



European Economic and Social Committee

Europe III

The voice of
Diversity Europe Group
June 2019



Arno METZLER (DE)
*President of the
Diversity Europe Group*

Dear colleagues and guests,

Europe has chosen!

The mobilization of civil society has succeeded. For the first time in history of EU elections, voter turnout has been very much higher than in the previous rounds. This time slightly more than 50% of EU citizens eligible to vote expressed their democratic right and took part in the elections. The turnout is historic - the highest score in 20 years! Numbers increased in 21 countries. In Germany, the turnout was even higher than 60%. As representatives of civil society, we can be proud of this mobilization and of our joint efforts to contribute to this.

Civil society organizations and our members played an instrumental role in mobilizing EU citizens. Not only did they take part in the elections. They also convinced and motivated citizens across Europe to turn out and vote in favor of the EU and the values it represents. Achieving this is simply impossible without engaging and motivating citizens on all levels. This activity does not end now. It is starting now. The follow-up of the European elections is a great opportunity to put the EU back on track with concrete ideas, visions, measures and dialogue and to go further including citizens. EESC started to elaborate proposals to contribute to EU Commission working programme 2019-2025.

The positive narrative has to be filled with concrete proposals. The ever closer Europe has to be discussed with its citizens. The communication process in our represented organizations shall continue. We will try to provide you with all the possible support.

Yours sincerely,
Arno Metzler

ED Editorial

Outcome of the European elections



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A winning Europe?



Reine-Claude MADER (FR)
*Member of the Consumption,
Housing and Living
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Member of the Diversity Europe Group*

Taking place in a context of social crisis, the European elections in France suscitated many fears with regard to the turnout and the results. Indeed, the confrontation between Europhobes and Europhiles has demonstrated the extent to which the role of Europe has been underrated, as well as an escalation of extremes which placed the responsibility of the crisis in the hands of European politics. Therefore a rejection of this form of consultation could have been feared. On the contrary, it was not the case. 4 million more voters than in the last elections went to the polls and there was a high level of youth participation among them even if

many young people are unhappy with the electoral consultations. The fact that the lists of MEPs who were committed to the European project have collected the largest number of votes has to be underlined. The European project has not been rejected. On the contrary, it will thrive as long as it corresponds with the aspirations of the population which has to be consulted and informed. The parliamentarians who have just been elected will have a great responsibility. Organized civil society can certainly help them and must keep on mobilizing.



The European elections and civil society



Jan DIRX (NL)

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When polling stations close and first forecasts get published, it is always a nerve-shredding moment for anyone who is politically engaged. This was the case for me on Sunday evening at 11 p.m. - whereas Italy was the last Member State to count the votes for the EP for a new 5-year period.

A few days later, now that the votes have been counted and that the outcome of the election is known, I would like to give a preliminary analysis of the consequences of the results on the stance of the civil society in the European Union. I am writing this analysis while looking out on the Belliard Street on which police escorts – with sirens wailing – bring government leaders to the building of the European Council so that they can translate the outcomes and directly assess the desirable configurations. First of all, let's sum up **the outcome of the European elections in four striking elements.**

Firstly, **the turnout:** although the turnout was actually sadly low, it was the highest in 20 years with a score of 50.5%. An illustration of the involvement of the citizens (in a positive or negative way) in the EU is growing. That should be an incentive for each EU institution, including the EESC, to maintain and increase that involvement by promoting active participation and communicating in clear language. That involvement will undoubtedly increase in the next five years due to the **remarkable second point: for the first time in history, Christian Democrats and Social Democrats have lost their joint majority.** This means that these two parties can no longer arrange things in a back room, as this was pretty common. They will now have to find majorities in the European Parliament within a political debate. That will make European politics more visible and lively.

A third important point is the substantial gain of the green parties. This is indeed a consequence of the concerns of citizens about the growing climate crisis, but also a reward for the fact that many green parties have succeeded in linking their ecological agenda with the social and democratic agenda in recent years. That means that you come up with solutions for climate and environmental problems which also have a positive effect on peoples' income position and on their say and involve-

ment in social issues. Wind and solar energy projects in-house are an example of this.

Finally, the fourth worth mentioning element is **the relatively modest gain of the Eurosceptics and populists, with the exception of the results in Italy, in Hungary and in Poland.** Marine Le Pen won the battle with President Macron in France, but the percentage of votes she won was lower than the one five years ago.

After these observations, as a representative of nature and environmental organisations and as a strong advocate of the position of CSOs, I am quite satisfied with the outcome of the elections of the European Parliament. The four largest political groups in the EP (Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Liberals and Greens) are all four defenders of the democratic rule of law, human rights and the stance of civil society. These four will often have to implement new policies and legislation in dialogue and debate with each other. **This also means that CSOs have four inputs to put their wishes and proposals on the table and to gain support. This result also makes it clear that it is more than necessary to continue to provide active social and political support to citizens and their organizations in the EU Member States where the rule of law and/or human rights are under pressure.**

Moreover, during the election campaign, Frans Timmermans (the *'spitzenkandidat'* of the *Social Democrats*) has always mentioned that the climate crisis is the highest priority for the EU. Combined with the strong growth of the green parties, with amongst other the climate scientist Bas Eickhout as *Spitzenkandidat*, **this raises the hope that the EU will intensify its energy saving and efficiency as well as its sustainable energy developments efforts in the near future.** In addition, civil society will undoubtedly face strong lobby competition from the established fossil powers.

But let us use this political momentum to make it more than clear that the progressive forces in the European Parliament have broad public support if they commit themselves to environmental, social and democratic justice.

Jan Dirx - 28 May 2019

EU elections in Slovakia



Vladimír BÁLEŠ (SK)

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The election turnout in Slovakia was 22.47%, much higher than in 2014 when Slovakia had a turnout of 13%. Still, it was the lowest within the EU.

The winners of the EU elections were pro-European parties, Progressive Slovakia/Spolu 20.11% and Direction-Social Democracy 15.72%. Furthermore, the far-right People's Party-Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) also had a strong result. With the support of 12% of votes, it obtained two seats in the EP.

Moreover, it was the first time that a politician of Roma ethnicity from Slovakia became a member of the EP. Most of his votes came from the majority. **This result constitutes the best answer against extremism. Another important aspect is that Slovakia will not likely have a representative among the hard-line Eurosceptics. In comparison to the rest of the Visegrád Group Region, the strongest pro-European voice is coming from Slovakia.**

The participation of members of the EESC to the to the EESC going local missions campaigns, in which they explained the importance of voting also influenced the high turnout in a positive manner.

