

Seven key takeaways from EU polls results

Traditional centrist parties took a drubbing, with the so-called Grand Coalition -- which consists of the center-left Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) bloc and the center-right European People's Party (EPP) -- losing more than 70 seats and its majority in the EU parliament. One of the key figures in the S&D is Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, while German chancellor Angela Merkel is part of the EPP. In contrast, liberal-centrist grouping the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE&R), which includes French President Emmanuel Macron, picked up 32 seats and will now play an important role in nominating officials for key EU positions.

In the UK, the Brexit Party, led by arch-Brexiteer Nigel Farage, took home 31.71% of the vote. This is almost equivalent to the vote share of the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats combined and reflects growing dissatisfaction with traditional UK parties.

Spain's Socialist party recorded another strong performance following a general election win in late April, winning 32.84% of the vote. Center-right parties the People's Party (20.1%) and Ciudadanos (12.2%) came second and third as Spain bucked the general European trend towards political extremes. Far-right party Vox won just 6.2% of the vote.

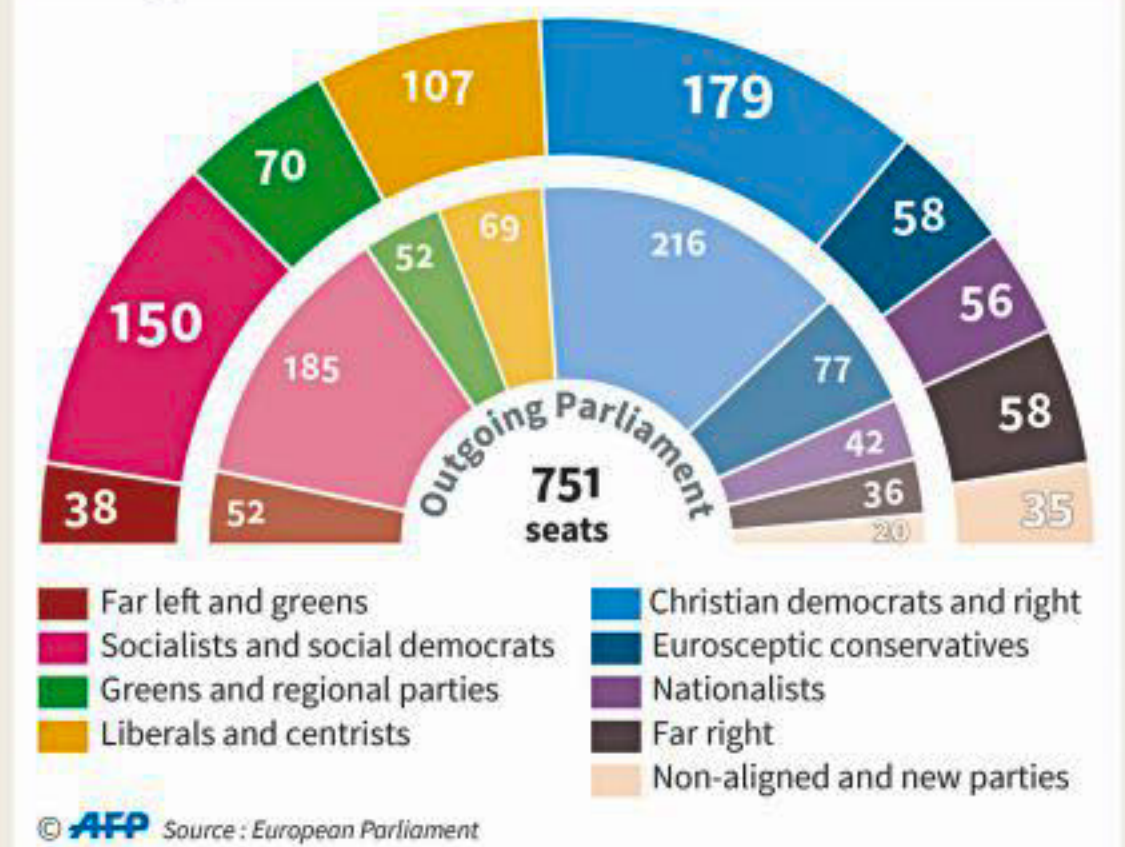
Results in France provided further evidence that a predicted surge in support for far-right populist parties did not materialize. Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally won with 23.31% of the votes, according to the French Ministry of Interior, beating French president Emmanuel Macron's La République En Marche alliance on 22.41%.

In Italy, the right-wing Lega Party, led by Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, took victory with 33.64% of the vote. Euroskeptical Salvini said that he will try to form an anti-EU bloc with Marine Le Pen and Hungary's Viktor Orban.

Orban, Hungary's far-right nationalist prime minister, scored a huge win after his Fidesz party received 52.14% of the country's votes. That's more than three times the amount of the second most popular party, the left-wing Democratic Coalition, which received just 16.26%.

The Green Party alliance posted its strongest ever performance in European elections, winning 70 seats and taking 9.32% of the vote -- a rise from 2014 when they took 50 seats. Much of the party's gains came from northern Europe, including the UK, Ireland, France and Germany, where young people have staged marches calling for political action over climate change.

SOURCE: CNN



World's rivers contaminated with high levels of antibiotics

Scientists detect drugs in two-thirds of waterways

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Rivers around the world are contaminated with dangerous levels of antibiotics, according to a major new study.

Concentrations of antibiotics in some waterways exceed safe levels by 300 times, a global team of scientists led by the University of York found.

The Thames was contaminated with five antibiotics, including levels of ciprofloxacin -- used to treat skin and urinary tract infections -- that were three times what is considered safe.

Researchers looked at 14 commonly used antibiotics in rivers flowing through 72 countries and found antibiotics were in two-thirds of samples.

Scientists fear antibiotics in rivers cause bacteria to develop resistance meaning they can no longer be used in medicines for



humans. The UN estimates that the rise in antibiotic resistance could kill 10 million people by 2050.

"A lot of the resistance genes we see in human pathogens originated from environmental bacteria," Professor William Gaze, a microbial ecologist at the University of Exeter who was not involved in the study, told The Guardian.

Drugs get into rivers via human and animal waste, as well as leaks from wastewater treatment and drug manufacturing sources.

In one site in Bangladesh, levels of metronidazole -- which is used to treat mouth and skin infections -- were 300 times greater than what is considered safe. The most common antibiotic was a urinary tract infection antibiotic called trimethoprim, which was present in 307 of 711 sites tested.

Thailand's pro-army party seeks allies to cement power

Two parties invited to join new govt led by junta chief

REUTERS, Bangkok

Two Thai political parties have been invited to join a new government led by military junta chief General Prayuth Chan-ocha as prime minister, a pro-army party said yesterday, more than two months after a disputed election.

A deal with the unaligned Democrat and Bhumjaithai parties would likely sink the opposition Democratic Front coalition's bid to keep junta members from retaining dominance over the government five years after the army seized power in a coup.

"We invited two parties, but did not expect a conclusion today," Uttama Savanayana, leader of Palang Pracharat, the pro-military party formed last year by members of the junta's Cabinet, said after yesterday's meeting.

"We understand there are internal processes, but it was a very good starting point," he told reporters. The two parties would give the pro-army coalition



Trump dovish on N Korea, Iran

Says not looking for regime change in Tehran, praises Kim Jong Un as 'very smart guy'; Pyongyang slams 'war maniac' Bolton

AFP, Tokyo

The United States does not seek "regime change" in longtime foe Iran, President Donald Trump said yesterday, also praising North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un in comments made during a historic visit to meet Japan's new emperor.

Speaking at a joint press conference in Tokyo with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Trump seemed at pains to dial down tensions in the world's two most pressing flashpoints as the US faces off against Tehran and Pyongyang.

Iran "has a chance to be a great country, with the same leadership. We're not looking for regime change, I want to make that clear. We're looking for no nuclear weapons," said the president, who became the first foreign leader invited to meet freshly crowned Emperor Naruhito, with a state visit and banquet.

"I really believe that Iran would like to make a deal. I think that's very smart of them and I think there's a possibility for that to happen also."



PHOTO: REUTERS

US President Donald Trump toasts with Japan's Emperor Naruhito during a state banquet at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Japan yesterday.

Trump had earlier opened the door to negotiations with Tehran, saying: "If they'd like to talk, we'd like to talk also."

The comments were in marked contrast to growing concerns in Washington about conflict after the administration dispatched an aircraft carrier, bomber planes and 1,500 extra troops to the region in response to alleged Iranian threats.

Trump has sought to dismantle

an international agreement meant to reward Iran for opening its nuclear program to outside controls, instead adding crippling new US sanctions seen by many as aimed at bringing down the government.

Addressing another hot-button issue, Trump doubled down on his backing for Kim despite two short-range missile tests that sparked renewed concern in the region after a period of relative calm.

Asked about the missile tests, Trump said: "My people think it could have been a violation... I view it as a man who perhaps wants to get attention."

This appeared to be a second put-down of his hawkish National Security Advisor John Bolton, who said Saturday the launches contravened UN Security Council resolutions.

"He knows that with nuclear, that's never going to happen. Only bad can happen. He is a very smart man, he gets it well," said the president, who even said he agreed with the North Korean leader's jibe about the intelligence of Joe Biden, who currently leads the pack to win the Democratic nomination to take on Trump in 2020.

"Kim Jong Un made a statement that Joe Biden is a low IQ individual. He probably is, based on his record, I think I agree with him on that," said the president.

A spokesman for the North's foreign ministry denounced Bolton, calling him a "war maniac" who developed various "provocative policies" against the North.

POST-POLLS INDIA

'Chemistry beat arithmetic'

Modi credits grassroot workers for his victory; BJP worker shot dead in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district

AGENCIES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday that 'chemistry beat arithmetic' in this election. He was speaking during a thanksgiving visit to his constituency Varanasi after winning from the temple city by nearly 5 lakh votes and leading the NDA to a landslide win in the Lok Sabha elections

"UP is giving new direction to politics... 2014, 2017 and 2019 hatrick is not small. Even after this, if the eyes of political pundit do not t open, their ears do not hear the sound, then they are living in 20th century. Political pundits have to agree that there is chemistry beyond poll arithmetic," the PM said while addressing party workers in Varanasi.

PM Modi visited the famous Kashi Vishwanath temple in the city and offered prayers. He was accompanied by BJP president Amit Shah and UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath. The Prime Minister in his pre-election trip to the constituency had addressed the party workers telling them



'each one of you is Modi' and that they had to run his campaign in his absence. He had also held a massive roadshow before filing his nomination papers on April 26.

The PM-elect led the NDA to a mega win sweeping the Lok Sabha elections winning 352 of the 542 seats polled with BJP alone notching up 303 seats. Varanasi was all decked up to welcome Modi with BJP flags and posters everywhere yesterday.

Cleaning and maintenance work has been completed, reported Hindustan Times.

Meanwhile, the fresh spate of political violence that has kept West Bengal burning since before the first phase of Lok Sabha elections 2019 claimed the life of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) worker, who was shot dead in North 24 Parganas district on Sunday night, reported The Statesman.

The deceased, identified as Chandan Shaw, was a resident of Kankinara. He was shot at by bike-borne assailants who also hurled bombs targeting Shaw. The BJP worker, who was in his 20s, died on the spot.



People react as a man carrying a young bombing casualty walks toward them after a reported air strike by regime forces and their allies in the jihadist-held Syrian town of Maaret Al-Noman in the southern Idlib province on Sunday evening.

PHOTO: AFP

WHO recognises 'burn-out' as medical condition

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization has for the first time recognised "burn-out" in its International Classification of Diseases (ICD), which is widely used as a benchmark for diagnosis and health insurers.

The decision, reached during the World Health Assembly in Geneva, which wraps up today, could help put to rest decades of debate among experts over how to define burnout, and whether it should be considered a medical condition.

In the latest update of its catalogue of diseases and injuries around the world, WHO defines burn-out as "a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed." It said the syndrome was characterised by three dimensions: "1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; 2) increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and 3) reduced professional efficacy."

"Burn-out refers specifically to

phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life," according to the classification.

The updated ICD list, dubbed ICD-11, was drafted last year following recommendations from health experts around the world, and was approved on Saturday. "This is the first time" burnout has been included in the classification, WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic told reporters.

The ICD-11, which is to take effect in January 2022, contains several other additions, including classification of "compulsive sexual behaviour" as a mental disorder, although it stops short of lumping the condition together with addictive behaviours.

It does however for the first time recognise video gaming as an addiction, listing it alongside gambling and drugs like cocaine. The updated list removes transgenderism from its list of mental disorders meanwhile, listing it instead under the chapter on "conditions related to sexual health".

Lanka to relax emergency in a month: president

Sri Lanka's President announced yesterday he will allow tough emergency laws to lapse within a month because the security situation was "99 percent back to normal" following the Easter bombings. Maitripala Sirisena told Colombo-based diplomats from Australia, Canada, Japan, the US and European states that security forces were successful in getting at all those responsible for the April 21 bombings. Sirisena declared a state of emergency giving sweeping powers to the military to arrest and detain suspects a day after the bombings that killed 258 people and wounded nearly 500. The suicide bombings against three Christian churches and three luxury hotels were blamed on a local jihadist group, the National Thowheeth Jama'ath which has since been banned under the emergency.

30 dead, dozens missing in DR Congo boat accident

At least 30 people died and dozens more were missing on Sunday after a boat accident on a lake in western Democratic Republic of Congo, a local mayor said. "So far, we have recovered 30 bodies, 12 women, 11 children and seven men," the mayor of Inongo, Simon Mbo Wemba, told media including AFP, adding that there had been more than 350 passengers on board the boat with only 183 survivors. The accident happened on Saturday night on Lake Mai-Ndombe. "The toll is still provisional," the mayor said, adding that it was difficult to know the exact number of passengers as many could have been illegal immigrants. River transport is one of the most used in DR Congo with its numerous waterways. Boat mishaps are common, typically caused by overloading of passengers and cargo.



German with 1,800 cows allowed to stay in India

It's a long way from Berlin to India, where Friederike Irina Bruening devotes her life to sick and abandoned cows. Now, after intervention from the Hindu nationalist government, she has been allowed to stay. "Currently we have around 1,800 cows," Bruening told AFP from outside the holy city of Mathura in northern India where she keeps the animals. "Between five and 15 are brought in every day." Bruening, 61, had threatened last week to return to a top civilian award for cow protection that she won -- the Padma Shri award -- after her request for a visa extension was denied. This prompted Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj to take to Twitter and announce she had "asked for a report", and yesterday Bruening said she had been issued with a new visa allowing her to remain in India. Bruening came to India around 25 years ago and says she has since spent around 200,000 euros (\$225,000) of her own money over the years on her cow shelter, which costs around \$45,000 per month to run.

SOURCE: AFP