

Pollwatch™: European Briefing

- **United Kingdom** – Cameron's Conservatives maintain 11% lead
- **Bulgaria** – GERB lead Socialist Party by 6%
- **Czech Republic** – ODS rebounds, government and opposition tied
- **Denmark** – Social Democrats and Left Liberals tied for first place
- **France** – Narrow lead for Sarkozy's UMP
- **Germany** – Merkel coalition in strong position as election looms
- **Greece** – Socialist PASOK expands lead over government
- **Hungary** – Centre-right Fidesz hold crushing 43% lead over government
- **Iceland** – Icelanders oppose accession to EU membership
- **Ireland** – Fine Gael surges, Fine Fail and Labour tied
- **Italy** – Overwhelming support for Berlusconi coalition
- **Lithuania** – EU Commissioner Grybauskaite coasting to victory
- **Netherlands** – Wilders' Freedom Party ahead of Christian Democrats
- **Poland** – Poles favour Tusk for President, PO leads by 31%
- **Slovakia** – Fico's SMER hold 33% lead
- **Spain** – Socialists and centre-right tied
- **Sweden** – Swedes narrowly oppose introduction of Euro

INTRODUCTION

The primacy of the financial and economic crisis dominates political discourse at both domestic and EU level. The June elections offer what for most European citizens will be the first opportunity to express a view on how their government is handling the recession.

The latest polling figures show that in many countries, incumbent political parties and leaders are sliding in popularity. The impact on the composition of the European Parliament post-June could be profound – especially for Member States such as Italy, the Netherlands and Poland.

We hope you find the latest Pollwatch™ useful. If you would like more information about how our polling could assist your organization please contact me.

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- Four times a year ComRes sends postal and online questionnaires to MEPs who have pre-agreed to take part in our surveys
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- We offer a full service package; this means that the price of a question on the ComRes MEPs panel includes help with designing the question, and a full analytical report which explains the results in context. All results are available 5 weeks after fieldwork begins
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United Kingdom

National Political Opinion Poll

The governing Labour Party has narrowly closed the gap with David Cameron's Conservatives in the latest ComRes poll for The Independent on Sunday. The Tory lead is 11 points, which is only just enough for David Cameron to secure a majority in the House of Commons.

Conservative Party	41% (-3)
Labour Party	30% (+2)
Liberal Democrats	17% (-)
Other	12% (+1)

The poll also finds a surprising degree of optimism about the economy. Although 62 per cent say they will spend less on their summer holidays, nearly 40 per cent expect to see signs of improvement in the economy "soon".

I am ready to make significant changes to the way I live to help prevent global warming or climate change:

Agree	83% (81% in June 2007)
Disagree	16% (16% in June 2007)

I will scale back my summer holiday spending plans to save money:

Agree	62%
Disagree	34%

In October 2008, 62% agreed that "I will scale back my Christmas spending plans to save money", 36% disagreed.

David Cameron has what it takes to be a good prime minister:

Agree	48% (46% in May 2008)
Disagree	41% (42% in June 2008)

I expect the economy will start showing signs of improvement soon:

Agree	39%
Disagree	58%

C2s voters – generally 'blue collar' workers such as skilled manual workers – are the most optimistic social group with 47% agreeing to 50% disagree.



Bulgaria

National Political Opinion Poll

Only launched in December 2006, Sofia Mayor Boyko Borissov's Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) party holds a 6% lead over Prime Minister Sergei Dmitrievich Stanishev's Socialists (PES). GERB, a strongly pro-European party, secured first place in Bulgaria's inaugural European Parliament elections in 2007 and appears to be in a strong position to repeat its success in June.

Support for the nationalist Ataka Party (NI), which received 14% of the vote and elected three MEPs in 2007, has declined to 6% meaning that the party will struggle to retain its seats in Brussels. Additionally, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (ALDE), a party which draws this majority of its support from Bulgaria's ethnic Turks and scored 20% of the vote poll in 2007 - less than 2% away from topping the poll – are in electoral difficulties.

Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB)	21%
Bulgarian Socialist Party	15%
Movement for Rights and Freedoms	7%
Ataka	6%
United Democratic Forces	2%
National Movement for Stability and Progress	2%
Forward Coalition	2%
Democrats for Strong Bulgaria	1%

Alpha Research

MEPs – MPs – Peers – MSPs – AMs – MLAs – Local Councillors – General Public – Council Officers – Civil Servants – NGOs – Patient Advocacy
 Groups – Think Tanks – Journalists –



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MEPs – MPs – Peers – MSPs – AMs – MLAs – Local Councillors – General Public – Council Officers – Civil Servants – NGOs – Patient Advocacy
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Czech Republic

National Political Opinion Poll

Ironically, given the dismissal of Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek's government following a vote of no confidence in the Czech Parliament on 24th March, this poll indicates the smallest gap between the centre-right ODS and opposition CSSD since the start of the year. Since January, the socialist former Prime Minister Jiří Paroubek's has fallen from, 6% in January to 4% in February and 2% today. For analyzing the likely outcome of the Euro elections, however, the usefulness of this poll is debatable.

While it is clear that the Social Democrats will improve dramatically upon their woefully poor performance in the 2004 European elections, where they secured only two of the country's twenty-four seats and were outpolled by the Communist Party, the poll does not take into the account the possible impact of several Eurosceptic parties which will contest the June poll.

The most significant challenge is likely to come from the sharply-Eurosceptic President Vaclav Klaus who parted company with the ODS earlier this year. Klaus' endorsement of the Free Citizen's Party is likely to be enough to secure the European parliamentary representation. Lesser Eurosceptic challenges are expected from businessman Vladimír Železný MEP (Ind/Dem) who and controversial former television presenter Jana Bobošíková MEP (NI) – both of whom are rumoured to be keen to stand under the Libertas banner.

Czech Social Democratic Party (CSSD)	38%
Civic Democratic Party (ODS)	36%
Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM)	12%
Christian and Democratic Union - Czech People's Party	6%
Green Party (SZ)	4%

Median



Denmark

National Political Opinion Poll

Socialist parties continue to dominate Danish politics, with Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen's Venstre and the Social Democrat Party in a statistical tie. Danish opinion polls have fluctuated little over the past six months.

Support for the Danish People's Party, whose tough stance on immigration boosted their support in the weeks following the controversy over the reaction of the country's Muslim community to derogatory cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, is double what it was at the time of the 2004 elections. The party, represented in Brussels by Mogens Camre since 1999, may secure a second seat in June.

As with previous national opinion polls, figures do not take into account support for the Eurosceptic June Movement which has held a seat in the European Parliament since 1979 but does not contest domestic elections. The June Movement received 9% of the vote in 2004 and their MEP Hanne Dahl, Co-President of the Ind/Dem group, is seeking election to a further term in Brussels.

Social Democracy in Denmark	27%
Left Liberal Left Party of Denmark (Venstre)	25%
Socialist People's Party	18%
Danish People's Party	13%
Conservative People's Party	11%
Radical Left-Social Liberal Party	2%
Unity List-The Red Greens	2%
Christian Democrats	1%
New Alliance	*

Catinét Research / Ritzau



National Political Opinion Poll

The results of the latest French national poll appear to suggest that the fragmentation of the country's MEPs across the political groupings of the Parliament, which had led to France punching below its weight in the 1999-2004 and 2004-2009 sessions of the Parliament, is set to continue. Combined support for Nicholas Sarkozy's centre-right UMP (EPP-ED) and opposition Socialist Party (PES) is less than 50%.

While confidence in Sarkozy among the French public is low, the party appears set to outpace the Socialist Party in June. In 2004, then President Chirac's UMP polled a humiliating 17% of the vote with the Socialists polling 12% ahead of them at 29%.

Former Presidential candidate François Bayrou's centrist MoDem party (ALDE) is likely to improve on its 2004 result when the party secured eleven seats. It is likely that MoDem's strong performance, coupled with the increase in support for the German Free Democrats, will see the British Liberal Democrats reduced to the third largest group national delegation in the ALDE.

As always, myriad left-wing parties are polling strongly, yet the fragmentation of leftist support places veteran communist MEP and GUE/NGL group president Francis Wurtz in serious peril in his Paris constituency. With Green support almost unchanged since the 2004 elections, the election of Green group President Daniel Cohn-Bendit (who currently sits as a German MEP) in the Paris constituency appears assured.

The independent candidacies of dissident National Front MEPs Carl Lang and Jean-Claude Martinez in the North West and South West regions may harm the party's chances of repeating its impressive performance in the 2004 elections where they returned 7 MEPs and recorded a national vote share of almost 10%.

UMP	5%
Socialist Party	3%
Democratic Movement - MoDem	5%
Green Party	2%
New Anticapitalist Party	2%
National Front	2%
Movement for France/Hunting, Fishing, Nature, Traditions	2%
Communist Party	2%
Workers' Struggle	2%
Rise the Republic	2%
Front National (Dissident list)	2%

Approval Ratings

“Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with Nicolas Sarkozy’s performance as President?”

Satisfied	37%
Dissatisfied	62%

“Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with François Fillon’s performance as Prime Minister?”

Satisfied	46%
Dissatisfied	52%



Germany

National Political Opinion Poll

Angela Merkel’s coalition “government in waiting” which brings together the Christian Democrats/Christian Social Union and Free Democratic Party continues to be in robust form. Their combined 48% vote share should be enough to guarantee Merkel the seats required to secure another four years in office without the need for an uncomfortable ‘grand coalition’.

From the perspective of the European Parliament elections, however, the numbers do not necessarily make such good reading for the Christian Democrats (EPP-ED). In 2004, the CDU/CSU attracted 37% of the national vote and 40 seats in the Parliament while their vote today now stands at 34%. Polls suggest that the Free Democrats (ALDE), who secured 6% of the vote and seven seats in 2004, have increased their support three-fold.

Given the likely increase in support for the Free Democrats, it is likely that they will replace the British Liberal Democrats the largest national political party inside the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe grouping. Bundis 90/Die Grunen, who have been destabilized by the effective deselection by party activists of several senior and long-standing members of their delegation, are unlikely to repeat their success in 2004 where they secured thirteen seats.

Christian Democrats/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU)	33%
Socialist Party (SPD)	26%
Free Democratic Party (FDP)	16%
Linke	11%
Bundis 90/Die Grunen	11%

Infratest-Dimap



Greece

National Political Opinion Poll

George Papandreou's Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) (PES) leads Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis' New Democracy (EPP-ED) by a 6% margin – a further deterioration of the government's poll standing since last month. Since 2004, support for New Democracy has declined by almost ten points while PASOK's standing has risen by 6%.

While support for the People's Orthodox Alarm (Ind/Dem) and Coalition of the Radical Left (GUE/NGL) parties, both who secured one European Parliamentary seat at the 2004 elections, remains relatively unchanged since the last election they will struggle to retain their representation in the Parliament as a result of a reduction in Greece's seat allocation from 24 seats to 22.

Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK)	40%
New Democracy (ND)	34%
Communist Party of Greece (KKE)	9%
Coalition of the Radical Left (SYR)	8%
People's Orthodox Alarm (LAOS)	5%

MRB / Eleftheros Typos



Hungary

National Political Opinion Poll

Former Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz) (EPP-ED) holds a near-unassailable 31% lead over the governing Socialist Party (PES). While the government has until the spring of 2010 to call a general election it remains unclear, following the resignation of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, if the government will be able to limp on until this date.

At the 2004 elections, Fidesz (EPP-ED) secured 47% of the vote to the Socialist Party's (PES) 34%. Given present trends, it is likely that the already-strong Fidesz delegation will be further strengthened.

The Hungarian Democratic Forum's sole MEP Peter Olajos has resigned from the party as a result of their choice to exclude him from their list of candidates for the 2009 elections in favour of former finance minister Lajos Bokros. Support for the ultra-nationalist Jobbik Party, who have done much to exploit Hungary's present economic woes in order to build their support base amongst younger, unemployed voters, is hovering only slightly below the 5% threshold required under Hungarian electoral law for parliamentary representation.

Hungarian Civic Union (Fidesz)	66%
Socialist Party	23%
Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary	4%
Hungarian Democratic Forum	4%
Alliance of Free Democrats	2%

Median



National Political Opinion Poll

Following months of economic instability in Iceland which led to the replacement of centre-right Prime Minister Geir Haarde with social democrat Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir the two main political parties are once again locked in a close fight for first place. It is likely, however, that Ms Sigurðardóttir's hold on power is secure for the time being with her coalition partners the Alliance of the Left/Greens polling at 26%. Combined support for Sigurðardóttir's coalition stands at 58%.

Social Alliance	32%
Independence Party	29%
Alliance of the Left/Greens	26%
Progressive Party	8%
Liberal Party	2%

Frettabladid

“Do you want Iceland to join the European Union?”

While in the weeks immediately following the meltdown of Iceland's financial markets it appeared as if a sea-change in public attitudes towards EU membership may have taken place, subsequent polls have indicated a return to the country's traditionally Eurosceptic outlook. By a small margin, Icelandic voters oppose their country's accession to European Union membership.

Yes	40%
No	45%
Unsure	15%

Capacent



National Political Opinion Poll

With less than two months to go until a European election campaign which may in the press are viewing as a referendum on beleaguered Prime Minister Brian Cowen's premiership, it appears if his party are in dire straits. Despite their seven point poll lead, opposition Enda Kenny's Fine Gael party (EPP-ED) will be disappointed not to have picked up more of the anti-Cowen vote, their vote share up only 3% on their performance at the 2007 parliamentary elections. Support for the Labour Party, who polled only 10% at the past elections and whose support has recently been limited to the Dublin area, has more than doubled to 22% and the party will be hoping that their sole MEP Proinsias De Rossa will acquire some colleagues after the June elections.

From the perspective of the European Parliament elections taking place in June, the opinion poll data is effectively worthless as it fails to take into account Ireland's tradition of sending independent and third-party representatives to the Brussels Parliament. Kathy Sinnott and Marian Harkin, elected in 2004 as independent MEPs for the Southern and North West regions respectively, are seeking re-election. Libertas leader Declan Ganley has declared his candidacy in the North West region.

Fine Gael (FG)	30%
Fianna Fáil (FF)	23%
Labour Party (Lab.)	22%
Sinn Fein (SF)	11%
Green Party (GP)	6%

Red C

"How would you vote in a second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty?"

With 58% of Irish voters having backed the Lisbon Treaty in the last public opinion poll, it now appears as if skepticism towards the document is once again in the rise with only 46% of respondents favouring its ratification. While less than a third of respondents record their opposition to the treaty, 27% describe themselves as "unsure". A second referendum is rumoured to be scheduled for this summer.

Yes	46%
No	27%
Unsure	27%

Red C



Italy

National Political Opinion Poll

Eleven months since his comeback election victory over former Rome Mayor Walter Veltroni, support for Silvio Berlusconi's government is at a record high, recording a strong lead over the centre-left Democratic Party.

The 22% poll lead recorded for the centre-right coalition will bring particular cheer to Prime Minister Berlusconi and Chamber of Deputies Speaker Gianfranco Fini who last week merged their two parties, *Forza Italia* and the *National Alliance*, to create a powerful new rightist party – the *People of Freedom*. In 2004, Forza Italia (EPP-ED) and the National Alliance (UEN) polled a disappointing combined vote share of just under 32% - twenty points lower than their showing in recent polls.

While the results of this poll will bring cheer to the centre-right government with only weeks to go until the European elections, far-right and far-left parties – who have traditionally polled strongly in Italian European Parliament elections - will be alarmed by their anemic polling numbers. Italy's adoption of a 4% electoral threshold for European Parliament elections places high profile MEPs such as the communist Parliament Vice-President Luisa Morgantini (GUE/NGL), veteran Radical Party MEP Marco Pannella (ALDE) and neo-fascists Luca Romagnoli (NI) and Roberto Fiore (NI) in very grave danger of losing their seats.

Berlusconi's party, who are likely to be the second-largest group in the European People's Party group after the June elections, have announced that they will be nominating Mario Mauro MEP for the post of President of the European Parliament setting up a tense contest for the post with former Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek MEP.

Berlusconi Coalition (Italian People of Freedom Party / Northern League / Autonomy Movement)	52%
Democratic Party / Italy of Values	30%
Union of the Centre	6%
Communists	4%
The Right (La Destra)	2%
Others	3%

Digis



Lithuania

Presidential Voting Intention

Dalia Grybauskaite, the European Commissioner for Financial Programming and the EU Budget is cruising to an easy first-round victory in the Lithuanian Presidential election. The wildly-popular Grybauskaite, who records the support of nearly three quarters of voters, served as Minister for Finance before taking up her posting as the Lithuania's first European Commissioner in 2004. Voting is scheduled to take place shortly before the European elections on May 17th.

Dalia Grybauskaite	74%
Algirdas Butkevicius	5%
Valentinas Mazuronis	3%
Kazimira Prunskiene	1%
Arunas Valinskas	1%

Prime Consulting



Netherlands

National Political Opinion Poll

Controversial nationalist politician Geert Wilders' Freedom Party (NI), formed only in February 2006, holds a narrow lead over Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende's Christian Democrat Appeal (EPP-ED). Wilders' party, whose support has swelled since the publication of the firebrand's anti-Islam film Fitna, may well rock the Dutch political establishment to the core by topping the poll in the June European elections.

Freedom Party	32 seats
Christian Democrat Appeal	27 seats
Labour Party	22 seats
Democrats 66	18 seats
Socialist Party of the Netherlands	17 seats
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy	15 seats
Green Left	10 seats
Christian Union	4 seats
Animals Party	2 seats
Reformed Political Party	2 seats
Proud of the Netherlands	1 seats

Maurice de Hond

NB: Available polling data is only published on the basis of projected seat numbers in the Dutch Parliament, the Tweede Kamer.



Poland

National Political Opinion Poll

With Prime Minister Donald Tusk's centre-right Civic Platform (EPP-ED) holding a 31% in the latest opinion polls, it appears that there will be no easy path back to power for hard-line former President Lech Kaczyński's Law and Justice Party (UEN).

Civic Platform, who defeated Law and Justice by a 10-point margin at the last general election, is poised to build on the fifteen seats it secured at in 2004. Civic Platform's strong opinion poll showing will do much to assist former Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek MEP who remains favourite to take over as President of the European Parliament.

The League of Polish Families, who received 16% of the vote and secured 10 MEPs in 2004 do not even register in current voting intention polls and appear to be facing electoral annihilation in June.

Civic Platform	58%
Law and Justice	27%
Democratic Alliance	5%
Peasant Party	4%

PBS DGA / Gazeta Wyborcza

Presidential Election Political Opinion Poll

The latest *PBS DGA / Gazeta Wyborcza* poll of voting intentions for next year's Polish Presidential election shows Prime Minister Donald Tusk leading conservative President Lech Kaczynski by 17%. The incumbent, who defeated Tusk by a 54% to 46% margin at the 2005 poll records the expressed support of only 13% of voters.

These results, however, may not be as grim for President Kaczynski as first appears. While the incumbent's poll numbers are concerning, so too are Donald Tusk's whose party leads by 31% in national polls yet is only able to record a 17% lead in the Presidential ballot. Supporters of conservative candidates Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, Radosław Sikorski and Zbigniew Ziobro, who poll combined 27% vote share. are far more likely to support President Kaczynski than Prime Minister Tusk in a second round runoff should no candidate reach achieve 50%+1 in the first round.

Donald Tusk	30%
Lech Kaczynski	13%
Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz	12%
Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz	12%
Tomasz Lis	9%
Radosław Sikorski	8%
Zbigniew Ziobro	7%

PBS DGA / Gazeta Wyborcza



Slovakia

National Political Opinion Poll

Popular Prime Minister Robert Fico's centre-left Direction-Social Democracy Party (Smer) holds an imposing 33% over its nearest political rival, the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union.

Smer appears guaranteed to improve upon its performance at the 2004 European elections where the party received 16.9% of the vote and elected only three of the country's fourteen MEPs. The party should conservatively expect to at least double its representation in Brussels.

Direction-Social Democracy (Smer)	46%
Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU)	13%
Slovak National Party (SNS)	11%
Christian Democratic Movement (KDH)	9%
Party of the Hungarian Coalition (SMK)	8%
People's Party - Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (LS-HZDS)	6%
Free Forum (SF)	3%
Slovak Communist Party (KSS)	2%
Movement for Democracy (HZD)	1%
New Civic Alliance (ANO)	*

UVVM



Spain

National Poll

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's Socialist Workers Party and Manuel Rajoy's opposition Partido Popular are statistically tied in national opinion polls.

The poll findings indicate a minimal shift in support since the 2004 European elections with support for both the Worker's Party and Partido Popular declining by a little over 2%. It is likely, given the sustained support for regionalist parties and the absence of significant movement in the opinion polls, that Spain's European Parliament delegation will remain relatively unaltered in June.

Socialist Workers Party (PSOE)	41%
Popular Party (PP)	39%
United Left (IU) / Initiative for Catalonia-Greens (IC-V)	5%
Union, Progress and Democracy (UPyD)	4%
Convergence and Union (CiU)	3%
Basque Nationalist Party (PNV)	1%
Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC)	1%

GESOP / El Periódico de Catalunya



Sweden

By a small margin, Swedish voters oppose the introduction of the Euro in the country. All major parties aside from the Centre Party, who secured the largest number of votes in the 2006 general election, are in principle in favour of the adoption of the currency.

Euro favourability

Oppose	51%
Support	45%
Undecided	4%

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