

European Union parliamentary groups prepare to collaborate with the far right ahead of European elections

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3 May 2024

Five weeks before the European elections from June 6 to 9, leading representatives of the European Union (EU) are preparing for close cooperation with far-right parties. Until now, the parliamentary groups of the Conservatives, Liberals and Social Democrats—and partly also the Greens—have taken important decisions and distributed key posts among themselves. But the right-wing extremists are set to play an important role after the election, both in the European Parliament and in the EU Commission. The much-touted “firewall” against or “cordon sanitaire” around the extreme right, which has always been a fiction, will definitively fall.

Two events in recent days have made this clear. Last weekend, a who’s who of the international extreme right met in Budapest under the patronage of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. Then on Monday, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen brought into play a possible cooperation with the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group of parties, which includes Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni’s Fratelli d’Italia, the Spanish Vox, the Polish Law and Justice Party (PiS) and the Sweden Democrats, among others.

Three thousand participants from five continents travelled to Budapest for the conference of the Hungarian branch of the Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC). The head of the Spanish Vox, Santiago Abascal, was there, as were Geert Wilders from the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) and Tom van Grieken from the Belgian Vlaams Belang. For the French National Rally (RN), the former head of the EU border agency Frontex and European election candidate for Marine le Pen’s party, Fabrice Leggeri, was in attendance.

The Italian Lega and the Fratelli d’Italia also sent representatives. Germany was represented by the former head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the country’s top domestic spy agency, Hans-Georg Maassen, who founded his own far-right party, the Union of Values. André Ventura of Portugal’s Chega and ex-US President Donald Trump sent video messages. Brazilian ex-president Jair Bolsonaro sent his son Eduardo.

In addition to two current heads of government, Orbán and the Georgian Irakli Kobakhidze, three former prime ministers took part: Mateusz Morawiecky from Poland, Janez Janša from Slovenia and Tony Abbott from Australia. Two ministers came from Israel: Amichai Chikli, responsible for diaspora affairs, and Intelligence Minister Gila Gamliel. In its genocide of the Palestinians, Benjamin Netanyahu’s regime can count on the unconditional support of the European right-wing extremists, who are riddled with antisemites.

Embedded in a reactionary mishmash of praise for “God, family, fatherland” and incitement against science, abortion, LGBTQ, liberalism and communism, the CPAC conference presented itself as the voice of order in times of “chaos.”

“Liberal hegemony has made the world a worse place. It has instigated war, where there was peace, brought chaos, where there was order, it wanted to wipe out countries and families, and it wanted to wipe our nations from the face of the earth,” Orbán explained in his opening speech.

He blustered about the dawn of a “sovereignist world order” in which “national interests determine the movement of states” and “each independent nation acts on the basis of its own national interests.”

“Not all possible NGOs, large companies, media centres, suspicious experts and dodgy academics will then say what is right and what needs to be done, but popularly elected representatives and politicians,” he added. The word “führer” would have been more appropriate.

The day after this repulsive conference, Ursula von der Leyen, who is seeking another term as Commission president, agreed to cooperate with the far right. During a debate in Maastricht, she did not answer “yes” to the question of whether she would exclude cooperation with the ECR group as usual, but replied: “It depends greatly on the composition of Parliament and who is in which group.”

Von der Leyen, the lead candidate of the conservative European People’s Party (EPP), would therefore be willing to be re-elected as head of the Commission with the votes of the right-wing extremists. It goes without saying that they will demand a price in the form of political concessions and important posts in the EU.

Polls project a significant strengthening of the extreme right in the European elections. The two far-right groups, European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and Identity and Democracy (ID), expect to win a quarter of the seats. Instead of 126 in the current parliament, they could win 165 of the 710 seats. In addition, there are 12 deputies from the Hungarian ruling party Fidesz, who are currently non-attached but may join the ECR.

Especially in Italy, where the right-wing extremists under Giorgia Meloni form the government, in the Netherlands, where Geert Wilders won the last parliamentary election, in Germany, where the Alternative for Germany (AfD) is in second place in the polls, and in France, a significant increase is expected for the right-wing extremists. In France, the National Rally is around 14 percent ahead of the Renaissance party of President Emmanuel Macron, whom Marine

Le Pen wants to replace as head of state in the next presidential election.

The National Rally, which expects 27 deputies, is ID's strongest party. The group also includes the German AfD, the Austrian FPÖ, the Italian Lega and other parties. Since some of them are more Russia-friendly and reject the EU, cooperation between them and the Conservatives is less likely. However, the factions could also regroup or re-form. There is speculation that National Rally will switch to ECR or set up its own faction.

How can the far right be stopped?

The responsibility for the growth of the extreme right lies entirely with the parties that currently determine EU policy. The idea that the rise of the extreme right can be stopped by voting for these parties—"left," green, social democratic, liberal and conservative—is a dangerous illusion. The reality is the opposite. The fight against the far right is not a question of electoral arithmetic, but of class dynamics.

The danger of a third, nuclear world war has never been as great as it is today. To satisfy its hunger for profits, raw materials and markets, the EU and its member states are once again prepared to commit the worst crimes. With €172 billion, they have invested more money than the US to fuel the Ukraine war against Russia. They support the terrible genocide in Gaza and are surrounding China militarily together with the US.

They pass on the costs of war and militarism to the working class and the youth. As the billionaires' wealth explodes, real wages and benefits fall. Hundreds of thousands are losing their jobs. Education and healthcare are being cut to the bone, every protection against COVID-19 and other pandemics has been sacrificed to profit. The destruction of the environment is progressing at a rapid pace.

Millions of workers, farmers and young people have gone on strike or taken to the streets to protest against the genocide in Gaza, rising gasoline costs, falling incomes and speed-up. But workers' struggles and protests are regularly stifled by the trade unions or restricted by pseudo-left groups to impotent appeals to the rulers.

In order to suppress the growing resistance, the ruling elite needs the right-wing extremists and fascists. Their parties create the reactionary political climate in which the seeds of fascism can flourish, adopt the program of the right-wing extremists, put it into practice and work closely with them in the process. Nowhere is this more evident than in the brutal repression of Gaza protests and the persecution of refugees. This creates the conditions for the establishment of a police state directed against the entire working class.

Commission President Von der Leyen has been working closely with Giorgia Meloni, who is also chairwoman of the ECR, for a long time. Together with Meloni, she visited Tunisia to bribe the authoritarian ruler Kais Saied to forcibly prevent refugees from leaving. She enforced the recent tightening of the European asylum law, against which there were a few dozen dissenting votes from her own camp, with the help of Meloni.

The leader of the European People's Party and its parliamentary group, Manfred Weber, a member of the Bavarian Christian Social Union, already backed the election campaign of his party ally Silvio Berlusconi in Italy in 2022—and thus Meloni's election. Meanwhile,

he maintains close contact with the Italian head of government and has tried to secure her agreement for cooperation between the ECR and the EPP. The only conditions he places on the far right are: for the EU, for Ukraine and for "the rule of law," by which he means the establishment of a police state.

The trade unions and the pseudo-left parties of the wealthy middle class play a particularly despicable role in the growth of the right. The trade unions fully support the EU's war policy. In the face of growing class conflicts, their main task is to preserve "social peace"—i.e., to suppress the class struggle. In this way, they paralyse the only social force that can confront the fascists.

The pseudo-left parties have proven to be staunch opponents of the working class wherever they have been swept into government positions by a wave of opposition. This applies to Greece's Syriza as well as to Spain's Podemos and the German Left Party.

When Syriza won the election in 2015 on the basis of its rejection of the EU's austerity dictates and headed the government with Alexis Tsipras, the party was forced to choose between the will of the voters and the dictates of the EU. Syriza chose the EU and implemented a draconian austerity program that drove millions into abject poverty and paved the way for the right to return to power.

Yanis Varoufakis, who was Greek Finance Minister at the time, is now competing in the European elections with the party DiEM25 (or MERA25). He uttered some radical phrases and promised the "democratisation" of Europe. What nonsense! The EU cannot be "democratised." The interests of the majority are no longer compatible with the greed for profit and imperialist strivings of the ruling class.

The masses must intervene independently into political affairs, break the power of the banks and corporations and place them under democratic control. The EU must be abolished and replaced by the United Socialist States of Europe. No great social problem can be solved without eliminating the capitalist system and replacing it with a socialist one in which the needs of society take precedence over the profit interests of the super-rich.

The Socialist Equality Party (SGP) advances this programme in the European elections. It fights for the development of a class-conscious, socialist movement of the working class. As the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, it works closely with its sister organisations in Europe and around the world.



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