

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS: PROMOTING A COALITION AGREEMENT BETWEEN FOUR POLITICAL FAMILIES



■ **PASCAL LAMY**, President emeritus of the Jacques Delors Institut,

■ **CHRISTINE VERGER**, Advisor, in charge of the relations with Parliaments for the Jacques Delors Institut,

■ **GENEVIÈVE PONS**, Director of the Brussels office of the Jacques Delors Institut.

Introduction

The 2019 European elections were like no other: a sharp rise in turnout, a relative fall for the traditional political families, a strengthening of the centre and greens, a contained advance of the nationalists and extremes.

Many European citizens have understood that the European Union was hit by many challenges at the same time, both internal and external. These include the climate and environmental crisis, the migration challenge, economic difficulties, growing social inequality, Brexit, a rise in forms of populism and nationalism, in addition to trade and geopolitical challenges presented by major powers: the United States firstly, Russia always and China probably.

EU citizens drew the conclusions from this. It is now up to the Parliament, the European Council and the new Commission to do the same.

A large pro-European majority emerged from the election, reflecting a reconfigura-

tion of the European political landscape. This majority must yet be built up.

The four main political families which are set to constitute it (EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens) must overcome partisan rifts and come together to agree on a common roadmap to form a stable coalition. Coalitions are commonplace in many Member States, and are even a pre-condition in some parliamentary systems, but they have never been formalised on a European scale. The aim is not to erase differences, or to stifle political debate, but to focus together on what needs to be done so that the parliamentary institution may operate effectively and take part in tackling the challenges of the next five years.

It will not be easy to establish such a coalition. In the European Parliament, even if the two main political families (EPP and S&D) generally get on, this cooperation has never given rise to a shared political statement and, for the first time in 2019, these two families no longer form a post-election majority.

This coalition could be developed in two phases.

Initially, the election of the President of the Commission (proposed by the European Council) by the new Parliament must be conditional upon the candidate's acceptance of a text which must reflect the political priorities expressed by the two "chambers", the States (Council) and the citizens (Parliament). The candidate must then ensure compliance in the composition, organisation and operation of the institution. A more detailed programme must be negotiated during a second phase between the political families in the Parliament, together with the guidelines that the European Council will adopt. This must be used as a framework for the Commission's programme of work.

In this brief, the Jacques Delors Institute proposes guidelines for the coalition agreement that may be established between the main pro-European political families (EPP, S&D, ALDE and Greens).

Behind the names of the figures who will be called upon to occupy the major presidencies of the European institutions, and in particular the presidency of the Commission, a programme must be implemented as a priority.

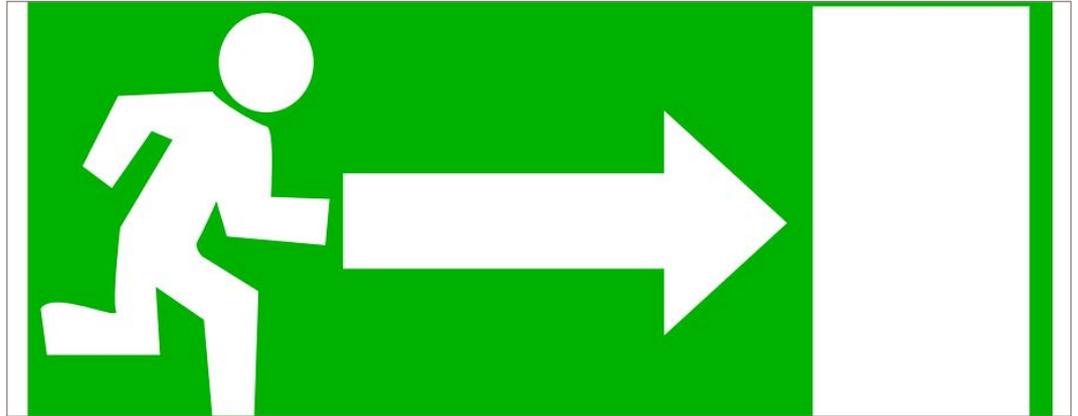
Firstly, the founding values of the European Union and its economic and social model must be reaffirmed: liberal democracy, the protection of fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, environmental protection, a social market economy, social development,

territorial cohesion and the defence of European interests on an international level. We must also take into consideration the key principles of the Union dear to Jacques Delors: "competition that stimulates, cooperation that strengthens, and solidarity that unites". Subsequently, the aim would be to be a driving force behind ambitious environmental standards, to step up our social systems and to propose regulations that allow us to embrace the technologies of the future, such as digital technology. Lastly, we must take responsibility for European sovereignty, in a world dominated by the rivalry between the United States and China, adapt several external policies accordingly and protect the EU's borders.

This coalition agreement would focus on four major political goals:

- **Responding to the environmental emergency,**
- **Working towards a more competitive and fairer Europe,**
- **Ensuring security for all,**
- **Stepping up democracy.**

RESPONDING TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY.



- **Ensure the European Union's climate neutrality** in 2050 and set the main avenues for furthering an energy transition, boosted by the rise of green finance, supported by the introduction of a European carbon tax, and considering the need for social assistance: training in new professions, measures to combat energy insecurity, housing renovation assistance ¹, etc.
- **Increase public funding** to support low-carbon investments and reduce carbon-intensive investments.
- **Organise the necessary changes to European agriculture** in order to preserve biodiversity and protect the health of farmers and consumers. Ensure that the post-2020 Common Agricultural Policy is a real agricultural and food policy (CAFP) and that it encourages new sustainable production and nutrition models: agro-ecology, permaculture, short supply circuits.
- **Act as a strong global player to protect the climate** and also biodiversity and the oceans. Play a proactive role in the signature of a biodiversity agreement during the 2020 COP in Beijing, to include ambitious commitments and enforcement measures. Achieve the goal of protecting 30% of our oceans by 2030. Promote the signature of a Treaty on ocean health including the prohibition of non-recyclable plastics and polluting microplastics; adapt the European trade policy to include more stringent environmental conditions ².
- **Further steps towards achieving a circular economy** by optimising rare natural resources, modernising the European legal and regulatory framework on waste and waste movement and on secondary materials and by focusing taxation more on natural capital and less on labour.

1. "Making the Energy Transition a European success", *Report*, Jacques Delors Institute, 2017

"Europe needs a Social Pact for the Energy Transition", *Brief*, Jacques Delors, Sofia Fernandes and Thomas Pellerin-Carlin, January 2018.

"Making the European energy transition socially sustainable", *Blog Post*, Sofia Fernandes and Thomas Pellerin-Carlin, 20 May 2019

2. "Time to green EU trade policy; but how?", *Policy paper* to be published by the Jacques Delors Institute, Pascal Lamy, Geneviève Pons, Pierre Leturcq.

WORKING TOWARDS A MORE COMPETITIVE AND FAIRER EUROPE.



2.1 Consolidating the European social model

- **Adopt a social policy agenda for 2024** to transform the 20 principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights into practical initiatives, concerning in particular vocational training, minimum wage and the fight against discrimination.
- **Step up the Erasmus programme** by paying special attention to apprentices (Erasmus Pro) and upper-secondary school pupils (Erasmus Teens³).
- **Establish a European unemployment insurance** (or reinsurance) system for the euro area.
- **Harmonise the rates and bases for corporate taxes**, combat tax dumping and enforce taxation on major companies based in the EU, such as GAFA.
- **Adopt a social investment plan** to support Europeans in the transitions taking

place on the labour market and combat social inequality within the European Union. This plan should include the creation of a European transition support fund⁴, the strengthening of the social component of the future InvestEU Fund and the introduction of new resources collected directly by the European Union.

2.2 Stabilising the euro area

- **Strive to create a budgetary instrument specific to the euro area**, managed by a European finance minister and subject to parliamentary control.
- **Achieve the Banking Union** by creating a backstop for the bank resolution fund and a European deposit guarantee scheme.
- **Draft a programme to step up the Euro's international role** with a view to protecting the European Union from US extraterritorial sanctions based on the Dollar.

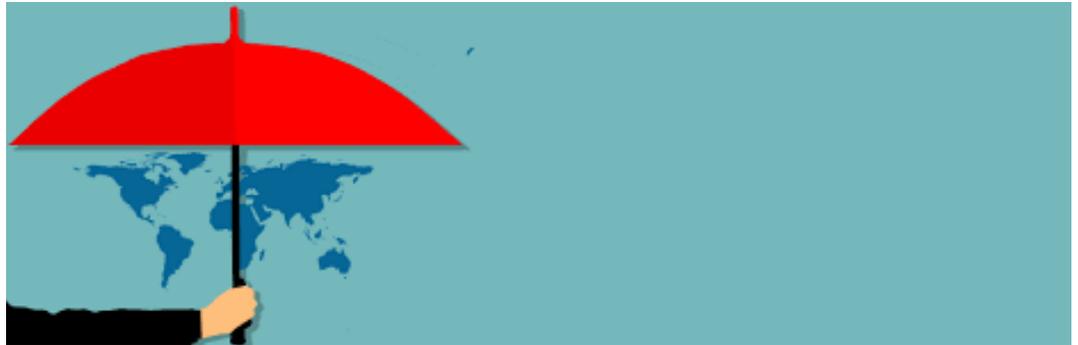
3. "For an Erasmus teens", Claire Versini, *Policy Paper 228*, September 2018

4. "Towards a European Transition Support Fund", Sofia Fernandes, *Policy Paper 231*, October 2018

2.3 Improving the European economy's competitiveness and resilience by furthering the digital single market

- **Extend the Juncker Plan** (or the Investment Plan for Europe), in particular regarding investments in digital infrastructure.
- **Double the funding** allocated to the “research, innovation and digitisation” policy area of the 2021-2027 InvestEU programme.
- **Reform the European competition regulations** in line with global market developments (growth of Chinese companies, the Big Four tech companies).

ENSURING SECURITY FOR ALL.



3.1 Ensuring Europe's security and defence

- **Make European defence** about a political vision and not about technical instruments, by promoting European strategic autonomy, including from the United States.
- **Create a security council** of heads of state and government to meet once a year. The role of this council would be to conduct a common analysis of threats to internal and external security, and a regular assessment of the policies implemented.

3.2 Combatting terrorism and cybercrime

- **Work together to combat the threat posed by terrorism** by establishing shared information systems on a European level, necessary for effective action in the area of free movement, and invest in the European Union's digital security.

3.3 An effective European migration policy

- **Seek an agreement, possibly with a new Treaty** signed by a number of Member States, on a European asylum, migration and mobility policy. Standardise asylum access conditions within the European Union, with the Member States concerned accepting the mutual acknowledgement of decisions to grant refugee status.
- **Increase the powers of the Frontex agency** by recruiting as early as 2022 the 10,000 border and coast guards already proposed and by increasing the agency's own budget.

STEPPING UP DEMOCRACY ■



4.1 Protecting the rule of law

- **Use all available legal and political means**, in particular by establishing parliamentary inquiry committees or special commissions and hearings to monitor the rule of law in Member States.
- **Step up the mechanisms that monitor the use of European funds**, for example via the budgetary discharge procedure, and give priority to anti-corruption measures, with the assistance of the European Public Prosecutor.

4.2 Enhancing representative democracy

- **Adopt the proposal of transnational lists for their introduction in 2024.**
- Allow the European Parliament to propose **amendments to the Commission's programme of work**, and allow the two institutions to adopt the programme.
- Condition the vote on the next financial perspectives on a guarantee that the European Parliament will gradually obtain competencies on revenues, according to the "no taxation without representation" principle, and on assurances regarding the implementation of the 2016 MONTI report on own resources.

4.3 Providing European guarantees with regard to equality between citizens and responsibilities towards them

- Ensure that the next College of Commissioners provides **equal representation**, including within the group created by the President and Vice-Presidents, and that the principle of parity is respected for the presidencies of the European institutions.
- **Strengthen transparency mechanisms**, in particular by making the legislative trilogues between the Parliament, the Commission and the Council public.

4.4 Furthering participatory democracy

- Encourage the ongoing **reform of citizen initiatives**.
- Enable a more systematic constitution of more representative **citizens' panels**.

Managing Editor: Sébastien Maillard

- The document may be reproduced in part or in full on the dual condition that its meaning is not distorted and that the source is mentioned
- The views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher
- The Jacques Delors Institute cannot be held responsible for the use which any third party may make of the document
- Translation from the French: Barbara banks
- © Jacques Delors Institute



L'Europe pour
les citoyens



18 rue de Londres, 75009 Paris
Bureau de Bruxelles : rue du duc 139, 1200 Bruxelles
info@delorsinstitute.eu
www.institutdelors.eu