

## European Elections in Southeast Europe – What are the regional trends?

### Executive Summary

- **Turnout:** Some Southeast European member states, such as Bulgaria and Greece, recorded a significant decline in voter turnout, with Croatia spearheading the trend with a historic low of 21.35%. Slovakia and Slovenia, on the other hand, registered a significant increase in voter turnout, owing to growing political polarisation that mobilised voters.
- **Trends:** Nearly all of the Southeast European member states saw an increase in the vote share of right and far-right parties, including Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Greece, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The most notable increase can be registered in Romania, where the share of right-wing parties accounted for 20% of the entire vote. Despite the overall swing to the right, pro-European parties (from the conservative to the liberal spectrum) remain dominant.
- **Newcomers:** The 2024 European elections saw a significant voter migration to political newcomers. Examples include the entrance of the extreme right-wing Revival party (Vazrazhdane/Възраждане) in Bulgaria, the right-wing DP and green Možemo! in Croatia, the right-wing AUR in Romania, or the green party VESNA in Slovenia. Cyprus accounts for one of the most noteworthy newcomers, the independent populist Fidiás Panayiotou, who entered at nearly 20%. TISZA in Hungary made the most striking entrance, achieving nearly 30%.
- **Established parties:** In most Southeast European member states, support for established parties (slightly) decreased, including for parties represented in national governments. The most striking example is the historic low vote share of Hungary's Fidesz, owed to the meteoric ascent of TISZA. Against this trend stand Slovenia, with GS making a steep entrance, and Croatia, with the HDZ increasing its vote share compared to 2019. The most surprising success by established parties was achieved in Romania by the coalition between the traditionally antagonistic PSD-PNL.

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## **Bulgaria in the 2024 European Elections**

### **Simultaneous national elections overshadow EU elections – further integration in EU – North Macedonia conflict no topic – pro-Russian political minority against arms for Ukraine**

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#### **The electoral campaign**

The electoral campaign was overshadowed by the campaign for the parliamentary elections, the sixth in three years. A pro-European attitude was dominant compared with the relatively successful right-wing pro-Russian camp by the Revival party and the newcomer Velichie Greatness, which almost won a seat. Electoral participation was the lowest, with only 33.8%. Two-thirds of the voters stayed at home. Thus, all parties represented in the previous EP lost votes.

#### **Winners and losers**

With some minor losses, the pro-European conservative GERB-SDS coalition remained strongest, followed by DPS, which remained stable thanks to its disciplined Turkish core electorate. The pro-EU PP-DB coalition lost considerably compared to the last national elections but turned out third. In comparison, the coalition partner DB had won only one mandate in the EP in 2019. In 2024, the DB's coalition with PP, which had only been formed in 2021, achieved three seats in the EP, equal to DPS. The Bulgarian socialist party BSP, which was dominant until the mid-2000s, lost further and will be represented in the EP with only two seats. The new, right-wing and pro-Russian Revival party, practically replacing VMRO, which had won two seats in the 2019 EP, gained three seats. One seat was won by the populist newcomer 'There is such a people' (ITN), which was founded by pop singer Slavi Trifonov in 2020.

#### **Comparison to the 2019 EU elections**

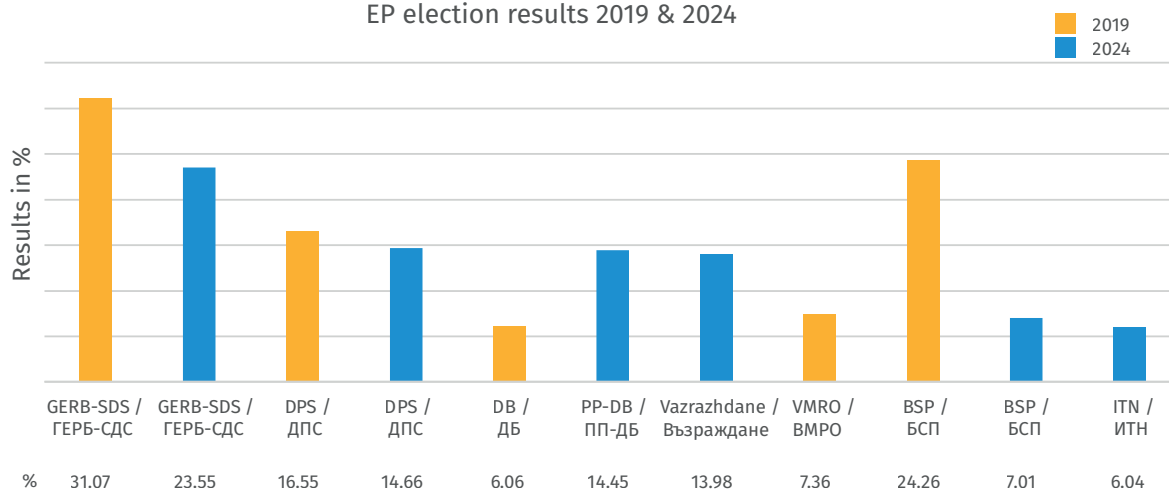
The low voter turnout in 2024, with 33.8%, was slightly higher compared to 2019, with 32.64%, most likely owed to the parallel national elections, which also saw dramatically low participation. Besides the massive losses of the socialist party BSP, the civic pro-European camp dominates the election results. The fact that the once strong nationalist party VMRO was replaced by a new extremist right-wing party shows the volatility of the Bulgarian political landscape.

#### **Conclusion**

The pro-Russian far Right will be present in the new EP with three representatives. This shows that a considerable part of the population is against further EU integration and against support for Ukraine in fighting Russian aggression. Nevertheless, the pro-European, rather conservative and liberal parties hold the majority. The again low voter turnout, paralleled by low participation in the national elections, shows a worrying trend of public disengagement from politics in the EU's poorest and maybe most corrupt country.

## European Elections in Southeast Europe – What are the regional trends?

EP election results 2019 & 2024



turnout 2019: 32.64%; turnout 2024: 33.8%<sup>1</sup>

Name	English translation		s. in EP 2019	s. in EP 2024	Political group in EP
Grazhdani za evropeysko razvitiе na Bulgariya – Sayuz na demokratichните sili / Граждани за европейско развитие на България – Съюз на демократичните сили	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria – Union of Democratic Forces	GERB-SDS / ГЕРБ-СДС	6	5	EPP
Dvizhenie za prava i svobodi / Движение за права и свободи	Movement for Rights and Freedom	DPS / ДПС	4	3	Renew
Demokraticzna Bulgaria / Демократична България	Democratic Bulgaria	DB / ДБ	1	3**	EPP
Prodalzhavame promyanata / Продължаваме промяната	We Continue the Change	PP / ПП		3**	Renew
Vazrazhdane / Възраждане	Revival	Vazrazhdane / Възраждане		3	independent
Bulgarsko Natsionalno Dvizhenie / Българско национално движение	Bulgarian National Movement	VMRO / ВМРО	2	0	ECR
Bulgarska sotsialisticheska partiy / Българска социалистическа партия	Bulgarian Socialist Party	BSP / БСП	4	2	PSE
Ima takav narod / Има такъв народ	There is such a people	ITN / ИТН		1	ECR

\* DPS joined Renew following the 2024 European elections.

\*\* Competing on a joint list DB-PP in 2024.

<sup>1</sup> Politico (2024), 2024 European election results, <https://www.politico.eu/europe-poll-of-polls/european-parliament-election> (accessed 9.7.2024); European Parliament (2019), Bulgaria – Results by national party – 2019-2024, <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/national-results/bulgaria/2019-2024/constitutive-session/> (accessed 9.7.2024); European Parliament (2024), Bulgaria – Results by national party – 2024-2029, <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/national-results/bulgaria/2024-2029/> (accessed 9.7.2024).

## Croatia in the 2024 European Elections What if they held an election and nobody came?

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### The electoral campaign

The electoral campaign was dominated by the parliamentary elections held in mid-April<sup>2</sup> and the subsequent coalition negotiations between the conservative HDZ (EPP) and the right-wing DP (ECR). During the negotiations, the HDZ, which has been in power since 2015, announced that Andrej Plenković, as party leader and Croatian Prime Minister, would head their list for the European elections. The announcement was accompanied by persistent rumours that Plenković would seek a move to a high-level EU position. Due to the previous (in part controversial) national election, the parties lacked time and resources to organise a distinct EU election campaign. This resulted in recycled platforms and a lack of public interest.

### Winners and losers

Once again, the HDZ emerged as the electoral victor, increasing its number of seats from four to six. Although the SDP (S&D) also gained a significant number of votes, they were unable to win another seat. Both the DP and the left-green party Možemo! (Greens-EFA) managed to enter the European Parliament for the first time. From now on, both will be represented by one MEP. The main losers include the liberal-conservative Most (ECR) party and the right-wing populist PiP (NI), which failed to win or defend mandates.

### Comparison to the 2019 EU elections

The already poor turnout in European elections reached a new low of 21.4% (-8.5 pp) in 2024. This puts Croatia at the bottom of the list among the member states. Though EU membership is viewed extremely positively by the vast majority of the population, the parties were unable to mobilise sufficient support for the election. Furthermore, after Croatia's accession to the Schengen Area and the Eurozone, candidates lacked significant issues to campaign on.

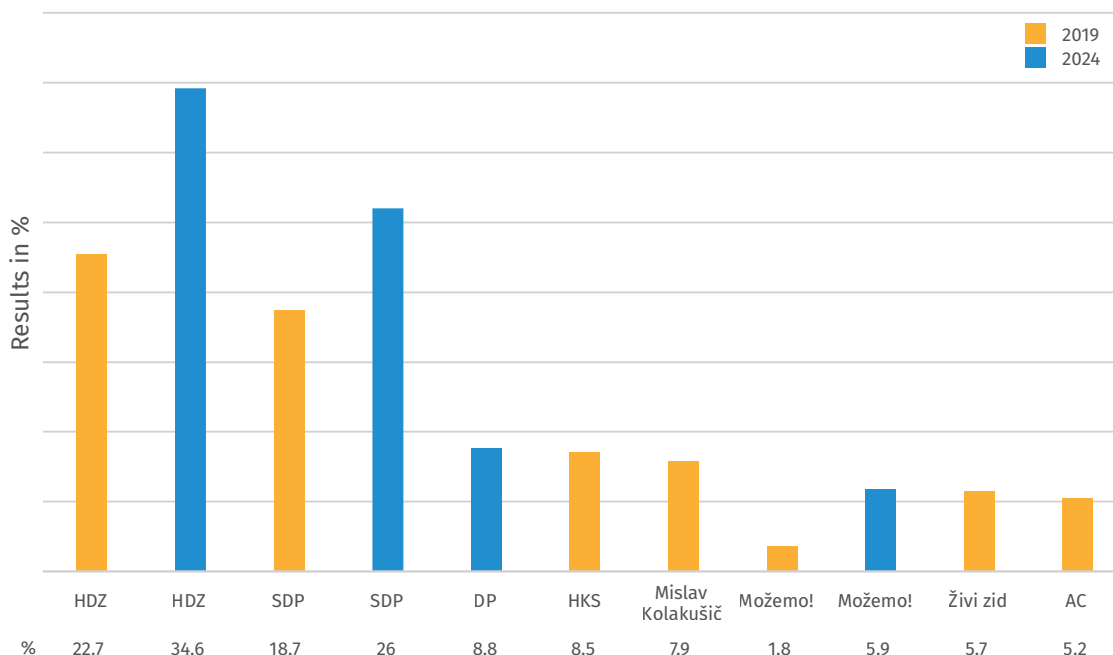
### Conclusion

Despite the historically low turnout, which should be a wake-up call for all political actors in Croatia, the 2024 European elections will not be remembered for long. Regardless of its controversial coalition with the far-right DP, the HDZ can be satisfied with its strengthened position in Zagreb and Brussels. Whether Plenković can actually parlay this advantage into a high-ranking office remains to be seen. At the same time, the SDP, as the largest opposition party, needs to find a new direction. The party leader, Peđa Grbin, has announced his resignation in the aftermath of the European elections.

2 For an analysis of Croatia's 2024 parliamentary elections, see Kannenberg, O. (2024), Croatia moves to the (far)-right – The parliamentary election 2024, Southeast Europe in Focus 2/2024, <https://sogde.org/de/publikationen/southeast-europe-in-focus/>.

## European Elections in Southeast Europe – What are the regional trends?

### EP election results 2019 & 2024



turnout 2019: 29.85%; turnout 2024: 21.35%<sup>3</sup>

Name	English translation		s. in EP 2019	s. in EP 2024	Political group in EP
Hrvatska demokratska zajednica	Croatian Democratic Union	HDZ	4	6	EPP
Socijaldemokratska partija Hrvatske	Social Democratic Party of Croatia	SDP*	4	4	S&D Renew
Domovinski pokret	Homeland Movement	DP		1	ECR
Hrvatska konzervativna stranka	Croatian Conservative Party	HKS**	1		ECR
Neovisna – Mislav Kolakušić	Independent – Mislav Kolakušić	Mislav Kolakušić	1		NI
Možemo! politička platforma	We Can! political platform	Možemo!	0	1	Greens-EFA
Živi zid	Human shield	Živi zid	1		NI
Amsterdamska koalicija	Amsterdam Coalition	AC***	1		ALDE

\* The SDP-led coalition "Rijeke pravde" ("Rivers of Justice") included the SDP, CENTAR (Centre), Croatian Peasants Party (HSS), Civil Liberal Alliance (GLAS), "Dalija Orešković and People with a First and Last Name" (DO i SiP).

\*\* Apart from the HKS, the coalition included the parties Hrast, Croatian Party of Rights – Dr. Ante Starčević (HSP – AS) and the United Croatian Patriots (UHD).

\*\*\* The Amsterdam Coalition was a political alliance between the following parties: Civic Liberal Alliance (GLAS), Croatian Peasant Party (HSS), Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS), Croatia Party of Pensioners (HSU), Democrats, Alliance of Primorje-Gorski Kotar (PGS) and Croatian Labourists.

3 Državno izborno povjerenstvo Republike Hrvatske (May 2019), Rezultati izbora članova u Europski Parlament iz Republike Hrvatske provedenih 26. svibanja 2019. godine, [https://www.izbori.hr/site/UserDocImages/2019/Izbori\\_clanova\\_u\\_EU\\_parlament\\_iz\\_RH/Rezultati/rjesenje.pdf](https://www.izbori.hr/site/UserDocImages/2019/Izbori_clanova_u_EU_parlament_iz_RH/Rezultati/rjesenje.pdf) (accessed 9.7.2024); Izbori.hr (June 2024), Konačni rezultati izbora 2024, <https://www.izbori.hr/eup2024/rezultati/> (accessed: 9.7.2024).

## Cyprus in the 2024 European Elections A Youtuber shocks the system

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### The electoral campaign

Given that the European elections were combined with local elections, European, national, and local issues dominated the electoral campaign. Immigration emerged as the most significant topic, followed by economic issues such as the rising cost of living and the loss of public trust in political institutions. This loss of trust was underscored by the prominent emergence of 24-year-old YouTuber Fidias Panayiotou. His criticism of the effectiveness and transparency of political structures resonated not only with young voters but also with a significant number of older Cypriots.

### Winners and losers

The election of Panayiotou came as a surprise and shock to the established parties and most observers. He obtained 19.4% of the votes, securing one of the six Cypriot seats with the third highest number of votes. The second winner of the elections was the far-right, xenophobic National Popular Front (ELAM/ECR), who secured their first ever seat with 11.2% of the vote. The center-right Democratic Rally (DISY-EPP) retained its two seats. The second-largest party in Cyprus, the left-wing AKEL (GUE/NGL), lost its second seat for the first time. The so-called parties of the political center, the Democratic Party (DIKO, S&D), the Socialist Party (EDEK, S&D), and the Democratic Alignment (DIPA-Renew), which support the President of the Republic of Cyprus, lost between one-third to half of their voters. At least DIKO managed to hold on to its seat. The last party represented in parliament, the Movement of Ecologists (Greens/EFA), also suffered massive losses. The only Turkish Cypriot MEP, Niyazi Kizilyürek, failed to be re-elected on an AKEL ticket.

### Comparison to the 2019 EU elections

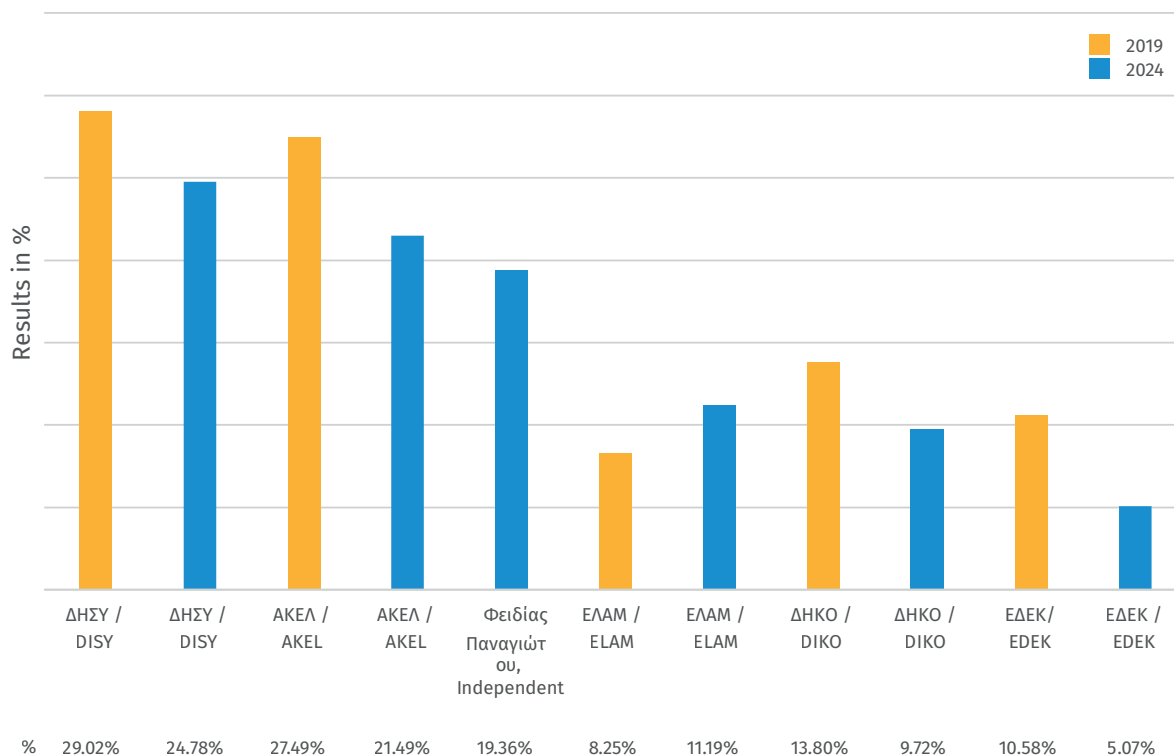
Voter turnout was significantly better than in 2019, reaching 58.7% (+13.9%). This improvement was largely due to the greater voter mobilization triggered by the simultaneous local and regional elections. Strikingly, all mainstream parties represented in parliament suffered significant losses. A new actor on the party scene, the bi-communal, pro-reunification party VOLT, emerged but only garnered 2.9% of the vote.

### Conclusion

The outcome of the elections clearly illustrates the disillusionment and alienation of a large number of voters from the established parties and the continued decline of traditional party loyalties. The first victory of an independent candidate, whose campaign was based on anti-establishment and anti-party sentiment, is the clearest manifestation of this trend. It also signifies the rise of social media in contemporary Cypriot politics. The success of ELAM and Panayiotou further evidences the continued fragmentation of the Cypriot party system and the decline of established parties, alongside the rise of the extreme right in the case of ELAM. It remains to be seen what changes and conclusions – if any – the established parties will draw from this shock to the system.

## European Elections in Southeast Europe – What are the regional trends?

### EP election results 2019 & 2024



turnout 2019: 44.99%; turnout 2024: 58.85%<sup>4</sup>

Name	English translation		s. in EP 2019	s. in EP 2024	Political group in EP
Δημοκρατικός Συναγερμός	Democratic Rally	ΔΗΣΥ / DISY	2	2	EPP
Ανορθωτικό Κόμμα Εργαζόμενου Λαού	Progressive Party of Working People	ΑΚΕΛ / AKEL	2	1	GUE/NGL
Φειδίας Παναγιώτου	Fidiás Panayiotou	Independent	0	1	Independent
Εθνικό Λαϊκό Μέτωπο	National Popular Front	ΕΛΑΜ / ELAM	0	1	ECR
Δημοκρατικό Κόμμα	Democratic Party	ΔΗΚΟ / DIKO	1	1	S&D
ΕΔΕΚ Κίνημα Σοσιαδημοκρατών	Movement for Social Democrats EDEK	ΕΔΕΚ / EDEK	1	0	S&D

<sup>4</sup> European Parliament (2019), Cyprus – Elections by national party – 2019-2024, <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/national-results/cyprus/2019-2024/constitutive-session/> (accessed 9.7.2024); Republic of Cyprus Ministry of the Interior, European Elections 2019 – Official results, [http://results.elections.moi.gov.cy/English/EUROPEAN\\_ELECTIONS\\_2019/Islandwide](http://results.elections.moi.gov.cy/English/EUROPEAN_ELECTIONS_2019/Islandwide) (accessed 9.7.2024); European Parliament (2024), Cyprus – Elections by national party – 2024-2029, <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/national-results/cyprus/2024-2029/> (accessed 9.7.2024); Government of Cprus (June 2024), ΕΚΛΟΓΕΣ ΜΕΛΩΝ ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟΥ ΚΟΙΝΟΒΟΥΛΙΟΥ – 9 ΙΟΥΝΙΟΥ 2024, [https://elections.gov.cy/moi/elections/elections.nsf/all/9CB6EAO7657379DoC2258Bo00368588/\\$file/deigma%20COLOUR.pdf?openelement](https://elections.gov.cy/moi/elections/elections.nsf/all/9CB6EAO7657379DoC2258Bo00368588/$file/deigma%20COLOUR.pdf?openelement) (accessed 9.7.2024); FastForward (June 2024), Final results of the EU parliamentary elections in Cyprus – Party percentages, <https://fastforward.com.cy/life/final-results-eu-parliament-election-cyprus-party-percentages> (accessed 9.7.2024); Knews (June 2024), Introducing Cyprus’ six newly elected members of the European Parliament, <https://knews.kathimerini.com.cy/en/news/introducing-cyprus-six-newly-elected-members-of-the-european-parliament> (accessed 9.7.2024).

## Greece in the 2024 European Elections

### Political landscape in flux

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#### The electoral campaign

European issues did not have an impact on the outcome. Opinion polls indicated that persistent price inflation mattered. Equally, concerns about safety in public spaces were on voters' minds. The train tragedy in February 2023 and unresolved issues concerning a wiretapping scandal against politicians, journalists and business representatives lingered on voters' minds.

#### Winners and losers

None of the three largest parties (ND, Syriza and PASOK) managed to achieve their stated election objectives. Similar to other countries, we can observe an increasing willingness of voters to select right-wing populist and nationalist parties. Parties such as Greek Solution (9.30%), Niki (4.37%) and Voice of Logic (3.04%) represent a growing share of voters migrating to the right of the governing conservative ND. Compared to the general election in June 2023, the party of prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis lost more than a million votes, while opposition Syriza further declined and PASOK gained in percentage terms, but not in absolute numbers.

#### Comparison to the 2019 EU elections

The participation rate declined considerably in 2024 compared to five years earlier. A record low of 41.37% of voters went to cast a ballot. A further difference is the rising fragmentation of the party-political system in Greece. Seven Greek parties are now represented in the European Parliament.

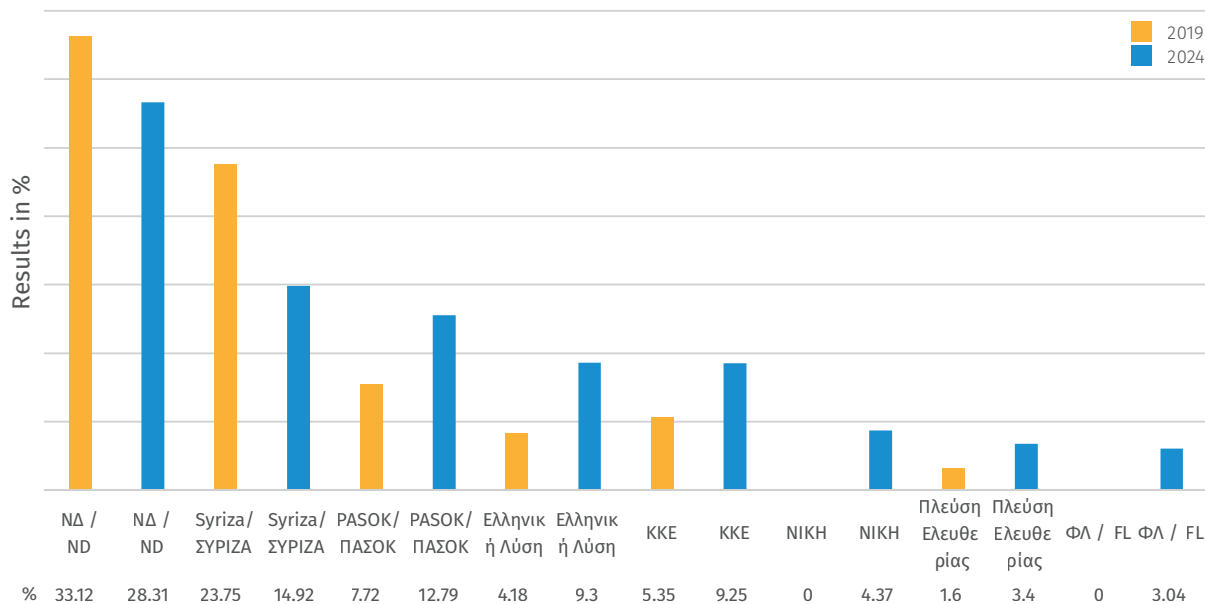
#### Conclusion

The political landscape in Greece is characterized by significant voter migration between 2019 and 2024. All parties have to reckon with shifting voter preferences and dramatically declining voter mobilization.



## European Elections in Southeast Europe – What are the regional trends?

### EP election results 2019 & 2024



turnout 2019: 58.69%; turnout 2024: 41.38 %<sup>5</sup>

Name	English translation		s. in EP 2019	s. in EP 2024	Political group in EP
Νέα Δημοκρατία	New Democracy	ΝΔ / ND	8	7	EPP
Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς	Coalition of the Radical Left	ΣΥΡΙΖΑ / Syriza	6	4	GUE/NGL
Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα	Panhellenic Socialist Movement	ΠΑΣΟΚ / PASOK	2	3	S&D
Ελληνική Λύση	Greek Solution	Ελληνική Λύση	1	2	ECR
Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας	Communist Party of Greece	ΚΚΕ	2	2	Non-Inscrits
Δημοκρατικό Πατριωτικό Κίνημα	Democratic Patriotic Movement – Victory	ΝΙΚΗ	0	1	Non-Inscrits
Πλεύση Ελευθερίας	Course of Freedom	Πλεύση Ελευθερίας	0	1	Not yet decided
Φωνή Λογικής	Voice of Reason	ΦΛ / FL	0	1	Non-Inscrits

<sup>5</sup> Government of Greece Ministry of Interior (June 2019), European parliament election – May 2019, <https://ekloges-prev.singularlogic.eu/2019/e/home/en/> (accessed 9.7.2024); Government of Greece Ministry of Interior (June 2024), European parliament election – June 2024, <https://ekloges.yypes.gr/current/e/home/en/index.html> (accessed 9.7.2024).

## Hungary in the 2024 European Elections Cracks in the foundations of the Orbán regime

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### The electoral campaign

Until February 2024, electoral campaigns seemed uneventful, until the unexpected rise of political newcomer Péter Magyar and his party Respect and Freedom (TISZA) in the spring. Magyar, who is the ex-husband of former Fidesz Justice Minister Judit Varga, became a public figure after his ex-wife had to resign because of a presidential pardon in a child abuse scandal she had countersigned. In an interview on the YouTube channel Partizán, Magyar openly spoke about the high-level corruption of the Orbán regime. In March 2024, he announced that he would form a “third force” to contest the approaching European elections.<sup>6</sup> Because the deadline for registration had already passed, Magyar “adopted” the party TISZA, which registered in 2020 but had existed on paper only. Polls as early as April indicated substantial electoral support for Magyar, even though he lacked an official electoral programme.

The campaign was dominated by Fidesz-KDNP and Magyar, while the other opposition parties were less visible. The campaign of Fidesz-KDNP was based on the well-known strategy of fearmongering. Their core message was that “Brussels” and its supporters, including Magyar and the other left and liberal-leaning Hungarian opposition parties, would promote war, and drag Europe into a superfluous armed conflict with Russia. In contrast, Fidesz-KDNP depicted themselves as guarantors of peace, a message which they conveyed through an aggressive social media campaign, in which Fidesz outspent all other parties in Europe in the 2024 European elections.<sup>7</sup> The cornerstone of Magyar’s campaign message was the need to replace the corrupt system, which he promoted through mass rallies held in several towns. By focusing on domestic issues, his campaign rather neglected European issues.

### Winners and losers

The 2024 European elections, which were held simultaneously with the municipal elections, ended the ruling Fidesz-KDNP alliance’s dominance. In all EP elections since Hungary’s accession to the EU (2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019), the electoral alliance Fidesz-KDNP scored first. In 2009, 2014 and 2019 Fidesz-KDNP even gained over 50% of the votes cast (56.36%, 51.48%, and 52.56% respectively). In 2024 Fidesz-KDNP only gained 44.82% and even scored slightly slower than in the 2004 EP elections (47.70%). Hence, this was Fidesz-KDNP’s worst-ever performance in any European election.

The clear winner of the elections is TISZA. The sudden hype around Magyar and his new party brought him 29.6% of the votes, making TISZA the second-strongest Hungarian delegation in the EP. All of his party’s seven newly elected MEPs, including him, are newcomers. TISZA’s sudden rise led to the almost complete collapse of the other opposition parties. While in 2019 the social-democratic Democratic Coalition (DK) and MSZP-Párbeszéd could secure five seats, they gained only two seats in 2024. Similarly, the liberal Momentum lost its two prominent MEPs, Katalin Cseh and Anna Donáth. The right-wing Jobbik party also missed the threshold and was replaced by its breakaway party Our Homeland, which secured one seat.

### Comparison to the 2019 EU elections

The first major difference was the breakthrough of the new opposition force TISZA. The second difference is the exceptionally high voter turnout of 59.46%, compared to just 43.58% in 2019, which is also the highest voter turnout ever (2014: 28.97%, 2009: 36.31%, 2004: 38.50%).

6 Mizsur, A. (March 2024), Magyar Péter elmondta, mi lenne az első lépése, ha pártjával megnyerné a választást, Telex, <https://telex.hu/belfold/2024/03/13/magyar-peter-partalapitas-fidesz-ellenzek-marcius-15-onkormanyzati-valasztas-ep-valasztas> (accessed 9.7.2024).

7 Goujard, C.; Scott, M.; Mackenzie, L.; Cokelaere, H. (June 2024): Orbán leads the way in EU election advertising, Politico, <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-election-political-ads-spend-online-meta-google-fidesz/> (accessed: 9.7.2024).

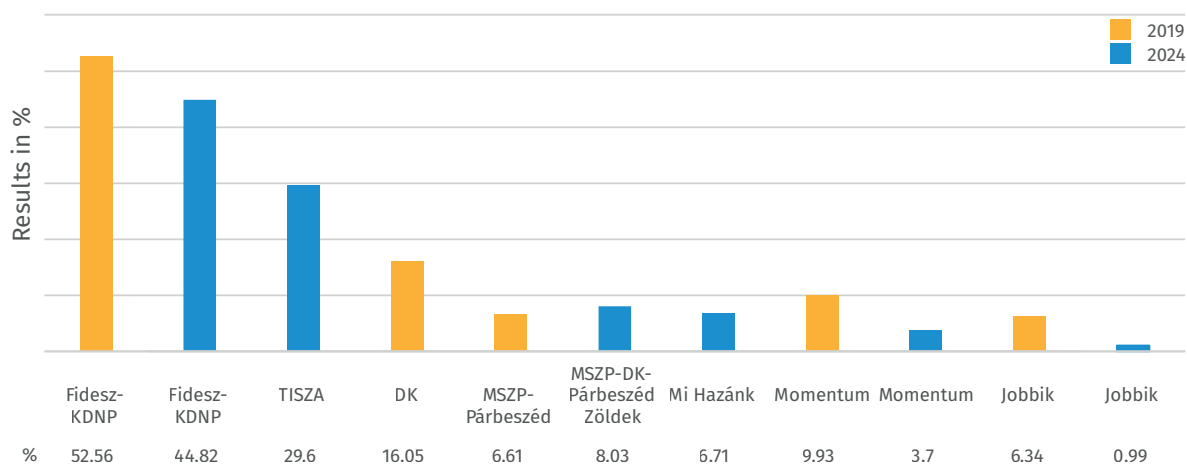
## European Elections in Southeast Europe – What are the regional trends?

### Conclusion

The 2024 EP elections ended the ruling party alliance Fidesz-KDNP's electoral dominance. The fact that a newcomer party with a similarly nationalistic but less illiberal outlook could attract as many voters despite the lack of a coherent programme indicates that there is a felt need for change at the domestic level. Since

European elections are test elections for upcoming domestic votes, this result is a clear warning sign to the government. It has revealed the cracks in the foundations of the authoritarian regime established by the government and the domestic wish for change. Hence, the 2024 EP elections may mark the beginning of the end of the Orbán regime.

EP election results 2019 & 2024



turnout 2019: 43.58%; turnout 2024: 59.46%<sup>8</sup>

Name	English translation		s. in EP 2019	s. in EP 2024	Political group in EP
Fidesz-Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt	Fidesz-Christian Democratic People's Party	Fidesz-KDNP	13	11	EPP / non-attached*
Tisztelet és Szabadság Párt	Respect and Freedom Party	TISZA		7	EPP
Demokratikus Koalíció	Democratic Coalition	DK	4	2*	S&D
Magyar Szocialista Párt-Párbeszéd	Hungarian Socialist Party-Dialogue	MSZP-Párbeszéd	1	2*	S&D
Mi Hazánk	Our Homeland	Mi Hazánk		1	Not yet clear
Momentum	Momentum	Momentum	2	0	Renew
Jobbik	Conservatives	Jobbik	1	0	Non-attached

\* Competing on same list in 2024.

\*\* Fidesz was a member of EEP until 2021, since 2021 the party is non-attached. KDNP remained member of EPP until 2024 and left the group after the elections.

8 Nemezeti Választási Iroda (May 2019), Európai parlamenti képviselők választása 2019, <https://www.valasztas.hu/ep2019> (accessed 9.7.2024); Nemezeti Választási Iroda (June 2024), Európai parlamenti képviselők választása, <https://vtr.valasztas.hu/ep2024> (accessed 9.7.2024).

## Romania in the 2024 European Elections Shades of right

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### The electoral campaign

Taking place at the same time as local elections, EU elections marked the beginning of Romania's bumper election year: parliamentary and presidential elections will follow this autumn/winter. A novelty was the decision of Romania's largest parties, the Social-Democrats (PSD) and the Liberals (PNL), to run on a joint list. Traditionally at fierce loggerheads with each other, the two govern Romania in a grand coalition since November 2021. The local elections largely overshadowed the campaign for the EU polls. Relatively more interest in European issues came from ADU, a right-wing alliance presenting itself as the democratic opposition to the PSD-PNL. European issues also informed the campaign of Nicu Ștefănuță, a USR MEP in Strasbourg between 2019 and 2014, who ran this time on an independent ticket. The campaign of AUR, Romania's openly nationalist party, was largely critical of the EU. SOS Romania, a splinter party of AUR, campaigned in the same vein. A similar stance also played an important role in the electoral mobilization of Romania's Hungarian population in favor of the UDMR.

### Winners and losers

With a share of 48.55% of the votes, the PSD-PNL alliance emerged as a clear winner of the elections. AUR got 14.93% of the votes, while SOS Romania 5.03%. ADU received 8.74% of the votes and UDMR 6.48%. In exchange, the independent candidate Nicu Ștefănuță, Romania's sole candidate with a Green political platform, received 3.08% of the votes, just above the 3% threshold required for independent candidates. Ștefănuță was surprisingly successful in mobilizing young (urban) voters in Romania as well as in the Romanian diaspora.

### Comparison to the 2019 EU elections

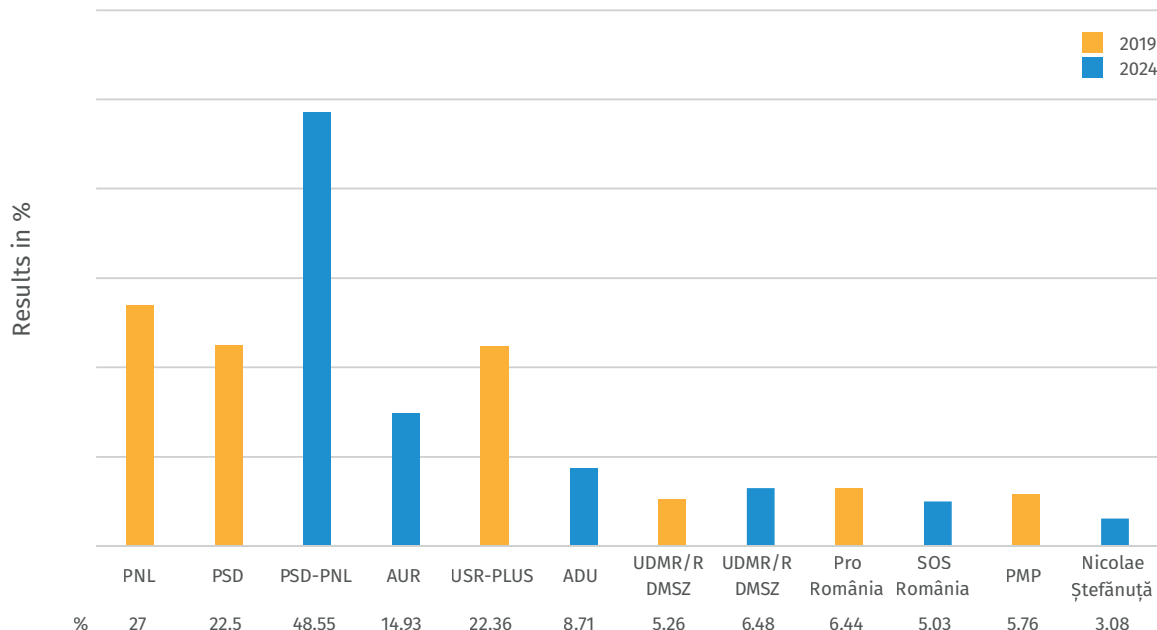
In 2019, PSD and PNL ran separately, receiving 27%, respectively 22.5% of the votes. With 48.55% of the votes in 2024, their share appears to have remained stable. The alliance consisting of USR and PLUS received in 2019 22.4% and PMP (right-wing conservatives) 5.7%. In 2024, ADU (consisting of USR, PMP, and the Force of the Right, a splinter of the Liberal Party) and REPER (largely the continuator of the PLUS party of 2019) received together 12.48% of the votes. The striking difference with respect to 2019 is that almost 20% of the votes went to Romania's far-right parties in June 2024, AUR and SOS. Nicu Ștefănuță's successful independent candidature in the 2024 elections also stands for a relevant difference as compared to 2019, even if Ștefănuță did (successfully) run in 2019 as well, at the time of the USR-PLUS lists.

### Conclusions

Hardly imaginable, some years ago, the PSD-PNL Grand Coalition appeared to work for both parties. Nonetheless, rifts are possible, and it remains to be seen what will happen at the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections later this year. The EU elections show the Romanian landscape to be heavily tilted to the right: politically, economically, and culturally. PSD might be a member of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats. Yet, few of those who will get to occupy the eleven seats in Strasbourg have any progressive credentials. Romania's unmistakable contribution to the shift to the right of the EU is much bigger than the 20% of the votes received by AUR and SOS.

## European Elections in Southeast Europe – What are the regional trends?

### EP election results 2019 & 2024



turnout 2019: 49.02%; turnout 2024: 52.42%<sup>9</sup>

Name	English translation		s. in EP 2019	s. in EP 2024	Political group in EP
Partidul Național Liberal	National Liberal Party	PNL	10	8*	EPP
Partidul Social-Democrat	Social-Democratic Party	PSD	8	11*	S&D
Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor	Alliance for the Union of Romanians	AUR		6	ECR
Uniunea Salvați România – Partidul Libertate, Unitate, Solidaritate	Union Save Romania – Party Freedom, Unity, Solidarity	USR-PLUS	8		Renew
Alianța Dreapta Unită**	United Right Alliance	ADU		3	2 – Renew 1 – EPP
Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România / Români ai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség	Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania	UDMR	2	2	EPP
Pro România	Pro Romania	PRO	2		S&D
S.O.S. România	S.O.S. Romania	SOS		2	
Partidul Mișcarea Populară	Popular Movement Party	PMP	2		EPP
Nicolae Ștefănuță (independent)				1	Greens/EFA

\* Competing on the same list in 2024.

\*\* Consisting of USR, PMP, and Forța Dreptei (Force of the Right)

<sup>9</sup> European Parliament (2019), Romania – Results by national party – 2019-2024, <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/national-results/romania/2019-2024/constitutive-session/> (accessed 9.7.2024); Biroul Electoral Central (June 2019), Proces verbal privind centralizarea voturilor și atribuirea mandatelor la alegerile pentru Parlamentul European 26 mai 2019, [https://europarlamentare2019.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PV\\_E\\_BEC\\_sgn\\_GS\\_P.pdf](https://europarlamentare2019.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PV_E_BEC_sgn_GS_P.pdf) (accessed 9.7.2024); European Parliament (2014), Romania – Results by national party – 2024-2029, <https://results.elections.europa.eu/en/romania/> (accessed 9.7.2024); Biroul Electoral Central (June 2024), Proces verbal privind centralizarea voturilor și atribuirea mandatelor la alegerile pentru membrii din România în Parlamentul European din data de 09 iunie 2024, [https://europarlamentare2024.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/PVCVAM\\_1.pdf](https://europarlamentare2024.bec.ro/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/PVCVAM_1.pdf) (accessed 9.7.2024).

## Slovakia in the 2024 European Elections

### A Pyrrhic victory for the pro-European opposition amid social polarization

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#### The electoral campaign

The 2024 European Parliament elections were the latest in a series of key contests that began in September with early parliamentary elections and continued in March and April with presidential elections. Given the return of Robert Fico's Smer party to power after the 2023 elections and a series of controversial moves by his new government, Slovak society has been in a state of prolonged polarization, the most dramatic manifestation of which was the gun attack on Prime Minister Fico in mid-May. As a result, a number of parties suspended their European Parliament election campaigns and the whole incident became a significant moment that overshadowed other issues. Yet the main dividing line can be traced between the opposition campaign, which accused the government of dismantling democracy by "urbanising" the country, which the government rejected, arguing that the opposition's attacks were externally orchestrated because the government favours a diplomatic solution to the war in Ukraine rather than military support for the invaded country.

#### Winners and losers

The main winner of this year's EP elections is Progressive Slovakia, led by former European Parliament vice-president Michal Šimečka, which has expanded its voter base compared to 2019, strengthened its representation in the European Parliament and defeated the main ruling party Smer. The second winner was the far-right Republika movement, founded in 2021 by Milan Uhrík, an MEP elected in 2019 on the LSNS list. This strongly Eurosceptic formation managed to attract voters from other nationalist parties, especially the ruling Slovak National Party (SNS), whose electoral result below the legal electoral threshold makes it the main loser of the elections. Similarly unimpressive was the electoral performance of the second strongest ruling party, Hlas, whose founder and chairman was elected head of state in early April. Although the party, founded in 2020, presents itself as pro-European, its coalition alliance with Eurosceptic nationalist parties made it look unconvincing in the European Parliament elections.

#### Comparison to the 2019 EU elections

Compared to the 2019 elections, voter turnout increased significantly and was the highest since Slovakia joined the European Union. The proportion of women elected to the EP from Slovakia has more than doubled, with seven female MEPs now elected out of 15. Although, as in the 2019 elections, a liberal party won, with both leftist parties Smer and Hlas suspended from the Party of European Socialists, the nationalist and populist parties slightly strengthened its presence among the Slovak MEPs.

#### Conclusion

The European elections in Slovakia took place in the shadow of internal political polarisation. Specific topics related to the level of the European Union did not appear much in the campaign, with some parties focusing much more on general criticism of the EU and its alleged excessive interference in the country's national sovereignty. The pro-European parties, on the other hand, criticised the government for its actions, which, according to them, will lead to the isolation of the country at the European level, including the possible application of sanction mechanisms on the grounds of violation of the rule of law. Despite the victory of the pro-EU opposition party, as a whole, the nationalists and populist Eurosceptics won more votes and seats for Slovakia.

## European Elections in Southeast Europe – What are the regional trends?

### EP election results 2019 & 2024



turnout 2019: 22.74%; turnout 2024: 34.38 %<sup>10</sup>

Name	English translation		s. in EP 2019	s. in EP 2024	Political group in EP
Progresívne Slovensko	Progressive Slovakia	PS	4*	6	Renew Europe
Spolu – občianska demokracia	Together – Civic Democracy	Spolu	4*	0	EPP
Smer – slovenská sociálna demokracia	Direction – Slovak Social Democracy	Smer	3	5	S&D**
Republika	Republic	Republika		2	
Hlas – sociálna demokracia	Voice – Social Democracy	Hlas		1	
Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie	Christian Democratic Movement	KDH	2	1	EPP
Sloboda a Solidarita	Freedom and Solidarity	SaS	2	0	ECR
Ludová strana Naše Slovensko	People's Party Our Slovakia	LSNS	2	0	NI
Obyčajní ľudia a nezávislé osobnosti // Slovensko	Ordinary People and Independent Personalities // Slovakia	OLANO // Slovensko***	1	0****	EPP
Za ľudí	For the people	Za ľudí	2	0****	NI

\* Competing on same list in 2019.

\*\* Membership suspended in October 2023.

\*\*\* OLANO renamed into Slovensko in 2023.

\*\*\*\* Competing on same list in 2024.

10 Štatistický úrad Slovenskej Republiky (2019), Voľby do Európskeho parlamentu 25. Máj 2019, <https://volby.statistics.sk/ep/ep2019/sk/> (accessed 9.7.2024); Štatistický úrad Slovenskej Republiky (2024), Voľby do Európskeho parlamentu 2024, <https://volby.statistics.sk/ep/ep2024/sk/> (accessed 9.7.2024).

## Slovenia in the 2024 European Elections

### Referendums on the electoral system, euthanasia and hemp organised on European elections day mobilised more voters, but right-wing parties still won

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#### The electoral campaign

Besides the issues and politics linked to the European parliament, questions were also connected to the three referendums organised on the same day, although some of the parties that participated in the European elections did not participate in the referendum campaign. Most discussed topics were the migration policy at the national and European levels, green passage, conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, EU foreign and defence policy, Slovenian recognition of Palestine, EU enlargement and, last but not least, relevant particularly to Slovenia, the judgment of the European Court on Slovenian fishermen related to the dispute with the border with Croatia.

#### Winners and losers

While in 2019, Slovenia had 8 seats in European Parliament, with 4 seats won by the right-wing and 4 by left-wing parties, for the 2024 elections, Slovenian voters elected 9 MEPs. Right-wing parties that are currently in the opposition won 5 seats, and compared to the main government party (GS) that won 2 seats, represented the winners of the elections. The main government party might be satisfied with two won seats, but both of the candidates are former LMŠ party<sup>11</sup> members. SD won barely one seat in the EP, while Levica, also a governmental party, received only 4.81% of votes and no seats. The winning SDS party with 4 new MEPs had some surprises as well: Besides Tomc and Zver, who kept their mandates, the elections of Grims, who was positioned 5th on the list and Tomašič, the youngest elected candidate who was even 9th on the list, were a surprise. A seat was also won by VESNA, the new green party, which was not able to surpass the threshold for the 2022 national parliamentary elections.

#### Comparison to the 2019 EU elections

In Slovenia, turnout in European elections has been traditionally low. While in 2019, less than 29% of voters cast a ballot, in 2024, more than 40% participated. The increase in voters' turnout could be attributed to a politically polarised society that potentially sees each election as an opportunity to express political views. However, the organisation of three referendums on the electoral system, hemp and euthanasia on the same day probably also mobilised voters. Among the 9 newly elected MEPs, two of them are representatives of the younger generation: 35 years old Joveva, who will serve her second term, and 28 years old Tomašič, who was previously politically unknown and shows the turn of young voters to the right-wing also in Slovenia.

#### Conclusion

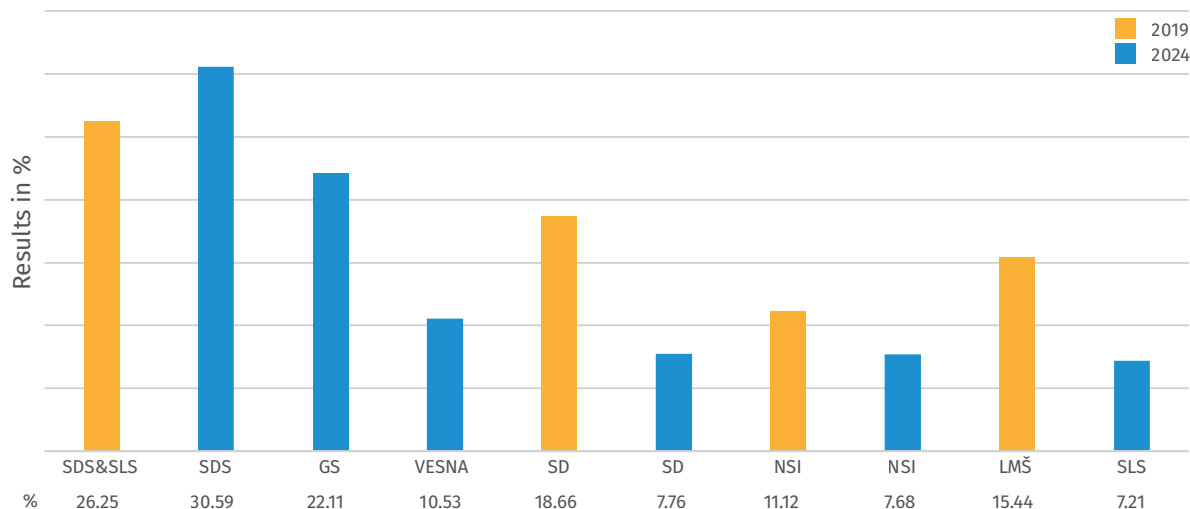
European elections in 2024 were won by right-wing parties getting 5 seats and SDS party that received 30.59% of votes. The voters' turnout at the European elections for the first time exceeded 40% of votes also due to referendums organised on the same day. The majority of voters used ranked-choice voting to upvote their preferred candidates. All candidates, who were elected into the EP, received their mandate through preferential voting.

11 After the national elections in 2022, when LMŠ failed to enter the national parliament, LMŠ and GS merged.



## European Elections in Southeast Europe – What are the regional trends?

### EP election results 2019 & 2024



turnout 2019: 28.89%; turnout 2024: 41.80%<sup>12</sup>

Name	English translation		s. in EP 2019	s. in EP 2024	Political group in EP
Slovenska demokratska stranka	Slovenian Democratic Party	SDS	3*	4	EPP
Slovenska ljudska stranka	Slovenian People's Party	SLS	3*	0	EPP
Gibanje Svoboda	Freedom Movement	GS		2	ReNew
Vesna zelena stranka	Vesna Green Party	Vesna		1	Greens
Socialni demokrati	Social Democrats	SD	2	1	SD
Nova Slovenija – Krščanski demokrati	New Slovenia – Christian Democrats	NSI	1	1	EPP
Lista Marjana Šarca	List of Marjan Šarec	LMŠ	2		ReNew

\* Competing on same list in 2019. Two MEPs were elected from the SDS (Tomc and Zver) and one from SLS (Bogovič).

<sup>12</sup> Republika Slovenija Državna volilna komisija (2019), Izidi glasovanja za celotno Slovenijo, <https://www.dvk-rs.si/arhivi/ep2019/#/rezultati> (accessed 9.7.2024); Republika Slovenija Državna volilna komisija (2024), Izidi glasovanja, <https://volitve.dvk-rs.si/ep2024/#/rezultati> (accessed 9.7.2024).