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THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS:
THEMES AND DIVIDES

ELECTIONS 2019

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The following brief is part of a series which began with the publication on 25 October 2018 of the brief "European Parliament 2019: The Parliament and Europe to come"[1], and will be followed by other publications before the European elections are held on 23-26 May 2019.

What is the likely scenario for the European election campaign?

Several older or new themes are set to dominate the campaign. Their European dimension will be more apparent than in previous elections. Some will be tackled in a controversial manner, for reasons of political symbolism, while others will emerge more positively.

Some themes will be exploited, as is commonly the case, through division and/or polarisation. Even if these divisions do not necessarily reflect European diversity or the EU's complexity, they have the advantage of helping to structure considerations and debates.

Yet the campaign will not boil down to a single divide. There will be intersecting divides. Within the divides themselves, fault lines will emerge. Others will remain concealed, one example being geographical divides. These will have no less of a structuring impact.

We must also expect misinformation, the techniques of which have prospered since 2014. This new development must be taken into account.

The following brief explores eleven themes and four divides that the campaign for the upcoming European elections will highlight.

1. Working group on the 2019 European elections, European Parliament 2019: The Parliament and Europe to come, Jacques Delors Institute, 25 October 2018

1 . Eleven campagn themes: from concerns to ambition?

The upcoming campaign will give rise to controversy, domestic policy clawbacks and instrumentalisations of all kinds across the European Union. Fake news will also feature. Some themes are more susceptible to this than others.

Other themes, however, are more related to future challenges, though a consensus is not always achieved. They will be debated more rationally, and are less subject to manipulations and economic, political or societal choices related to the continent's future.

We can also count on the various political forces to project the polarisations that best suit their electoral strategy, even if that means exaggerating somewhat here and there.

The foreseeable ingredients will be relatively negative in certain cases, and more positive in others.

1.1 Controversial and emotionally-charged themes

1.1.1 Europe: sieve or shield?

The issue of migration, inescapable in all countries, is now considered a European subject. Europe appears powerless, and yet it does not enjoy the necessary competences to take common actions.

With the "subversion of migration" and the "collapse into savagery" described by the extreme right, who exploit fears and the identity crisis, and the mainly humanitarian approach championed by a substantial share of the left and NGOs, citizens have doubts, as they are torn between values and fears.

Attitudes contrast greatly according to geographical location: different approaches within Western European nations (criticised in the more affected countries in the South), misgivings, which can give way to genuine hostility and even a rejection of solidarity, in Central and Eastern European States, where, paradoxically, there are no migrants. However-

er, actions of solidarity are also being rejected in France, Italy and Greece.

Yet contrasts also appear according to the dominant religious culture, past migrations in each country and its political history, the demographic context and personal experience.

Emotionally-charged approaches are deployed by all those who want public opinion to feel that immigration must be stopped, in line with their primary and short-sighted demands.

Those who prefer a factual approach include those who observe that the arrival flows of migrants are in sharp decline in comparison with the peak in 2015 (150,000 in 2018, as against more than one million in 2015), and that responses to the migration challenge, despite divisions between States, are gradually put forward and debated against a backdrop in which Member States' competences in this field remain greater than those of the European Union.

In this way, the debate on the Schengen Area is at the centre of the issue of distributing migratory flows, which would be facilitated by harmonised asylum systems[2].

1.1.2 Europe, technocracy or demoï-cracy?

Estranged Brussels, bureaucrats who decide everything, without any knowledge on a grass roots level, excessive standards and regulations, an anti-democratic system with rules imposed from the outside, Council of Ministers proceedings that lack transparency, the voice of citizens which remains unheard, all-powerful lobbies, etc.

These arguments are often heard at the extremes of the political spectrum, also frequently in many companies, or from farmers, in the media, and even political leaders, particularly in Eastern Europe. For the latter, Brussels is another Moscow, like in the Soviet era...

Others, conversely, mostly on the basis of facts (even if this polarisation may appear too

2. See Jérôme Vignon, "For a European Policy on Asylum, Migration and Mobility", Report, Jacques Delors Institute, 28 November 2018

simple), raise the question of the competences of the EU and its institutions, which are often weaker than those of Member States. They put the weighting of European lobbies into perspective, which are highly regulated by strict provisions in comparison to national lobbies. They also stress the importance of the European Parliament, and that of national Parliaments, and that institutions often operate with greater transparency than national counterparts, and are more suitable for participative democracy, in addition to representative democracy.

They strive to provide proof that most European standards aim to inform consumers and facilitate companies' access to the European market. They wish to deconstruct the idea that Europe is a scapegoat for unpopular decisions made on a national level.

Some even suggest inventing a demoicracy, a democracy of several peoples, of negotiation and not confrontation.

Nonetheless, this debate must include the calls from many citizens for more direct consultation mechanisms (referendums, digital citizen platforms, etc.).

1.1.3 Enlargement, enough or more?

The enlargements of 2004 and 2007 to Central and Eastern European nations continue to raise questions in some other countries: should we have enlarged so much and so quickly? The new arrivals allegedly practice social dumping, make decision-making more burdensome, do not share the same values as countries which entered earlier, are only interested in financial transfers. Many pro-Europeans, particularly in France, are also asking this question and are championing the return of a more integrated inner circle (even if a certain erosion of values can be observed in some countries of "old Europe", particularly as regards migrants).

Conversely, the geopolitical advantages and increased market access are put forward by those who claim the weight of history (using the term "reunification") who speak of necessary transition. For them, a Europe reunified at last was an obligation. Along the same

lines, some are fierce champions of the future membership of the Balkan countries (and Poland in particular is even in favour of Ukraine joining the EU).

Against this backdrop, future enlargements, in particular to the Balkan countries, with which negotiations are underway (enlargement to Turkey is no longer on the agenda today), are under debate. There are those which stress the danger of a return to war if such a prospect is not achieved, even in the distant future (the Commission, countries who are geographically close), and there are those who raise the spectre of a distended and ungovernable Europe (most often in right-wing parties).

While enlargement is a success in terms of foreign policy for many, it remains a challenge for internal cohesion.

1.1.4 Europe, a cost-benefit analysis

"They decide, they spend, we pay!" That was the slogan of the Europe of Nations and Freedom parliamentary group (far right) at the European Parliament. The group adds that the EU must "put an end to unnecessary spending and propaganda" and "give States their money back". It also notes for example that "when France pays €100 to the European Union, €43 go towards subsidising Member States which are net recipients".

In this debate, on one side are the countries which have joined the EU since 2004, which benefit greatly from transfers, Northern European countries for which the added value of the EU, which must focus on the key issues, must be proven, those who believe that European construction should simply be a zero-sum game. For the latter, Member States' contributions should be equal to the amount they receive (argument often put forward by national administrations).

Others, particularly to the left and in the centre, call for a larger EU budget, in order to achieve economies of scale, make strategic investments in promising sectors or meet new challenges (migration, environmental transition). They assume that in these sectors, the European echelon is more relevant.

The concepts of "European public goods" and "European added value"[3] are also highlighted, based on the idea that the European budget is not primarily a redistribution instrument, but an instrument intended to finance common policies, even though the cohesion policy is a form of redistribution.

Countries that are major recipients of the common agricultural policy (France, Spain, Poland), and of structural funds (with the issue of possible reallocation from the East to the South which suffered from the crisis), seek above all to safeguard the results they have achieved.

1.1.5 Europe, imposed austerity or healthy management?

The left wing in Europe and some governments connected to the far right, as in Italy, hold Brussels responsible for the erosion in purchasing power, the declining salary and pension levels, the blocking of reforms in favour of employees, and, in short, a social breakdown. Whether for ideological reasons or in line with the reality experienced, this is their perception, particularly in the countries worst affected by the 2008 economic crisis.

From this perspective, the 3% rule set by the Maastricht Treaty appears to be the bugbear that hampers recovery policies.

Conversely, Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavian countries, countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the right wing in general argue the necessary compliance with the rule of law, the urgency of debt relief (theme of solidarity with future generations) and the obligation of structural reforms which, however painful at first, will prevent States from becoming bankrupt in the medium term. They also cite the assistance, albeit exacting, that the EU and Member States provide to the countries in question.

Going beyond the ideological divides on the economic foundations of the European Union, and on the notion of sovereignty, it is also a debate on rigour and ambition, which political families and States often experience.

1.2 Positive themes for the future

1.2.1 Energy, climate, environment, health: who pays the transition bill?

Types of lifestyle and economic model and their impact on the environment will be one of the themes of the electoral campaign.

The fault lines, and subjects of future debates, could have two central elements:

The level of ambition of the environmental transition, in particular between the most ambitious parties such as the Green Party, the Social-Democrats and some radical left movements, and those who understand the environmental aspect but do not see a central aspect (for example far right movements, some radical left movements, many government parties, even though there are political leaders and citizens who negate the advantages of the environmental transition).

The level of importance given to the solidarity aspect of the environmental and solidarity transition. Between those who give little importance to the solidarity aspect (most members of the ALDE and EPP), those who only want to limit the negative effects of some measures (for example measures aimed at offsetting the rise in fuel prices – SPD, LREM) and those who want to make the transition an opportunity to achieve greater social justice in Europe, the only way to make it possible (for example, improved income for farmers, improved public health through a decrease in air pollution, thermal renovation of buildings –Socialist Party, France Insoumise, Greens, in particular).

The dimension outside of the EU should not be forgotten, highlighted by those who call for more social and environmental clauses in trade agreements, and the proposal of a European energy transition fund.

1.2.2 Europe, a power to combat external threats?

Trump, Putin, China, Iran, Syria, terrorism: European citizens are worried about these threats, in terms of their domestic and external security.

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3. Joseph Dunne, *Mapping the Cost of Non-Europe 2014-19*, Study, European Parliamentary Research Service, 2014

They are not necessarily aware that Europe is already more powerful that it even knows itself: if Trump and Putin attack us, it is probably not because we are weak.

The theme of European defence has once again become a priority for some (France, developments in Germany, in particular on the right), even if NATO remains for an overwhelming majority the best military protection (except for the extremes). The theme of peace has again emerged in the polls as a highly positive achievement of the European Union, and one that must be preserved.

Yet States are still divided on Europe's role and political independence in the world, the relationship to be conducted with Russia, or with China. Also, the necessary degree of diplomatic integration.

The relationship with the USA is also a major subject of debate for all issues concerning the economy, world trade and currency (Europe's problems in view of US extraterritorial sanctions with the suggestion of EU extraterritoriality, the idea of making the Euro a real international currency), but also on the resources to be allocated to defence within or outside of NATO.

The gap between States, and even nationalist parties, concerned with national sovereignty, and many citizens, concerned with peace and security, leaves open the possibility of rekindling the debate on an EU foreign policy, and on the concept of political power (the idea of a European hub in a competitive world).

1.2.3 "Social" Europe, utopia or reality?

Are common social standards an option on a European level, and if so, which ones? Is a European social contract necessary?

For some, social convergence involves the European Union's financial transfers (in the East), for others (Northern Europe), the idea is to respect national sovereignty and social partners. It is the norm that matters.

The free movement of people is one of the four fundamental freedoms. Yet when it is noted that all nurses have left Bulgaria and 20% of the population of the Baltic States

have moved West or that 75% of those leaving Poland are aged under 35, how can those in these countries not feel like "second-rate citizens"? Even in Italy, around 2 million people have left the south of the country since 2002. Others in Western Europe stress that many unscrupulous companies exploit workers "posted" from the East, penalising those from the West (social dumping).

What does fair mobility mean under these circumstances? The debate also focuses on Europe's understanding of inequality, and how the environmental and digital transitions can be supported. How can a real social and wage convergence be fostered between countries? Such debates concern the EU as a whole, and therefore the electoral campaign.

Pragmatists remind that these are above all national competencies guarded by Member States and that discussions should focus on the type and extent of support that the EU can provide to policies which remain chiefly national.

They also highlight, however, that there is a narrow yet real means of Social Europe making progress on specific issues (a successful example is the revision of the directive on posted workers).

The extremes will be inclined to make full use of ignorance on this subject, by accusing the EU of neglecting workers. The left will generally be likely to criticise the EU for being too liberal and insufficiently concerned with the social dimension.

1.2.4 An EU tax system, fewer taxes for Member States?

The single market was established without harmonising tax bases or direct tax rates, and tax remains subject to the unanimity rule of Member States. This means that European "tax havens" have up to now prevented the implementation of binding minimum standards, giving rise to tax dumping.

Therefore, the project, championed by France in particular, to tax the Big Four tech companies (GAFA), which take advantage of the inconsistencies in the European tax system to minimise their tax payments, is coming up

against hostility, above all from Ireland. Even Germany has an ambiguous stance, as do the countries in Scandinavia and the Netherlands.

Similarly, the financial transaction tax (FTT) has still not been finalised.

Yet European citizens want greater fiscal transparency, and the European Commission is now proposing a preliminary move to qualified majority voting; it has also made proposals to harmonise the common consolidated corporate tax base or a digital tax base, which are stuck at the Council of Ministers.

A package to combat tax optimisation and fraud and to foster greater transparency is also on the table.

Similarly, proposals to create new own resources for the EU are based on the argument that more taxes on a European level would reduce the volume of national taxation and Member States' contributions to the European budget through economies of scale and subsidiarity.

Under the competition policy, the Commission was able to oblige Apple to pay €13 billion in unpaid taxes.

This subject symbolises the contradiction between the defence of specific national interests and the European general interest. According to a study commissioned by the S&D group of the European Parliament and conducted by tax avoidance specialist Richard Murphy, Professor of Practice at City, University of London, the current EU tax gap is €825 billion, on the basis of 2015 data[4].

1.2.5 Europe, a digital colony, or promises for new markets?

Digital and new technologies, an area of innovation and source of significant economic growth, are a promising prospect for Europe. Yet these opportunities come with challenges that must be overcome to ensure users' protection and the continuation of European sovereignty in this area, including in the space sector.

Debates will focus on several aspects: data protection for European citizens, the barrier to European digital data interference and the

issue of using big data (at this point, there is no major operator in Europe).

While the Big Four tech companies, in response to public authorities and users' opinions, have already launched and broadly funded research on the implementation of data anonymisation and encryption processes, some (to the left for the most part) are questioning the legitimacy of these players in taking charge of these protection efforts, while the EU has exemplary legislation with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Interference observed in the digital sector, during the last US elections, alerted European decision-makers to the risks that this entails for the sovereignty of European States. Debates on this issue could divide champions of enhanced controls on European digital networks, while others, within more liberal groups, will fear potential infringements of freedom.

The question is also raised as to the opportunity for new regulations to guarantee the status of workers in these sectors (self-employed workers via digital platforms).

1.2.6 Which institutional resources must be leveraged to make Europe efficient?

Faced with those who deem Europe inefficient, bureaucratic, ineffective (nationalists in particular: Alternative for Germany, for example, proposes the abolition of the European Parliament), "pro-Europeans" are calling for institutional change: limiting the inter-governmental field, extending qualified majority, joint decision-making between the Council and the Parliament, improved use of reinforced cooperation.

It is often argued that institutional issues are not exciting. They are, however, related to the content of policies and their effectiveness. It is clear that the question of resources must be raised quickly.

This debate displays the divide between pro-European political families and nationalists, even though expressions from both camps are highly nuanced.

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4. Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats, *Fair Tax Report*, 2019

2. Divides

2.1 Left-wing Europe against right-wing Europe

This is a divide which may appear somewhat outdated due to the fragmentation, to the right and to the left, of positions on European issues. It does, however, refocus debate on positions that are less national: on one side, champions of a more socially integrated Europe, and on the other rhetoric focused more on continued market integration.

Yet this opposition is currently kept in perspective for the most part. The weakening of socialist and social-democrat parties more or less across Europe as well as the nationalist tightening of some right-wing parties' approaches have certainly disputed the left-right bi-partisanship that was the norm until recently.

The multiplication of parties with seats in the EU's parliaments is evidence of this. It is the phenomenon of "Dutchification", observed in several recent national elections and forecast for the upcoming elections.

It does, however, seem somewhat hasty to lay this system of representation to rest, as a 2017 poll indicated that it still made sense for 75% of French people polled.[5] "Even if it is no longer as strong as it once was, the divide is still present. [...] Regarding questions of governance, debate has become de-ideologised in favour of terrorism and the migration crisis, while in terms of the economy, it is still profoundly marked by the notion of conflict between social classes", specifies Chloé Morin, Director of the Jean Jaurès Foundation's opinion watchdog, Observatoire de l'opinion[6].

There is no doubt that new fault lines have emerged, but not to the extent that the right-left opposition has become obsolete, at least for voters who still identify themselves very much according to left or right depending on the themes they deem the most crucial.

In terms of political parties, the weakening of the left-right opposition must be considered in relation to the many gaps that have emerged within the two blocks. The failures of social-democrats[7] have resulted in the departure of those in favour of a more radical left while to the right there is a clean break between those in favour of economic liberalism and those who support a more nationalist and sometimes protectionist line.

The left-right divide can be of interest to the left, allowing it to get back into the conventional political game, despite disagreements within leftist factions.

Given the rise in populism and nationalism to the right and even within the EPP, the landscape is markedly different on this side. Manfred Weber's election, at the EPP Congress, as the candidate of this political family for the presidency of the European Commission, has maintained a line which does its utmost to maintain the EPP family's power in order to avoid the groups to its right growing in strength. These internal struggles mean that opposition with the weakened left is not the priority right now.

Lastly, the ALDE group of the European Parliament, the objective of which is greater weight, should have an interest in promoting a clear left-right divide which would highlight its centrist position. Against the backdrop of a left-right divide with two weakened poles, the liberals could play a key role in building a pro-European parliamentary majority, thereby reflecting the complexity and diversity of European political life[8].
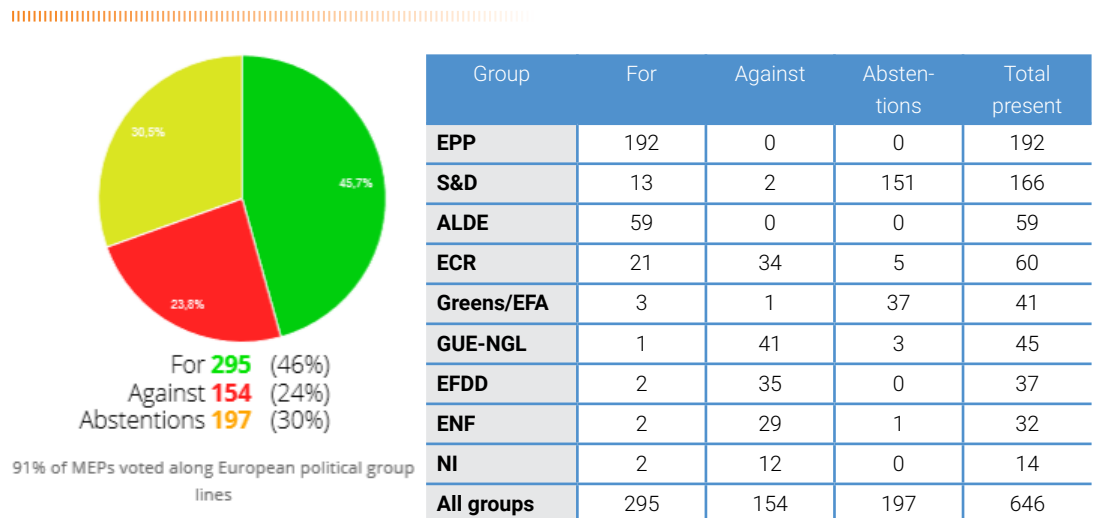

[5.] ELABE poll for *Les Echos*, 2017.
[6.] "Le clivage gauche-droite est-il mort ?", *Les Échos*, 24 November 2017 (in French)
[7.] "2017 and the curious demise of Europe's centre-left", *The Guardian*, 29 December 2017
[8.] Working group on the 2019 European elections, "European Parliament 2019: The Parliament and Europe to come", Jacques Delors Institute, 25 October 2018

FIGURE 1 ▪ An example of voting at the European Parliament which illustrates this divide: Vote on the 2018 budget (date: 30 November 2017)

Group	For	Against	Absten-tions	Total present
EPP	192	0	0	192
S&D	13	2	151	166
ALDE	59	0	0	59
ECR	21	34	5	60
Greens/EFA	3	1	37	41
GUE-NGL	1	41	3	45
EFDD	2	35	0	37
ENF	2	29	1	32
NI	2	12	0	14
All groups	295	154	197	646

For **295** (46%)
Against **154** (24%)
Abstentions **197** (30%)

91% of MEPs voted along European political group lines

While the MEPs of the EPP and ALDE groups voted unanimously in favour of this budget, the S&D and Greens MEPs abstained, dissatisfied with its insufficient ambition. Most other groups voted against.

91% of MEPs voted along European political group lines.

Source : Votewatch

2.2 In a globalised world, does Europe open up or withdraw?

On the one hand, the fact is that the global economy is becoming increasingly integrated. This has the advantage of reducing political conflicts due to the new international division of labour and the economic and financial interdependence it brings about.

For the champions of openness, "the European level, through its coherence, size and operating structures, proves more promising in meeting many of the global challenges resulting from globalisation"[9].

These same people are, however, aware of the negative repercussions of globalisation, in particular in terms of inequality. They do not propose a free-for-all but remind that Europe regulates freedom by rule of law. They put forward proposals to "regulate" globalisation in the interests of and according to the values of Europe. They call for greater resources in terms of European governance to achieve this.

This approach is favoured by those who could constitute the future majority in the European Parliament (EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens).

The inclination to openness comes, of course, in varying levels. Those in favour of it are divided as to whether it must be extended to people or if it should be restricted to goods, services and capital. Some parties are open to the world[10] from a trade standpoint but not in terms of immigration. Among the champions of an open society, there are also those who are sceptical with regard to the European Union's trade policy, considered insufficiently stringent in terms of reciprocity and ambitious in terms of social and environmental standards (in particular the Greens).[11]

On the other hand, those in favour of Europe acting as a shield, much more cautious of globalisation, put forward a protectionist position, going back to the spirit of "Community preference" of the 1960s. They believe that

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[9]. See Pascal Lamy et Nicole Gnesotto, *Où va le monde ? Trump et nous*, Odile Jacob, 2018 (in French).
[10]. FEPS, "For the many, not the few; A Progressive Model for Trade and Investment", 5 December 2018
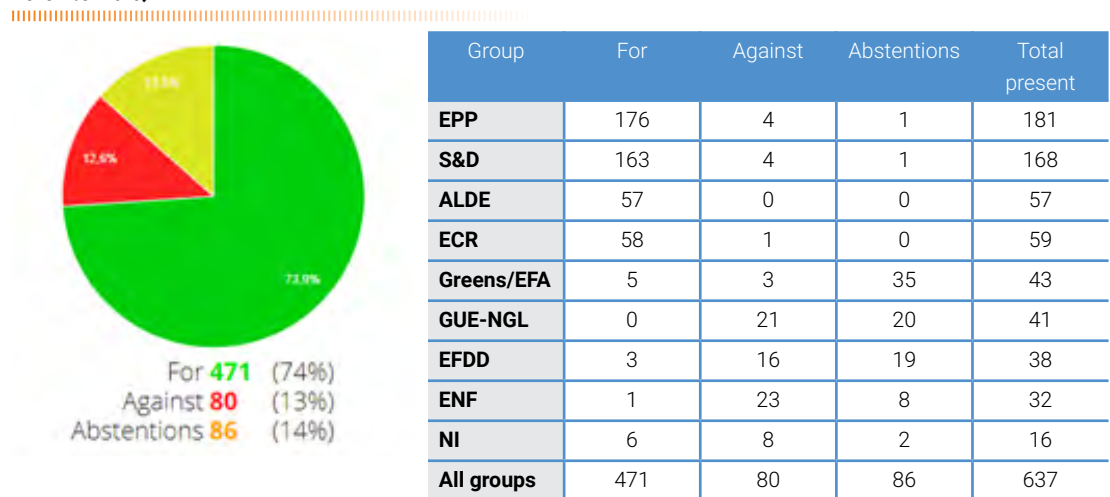[11]. ibid.

their voice is not heard on a European level and therefore want a reduction in European competences which would enable Member States to recover the sovereignty needed to implement withdrawal policies, for example to deal with migration challenges.

For the extreme left, in particular La France Insoumise, an increasingly anti-globalisation approach is emerging, which is protectionist and also hostile to NATO, even though this is not the prerogative of this party alone, including a line in favour of a degree of rapproche-ment with Russia. This is one way of criticising globalisation, not to regulate it but to protect oneself from it, by questioning the capitalist system itself. For La France Insoumise, dis-trust as regards immigration takes on a spe-cific Eurocentric approach: denunciation of migration flows between the east and west of the continent and questioning of the direc-tives on posted workers.

In both cases, and at the risk of oversimplify-ing, the bias of national withdrawal opposes an approach of global openness.

FIGURE 2 ▪ An example of voting at the European Parliament which illustrates this divide: "WTO: the way forward" voting (29 November 2018)

For 471 (74%)
Against 80 (13%)
Abstentions 86 (14%)

Group	For	Against	Abstentions	Total present
EPP	176	4	1	181
S&D	163	4	1	168
ALDE	57	0	0	57
ECR	58	1	0	59
Greens/EFA	5	3	35	43
GUE-NGL	0	21	20	41
EFDD	3	16	19	38
ENF	1	23	8	32
NI	6	8	2	16
All groups	471	80	86	637

The voting at the European Parliament on the WTO: the way forward illustrates the divide between parties representing a Europe open to the world and in favour of strengthening the WTO and enhanced trade relations (EPP, S&D, ALDE, ECR), and parties which are more inclined towards protectionism which vote against (ENF), abstain (Greens) or are divided (EFDD, GUE-NGL).

88% of MEPs voted along European political group lines.

Source : European Parliament

2.3 A powerful Europe or a "light" Europe

In the former case, the idea is to ensure a greater latitude for the European Union, in terms of its partners or competitors who are often unpredictable and always powerful in the international arena (USA, China, Russia).

In other words, in a rapidly-changing world, a European power or sovereignty must be affirmed, which does not replace national sovereignties, but is complementary to them, in areas in which it would be more effective. Common interests and objectives would be declared in a number of areas, together with commensurate resources.

For the champions of this approach, the EU's added value, in comparison to that of each Member State considered in isolation, is al-ready confirmed in the area of trade, or when stringent standards must be defined, particu-larly in the environmental or health fields, or for data protection.

It therefore presupposes that the notion of European "public goods" is put forward, "to re-place, at last, European added value, and not

financial transfers, at the heart of the European project".[12]

It has already been observed in the fields of competition (penalty for Apple), personal data protection or ultimately the protection of savers.

Admittedly, it is still in the early stages of development on a political level (foreign and defence policy), even though there is progress (pilot project of the European Defence Fund, or the European Intervention Initiative signed by ten countries). It should be noted, however, that the European Greens, while being in favour of a "powerful" Europe, are strongly against defence initiatives. It is nascent or under development in the fields of new technologies and taxation.

It is also nascent in the field of competition policy, in which there are increasing calls to consider relevant markets outside of the European market, in particular from Berlin, which is new.

Based on the principle that the European identity sets Europe apart from the rest of the world, this concept confirms that, to survive and play a part, the EU must be more than the sum of national identities, while it preserves the specific features of said identities. This identity pertains to justice, solidarity and tolerance, compliance with the rule of law, a certain understanding of freedom, together with a social market economy, a perception of power and environmental protection.

The expression of this sensitivity should result in renewed institutional debate, focusing in particular on the extension of qualified majority voting to some political competences. It should be observed, however, that parties are extremely discreet in relation to this subject which is not likely to achieve a consensus and which is poorly understood by public opinion.

Conversely, those in favour of a mere cooperation between States, of a "Union of European Nations", as Marine Le Pen called it, who are against European institutions, their standards and bureaucracy, believe that the "globalist parenthesis is closing in" and that "the struggle of the nations against the European Union is a struggle for independence." Their vision of Europe is that of a "light" Europe, which is weak as an entity.

What is striking in this approach is the lack of concrete proposals to meet major continental and global challenges, the use of generic formulas, albeit loaded terms (independence, freedom of peoples, national sovereignty), and solutions involving closures (borders, rejections of migrants). Those in favour of this approach propose solutions with a particular resonance for domestic policy, without specifying that there are no formal European competences in fields such as purchasing power or unemployment.

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12. « Il faut développer les biens publics européens », Opinion piece by Pascal Lamy and Jacob von Weizacker, *Le Monde*, 26 November 2018

FIGURE 3 ▪ Final vote on the very first European Defence Industry Development Programme (13 March 2018)

For **471** (68%)
Against **195** (28%)
Abstentions **24** (3%)
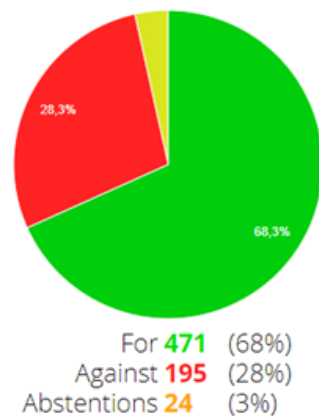
Group	For	Against	Abstentions	Total present
EPP	208	0	0	208
S&D	128	34	6	168
ALDE	62	1	2	65
ECR	49	10	4	63
Greens/EFA	1	47	1	49
GUE-NGL	0	44	1	45
EFDD	13	27	0	40
ENF	4	24	7	35
NI	6	8	3	17
All groups	471	195	24	690

The vote on the first European fund devoted to the defence industry illustrates the divide between parties which encourage European defence initiatives, and represent a desire to make the EU more independent (EPP, S&D, ALDE, ECR) and parties which oppose this programme (Greens, GUE-NGL, ENF, and to a certain extent EFDD).

87% of MEPs voted along European political group lines.

Source: Votewatch

2.4. "Progressive" Europe or reactionary Europe?

While the pro/anti EU fault line no longer seems relevant (according to the latest Eurobarometer survey, "62% of European citizens polled found that being a member of the EU is a good thing for their country in the spring of 2018, against 11% who considered EU membership a bad thing and 25% who believed it is "neither a good nor a bad thing"[13]), the far right and national movements have become pan-European.

Matteo Salvini's declaration at the Italian-Polish summit in January 2019 ("Poland and Italy will be the heroes of this new European spring, this revival of real European values, where there will be less finances, less bureaucracy, more work and more family, and above all more security") is a prime example of the new line adopted by the extremes with regard to Europe.

Criticism of a Brussels establishment is the gateway to a Europe of Nations made of cooperation between nations. This Europe is intended to guarantee more sovereignty to Member States by granting them greater budgetary freedom, with fewer requirements in relation to the European institutions and protection from external migratory pressures.

Going beyond this new rhetoric, it is very difficult to identify other points of contact between the various European nationalist and populist groups.[14]

In contrast to this pole, which seems to be less consistent than it claims to be, Emmanuel Macron proposed in July 2018 to oppose populism by bringing together a pro-European progressive front.

This approach has come under fierce criticism from both sides of the European political spectrum. In France, Boris Vallaud (Socialists) deemed this divide too simplistic[15] while Laurent Wauquiez (Les Républicains) denounced a deceit which involved writing a story in which you have nationalist baddies who want to close borders, and the progres-

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13. Statistic from Eurobarometer 90 of the European Parliament dated October 2018 (in French)

14. Working group on European elections, "European Parliament 2019: The Parliament and Europe to come", Jacques Delors Institute,October 2018

15. « Le débat progressistes contre nationalistes est simplificateur, critique Vallaud », *Le Point*, 29 October 2018 (in French)

sive goodies who want open borders".[16]

While it cannot be denied that this scaremongering rhetoric played a major part in propelling Emmanuel Macron to the presidency of France, many are concerned about the effectiveness and risks of such an approach on a European level.

One major aspect of this divide opposing progressives and reactionaries will probably take shape in debates on migration. This debate will tackle the question of European identity, which, for some, must reflect a contrast between a closed "white and Christian" Europe and a multicultural Europe open to the world (even if there are potentially several nuanced positions within this latter stance).

It may seem a risk for champions of multiculturalism to enter into a power struggle with those in favour of an ethno-centric Europe, as this would propel the latter to prominence. Conversely, by asserting their refusal to welcome migrants, populist and nationalist groups will certainly tackle this identity issue which is very popular in Central and Eastern Europe and in far-right groups in general.

In addition to the fact that the forces present are far from pooled in two separate poles which would justify such a campaign strategy, many observers deem it counterproductive to stir up voters' fears to ensure their support and believe that it is not appropriate to raise the profile of populist parties by establishing them in a constructed and coherent camp.

The conference organised by La République En Marche, "Progressisme, mais encore ?", on 19 and 20 October 2018 confirmed the difficulties in building a coherent rhetoric on the concept of progressiveness.[17]

The French President now prefers terms such as "security", "protection", "sovereignty" and the fight against "ultra-liberalism". In an interview with Europe 1[18], he favoured concrete proposals such as taxation for the Big Four tech companies (GAFA), the regulation of ultra-liberalism and European defence. Europe, as the relevant level of sovereignty, was also at the heart of his campaign in 2017.

The danger remains that, in striving to oppose a united camp against reactionaries, whatever this camp's banner is, there is a risk of playing into the latter's hands, the excesses of compromises could result in a Europe which is more "intergovernmental" rather than a "community-based" Europe.

16. « Macron sur les progressistes et les nationalistes en Europe: une supercherie pour Wauquiez », *Le Point*, 30 August 2018 (in French)

17. Report of the conference « Progressisme, mais encore ? », 19 and 20 October 2018 (in French)

18. Emmanuel Macron on Europe 1, 6 November 2018 (in French)

FIGURE 4 ▪ **Two examples of voting at the European Parliament which illustrate this divide**

Parental leave: Resolution on the application of Directive 2010/18/EU of the Council of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave (date: 12 May 2016)


For **491** (78%)
Against **101** (16%)
Abstentions **38** (6%)
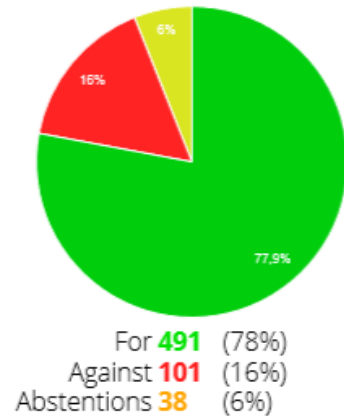
Group	For	Against	Abstentions	Total present
EPP	178	6	3	187
S&D	159	0	1	160
ALDE	48	4	7	59
ECR	3	50	6	59
Greens/EFA	39	0	0	39
GUE-NGL	42	2	0	44
EFDD	19	3	16	38
ENF	0	30	2	32
NI	3	6	3	12
All groups	491	101	38	630

The resolution requests the extension of the minimum duration of unpaid parental leave from four to six months. The different votes demonstrate a divide between a more progressive Europe on social matters (S&D, EPP, ALDE, Greens) and a more conservative Europe (ECR, ENF) opposed to this resolution.

91% of MEPs voted along European political group lines.

Source : Votewatch

The situation in Hungary: Resolution on a proposal calling on the Council to determine, pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union, the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded (date: 12 September 2018).

For **448** (65%)
Against **197** (28%)
Abstentions **48** (7%)
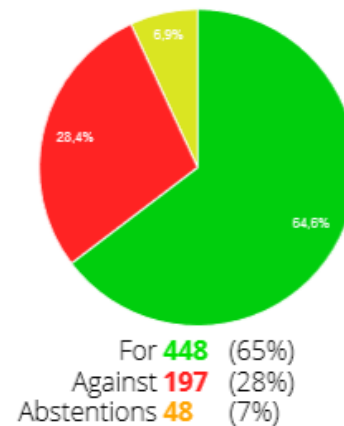
Group	For	Against	Abstentions	Total present
EPP	115	57	28	200
S&D	167	2	5	174
ALDE	59	4	2	65
ECR	3	57	9	69
Greens/EFA	49	0	0	49
GUE-NGL	41	6	0	47
EFDD	12	24	1	37
ENF	0	34	0	34
NI	2	13	3	18
All groups	448	197	48	693

The vote on the triggering of article 7 for a clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law in Hungary demonstrates the opposition between far right and Eurosceptic groups which did not seek sanctions (ECR, EFDD, ENF) and a majority which defends the democratic values of the Treaties (EPP, ALDE, S&D, GUE-NGL, Greens, ECR). Despite the Fidesz party's membership to the European People's Party, the group decided to disassociate itself for the most part with Viktor Orban during the vote.

81% of MEPs voted along European political group lines.

Source : Votewatch

Appendix: Political groups in the European Parliament

The European People's Party Group (EPP):

The European People's Party (EPP) is a centre-right political group. It is the largest of the eight political groups in the European Parliament.

The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats Group (S&D):

The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats is the second-largest political group in the European Parliament, composed of members of the socialist, social-democrat or labour parties.

European Conservatives and Reformists group (ECR):

The European Conservatives and Reformists group is a nationalist and anti-federalist centre-right group.

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe group (ALDE):

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe parliamentary group is a centrist group which defends economic liberalism and European values.

Greens−European Free Alliance group (Greens/ALE):

The Greens−European Free Alliance group is composed of members of the European Green party and the European Free Alliance group.

The confederal European United Left−Nordic Green Left group (GUE/NGL):

The confederal European United Left−Nordic Green Left group (GUE/NGL) brings together left-leaning, socialist, anti-liberal, anti-capitalist, eco-socialist and communist parties.

Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group (EFDD):

The Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group is composed of populist and Eurosceptic parties.

Europe of Nations and Freedom group (ENF):

The Europe of Nations and Freedom group is on the far right of the European political spectrum.

Non-attached Members (NA):

This group is composed of 23 MEPs which do not belong to the aforementioned political groups.