

An aerial photograph showing a vast, rectangular parking lot completely filled with hundreds of new cars. The cars are arranged in neat, parallel rows, creating a dense grid of vehicles. The colors of the cars vary, including white, black, silver, and red. In the background, there are some trees and buildings, suggesting an industrial or commercial setting.

# TRANSPORT / EUROPE #11

New car lot, France.

## THE PLACE OF TRANSPORT IN THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS OF JUNE 2024

European policies strongly influence transport systems in each country of the EU. However, transport issues had a limited place in the debates in preparation for the European Parliament elections, except for one point which involves high economic, social and ideological stakes, and which crystallizes the conflicts: the European choice to stop sales of new combustion engine cars as of 2035.

Is this summary report sufficient? Attentive observation and a comparison between European countries allow us to better understand this particular moment in time when national approaches and the processes specific to the political life of the EU are becoming intermingled.

### EUROPEAN ELECTIONS AND TRANSPORT

The stakes of the recent European elections were substantial: in the months prior to the elections, we observed changes in the political equilibria in several member states and international political and economic changes led to a reconsideration of the priorities of the European policies of the past. Should they continue (or reinforce, or on the contrary decrease) the efforts to implement the Green Deal, a key policy of the previous term? Should they give priority to strategic autonomy and international competitiveness for the European economy? Or build a European defense system, during an ongoing war at the EU borders?

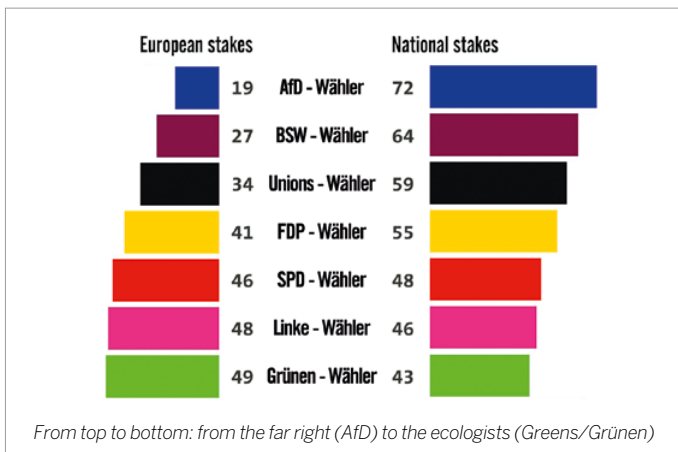
### European or national elections?

However, the preparation for the elections and the interpretation of their outcomes occurred within a national framework in most countries. The European elections were, in certain cases, somewhat hidden by the national elections (legislative, regional or municipal). In other cases, opposition parties wanted to make them a test, or even a referendum, with regard to the current government. At the end of the day, the changes in the political equilibrium were more marked in some countries than on the level of the EU where, despite the gains of the far right and a decline for the ecologists and the center, the social-democratic and conservative parties maintained their shared dominant position.

In particular, the European People's Party (EPP) reinforced its place as the number one political group of the European Parliament.

Another thing which explains this “local preference” is that European policies (as long as they are known to citizens) often appear to be technical or abstract (ETS, Emissions Trading System, TEN-T, Trans-European Transport Network, etc.) while the effects of the LEZ ( Low Emission Zones limiting automobile traffic), congestion, and the efficiency or inefficiency of public transport are immediately perceptible to voters.

This general observation should be nuanced with regard to its manifestations and interpretations. The question of whether the European elections involved mainly national or European stakes does not receive the same answer according to the political families within each country. In Germany for example, the importance given to the specifically European dimension increases along a right-left gradient.

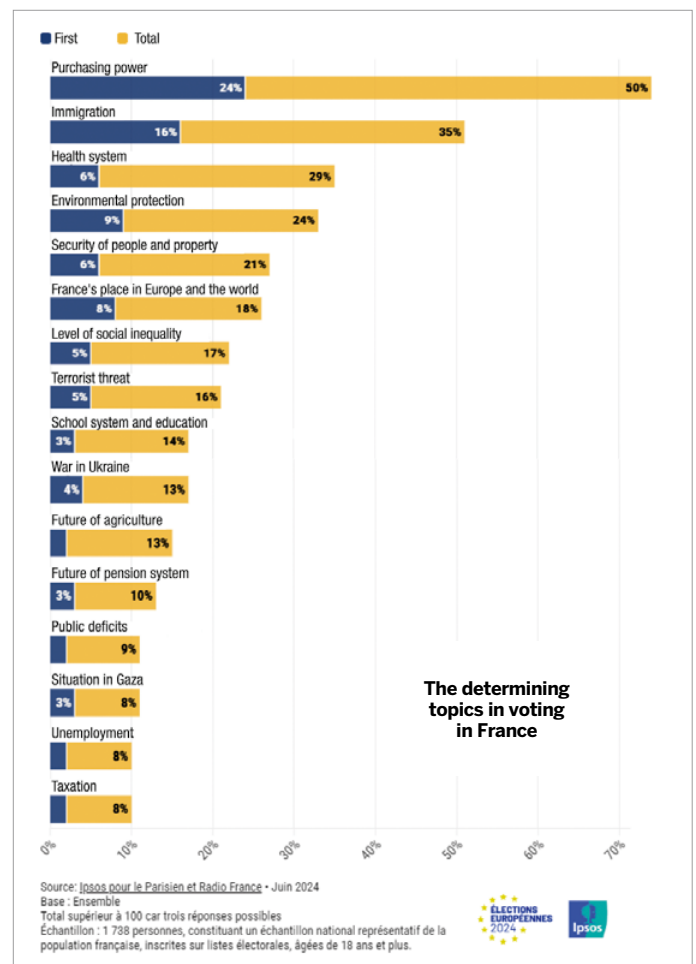
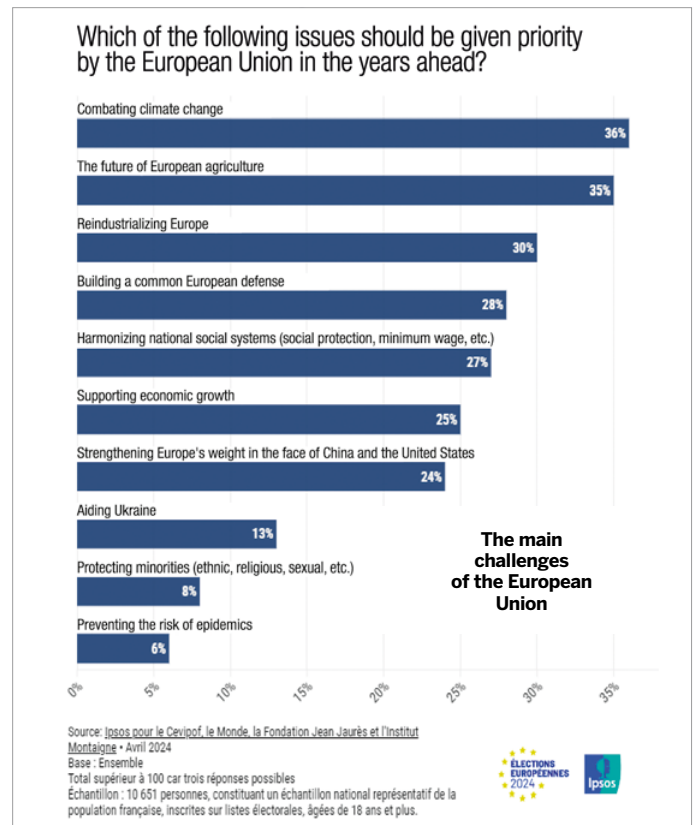


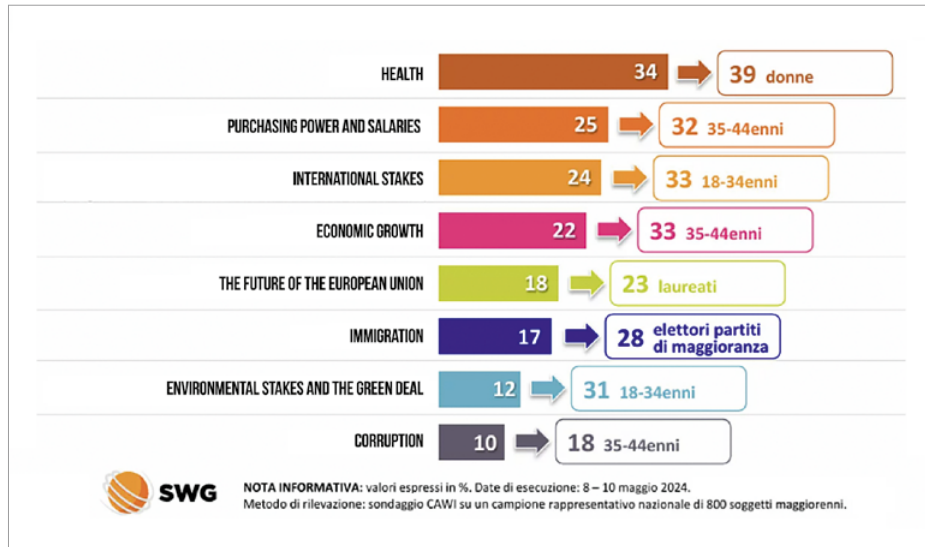
**Meaning of the 2024 European elections  
 According to the political opinion of voters in Germany**

Source : [Tagesschau](https://www.tagesschau.de), June 29, 2024.

In many cases, we observe a distortion between the stakes to which the EU should give priority (according to citizens) and the determining factors in their choices when voting. In France, opinion surveys reveal, on one hand, the fight against climate change, the future of agriculture, reindustrialization, the construction of a European defense system; and on the other, purchasing power, immigration, the health care system, the environment, and security.

The mix between the mainly national concerns and European concerns can be observed in Italy for example (with, as reasons for voting, in descending order: health care, purchasing power, the international situation, economic growth, the future of the Union, immigration, sustainability and the Green Deal, corruption).





Topics taken into consideration at the time of the vote in Italy.

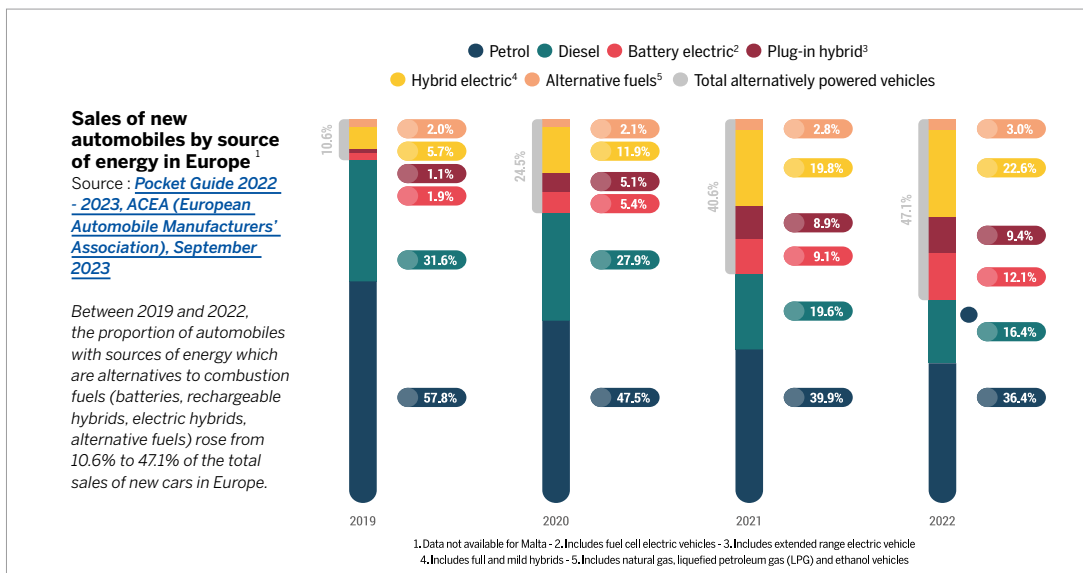
Source : [asvis.it](https://www.asvis.it)

**The divisive topic of the stopping of sale of new combustion engine automobiles**

It is therefore not surprising that issues of transport as such are not very present in public debate. One issue stands out however, because it involves major economic and social factors and is a strongly ideological issue: the European decision to ban the sale of new combustion engine cars as of 2035.

It is true that the models which are now available on the market are large and expensive and that the transition to electric cars is at present socially discriminatory. The implementation of “social leasing” (rental at an

affordable price offered for citizens with low incomes) aims to limit this phenomenon but is still insufficient. Nevertheless, the increase in the share of electric vehicles in sales is undeniable, beyond the cyclical fluctuations which differ from one country to another, and the installation of charging stations is increasing at a steady pace. The future arrival on the market of less expensive vehicles (even though there are protectionist measures that seek to limit the sale of Chinese cars, which are very competitive) and the development of a used car market will increase access to this type of vehicle. However, the difficulty in carrying out a socially acceptable transition is a legitimate source of concern.





While all of the left and center parties support the electrification of cars (and more broadly road transport), several right-wing parties remain unenthusiastic, although the President of the Commission from the EPP, Ursula von der Leyen, was its initiator. The far-right parties and some right parties are fully opposed to it. In the name of the principle of technological neutrality (technical choices are not the competency of politicians), they defend the continuation of the sale of combustion engine cars, as long as they use synthetic fuels, which are carbon neutral. They also maintain that this measure would allow the European automobile industry to continue production in which it is competitive. The ideological stakes linked to this are significant, and the Forza Italia party thus wishes to “defend houses, property and cars”, focusing on individualism in the face of the very idea of ecological planning.

A conflict which underlies the issue of electric cars, but which is rarely made explicit, probably relates to the response to be given to the growth in the demand for mobility. Should we respond by increasing the capacity of infrastructures and vehicle fleets, or rather call for moderation (without daring to speak of “demobility”)? The freedom to come and go, a fundamental right, is it not intangible?

**Other ideas for mobility**

Beyond the issue of the electrification of road transport, the most politically conflictual issue in each country observed, other proposals have appeared here and there. They form a reservoir of ideas that could enrich future European policies.

For several parties, particularly the greens, the social democrats and the far left, rail must be reinforced. Various approaches have been proposed such as low-price subscriptions to travel in Europe by rail, and a shared system for the reservation and sale of tickets. In the same spirit, it has been proposed that short-distance air connections be banned when an alternative rail solution exists. We also find in some places proposals for local transport free of charge. There is more consensus in support for soft modes however. Bicycles are not a political issue!

The means allocated to the financing of European projects is another topic of differentiation. The Eurosceptic or sovereigntist parties are requesting a lesser participation in the European budget while others, from the center right to the left, request that it be increased in order to complete



the TEN-T, the Trans-European Transport Network which contributes to the cohesion of the territory of the EU. Several large emblematic projects are the subject of specific debates: the Lyon-Turin tunnel (the realization of which seems to have passed the point of no return), the bridge over the Straits of Messina, etc.

We also note some national specificities in countries where a specific problem is much more important than in the EU as a whole: the production of electricity from coal in Poland, which remains a producer country and fears the economic and social cost of decarbonization, or maritime transport in Greece (half of the European fleet belongs to Greek shipowners).

Another difference of opinion, between old and new members of the EU (although the last enlargement was in 2013!), involves competition on the international market for road transport of freight and its regulation. All of the parties in Poland (of which the truck fleet dominates the international market within the EU) are unsatisfied with the limits set for cabotage and reject the argument of social dumping on the European road freight market.

Following the 2024 European elections, it seems that there is majority support for the trans-European networks, sustainable mobility and the energy transition, but that this is not unanimously shared by the parties present in Parliament. Some people now put forward concerns about international economic competitiveness or the need for a European defense system alongside the fight against climate change, or even substituting for this priority. The coming months will reveal which equilibria will be found between these major options. The overview of the OPSTE experts sheds light on the considerations which underlie these debates.

### Michel Savy

Director of the Observatory of Transport Policies and Strategies in Europe

## TOUR D'HORIZON SUR LES TRANSPORTS EN EUROPE

This bulletin contains contributions of OPSTE experts:

**Antoine Beyer**, Université de Cergy-Pontoise ;

**Vincent Bourquin**, Haute école d'ingénierie et d'architecture de Fribourg ;

**Jan Burnewicz**, University of Gdańsk ;

**Laurent Franckx**, Bureau fédéral du plan, Brussels ;

**Rafael Giménez-Capdevila**, Societat Catalana de Geografia, Barcelona ;

**Seraphim Kaproz**, University of the Aegean ;

**Barbara Lenz**, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin ;

**Mihaela Negulescu**, University of Bucharest ;

**Cristina Pronello**, Politecnico di Torino ;

and **Cécile Combette-Murin**, TDIE correspondent in Brussels.

*The OPSTE articles reflect only the views of their authors.*

To receive the Observatory's publications,  
please e-mail: [opste@tdie.eu](mailto:opste@tdie.eu)

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TDIE's mission is to illuminate the debates and discussions that feed into strategic public policies on transport, mobility and logistics: on behalf of its members, paying great attention to the directions being taken by public authorities as well as by political groups; and on behalf of public authorities, paying attention to the needs of different territories as well as to the concerns of transport professionals.

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Édité par TDIE - 9, rue de Berri - 75008 PARIS - 01 44 13 31 80 - [opste@tdie.eu](mailto:opste@tdie.eu)  
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Soutenu  
par



MINISTÈRE  
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AVEC LES TERRITOIRES  
ET DE LA DÉCENTRALISATION

Liberté  
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# PANORAMA OF THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS OF 2024

## Political calendar

Before discussing the countries observed, we will give a reminder of the calendar for the new European term. The composition of the Parliament following from the elections held between June 6 and 9, 2024 shows gains for the far-right parties (divided between several parliamentary groups) and a decline for the Greens and the liberals-centrists (Renew), but without changing a certain political continuity: the two main groups remain the conservative group, EPP, and the social-democrat group (group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, S&D). The European Council met at the end of June to propose appointments to the “top jobs” (men or women!): President of the Commission, high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, President of the European Council. The appointment of the President (in this case a woman) of the Commission involved a vote of the European Parliament (which took place on July 18).

The Council also established a strategic agenda for the coming term, with as its topics a free and democratic Europe, strong and safe, prosperous and competitive<sup>1</sup>. Will these topics erase the Green Deal? They allow for the addressing of supply chains, the dependency of Europe for certain essential products, equitable international competition, the reinforcement of strategic sectors (among them mobility), cross-border infrastructure (including transport infrastructure) and the double transition, ecological and digital, which affects all sectors.

In autumn, the European Parliament will interview commissioner candidates. The Parliament will then vote to confirm the entire College of Commissioners, which must assume its functions in December<sup>2</sup>. In June 2025, the new college will publish a multi-year financial framework proposal for the period beyond 2027.

The second half of 2024, when the Council of Ministers of the EU will be chaired by Hungary, should therefore be a time of transition. ■

## BELGIUM

In Belgium, the European elections occurred at the same time as the federal and regional elections. This factor contributed to masking the European stakes.

The Belgian political parties are separated linguistically (except for the Greens and the far left) and have little contact within the same ideological family. The Flemish liberals and the Christian democrats refer to the European parliamentary group of which they are members and cite its topics.

Some proposals for transport appear in the national programs of the parties. The EPP supports technological neutrality, i.e. challenging the electrification of cars by authorizing the use of carbon neutral alternative fuels. It advocates for the completion of TEN-T and considers that clean technologies must be manufactured in Europe (which implies an industrial policy with respect to China and the United States).

For the centrist group in the European Parliament (Renew), energy efficiency is a priority. The electrification of road transport must be supported by innovation and by eliminating subsidies for fossil energies. It wants to be able to address the outlook for growth in the demand for transport while reducing the emissions involved, and new means must be harnessed for the realization of the TEN-T. In general, transport will benefit from the impact of technological progress, to achieve modal transfer of freight from road to rail, intelligent mobility, etc.

The Flemish socialists published a text regarding transport in Europe which is specific to them. They are in favor of the electrification of cars as long as this is socially just, with in particular the implementation of “social leasing” allowing for the making available of electric vehicles to citizens with modest resources. They support multimodality for service to ports, the supplying of ships at docks with electricity and

1. - European Council, [Strategic Programme 2024-2029](#), June 27, 2024.

2. - Article 17 of the Treaty on Functioning states that “the President, the high representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy and the other members of the Commission are subject, as a college, to a vote of approval of the European Parliament. Based on this approval, the Commission is appointed by the European Council, ruling with a qualified majority of the European Union.”

alternative fuels, the doubling of the share of rail freight between now and 2030, the decarbonization of road transport and higher taxation of air transport.

The proposals of the Flemish Greens are limited to the implementation of a European system for the reservation of train tickets, and the mobilization of resources to improve public transport and to make it less expensive. They propose the creation of a European investment fund of at least 1% of the European GDP over the next ten years for public investments in green mobility, industry and housing.

The far-right conservative separatists of the Vlaams Belang (Patriots for Europe group) are in favor of cancelling the Green Deal.

The Labor Party of Belgium (PTB, far left, Left group in the European Parliament), proposes replacing the system of negotiable emission quotas (European trading system, ETS) with standards, investing in hydrogen and phasing out biofuels.

On the French-speaking side, the socialists (S&D group) are against the liberalization of rail and energy which deprives the public authorities of levers to accelerate the transition. They support the direct attribution of public rail services to SNCB. They want to harmonize transport on the European level to the benefit of the community and workers, whether for regulations, the compatibility of infrastructures, pollution standards for vehicles and working conditions for workers in the sector. They want to fight against social dumping and to invest in the creation of quality jobs. Lastly, they want to reinforce coordination between European countries to favor multimodal mobility and to systematically favor rail and river transport.

The Liberal party (Reformist Movement, RM, Renew group) supports the Green Deal but criticizes the taxation of air transport, which it considers ineffective. It is in favor of a European industrial policy.

The Engagés (center party, formerly Christian democrat, Renew group) propose making jet fuel subject to the excise taxes on fuels and airline ticket to VAT, and also to ban short-distance flights on the European level. On the other hand, they are in favor of decreasing taxes on the rail sector. They want to reinforce high-speed rail connections and the number of night trains between European countries, according to a

European vision of rail which guarantees better price competition with air travel. They also want to guarantee the modal transfer of freight from road to rail and waterways through the development of port and rail infrastructure serving road transport hubs for the last kilometers, developing the TEN-T as fast as possible and in a manner integrated with rail corridors and lastly to facilitate the reservation of train journeys throughout Europe.

The French-speaking Greens (Les Écolos, Greens/ALE group), are in favor of rail interconnections in Europe and better regulation to facilitate the border crossing of freight trains.

## FRANCE

The votes in the European elections in France followed the basic ideological differences (conservatism or progressivism, national preference or support for European integration, acceptance of the constraints linked to the fight against climate change or primacy of individual liberties, the free play of the market or planning, etc.).

Some of the topics mentioned were clearly not the purview of the EU (crime and security of citizens, etc.), especially because several candidates wanted to make the election a question of domestic importance, or even a referendum of defiance of the President of France (who asserted his pro-European stance) and the current government.

Opinion surveys revealed a distortion between the stakes to which the European Union should give priority according to citizens and the main subjects that affect their voting choices. On the one hand (in descending order) the fight against climate change, the future of agriculture, reindustrialization, the construction of a European Defense; and on the other purchasing power, immigration, the health care system, the environment, and security (see diagram The priorities of the European Union according to the opinion of French citizens, p 2).

As for the debates regarding transport issues, they covered the environmental urgency, which guides many other orientations; the electrification of automobiles by 2035, the protection of European transport industries, the preference for rail and controls on air transport, the need for infrastructure and its financing.



The results of the European elections were marked by a strong showing by the far right, which came in first, well ahead of the governmental party. As of the evening of the vote, the President of France announced the dissolution of the National Assembly with new elections to be held very quickly. These legislative elections held at the beginning of July led to a new composition of the Assembly, but with none of the three main blocks (left, center and far right) having an absolute majority. This led to uncertainty about the governability of this situation, but that is another story...

Analysis of the place of transport in the European elections in France is facilitated by the TDIE initiative. Before the elections, it published a document proving information and asking the candidates about their visions and proposals regarding the main factors involved in transport policy.<sup>3</sup>

- The fight against climate change: What energy and industrial strategy for transport?
- What financing for the trans-European transport network?
- Modal transfer and decarbonization;
- Public services;
- The aviation sector: stakes and regulations;
- Research and innovation in the field of transport and mobility;
- Transport jobs and professions.

Having collected the responses to this questionnaire (to publish them) from most of the main candidate lists, TDIE organized a public debate between their representatives.<sup>4</sup>

The Rassemblement National (far right, Patriots for Europe group), in a traditionally critical position with respect to the EU (but now without the “Frexit” plan nor phasing out the euro), is against punitive and incantatory ecology and wants to postpone the ban on the sale of new combustion engine cars beyond 2035. Short economic circuits would favor national trade and activities and, for transport, French fleets and resources.

The Républicains (right, member of the EPP) are in favor of freedom of choice by the market and the price signal: i.e., according to the principle of technological

neutrality (technical choices should not be made by politicians), we must not ban the sale of combustion engines, for which the margins of innovation have not been exhausted (use of synthetic fuels, etc.).

The centrists (Renaissance, presidential majority, Renew group) want transport to be decarbonized and accessible for everyone, with for example “social leasing” which allows low-income households to have access to an electric vehicle.

The social democrats (Socialist Party and Place Publique, S&D group) are in favor of social support for the ecological transition in transport, access to electric cars and also for continuing education in the fields affected by industrial transformations. They also propose reinforcing the objectives of reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, i.e., a decrease of 90% by 2040 with respect to the level of 1990.

The greens stress the European urgency of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Priority must be given to the regeneration and modernization of the existing rail network, to the development of local lines and night trains, and not to new projects such as Lyon-Turin and other high-speed lines.

The Communists (PCF) gave a reminder of the failure of the referendum of 2005 on the draft Treaty establishing a constitution for Europe and the way in which this vote was then bypassed. They are in favor of the decarbonization of transport, but without inequalities of mobility to the detriment of the working class.

For the far left (La France insoumise, left group in the European Parliament), the European level can be the framework for common regulations, but their implementation must remain national. It wants measures to better protect the European Parliament from the action of lobbies. To have the necessary resources, it wants to tax surplus profits and sectors that emit greenhouse gases, such as aviation. LFI does not rule out opting out of European law (governed by the rules of free competition and a balanced budget). It also wants to repeal the Posted Workers Directive and impose a European minimum income.

3. - [Avenir de l'Europe : les transports. Analyses, propositions et questions aux candidats à l'élection européenne en France](#), TDIE, April 2024, 56 pages. The full responses of the candidate lists were published, accompanied by a brief summary.

4. - The replay of the debate of May 23, 2024 is available on the [TDIE web site](#).



Among the controversial subjects, the automobile was the most frequently addressed topic, whether to promote the shift to electrical energy or, on the contrary, to continue the sale (and thus the manufacturing) of combustion engine vehicles. This also involves social considerations (the discriminatory effects of electric cars, if they remain more expensive than combustion engine vehicles), individual freedoms versus collective standards, the industrial stakes (maintaining the current activities, or promoting an industrial transformation in Europe).

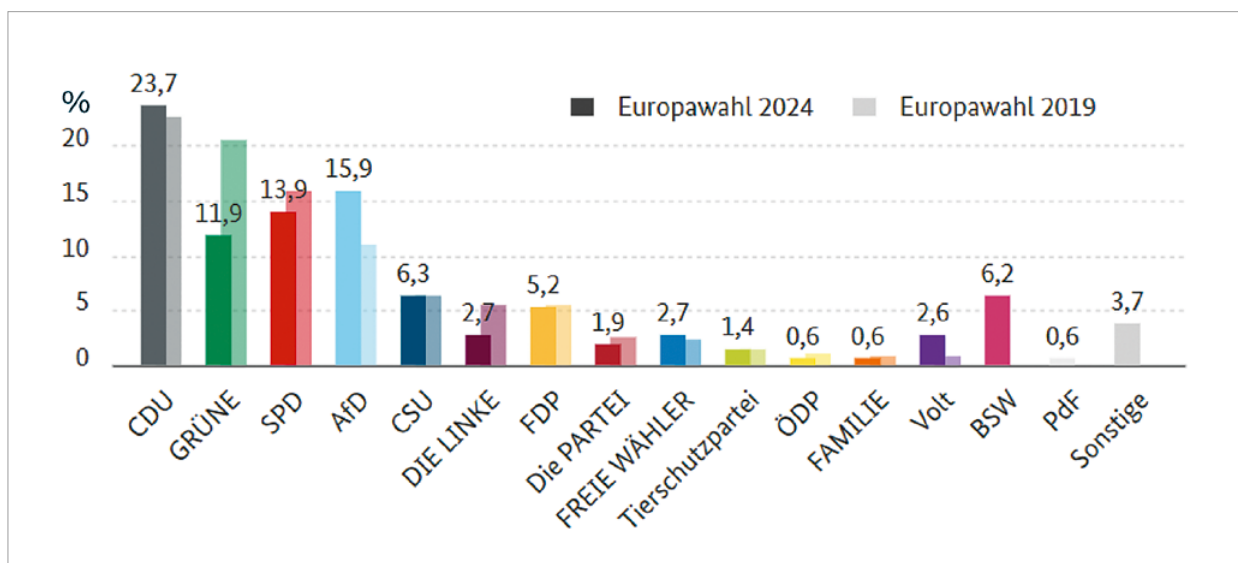
The other topic that marked the strongest differences of positions was rail. The left and Green parties are in favor of a strong policy to reinforce European and domestic rail and public transport in general. They also denounce the right of circulation of long trucks (European Modular System, EMS) and advocate for the limitation of air transport. The RN and LFI are critical of the policy of liberalization of rail services which broke the national companies. The LFI and the PCF criticize the third and fourth rail packets which opened the markets to competition, "dismantling public services."

With regard to the financing of infrastructure, the RN considers that France's contribution to the European budget is too high, while the left and the liberals want increased means to complete the TEN-T.

**GERMANY**

Before the European elections, the federal government had announced that it wanted to more actively pursue the Green Deal (with its implications for transport) among the priority topics for the coming years established by the European Council. The media and the electoral propaganda barely mentioned transport in the presentations of the programs of the parties for the European elections. In Germany, the European Union is generally considered as an element of security to address world problems in a coordinated manner and in particular in times of crisis, as well as of economic success. The topics most often mentioned during the campaign were issues of peace, social security, immigration, the climate (but less intensely than in the past) and lastly economic growth. For many voters, the main issue was in reality the equilibrium between political forces on the national level rather than European stakes. However, this appreciation is not homogeneous according to the opinions of voters and varies according to a rather marked right-left gradient (see diagram Meaning of the 2024 European elections According to the political opinion of voters in Germany, page 2).

The elections showed gains by the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the far right (AfD) and a decline for the social democrats (SPD) and the ecologists (Greens/Grünen).



Results of the European elections in Germany by political parties 2019 and 2024 (% of votes)

Source : [www.bundeswahlleiterin.de](http://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de)

**GREECE**

The topic of transport was mostly absent from European debate in Greece, or present as a sub-issue within other debates. The same could be observed for last year's national elections.

The programs of the parties are no longer as in the past documents of more than one hundred pages, developing analyses on major stakes. They are now limited to some general remarks, with no specific proposals. There are however the topics of the green transition and the new international order marked by geopolitical instability and the necessary adaptation of logistical chains, but these issues are not being addressed outside of specialized circles.

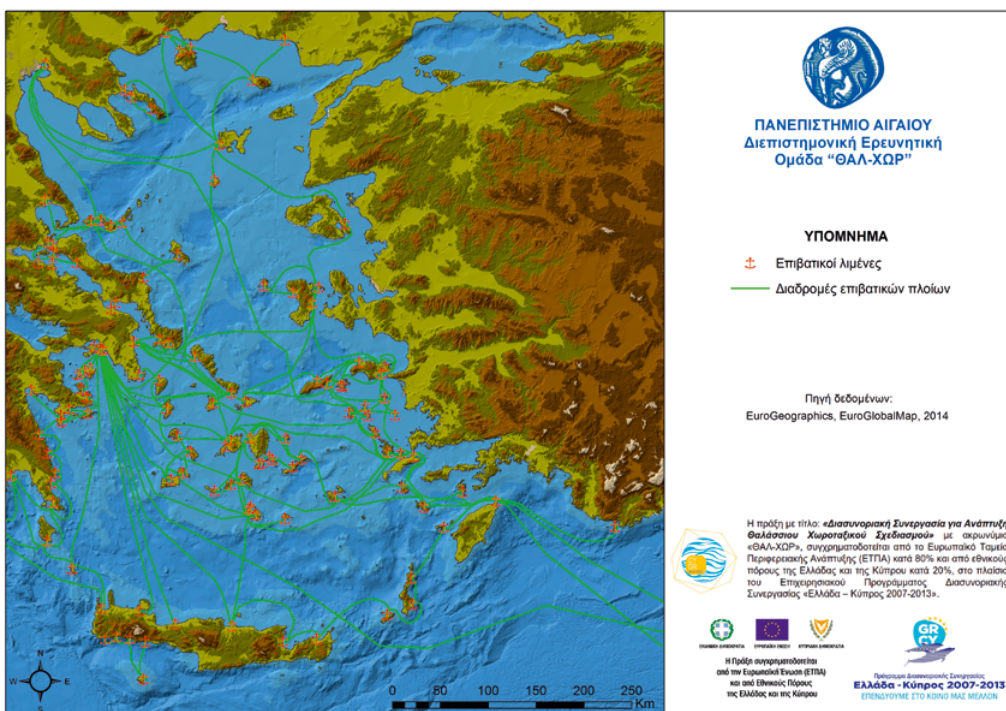
Greek opinion is generally positive with regard to Europe (in particular, the country benefits from the cohesion funds, etc.). For local elections however, rising prices seems to be the most important issue because it affects basic necessities. The price of housing has increased with the recovery of tourism (short-term rentals, through Airbnb for example, compete with long-term rentals for the resident population). There is also the decline of the public health system, justice, civil protection, etc. From an interna-

tional standpoint, relations with Turkey are mentioned while the issue of immigration is still present but in a less virulent manner than in the past.

A particular debate focused on the green transition for maritime transport, with international shipping on the one hand (more than half of the European fleet capacity belongs to Greek ship owners) and domestic coastal transport on the other.

Greek shipping constitutes a liberal entrepreneurial milieu but one which is not very European: it is the global scale and the International Maritime Organization (IMO, specialized agency of the United Nations) which count. Ship owners are hostile to the application of the ETS to maritime transport. They are making substantial investments in new technologies, although the fuel of the future has not been identified and electricity does not allow for long distances...

Coastal transport is a public service which provides territorial cohesion with the islands. It represents 5.4% of the GDP. Its price would increase by 30% with the introduction of the ETS, while the fleet is ageing: how can its replacement be financed? Furthermore, efforts for the decarbonization of maritime transport must also include ports.



**Coastal transport in Greece**

Source: Study report in the framework of the Interreg Programme 2007-2013, co-funded by the European Commission and the governments of Greece and Cyprus, 2015.

**ITALY**

Transport was not frequently mentioned in the debates in preparation for the European elections in Italy. To know the positions of the parties on transport issues we must read their programs carefully. According to a study carried out by the ISPI (*Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale, International Institute for International Politics*) in 2023, the prevailing concerns were the economic crisis, climate change, immigration, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the world pandemic<sup>5</sup>. However, it is the topic of immigration that was most often mentioned during the campaign. In the period preceding the elections, health, purchasing power, international scenarios, economic growth, the future of Europe, immigration, sustainability and the Green Deal and lastly corruption were the topics which seem to have been taken into consideration at the time of the vote (see diagram Topics taken into consideration at the time of the vote in Italy, p. 3).

After the voting, the breakdown of the 76 Italian MPs showed the strong position of the far right (ECR and ID) followed by the social-democratic left, and the relative weakness of the far left, the Greens and the EPP.

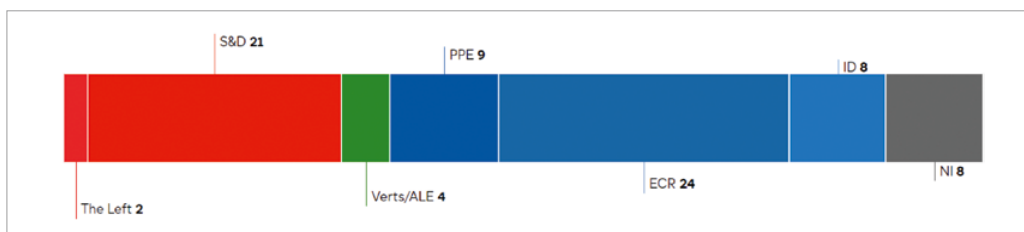
When we review the political parties, we observe that Azione (the Action Party, member of the European liberal Renew group) wants to reconsider the strategy for rare materials and green supply chains. It proposes to adjust the calendar for the shift to low-emission vehicles by linking the taking effect of the bans on the sale of combustion engine vehicles with the creation of electrical charging infrastructure distributed over the entire country, and by stimulating demand through economic incentives rather than bans. It also proposes to authorize the sale of motor vehicles which use biofuels after 2035 with a revision of the plan every three years.

Forza Italia (member of the EPP) wants to “defend homes, property and cars.” It also considers it necessary “to protect the automobile supply chain by supporting the companies that saw the network of Italian suppliers dedicated to our high-tech sector dismantled due to the ideological follies supported by the left.” It also proposes to guarantee incentives for the latest generation combustion engines for a significant reduction of carbon emissions and to support the development of alternative fuels, hydrogen technologies and new fuel systems for vehicles, i.e., to abandon the decision to ban the sale of new automobiles with combustion engines as of 2035.

The Five Star Movement (member of the Left group in the European Parliament) has always been sensitive to transport issues. It recommends facilitating exchanges between modes of transport and sustaining connections between the Italian and European rail networks. It puts emphasis on service for industrial sites, in synergy with the strategy of development of systems for ports, between ports, airports and dry port systems. It also recommends improving the connections between the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian ridges and with the South.

It proposes to accompany the stopping of the sale of combustion engine automobiles as of 2035 with equitable transition policies, and a reduction of the number of private cars in circulation, reinforcing public transport in cities. The automobile sector will be converted with European funds, which could also finance bike paths and the industrial production of bicycles (including electric bicycles).

It is furthermore necessary to decarbonize ports and maritime transport, which account for 2.5% of world greenhouse gas emissions.



Source : European Commission, [Seats by political group - 2024-2029 Italy - Inaugural session](#)

5. - ISPE, [Sondaggio ISPI 2023: gli italiani e la politica internazionale](#), January 21, 2023.





For the Lyon-Turin tunnel, the traffic forecasts were apparently overestimated. Lastly, Italy doesn't need cathedrals in the desert, but rather infrastructure which serves its citizens: it must abandon the construction of the bridge over the Straits of Messina with European funds.

The program of the Democratic Party (S&D group) does not include any section or reference to mobility. At the very most, it says: "Living in a territory means being able to live and enjoy the same rights of citizenship, services that are essential for people, mobility, physical and digital infrastructure, and access to training and work." It also proposes to improve connections in mountain areas.

This political prudence is probably due to the fact that some mobility issues are particularly divisive, particularly the ban on combustion engines, the thirty km/hour zones, and the limited traffic zones in historic city centers which have already led to heated controversies, in Bologna and Milan for example.

Fratelli d'Italia (right wing, ECR group), the party of Giorgia Meloni, the current Prime Minister, supports the decarbonization of various modes of transport and sustainable urban mobility. But it wants to cancel the decision to ban the sale of new automobiles with combustion engines as of 2035 and to relaunch the automobile sector according to the principle of technological neutrality, by investing in all alternative fuels and not just in electricity, and to develop the supply chain for biofuels.

Unlike the other right wing eurosceptic parties, Fratelli d'Italia is in favor of the completion of the TEN-T, as the cross-border sections promote interconnection in the single market.

For the Verdi-Sinistra alliance (four members are with the Greens and two with the Left in the European Parliament), the challenge of climate neutrality also means the realization of a mobility system which is sustainable, inclusive and accessible. To this end, it is necessary to increase investments in public transport and slow, shared and electric mobility and to support the increased use of bicycles.

To reduce the costs of mobility for citizens, they want to consider free transport for young people and financing of actions for the fight against poverty linked to mobility from the Social Fund for the Climate.

Investing in night trains and establishing a European ticketing platform could make it possible to reduce the number of short-distance flights.

La Lega (Lega Nord, led by Matteo Salvini, right wing and Eurosceptic, member of the Patriots for Europe), is positioned "in defense of our real estate and automobile industry." It is committed to guaranteeing all citizens "the sacrosanct right to own private vehicles at sustainable prices." It is thus hostile to the ban on new combustion engines in 2035 and wants to authorize the unlimited use of biofuels.

**POLAND**

The European elections in the 27 Member States of the EU should be evaluated as a function of their potential impact on the future common policies – including transport policy – while domestic policy considerations often prevail. Furthermore, the thinking of all of the candidates to the European Parliament (and of their parties) is of little importance, because only 5% of them will be elected ... Lastly, among the MPs, a limited number will be involved in the handling of transport issues, while the initiative for new legislative texts is the competency of the Commission (but taking into account the orientations negotiated within the European Council).

To predict the future form of the common transport policy, we should take into account a set of determining factors, and not just the fragmentary ideas of the electoral campaign. However, the European elections are not without effect and, over the years, the common transport policy influences national policies and encourages their progressive convergence. The context of the 2024 elections includes elements in continuity with earlier periods as well as new items. Some elements carried over include subsidiarity rules, the search for sustainability and the interoperability of transport systems, the liberalization of markets, the integration of infrastructure, etc. But the international situation has changed substantially, with conflicts in the world and even in Europe, the tensions of international commerce, as well as technical progress in terms of energy, information processing (artificial intelligence), etc. We can thus expect that new concerns will appear in the European Parliament, leading to the updating (some would even like the abandoning) of the Green Deal strategy, the realization of the trans-European transport network, while alternative visions to the electrification of road transport are being put forward.

During the election campaign, the main problems discussed were of national importance (security, access to transport, the future of coal extraction, etc.). Among the problems of European importance, there were above all discussions of issues of the Green Deal and rules for the dispatching of immigrants within the EU. An important Polish aspect of this campaign was military aid to Ukraine, requiring special transport of merchandise and military equipment through the country.

Of 53 Polish MPs sent to the European Parliament, 27 have pro-European opinions (Civic Coalition, Third Way and Left) and 26 have anti-European opinions (Law and Justice, Confederation).

The program of the Civic Coalition (21 MPs, members of the EPP) assumes the phasing-out of coal in the heating sector and in the commercial energy sector by 2035. The decarbonization of transport applies first and foremost to road transport. In the international road transport of freight, the decarbonization strategy is linked to the maintaining of the international competitiveness of Polish carriers.

For the Third Way (three MPs, members of the EPP), the last coal production unit in Poland must be closed by 2040, while monitoring the quality of life of the people who now depend on the existence of mines, power plants or the sector linked to coal. An effort must be made to reach total climate neutrality by 2050, and the abandoning of coal is one of the steps to reach this objective.

For the Left (three MPs, members of the S&D group), the use of coal must be abandoned as soon as possible, while maintaining the energy security of Poland and the economic security of the inhabitants of the regions that are dependent on fossil fuel. Thanks to public investments in solar panels and offshore and land-based wind farms, most of the energy consumed in the economy in 2035 will come from renewable energy sources.

For Law and Justice (twenty MPs, members of the European Conservatives and Reformists group), coal must remain one of the sources of the Polish mix and the program of the party does not set a precise date for the coal phase-out. The decarbonization of road transport must be linked to the maintaining of the competitiveness of Polish carriers on the European market.

We thus observe that all of the Polish political parties have a critical or negative attitude with regard to radical decarbonization. The complete implementation of this policy would lead to high costs and would distort fair competition on the international transport markets. Furthermore, the decarbonization (electrification) of Polish road transport and the automobile industry would lead to major changes on the labor market and the risk of losing about 300,000 jobs.





Timișoara, Roumanie

Over the past few years there has been a controversy between Poland and the EU regarding the development of the Trans-European corridors in the country. These controversies will continue to exist, because the TEN-T system does not reinforce the connections between the largest metropolitan areas.

Poland is still not satisfied with the liberalization of access to road cabotage of freight. The argument of social dumping as a limitation of cabotage is not true in the eyes of the Poles, because such an argument is not raised in Poland in the case of supermarket chains dominated by foreign capital (as well as in the case of logistics).

Poland is expecting that as of 2024 the EU, within the framework of its competencies in the field of transport, will address issues such as the reform of the Green Deal, the decarbonization and electrification of transport, the reduction of the over-regulation of transport, the planning of new infrastructure elements that are more realistic in terms of their financing, the liberalization of the rail network in relation with an effective trajectory of interoperability, the abandoning of the dogma of social dumping in international road transport carried out by carriers of the countries of Central Europe, and lastly greater attention to the reinforcement of transport and the spatial cohesion of the EU.

## ROMANIA

In Romania, the European elections coincided with the municipal elections. Electoral speeches focused on the problems which communities are facing on the local level, with very few references to regional, national and European challenges.

The European Parliament candidates did not carry out a significant electoral campaign. They mostly counted on the powers of persuasion of the Romanian political parties to which they belong. Concerns regarding European transport policies were only mentioned in the professional milieu involved. One of the possible explanations is that the interest of the population is focused on the resolution of urban mobility problems on the local level, because they see the negative aspects directly and on a daily basis.

The development of major circulation infrastructures, road (highways, expressways) and rail (particularly metropolitan transport), on the regional and national level, was very little discussed in the electoral debates, even though, over the past few years, there has been a perceptible acceleration in the establishment of new road connections and urban bypasses, at high speed. However, much remains to be done to reduce the discrepancy in connectivity on the national level with respect to those of Western countries which



began their process of development of highways three or four decades before the East European countries. The Romanian region of Moldavia remains particularly inaccessible, and it is appropriate that the European Commission continue the policy of equitable access to the TEN-T network (central and global) for the entire territory of the European Union.

On the national level, the framework for the elaboration of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP) was established and, based on the mechanism of European project financing, contributed significantly to the change of mentality and models in urban mobility planning. It is therefore desirable that the European Commission continue and perfect this financial support mechanism, particularly in the countries of Eastern Europe which are somewhat behind in the development of alternative transport systems which are less polluting and which consume less urban space (metropolitan rail transport, local rail transport, cycling infrastructures, micro-mobility, etc.).

On the municipal level and especially in large cities, the population is worried about the number of traffic jams and the insufficiency of parking with respect to the demand determined by the very large number of cars on the road (in Bucharest, car ownership is 640 cars/1,000 inhabitants). The population's demands therefore focus on solutions to make traffic more fluid and to increase the number of parking spaces and, to a considerably lesser extent, on solutions for the decarbonization of mobility, modal restructuring and urban regeneration.

In political terms, the situation is dominated by a coalition of the Social Democratic Party and the Liberal Party which obtained 67% of the total number of municipalities and which will also very likely obtain a large majority in the national legislative elections. It is an apparently dichotomous alliance, leading to center-type policies, with no clear ideological orientations. The other parties have been weakened over the past five years and do not currently constitute a notable opposition. We therefore cannot speak of alternative perspectives in the field of transport, of an ideological essence, on any territorial level.

## SPAIN

The European elections in Spain come within a long sequence of national and regional elections, in a climate of persistent political polarization, and some parties wanted a referendum against the Prime Minister. This time, the results are not a rejection of him, nor a vote of approval. Opinion surveys show that the Spanish mostly have a positive image of the European Union and the forces favorable to Europe are in the majority among the MPs, i.e. 50 MPs out of 61.

The two-party system (opposing the socialist PSOE and the conservative Partido Popular) structures the results, despite a breakthrough by the far right, while the alternative left is divided and having difficulty consolidating itself.

Transport issues were not very present during the election campaign, as they were mainly addressed within the framework of the Green Deal or industrial policy.

RTVE, the Spanish State company for television and radio, systematically compared the electoral programs of the Spanish candidates for the European elections<sup>6</sup> We note few differences between the programs of the Spanish parties and those of the European parties to which they are linked.

Podemos (member of the Left group in the European Parliament) promotes public transport and particularly trains, for freight and passengers. It proposes to create a European card giving free access to urban, metropolitan and regional transport and to establish public service obligations for air travel between the Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands and mainland Spain.

Other measures aiming to reduce emissions: setting minimum objectives for the number of kilometers of bicycle paths per inhabitant, encouraging the use of electric vehicles and the substitution of alternative fuels for fossil fuels (25% of vehicles sold by 2025, 70% by 2030 and 100% by 2040), promoting public-private investments in batteries and storage technologies and in sustainable mobility. This party also proposes to intensify European rail infrastructure plans, particularly in the regions where the infrastructure deficit is highest.

6. - RTVE, [Comparador de programas electorales de las elecciones europeas 2024 : las propuestas de los partidos](#), May 31, 2024.

In terms of energy, it proposes to cut the amount of energy produced from fossil fuels in half by 2030, to achieve entirely renewable production by 2040, and to support a European plan for employment and the climate for a green horizon by devoting 5.1% of the GDP to the ecological transition.

Sumar (which has two MPs with the Greens group and one in the European Left group) proposes a European framework for public transport with an affordable ticketing system, as well as an experiment with a European multimodal transport card. It recommends reinforcing cycling infrastructure. For energy, it wants to increase the objective of reduction of emissions from 55% to 65% between now and 2030.

Ahora Repúblicas (two elected representatives sit in the Greens/European Free Alliance group and one in the Left group in the European Parliament) wants to promote a European public transport network, with investments in sustainable modes, low prices, a multimodal ticketing system and a central platform for train journey reservations on a European level. It also promotes sustainable mobility in cities.

For rail, it proposes increasing the number of night trains and freight transport, while banning flights of less than 650 km for which high-speed rail alternatives exist.

For road transport, it wants to introduce a speed limit on the European level in order to reduce accidents and emissions.

For energy, it recommends increasing investments in the transition to 1.7 billion euros by 2030, devoting at least 1% of the GDP of each Member State to renewable energy and energy efficiency, coal phase-out by 2030, fossil gas by 2035 and all non-renewable energy by 2040, acceleration of the electrification of transport, heating and industrial processes and lastly to give priority to programs for energy efficiency and energy savings.

The Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE, S&D group) proposes to take into account the effects of poverty in terms of mobility in the national plans for the economy and the climate and in sustainable urban mobility plans. It wants to support the most sustainable modes of transport, such as rail, and to invest in inter-modality to facilitate door-to-door

mobility. It also proposes to revise the European legislation on air quality so that the low-emission zones include the obligation for the States to provide for penalties in the event of non-observance, to support the development of European corridors (TEN-T) such as the Atlantic and Mediterranean corridors as the main mobility axes for passengers and freight.

For the adaptation to climate change, solidarity mechanisms should be developed between Member States, with promotion of a law on the adaptation to climate change and the implementation of a circular and neutral economy with regard to the climate by 2050.

Junts (centrist Catalan separatist party, among the independents at the European Parliament) plans to work within European institutions to create the largest logistical platform in southern Europe and to defend the priority of the Mediterranean rail corridor.

Energy sovereignty must be based on the expansion of renewable energy and energy efficiency, maintaining the European objective of climate neutrality by 2050 and reduction of at least 90% of greenhouse gas emissions by 2040. In this context, it wants to end the subsidies for and dependency on fossil fuels. It proposes to implement the Green Deal with more determination and speed, making sure that the costs of the environmental policies are shared in a socially just manner, and lastly to improve the monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions, particularly methane, and to support the effective implementation of the carbon tax at borders and the reduction of free quotas in order to avoid CO<sub>2</sub> emission leaks outside of the EU.

Coalición por una Europa Solidaria/Coalition for a Solidary Europe (CEUS, linked to Renew, centrist), wants to put bicycles at the forefront of sustainable urban mobility. It proposes giving the regions the means to promote sustainable and multimodal mobility habits, to simplify the use of public transport and to implement common ticketing systems. It also suggests giving the central network of the TEN-T 100,000 secured parking spaces for trucks, to avoid dumping in the road transport sector and to uniformly apply the conditions of access to the haulage trucker profession.

In terms of energy, it would like to promote the use of alternative fuels in air and maritime transport and lastly to develop the Single European Sky for the efficiency of air transport and the reduction of emissions.

The program of the Partido Popular (PP) is that of the conservative EPP to which it is linked. In terms of energy, the EPP wants more interconnections for electricity and gas in order to make progress towards an Energy Union with lower prices and carbon neutrality. To do this, there is a need for diversified investment in resources, raw materials, technologies and the innovations necessary for energy resilience and the electrification and hydrogenation of the economy. The abandoning of fossil fuels in favor of renewable energies must not cause deindustrialization (in the interest of European competitiveness). In particular, the EPP expresses its reservations regarding the stopping of the sale of new automobiles with combustion engines in 2035, in the name of technological neutrality, and proposes to authorize the use of carbon-neutral synthetic fuels.

The Vox party (linked to the Patriots and European conservatives, far right) wants to abolish the European system of limitation of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and to repeal all of the policies inspired by the European Green Deal and Agenda 2030, and in particular the European law on the climate.

The movement *Se acabó la fiesta* (Self, The Party's Over, independent European group), which obtained three seats and based its campaign on the social networks, did not publish an election platform.

These proposals, indicated in the programs of the candidates who obtained parliamentary representation, can be made explicit in three parts: Green Deal, sustainable mobility and trans-European networks.

The Green Deal means everything connected to the energy transition, including the electrification of automobiles and the objectives of reduction of polluting emissions. All of the center and left political forces are aligned with the postulates of the European Union, only the far right is against them, while the conservative party, although it is integrated with the EPP which is favorable to it, has not expressed an explicit position.

For sustainable mobility there are no explicitly contrary positions, although the far right does not want to act to develop it. For the favorable positions, Sumar and Ahora Repúblicas suggest the limitation of air transport for short journeys and their replacement with rail transport, a measure which has already been adopted by the Spanish government. The revival of night trains was also mentioned.

For the development of the trans-European networks, particularly the Mediterranean and Atlantic corridors that cross the Iberian Peninsula, the agreement of the various candidates is clear, although not made explicit by the right and the far right, nor by the alternative left, Podemos. The left is rather focusing on the development of a pan-European rail network.

We thus observe that explicit support for policies favorable to the energy transition, sustainable transport and to trans-European networks does not represent 50% of voters. This limited support is more due to the absence of positioning of several candidates rather than to contrary postures, which involve only 10% of voters. ■



Country	Seats (total)	% EP	EPP	% by country	% by political group	S&D	% by country	% by political group	PfE	% by country	% by political group	ECR	% by country	% by political group	Renew	% by country	% by political group	Greens / EFA	% par pays	% by political group	The Left	% by country	% by political group	ESN	% by country	% by political group	NI	% by country	% by political group	
Austria	20	2,78	5	25	2,66	5	25	3,68	6	30	7,14				2	10	2,6	2	10	3,77										30,30
Belgium	22	3,06	3	13,64	1,6	4	18,18	2,94	3	13,64	3,57	3	13,64	3,85	5	22,73	6,49	2	9,09	3,77	2	9,09	4,35							
Bulgaria	17	2,36	6	35,29	3,19	2	11,76	1,47				1	5,88	1,28	5	29,41	6,49							3	17,65	12				
Croatia	12	1,67	6	50	3,19	4	33,33	2,94				1	8,33	1,28				1	8,33	1,89										
Cyprus	6	0,83	2	33,33	1,06	1	16,67	0,74				1	16,67	1,28							1	16,67	2,17				1	16,67	3,03	
Czechia	21	2,92	5	23,81	2,66				9	42,86	10,71	3	14,29	3,85				1	4,76	1,89				1	4,76	4	2	9,52		
Denmark	15	2,08	2	13,33	1,06	3	20	2,21	1	6,67	1,19	1	6,67	1,28	4	26,67	5,19	3	20	5,66	1	6,67	2,17							
Estonia	7	0,97	2	28,57	1,06	2	28,57	1,47				1	14,29	1,28	2	28,57	2,6													12,12
Finland	15	2,08	4	26,67	2,13	2	13,33	1,47				1	6,67	1,28	3	20	3,9	2	13,33	3,77	3	20	6,52							
France	81	11,25	6	7,41	3,19	13	16,05	9,56	30	37,04	35,71	4	4,94	5,13	13	16,05	16,88	5	6,17	9,43	9	11,11	19,57	1	1,23	4				
Germany	96	13,33	31	32,29	16,49	14	14,58	10,29							8	8,33	10,39	15	15,63	28,3	4	4,17	8,7	14	14,58	56	10	10,42		
Greece	21	2,92	7	33,33	3,72	3	14,29	2,21	1	4,76	1,19	2	9,52	2,56							4	19,05	8,7				4	19,05	12,12	
Hungary	21	2,92	7	33,33	3,72	2	9,52	1,47	11	52,38	13,1													1	4,76	4				
Ireland	14	1,94	4	28,57	2,13	1	7,14	0,74							6	42,86	7,79				3	21,43	6,52							
Italy	76	10,56	9	11,84	4,79	21	27,63	15,44	8	10,53	9,52	24	31,58	30,77				4	5,26	7,55	10	13,16	21,74							
Latvia	9	1,25	2	22,22	1,06	1	11,11	0,74	1	11,11	1,19	3	33,33	3,85	1	11,11	1,3	1	11,11	1,89										
Lithuania	11	1,53	3	27,27	1,6	2	18,18	1,47				2	18,18	2,56	2	18,18	2,6	1	9,09	1,89				1	9,09	4				
Luxembourg	6	0,83	2	33,33	1,06	1	16,67	0,74				1	16,67	1,28	1	16,67	1,3	1	16,67	1,89										
Malta	6	0,83	3	50	1,6	3	50	2,21																						
Netherlands	31	4,31	6	19,35	3,19	4	12,9	2,94	6	19,35	7,14	1	3,23	1,28	7	22,58	9,09	6	19,35	11,32	1	3,23	2,17							
Poland	53	7,36	23	43,4	12,23	3	5,66	2,21				20	37,74	25,64	1	1,89	1,3							3	5,66	12	3	5,66	9,09	
Portugal	21	2,92	7	33,33	3,72	8	38,1	5,88	2	9,52	2,38				2	9,52	2,6				2	9,52	4,35							
Romania	33	4,58	10	30,3	5,32	11	33,33	8,09				6	18,18	7,69	3	9,09	3,9	1	3,03	1,89							2	6,06	6,06	
Slovakia	15	2,08	1	6,67	0,53										6	40	7,79							1	6,67	4	7	46,67	21,21	
Slovenia	9	1,25	5	55,56	2,66	1	11,11	0,74							2	22,22	2,6	1	11,11	1,89										
Spain	61	8,47	22	36,07	11,7	20	32,79	14,71	6	9,84	7,14				1	1,64	1,3	4	6,56	7,55	4	6,56	8,7				3	6,56		
Sweden	21	2,92	5	23,81	2,66	5	23,81	3,68				3	14,29	3,85	3	14,29	3,9	3	14,29	5,66	2	9,52	4,35							0,00
UE	720	100	188	26,11	100	136	18,89	100	84	11,67	100	78	10,83	100	77	10,69	100	53	7,36	100	46	6,39	100	25	3,47	100	32	4,58	100,00	

**The European Parliament resulting from the June 2024 elections**

Source : [results.elections.europa.eu](https://results.elections.europa.eu) (consulted and reworked on 29/08/2024) - OPSTE countries are highlighted in blue.

The top five countries in terms of number of MEPs account for 50.97% of the total (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland). They also account for almost 50% (48.40%) of the EPP group and 51.21% of the S&D group.

Eight political groups and a separate category for non-attached members :

**EPP:** Group of the European People's Party, right; **S&D:** Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, left;

**PfE:** Patriots for Europe, right (extr.); **ECR:** European Conservatives and Reformists, right (extr.);

**Renew Europe :** center/liberals; **Greens/ALE:** Greens/European Free Alliance, left; **The Left:** Group of the Left in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL), left (extremist); **ESN:** Europe of Sovereign Nations, right (extremist); **NI:** Non-attached Members, various.