EU HEADLINES

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF EUROPEAN DEBATES

Aftermath

The European elections provided Europe with enough to talk about this week. We take a look at the aftermath.

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And snap

Sunday's EU elections provided French President Emmanuel Macron with quite the day in the office. Macron dissolved the Assemblée Nationale and called early legislative elections after his coalition finished second (14.6%), well behind the far-right Rassemblement National party (31.5%), *Le Monde* reports. The first round of elections for the Assemblée will take place on June 30, with the second round on July 7, Macron announced in an address to the nation. "I could not, at the end of this day, act as if nothing was happening," he said. The dissolution will be the first such move since 1997 when then-right-wing president Jacques Chirac called snap legislative elections only to see the left win a majority. This left him forced to endure half a decade in "cohabitation," a term used in France when the president and prime minister come from opposing political camps – as might be the case if the far-right gains similar momentum on the national level in France as they did in Brussels. Far-right wonder boy Jordan Bardella stated after the estimates were published that "a wind of hope has risen in France." As France snaps into another election, the next weeks will show us what direction the wind is really blowing.

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Musical chairs

Newly elected MEPs in search of a political family are causing anxiety in Brussels, writes Spanish newspaper *El País*. Over 50 new lawmakers, some of whom are openly anti-establishment, are now seeking a parliamentary group to join in the European elections' aftermath. Their presence could push the European Parliament even further to the right. So, who are these anxiety-triggering politicians? Among those who generate the most doubts are the newcomers not only to Brussels, but to politics itself, such as Spain's Alvise Pérez, a self-styled anti-establishment and anti-corruption crusader who has been convicted of spreading fake news on the internet and who has openly acknowledged that he ran for office in Europe to seek immunity from prosecution. And then there is the Cypriot YouTuber Fidias, who at 24 years of age has a record number of followers on social media, 2.6 million, and who readily admits to having no idea about European political issues. Promising indeed.

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Family matters

Italian outlet *Il Post* writes that even with her considerable wins in the European elections, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will have to tread carefully in her choice for the European Commission – in which Italy may get one of the top jobs in order to secure Meloni's support. She was indeed one of the most successful national leaders coming out of last week's European elections, but the EPP, S&D and Renew are, for now, still holding their weight in the European Parliament, and she will need at least some of their support. It has been known already that it will be complicated for the right-wing ECR and ID groups to forge alliances – the EPP would burn bridges by working with them. The article suggests that in the vote for the European Commission president, the ECR may end up divided if the Brothers of Italy's support Ursula von der Leyen, but that it wouldn't really be a long-lasting issue. Further, the idea of a single far-right group forming is remote considering the many fracture points between the parties and groups. For now, Meloni is likely in a good place, but very much remains to be seen.

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Robbing Putin to pay Paul

Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* gives an overview of the ongoing G7 meeting in Apulia, Italy, which began on Thursday and invites Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyi to join the discussion regarding Russia's ongoing war of aggression against his country. There has been a fierce debate of late regarding how to use €300 billion of frozen Russian Central Bank assets, as the funds technically still belong to the aggressor to the east and it would take some legal manoeuvring to pull off. Now, according to a French official, the G7 have agreed to grant a loan of $50 billion, using interest from the frozen Russian funds as collateral – a much simpler process. It remains to be decided how the risks would be divided amongst the countries. A further complication – once again – is Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, because most of the funds are frozen as part of the EU sanctions package, which he may attempt to interfere with, but one of the US' conditions is for the EU to leave the sanctions in place until the end of the war. Several particularities remain, but it does look like Ukraine will get some much-needed funds soon.

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