

BRIEFING

100 DAYS TO GO, 100 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT EUROPE'S YEAR OF CHANGE

At 07:00 CET on Tuesday 11 February, there is exactly 100 days to go to the opening of the polls for the European Parliament elections.

As the countdown to the elections intensifies, here is our overview of where we stand:

Top jobs

1. Martin Schulz, the President of the European Parliament, is the candidate-designate of the Party of European Socialists for the presidency of the European Commission. He will formally become the PES candidate at a congress in Rome on 28 February and 1 March. *Read our profile of [Martin Schulz](#) and our [Storify of the announcement of his nomination](#)*
2. Guy Verhofstadt, a former prime minister of Belgium and current leader of the Liberal Group in the European Parliament, will be the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) Party candidate for the Commission presidency. He will co-lead the Liberal campaign with the Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs, Olli Rehn. *Read our profiles of [Guy Verhofstadt](#) and [Olli Rehn](#)*
3. The Liberal ticket was a compromise agreed ahead of the ALDE Party Electoral Meeting on 1 February. Olli Rehn will be a candidate for a top economic or foreign affairs post. Just under 80% of delegates at the meeting backed the deal. *Read our [Storify of the Liberal selection process](#)*
4. The European Greens' campaign will be led by German MEP Ska Keller and French MEP José Bové. They defeated Rebecca Harms and Monica Frassoni in the Green Primary election. *Read our profiles of [Ska Keller](#) and [José Bové](#)*
5. Around 23,000 people voted online in the Green Primary, the first EU-wide online primary election. The number was lower than expected. *Read a [guest blog](#) by Johannes Hillje, Campaign Manager of the European Greens, on the lessons of the primary election*
6. The European Left party has selected Alexis Tsipras, leader of Greece's Coalition of the Radical Left - Unitary Social Front (Syriza), as its lead candidate for the Commission presidency. *Read our profile of [Alexis Tsipras](#)*
7. The nomination process for the centre-right European People's Party begins on Thursday 13 February and will last until the EPP Congress in Dublin on 6-7 March, when around 820 delegates will pick the party's candidate for the presidency of the Commission. *Read our [overview of some of the EPP contenders and vote in the poll \(until 12 February\)](#)*
8. Jean-Claude Juncker appears to be the frontrunner for the EPP nomination after receiving the backing of Angela Merkel. Some other contenders, such as Jyrki Katainen, have dropped out. *Read our profile of [Jean-Claude Juncker](#)*
9. Valdis Dombrovskis is likely to be another nominee in the EPP election after the Estonian centre-right party, IRL, said it would back him. Michel Barnier, the Commissioner for the Internal Market and Services, is also set to stand. *Read our profiles of [Valdis Dombrovskis](#) and [Michel Barnier](#)*
10. The candidates for the Commission presidency are likely to take part in a series of pre-election debates, including one at the University of Maastricht on 28 April and a televised debate, organised by the European Broadcasting Union, on 14 May.
11. The choice of candidates has been heavily criticised in some media. The *Financial Times* called Juncker, Schulz and Verhofstadt "yesterday's men"; *European Voice* dismissed Juncker as a stalking horse; and *The Economist* said that Christine Lagarde, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, would be a better pick. *Read our profile of [Christine Lagarde](#)*
12. Candidates for other leading positions are already jockeying for position. Potential candidates for the position of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy include the Dutch foreign minister, Frans Timmermans; his Swedish and Polish counterparts, Carl Bildt and Radosław Sikorski; and a former French European affairs minister, Elisabeth Guigou. *Read our profiles of the [contenders to be High Representative](#)*
13. Some names are already circulating for the presidency of the European Council. Potential successors to Herman Van Rompuy include Jean-Claude Juncker, Fredrik Reinfeldt, Dalia Grybauskaitė, and José Luis Zapatero. *Read our profiles of the [contenders to be President of the European Council](#)*

14. Potential choices as the next Nato Secretary-General – succeeding Anders Fogh Rasmussen - include the Belgian defence minister, Pieter De Crem, and the current President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso. *Read our profiles of [Pieter De Crem](#) and [José Manuel Barroso](#)*

European Parliament election candidates

15. In Germany, all the main parties have named candidates. The Christian Democrats have adopted region-by-region lists, but the former premier of Lower Saxony, David McAllister, will be the CDU lead candidate. The Social Democrats will be led by Martin Schulz, the Liberals by Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, and the Greens by Rebecca Harms. *Read our [list of candidates from Germany](#)*

16. In France, the centre-right UMP and the Socialists have named their lead candidates. Both parties had acrimonious processes, with former ministers and party bigwigs unseating some established MEPs in the top positions. *Read our [blog on the French candidate selection process](#)*

17. The French Greens have also chosen their *têtes de liste*, while the centrist UDI (currently in the EPP Group) and Modem (a member of the ALDE Group) will run a common list. *Read our [list of candidates from France](#)*

18. All the main parties in the United Kingdom have selected their lists, with many MEPs in leading positions. Arlene McCarthy, a former chair of the Parliament's Internal Market Committee, withdrew from the Labour Party list in North West England last month. *Read our [list of candidates from the United Kingdom](#)*

19. Almost all parties in the Netherlands have selected their candidates. The centre-right CDA list will be led by Esther de Lange MEP and the Labour list – which features no current MEPs - by Paul Tang. The Liberal VVD list (which features Derk Jan Eppink, currently a Belgian Conservative MEP) will be led by Hans van Baalen MEP. Bas Eickhout MEP leads the Green list and Peter van Dalen MEP heads the ChristianUnion list. *Read our [list of candidates from the Netherlands](#)*

20. The Dutch Liberal Democrats 66 list is led by Sophie in 't VeldRead after she won a leadership race with fellow MEP Marietje Schaake. *Read our [blog on the battle to lead the D66 list](#)*

21. In Romania, the Social Democrats have named a vice-president of the Socialists and Democrats parliamentary group, Corina Crețu, at the head of its list. Six other current MEPs are among the top twelve candidates. *Read our [list of candidates from Romania](#)*

22. Spain's two main parties have been slow to pick their candidates. However, the centre-left PSOE is set to name Elena Valenciano, a former MEP and current deputy party leader, as its lead candidate. *Read our [list of candidates from Spain](#)*

23. Selection processes in Poland have also been sluggish. Of the main parties, only the centre-left Democratic Left Alliance has picked its candidates, which include all the party's current MEPs. *Read our [list of candidates from Poland](#)*

24. In Portugal, one EPP member party – the CDS-PP – has picked Nuno Melo MEP to lead the party's list. The party will present a final common list with the other EPP member, the Social Democratic Party (PSD). *Read our [list of candidates from Portugal](#)*

25. Belgium's Flemish Christian Democrats have picked Marianne Thyssen and Ivo Belet, both currently MEPs, to head their list. Former deputy prime minister Steven Vanackere is third. Guy Verhofstadt leads the Flemish Liberals' list and Johan Van Overtveldt, a former editor of a leading business magazine, heads the list for the separatist New Flemish Alliance (N-VA). Philippe Lamberts MEP heads the Francophone Greens list, having defeated Isabelle Durant, a vice-president of the European Parliament. *Read our [list of candidates from Belgium](#)*

26. In the Czech Republic, the Social Democrats have picked Jan Keller, a sociologist, to head their list. Libor Rouček, currently a vice-president of the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament, faces a very tough battle, having been placed ninth. Pavel Svoboda leads the Christian Democrat list and former European commissioner Pavel Telička is set to head the list of ANO 2011, a Liberal party that is now part of a coalition government in Prague. *Read our [list of candidates from the Czech Republic](#)*

27. Hungary's Socialists have ditched all their current MEPs except Zita Gurmai. Krisztina Morvai MEP will lead the far-right Jobbik party's list. Two Green/Liberal movements, Dialogue for Hungary and Politics Can Be Different, have also named candidates. Hungary will hold a general election on 6 April. *Read our [list of candidates from Hungary](#)*

28. Nearly all the major parties in Sweden have selected their candidates. Current MEPs feature high on the lists of the Moderate Party (EPP) and the Social Democrats. The Chair of the Parliament's Women's Rights Committee, Mikael Gustafsson, was relegated to second place on the Left Party list, defeated by Malin Björk, who works for the European United Left / Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) Group in the European Parliament. [Read our list of candidates from Sweden](#)
29. In Austria, current MEPs Othmar Karas, Ulrike Lunacek and Andreas Mölzer head the lists of the Austrian People's Party (EPP), the Greens and the far-right Freedom Party respectively. For the Social Democrats, former journalist Eugen Freund was brought in to head the list, with four of the party's current taking second, third, fourth and fifth places. Hannes Swoboda, leader of the Socialists and Democrats Group, is standing down. [Read our list of candidates from Austria](#)
30. In Denmark, Bendt Bendtsen MEP leads the Conservative People's Party (EPP) list, Jeppe Kofod heads the Social Democrats list, and current MEPs Margrete Auken (Socialist People's Party – Greens/EFA Group) and Morten Messerschmidt (Danish People's Party – Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group) lead their parties' lists. [Read our list of candidates from Denmark](#)
31. Anna Záborská MEP and Miroslav Mikolášik MEP head the Christian Democrats list in Slovakia, with a few other parties naming candidates, including ALDE Party member Freedom and Solidarity (SaS). [Read our list of candidates from Slovakia](#)
32. In Finland, Alexander Stubb and fellow minister Henna Virkkunen join three current ministers on the National Coalition Party (EPP) list. Current MEPs Mitro Repo and Liisa Jaakonsaari are on the Social Democrats list. [Read our list of candidates from Finland](#)
33. Finland's Centre Party (ALDE) list includes a former party leader and prominent Eurosceptic, Paavo Väyrynen, and a former newspaper editor, Mikael Pentikäinen. Olli Rehn is also set to join the list. [Read our blog on the choice of Finnish candidates](#)
34. Ireland's Fine Gael (EPP) has chosen current MEPs Jim Higgins and Mairead McGuinness to fight the Midlands-North-West constituency. Marian Harkin MEP (an independent member of ALDE) will stand in the same constituency. Emer Costello MEP will stand for Labour (S&D) in Dublin, and will compete with Mary Fitzpatrick of Fianna Fáil (ALDE). Nessa Childers MEP (Independent) will also stand in Dublin. The Greens, Sinn Féin (GUE/NGL) and left-wing parties have also named candidates. [Read our list of candidates from Ireland](#)
35. Algirdas Saudargas MEP heads the list for Lithuania's Christian Democrats, while Zigmantas Balčytis MEP leads the Social Democrats roster. Environment Minister Valentinas Mazuronis (Order and Justice – EFD Group) is also standing. [Read our list of candidates from Lithuania](#)
36. Former prime minister Valdis Dombrovskis heads the Unity party (EPP) list in Latvia, with Sandra Kalniete MEP and former defence minister Artis Pabriks also on the slate. Robert Zile MEP heads the list of the For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK party (European Conservatives and Reformists Group). [Read our list of candidates from Latvia](#)
37. In Luxembourg, the Eurosceptic Alternative Democratic Reform Party and the Pirate Party have published their lists. [Read our list of candidates from Luxembourg](#)
38. Malta's Nationalist Party (EPP) and Labour Party (S&D) have both published shortlists of names, while the Green party, Democratic Alternative, has also named candidates. [Read our list of candidates from Malta](#)
39. The Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Transport, Siim Kallas, has said he will not stand in the European Parliament elections, after his daughter Kaja Kallas, announced her candidacy in Estonia.
40. We have no confirmed names of European Parliament candidates yet for Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia. See our [overview of candidate selections](#) and [contact us](#) to contribute!

European Parliament election opinion polls

41. In Austria, the far-right Freedom Party is currently on 23% in the polls, just behind the Social Democrats (24%). The centre-right Austrian People's Party is in third (20%), with the Greens and the Liberal NEOS party both on 13%. Source: [electionista](#) (@electionista)
42. The latest poll in Bulgaria suggests that the centre-right GERB party will take most seats, just ahead of the Socialists. The breakaway centre-left ABC Movement – including current S&D MEP Ivailo Kalfin – could win two seats. Source: [electionista](#)

43. A pre-Christmas poll in Finland showed the centre-right National Coalition Party just ahead of the Liberal Centre Party, with the right-wing Finns Party third and the Social Democrats fourth. More recent national-based polls put the Centre Party ahead. *Source: electionista*
44. France's far-right National Front is set to win the European Parliament election according to a recent poll. The FN stands on 23%, with the centre-right UMP on 21% and the Socialists on 18%. *Source: electionista*
45. The centre-right CDU in Germany, with its Bavarian CSU partners, is ahead in the European Parliament election opinion polls, on 38%. The Social Democrats are on 29%. The Liberals are on four per cent and should be able to breach the three per cent threshold. The anti-euro Alternative for Germany party stands at six per cent. *Source: electionista*
46. Alexis Tsipras' Syriza party is set to win in Greece. It stands at 27% according to a pre-Christmas poll, with the centre-right New Democracy just behind. The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn – which may have to re-form to be allowed to stand – could win 11% according to the poll. *Source: electionista*
47. In Italy, there is a three-way fight to top the polls, with the Democratic Party (whose members sit in the S&D Group) on 28%, Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement on 25%, and Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia on 24%. Berlusconi is looking to stand in the election despite a criminal conviction at the end of last year. *Source: electionista*
48. A poll in the Netherlands at the turn of the year puts the far-right Freedom Party in the lead, on 16%. The Christian Democrats are second (13%) and the Liberal VVD third (11%). *Source: electionista*
49. Poland's conservative Law and Justice Party is set to top the polls with 30% of the vote. The centre-right Civic Platform of the Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, will win 26% and the Democratic Left Alliance 20%, according to a poll published in mid-January. *Source: electionista*
50. In Portugal, the centre-right alliance (CDS-PP / PSD) is on 37%, with the centre-left on 35.5%, according to a poll taken in January. *Source: electionista*
51. In Romania, the Social Democrats are set to win big, with 37% of the vote. The Liberals – who are in government with the Social Democrats - are on 20%. The centre-right PDL is on 17.5% according to a poll taken in January. *Source: electionista*
52. The latest European election poll in Spain shows the People's Party (EPP) on 32% and the Socialists on 28%, although another poll put the centre-left on top. However, the drop in support for the big two means that other parties are set to make gains, including the United Left (11%) and the Liberal UPyD (nine per cent). *Source: electionista; read our [blog on the European Parliament election in Spain](#)*
53. In the United Kingdom, the Conservatives are set to finish third in the European Parliament elections, behind Labour (32%) and the UK Independence Party (26%). The Tories are on 23% and their coalition partners in the UK, the Liberal Democrats, are on nine per cent. *Source: electionista*
54. Elsewhere, Belgium's triple election (regional, federal, European) looks set to be won in Flanders by the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) and in Wallonia by the Socialists. *Source: electionista*
55. In the Czech Republic, ANO 2011, a Liberal junior coalition partner, is leading the national polls, ahead of the Social Democrats. *Source: electionista; read our [blog on the new Czech government](#)*
56. Denmark's national polls place the Liberal Venstre party ahead of the ruling Social Democrats. *Source: electionista*
57. In Hungary, Fidesz (EPP) is set to take more than half the vote in the national elections according to opinion polls, a result that could well be mirrored in the European Parliament elections less than two months later. *Source: electionista*
58. In Ireland, the governing Fine Gael party (EPP) is comfortably ahead in the national polls. *Source: electionista*
59. PollWatch 2014, a VoteWatch Europe project in partnership with Burson-Marsteller and Europe Decides, will launch on 19 February and will give the most comprehensive overview and prediction of the next European Parliament up until the polls open on 22 May. [Find out more about PollWatch 2014](#)

Processes and procedures for the elections and beyond

60. The elections will be held from 22 May until 25 May, with a variety of different voting systems used and qualification criteria for standing and voting. [Find out more with our infographic](#)

61. After the elections, Herman Van Rompuy will convene a European Council meeting on 27 May to discuss the results and the impact on the choice of a president of the European Commission. The Parliament's leaders will now pre-empt that meeting by convening on the morning of 27 May.
62. The European Council will nominate a candidate for the Commission presidency 'taking into account the results of the elections', but there are suggestions that the European Council will choose someone other than one of the 'lead candidates'.
63. Whoever the European Council picks, the candidate will need the support of an absolute majority of MEPs. Read a [guest blog](#) by Christian Feustel of BusinessEurope on why 400 is the magic number for choosing a Commission president
64. A high number of extremists are likely to be elected to the European Parliament. Marine Le Pen of France's National Front and Geert Wilders of the Netherlands' Party for Freedom are likely to try to form a group with other right-wing groups from countries including Belgium, Sweden, Austria and Italy, although more extreme racist groups from Greece, Hungary and the UK are likely to be excluded. Read our [blog on the rise of Le Pen and Wilders](#)
65. The UK Independence Party could see its group squeezed out by more radical anti-Europeans on one side, and Conservatives on the other. Other groups are also likely to see changes, with the destination of Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement and various Pirate parties as yet unknown. The choice of groups could have a big impact on the post-election scenario. Read our [blog on the post-election party games](#)
66. The European Parliament will elect its office-holders at the first plenary session in July, and then is set to elect a Commission president later that month. The hearings of commissioners-designate should take place in September, and the Commission is set to take office on 1 November. The new President of the European Council takes office on 1 December. [Read our timeline of the main events in 2014](#)

Potential nominees to the European Commission

67. Some names are already circulating regarding nominees to the European Commission, as politicians look for escapes from national politics or current commissioners look to remain in Brussels with more important portfolios. [See our overview of potential nominees to the European Commission](#)
68. Neelie Kroes is thought to want to hold on to her post but the Labour Party has a big claim on the Dutch nomination. Frans Timmermans and Ad Melkert are among the potential nominees from the centre-left. Read our [blog on the Dutch nomination](#) and see our [list of potential nominees from the Netherlands](#)
69. In France, the President, François Hollande, may look to dispatch a current minister to Brussels after an expected defeat in the local elections (in March) and the European polls. Finance Minister Pierre Moscovici is one of several names in the frame. Read our [blog on the French nomination](#) and see our [list of potential nominees from France](#)
70. However, Hollande may be prepared to name a centre-right figure – such as Michel Barnier or Christine Lagarde – if it means that France gets the Commission presidency. Read our profiles of [Michel Barnier](#) and [Christine Lagarde](#)
71. British PM David Cameron will come under intense pressure to appoint a right-winger if the Tories lose to Ukip in the European Parliament election. Andrew Mitchell is the current favourite with bookmakers. Read our [blog on Cameron's choice](#) and see our [list of potential nominees from the United Kingdom](#)
72. Belgium will face a difficult choice of commissioner as the position – which ranks alongside a federal minister – will be chosen shortly after the federal and regional elections that take place on the same day. The Christian Democrats are likely to lay claim to the nomination, with Flemish PM Kris Peeters a possible candidate. Read our [blog on the Belgian nomination](#) and see our [list of potential nominees from Belgium](#)
73. In Germany, the field is complicated by the candidacy of Martin Schulz for the presidency of the European Commission. David McAllister is a decent tip from the Christian Democrats, while Frank-Walter Steinmeier is a possibility from the Social Democrats. See our [list of potential nominees from Germany](#)
74. From Croatia, current commissioner Neven Mimica is almost certain to be re-nominated. See our [list of potential nominees from Croatia](#)

75. The Estonian Prime Minister, Andrus Ansip, is thought to want to be his country's commissioner, but his Foreign Minister, Urmas Paet, and the current commissioner, Siim Kallas, are among the other potential nominees. See our [list of potential nominees from Estonia](#)

76. Finland's nominee could also be the Prime Minister, Jyrki Katainen, if he is a late compromise candidate to head the Commission. Otherwise, Alexander Stubb and Olli Rehn are possible nominees. See our [list of potential nominees from Finland](#)

77. Ireland's nominee is likely to come from the governing Fine Gael (EPP) party. Brian Hayes and Phil Hogan, both ministers in the national government, are among the contenders. See our [list of potential nominees from Ireland](#)

78. Luxembourg's nominee would be Jean-Claude Juncker if he wins the Commission presidency. Viviane Reding is unlikely to return, and will probably take a senior role in the European Parliament. Other potential nominees include the centre-left employment minister, Nicolas Schmit. See our [list of potential nominees from Luxembourg](#)

79. Poland's nomination process is also complicated by the possibility of it gaining a top job. Radosław Sikorski is a contender to be High Representative, but other possible commissioners include Jan-Vincent Rostowski, until recently Poland's finance minister, and the current commissioner, Janusz Lewandowski. See our [list of potential nominees from Poland](#)

80. From Sweden, potential contenders include the Foreign Minister, Carl Bildt, and the current commissioner, Cecilia Malmström. However, with elections due in September, the choice may be more open, with a compromise needed between the various parties. See our [list of potential nominees from Sweden](#)

81. We will continue to add to the list of potential nominees, covering more countries in the weeks to come. [See our overview of potential nominees to the European Commission](#)

Online conversations

82. Many of the conversations around the elections have focused on the rise of extremist parties and their potential to form a significant hurdle to action in the new European Parliament. Some commentators believe, however, that the likelihood of success for the far-right has been overstated. [Read Cas Mudde's article for Reuters: 'Why 'anti-European populists' won't win big in the European elections'](#)

83. Given the low budgets for European Parliament election campaigns, a lot of candidates are using social media such as Twitter to reach a wide audience, sending an average of 2,000 tweets a day. [Read our blog on what the candidates are saying on Twitter](#)

84. However, the elections seem not to have caught the general public's imagination: use of the #EP2014 hashtag is hardly viral - just over 17,000 users used that hashtag, with just over 25,000 uses.

85. As the election nears, this number is at least an increase on last month – a 70% rise in the number of users and a 75% increase in the number of users.

86. In addition, by our calculations only around 25% of tweets about the elections use the #EP2014 hashtag.

87. Many of the political parties are also using their own hashtags – such as #up2youth (EPP) and #knockthevote (PES). [Read our blog on the online campaign](#)

88. MemeWatch: Cats have made it to the European elections, with the PES having its own feline supporter, TeamSchulzcat, and the Greens using cats to promote the Green Primary.

Also on Europe Decides

89. Our [digital centre](#) has all the stats you will need about the European Parliament elections online

90. Our [insights and infographics](#) page has a range of materials for you to download and print

91. We will soon begin our assessment of the achievements of the current European Commission – take a look at our [Commissioners' commitments](#) page

92. You can sign up for [email alerts](#), including the [Europe Decides Weekly](#) report

93. Keep an eye on our [events](#) page and look back at the [video and slideshow from our December 2013 event 'What's happening in 2014... and will it make a difference?'](#)
94. Get all the news about the institutions on our dedicated pages on the [European Parliament](#), [European Commission](#) and [European Council](#)
95. Read all about the [European political parties](#) and their processes for selecting candidates
96. Get all the essential information about each member state on our [country-by-country](#) page
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