paper closes**



Further information



- [Post-Brexit environment watchdog must wield sufficient clout, demand MPs](#)
- [Local Authorities prepare for Brexit-driven civil unrest](#)
- [International Trade Secretary Liam Fox anticipates 60:40 chance of a ‘no-deal’ Brexit](#)

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