

**Remarks by the President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola  
at the informal leaders' meeting in Brussels, 17th June 2024**

Thank you Charles and good evening everyone.

It has been a little over a week since Europeans went to the voting booths to elect the 720 Members of the European Parliament that will represent their interests over the next five years. We now have a much clearer picture of the outcome of the elections and of how the 10th Legislature of the European Parliament will look like. The main takeaway is that the constructive pro-European centre holds.

To start with, I wanted to quickly touch upon the topic of voter turnout. As you know, members of the European Parliament, colleagues and staff invested a lot of time, energy and resources over the past months into trying to increase the participation rate of these elections. As part of our 'Use your vote' campaign, it was both a responsibility and a pleasure for me to visit your countries to try to convince people, especially young people, why their vote matters. I want to thank you all for your institutional but also personal support in helping us successfully do that.

The 2024 European elections saw the highest voter turnout in over 30 years and in over half of EU Member States (14 to be exact), the participation rate also increased from 2019. But while it is true that the voting turnout was a little higher than it was in the 2019 European elections, it is also true that the participation rate is still too low in many places. Of course, this can be partly explained by election fatigue in some Member States. But what was perhaps a more far-reaching factor in voter turnout was the actual dates of the election, which we know came later than usual. So going forward, I would suggest that we already start looking into identifying dates for future European elections, to avoid the same issue from happening again.

We are still waiting to receive the official notification of the results, but so far, 55% or 396 members are new, meaning that they were not already MEPs in the 9th legislature. The proportion of "new" vis-a-vis "re-elected" members is less than it was five years ago, but of course it is still a lot. The gender balance of the newly elected Parliament sits at around 60% male with 40% female, roughly the same proportions as they were back in 2019.

When it comes to our next steps, it is important that I emphasise the statutory role of Parliament in the process of electing the next Commission President.

Article 17(7) of the Treaty on European Union, states that the European Parliament elects the Commission President with a majority of its component Members and that before that, the European Council has to "take the European Parliament elections into account" when proposing a candidate.

Declaration 11 annexed to the Lisbon Treaty also states that together with the European Council, the European Parliament has a duty to ensure the smooth running of the process

leading to the election of the President of the European Commission by conducting the necessary consultations. Charles and I already spoke about this on the 7th of June and we both agreed on the need for our respective institutions to work closely together in the context of electing the next Commission President.

As part of the European Parliament's internal consultation process, the Conference of Presidents met last week to assess the outcome of the European elections. In that meeting, a majority of political group leaders confirmed the Lead Candidate process and we all agreed that following the results of the elections, the European People's Party is once again the largest political group in the European Parliament. The largest political group also confirmed that their lead candidate for the next Commission President is the incumbent.

As for our next steps: Charles Michel has already been invited to attend the next meeting of the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents this Thursday. He will again be invited to attend our political group leaders' meeting on 26 June, for a final consultation ahead of our European Council Summit between the 27 and 28 of June. Should there be agreement on a candidate for the next Commission President; the political group leaders in the European Parliament would be available to meet that person for an exchange of views in their meeting on the 2nd of July.

To be clear: the ultimate aim of this process is to determine the candidate able to form the necessary qualified majority in Parliament to become the next Commission President. We stand ready to move the process forward without delay as soon as the European Council submits its candidate.

Allow me to make one appeal. I understand the debate here is about jobs, roles and candidates. It is important. Critical even. But we also need to ensure that the message out there is not only about personalities and deals reached, but also about reflecting on the message that the electorate sent us.

The election results show a majority of our citizens have called for the defence of our values and for security to remain a top priority. Meaning that our support with Ukraine must continue. On the twin transitions, everyone must benefit. The green deal needs to be a driver of economic growth without burdens, bureaucracy and red tape. We need to move from being in 'crisis mode' to thinking long term. That means building on our greatest asset, the single market and prioritising the EU's competitiveness. That is how we cement Europe's place in the world.

Let me just conclude by reiterating the European Parliament's full cooperation and strongest commitment to ensuring the smooth running of the process leading to the election of the President of the European Commission. In the European Parliament, our work has already started - and will continue - in that regard.

Thank you.