UA: UKRAINE ANALYTICA

COALITION
PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE
EUROPEAN PEOPLE'S PARTY
GOLOS
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OPPORTUNITIES
NEW FACES
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- **NEW EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**
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WHAT SHOULD UKRAINE EXPECT FROM THE NEW EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT?

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After the 2019 elections, the balance of power inside the European Parliament has changed. Programmes of political groups and the number of seats they have won can help us predict the position of the legislature on questions important for Ukraine. The study shows that Ukraine will have strong support on the status of Crimea, sanctions regime, Russian aggression in the east and in the Azov Sea. On the contrary, Ukraine will not be able to secure support on Nord Stream 2 and should be ready for cooperation between the EU and Russia. Also, Ukraine can face criticism from the EU on minority rights protection and insufficient efforts against corruption.

The European Parliament (EP) has been very supportive of Ukraine in the past years. Traditionally, two largest political groups – the European People's Party (EPP) and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) – dominated the scene. After the European elections in 2019, however, the composition changed dramatically. New forces emerged, old ones lost seats. Nonetheless, the principle is the same – one needs to get enough political groups on one's side to get something passed. Now 'enough' means at least three.

The purpose of this article is to determine the stance of all political groups on matters of importance for Ukraine. With such information at hand, it would be possible to predict with a high degree of credibility the EP's policy towards Ukraine. Will they keep supporting sanctions against Russia? What will be the EP's priorities regarding Ukraine?

Official statements published on websites of the political groups since the beginning of 2018 are taken as raw data and analysed in order to understand what these groups stand for in terms of their policy towards Ukraine and Russia[1]. Taking into account the number of seats each group has, it is possible to determine what positions the majority of the European Parliament will endorse and then extrapolate these findings to the EP's policy towards Ukraine.

Of course, the data can involve some inaccuracies, as there are cleavages inside the groups, which consist of representatives of different countries. And the conservatives from Germany and from Poland might have polarized opinions on Russia, for instance. Apart from that, the position of a group can change drastically over time under particular circumstances. Nevertheless, official statements tend to represent

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1 The full list of all the materials used can be found under the following link:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ipp7VQlCCFZlmSiSaKqFmodINobmilEoPS7DNk6enew/edit?usp=sharing.

a position that reflects an intra-group consensus. Therefore, the data presented here are a solid basis for prognosis.

Political groups

European People's Party – 182 seats

The EPP is the biggest loser of this election – now they will have 34 seats fewer than in the previous five years. However, this conservative faction will remain the largest political group in the European legislative body. They are probably the most pro-Ukrainian group of all. Although several political groups voted for the resolution that reiterates Ukraine's prospect of the EU membership[2], the EPP was the only one that adopted an intra-group document outlining its policy towards Ukraine. They support the integration of Ukraine into the EU and even NATO (the only political group with such a position), but acknowledge that it will take at least 10 years before both parties are ready for it and may discuss more specifically the way forward. The EPP stresses the need to continue assisting Ukraine, especially across such areas as economic development, rule of law, fighting corruption, and countering Russian aggression.

This is the single group that spoke out in favour of elaborating a Marshall Plan for Ukraine. They also agree that the annexation of Crimea is illegal, support sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, condemn Russia's ongoing efforts to destabilize eastern Ukraine, and want the sanctions to remain. The EPP also voted for the EP's resolution on the incident in the Kerch Strait that defended freedom of navigation in the Azov Sea and condemned the militarization of the Black Sea.

At the same time, they want a double-track policy towards Russia – a firm position and increase in military capabilities on the one hand and a constructive dialogue where it is possible on the other. When it comes to opposing Russia, they are especially keen on scrutinizing Russian investments, particularly those in media, strategic infrastructure, and technology sectors. The EPP urges Ukrainian authorities to refrain from any measures against the rights of minorities. They voted for the resolution that recommends the European Commission to extend the Third Energy Package regulation to include the Nord Stream 2 project[3].

Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats – 154 seats

The S&D lost almost as many seats as the EPP did – 31, but has remained a powerful faction in the Parliament as well. Many of their positions coincide with the ones of the EPP, in particular regarding the status of Crimea, Ukraine's territorial integrity, Russian aggression in the east, rights of minorities, Russian investments and money laundering, ongoing dialogue with Russia, militarization of the Black Sea, and freedom of navigation in the Azov Sea.

However, there are some divergences with the conservatives. While the EPP emphasizes more how the EU can help Ukraine to carry on with reforms, the S&D expects Ukraine to do more – particularly in fighting corruption and pursuing de-oligarchization. They are ready to strengthen sanctions against Russia if the situation requires it, as well as to exert more pressure on the Kremlin to release political prisoners. The social democrats also strongly condemn human rights violations in

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2   European Union, *European Parliament Resolution of 12 December 2018 on the Implementation of the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine*, 2018
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0518_EN.html?redirect]

3   *MEPs Strengthen EU Rules on Pipelines to and from Third Countries*, "European Parliament News", 21 March 2018
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20180320IPR00143/gas-meps-strengthen-eu-rules-on-pipelines-to-and-from-third-countries].

Crimea. They aren't much enthusiastic about expanding the EU's assistance to Ukraine, but nevertheless appreciate Zelenskyy's pro-European position. They call on Kyiv and Moscow to fully respect the Minsk Agreements and are willing to cooperate with Russia in data security.

Renew Europe – 108 seats

Renew Europe is an alliance between the oldest political group of liberals (ALDE) and Macron's party En Marche. Now their position has become much stronger. In last Parliament they had 9.2% of seats compared to 14.3% that they have secured this time. The liberals are likely to be the third force that will join the EPP–S&D coalition determined to move the European integration forward.

There aren't much data for the analysis as they have just created their official website and it does not contain many official statements yet. For this research, the websites of ALDE and En Marche were used. They express interest in cooperating with Russia (for example, on Iran nuclear deal and regulation of cyberspace). The liberals want to achieve a peaceful settlement in the east of Ukraine and therefore, unlike the abovementioned groups, do not emphasize Russia's involvement in the conflict.

Nevertheless, on the key issue for Ukraine they are very firm – RE condemns the occupation of Crimea and ongoing destabilization of the eastern part of Ukraine. However, they haven't voiced clearly their position on sanctions.

Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) – 74 seats

The Greens/EFA gained some electoral weight in 2019 with additional 22 seats. On many issues they are staunch supporters of Ukraine. That involves the standard package – criticism of Nord Stream 2, respect

for the territorial integrity of Ukraine, condemnation of the occupation of Crimea and destabilization of eastern Ukraine, freedom of navigation in the Azov Sea. They also call for new measures to tackle money laundering cases, especially those benefiting Russian oligarchs close to Putin. Apart from that, as a response to the Kerch Strait attack on Ukrainian vessels, they propose new tough sanctions on Russia as well as the extension of the OSCE mandate to cover the Azov Sea and an increased pressure to finally release Ukrainian soldiers and political prisoners.

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At the same time, the Greens/EFA tend to accentuate the issue of minority rights and blame the murder of the young Roma David Papp on propaganda against Roma and Sinti in Ukraine.

European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) – 62 seats

The ECR used to be the third largest faction in the European Parliament, but now they are behind five political groups on the number of seats. Their position in many cases is similar to the one of the Greens/EFA group, but on some questions, they go even further. For example, they say that it does not suffice just to make Gazprom abide by the Third Energy Package regulation, since this legislation has too many loopholes that the Russian energy giant can exploit.

Apart from that, the ECR is the only political group that has voiced strong disappointment with the restoration of Russia's voting rights

in PACE and called Russian involvement in eastern Ukraine *occupation* instead of *destabilization*. They also want to tackle Russian disinformation campaign and propaganda.

European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) – 41 seats

GUE/NGL will be the smallest political group in the new European Parliament. Ukraine does not often appear on their radar, and the rare instances when it does are mostly marred with hostility and aggressiveness from the group. They mention Ukraine mostly to condemn SBU's pressure on the Communist Party and its leader Petro Symonenko. They also, in line with Russian media and Ukrainian pro-Russian parties, criticized Andriy Parubiy, the then Head of Ukrainian Parliament, for his alleged praise of Hitler (although Parubiy did not praise the Nazi leader, but only spoke about him).

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GUE/NGL believes that the Revolution of Dignity was a coup d'état and post-Maidan Ukrainian authorities are backed by extreme nationalist and fascist groups. They are also strongly against any kind of escalation with Russia and strongly disapprove of European media's obsession with 'claimed Kremlin-orchestrated fake news and disinformation'. In general, they can put up with macro financial assistance to Ukraine, but want to raise the number of conditions on this assistance, demanding, *inter alia*, the reduction of poverty.

Identity and Democracy (ID) – 73 seats

Many feared that the far-right forces after these elections would be able to block any decision that requires a two-thirds majority. It did not happen, but still these parties are the biggest winners of the elections together with Renew Europe, as they have doubled their representation. They have not set up an official site, so the websites of three parties (and statements of their leaders) that form together 81% of the group – Alternative für Deutschland, Lega Nord, and National Rally – were taken for the analysis.

This is the group with the most unfavourable stance towards Ukraine. They openly champion closer cooperation with the Kremlin and the lifting of sanctions on Russia, as they deem those harmful to European farmers. They claim that Crimea is historically a Russian peninsula and therefore the annexation is legitimate. Moreover, they deny Russia's role in eastern Ukraine and believe that the EU's support to Ukraine only fuels the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

In their eyes, similarly to GUE/NGL, Maidan was a fake revolution and externally funded coup. Alternative für Deutschland expressed the opinion that Nord Stream 2 is beneficial for Germany. While Lega Nord and Rally National are not so keen on Germany's interest, they will probably support this view for the sake of cooperation with Russia. Lega Nord and their leader Matteo Salvini are especially hostile towards Ukraine as Salvini even claimed that Ukrainian neo-Nazis wanted to kill him.

Topics

Occupation of Crimea, Russian Aggression in the East of Ukraine

In the new European Parliament, there still will be an overwhelming majority that considers the occupation of Crimea illegal

and believes that it shouldn't be accepted by the European Union. There is support from 578 MPs on this matter – from all the political groups, except for ID and GUE/NGL. Even in these two groups, only the far-right parties are explicitly in favour of the idea that Crimea should belong to Russia. However, GUE/NGL will undoubtedly take the same position if the overall situation shifts towards this view. By and large, there is no risk that the EP's position concerning legality of the occupation of Crimea will change.

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The European Union has always emphasized the importance of the Minsk Agreements and the need to implement them. But the approach has changed over time. At first, they pressured Ukraine to deliver on its promises before Ukraine adopted the legislation stipulated in the Minsk Agreements (introducing amendments to the Constitution, passing the law 'on the special status' for Donbas, as well as the law on amnesty).

Since then, until recently, Russia has not been willing to do anything at all, even to guarantee a durable ceasefire. Russia, therefore, is to blame for the lack of progress in the implementation of the Minsk Agreements. And now this viewpoint has the support of the majority of MPs comprising the EPP, S&D, and ECR. The latter even defined the Russian involvement in eastern Ukraine as occupation. The position of Renew Europe in this context merits special attention. They take a more appeaseable tone towards Russia and declare that they want a peaceful resolution of the conflict without stating explicitly who is to blame.

Sanctions against Russia, the Azov Sea, and the Black Sea

The question of whether the EU's sanctions against Russia will remain in place is a hot potato for both Ukrainian and European politics. The trick here is that a single country can block the prolongation of sanctions and we have a couple of those willing to do that, but hesitating yet, e.g. Italy or Hungary. However, when it comes to the European Parliament, the support for sanctions is quite large – 470 MPs from four political groups (EPP, S&D, Greens/EFA, and ECR). More than that, three out of four (all except the EPP) now want to even strengthen the sanctions regime, mainly in the light of the Kerch Strait incident. These three parties together have 288 MPs, which is 88 legislators short of the majority. It means that Ukraine has to report any provocation from Russia to the EPP group in order to convince them that sanctions can reduce the level of Russian aggressiveness.

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Some political groups paid attention to the situation in the Azov Sea even before the incident in the Kerch Strait took place. The Russian assault against Ukrainian vessels made all major political groups articulate their position on the matter. The EPP, S&D, Greens/EFA, and ECR spoke out in favour of freedom of navigation in the Azov Sea and condemned Russian actions and ongoing militarization of the Black Sea region. What

is also important for Ukraine is the fact that this coalition of 470 MPs has proposed the idea of extending the OSCE Mission's mandate to the Azov Sea.

Release of Political Prisoners

In the recent one and a half years, three political groups (EPP, S&D, and Greens/EFA) made statements calling on Russia to release Ukrainian political prisoners, with special attention to Oleg Sentsov. These groups together constitute a majority in the new European Parliament (408 mandates). Therefore, there will be a support of the EP to advance further efforts on prisoners. The S&D even proposes to increase pressure on the Kremlin to facilitate the process. However, recent events may shape the position of the European Parliament on this

> ❝ **Two largest political groups are pushing forward the issue of reforms and fight against corruption in Ukraine**

topic. Russia released 35 Ukrainian political prisoners in a swap deal in September. This may complicate for Ukraine the securing of the EP's support to pressure Russia to release remaining prisoners, as 'big names' such as Sentsov, Kolchenko, and Suschenko returned to Ukraine.

Integration of Ukraine in the EU

On the one hand, the EPP, S&D, and ALDE (RE in the new EP) all voted for the resolution that supports a prospect of the EU membership for Ukraine. And these three political groups will have the majority of votes in the new legislature. On the other hand, among them only the EPP explicitly declared in its own statement the support for the future Ukrainian membership in

the EU and was rather specific about it. However, even they think that a meaningful dialogue on this question can be launched only in a decade.

All other political groups are silent on this matter, except for ID, which wants the EU to cease the assistance to Ukraine entirely, let alone grant it the prospect of membership. In general, Ukraine's accession to the EU for the groups in the EP is a matter of a distant future at best. Ukraine is not likely to find a big number of allies who will be willing to push this question onto the EP's agenda.

Reforms, Fight against Corruption, and Minority Rights

Two largest political groups are pushing forward the issue of reforms and fight against corruption in Ukraine. Yet, they have different perspectives – while the EPP is particularly vocal about providing more support to Ukraine in order to get things done, the S&D maintains that Ukraine does not do enough in this area and should accelerate reforms. In any case, these groups do not constitute a majority and will need allies to advance this agenda.

ID is not interested in Ukraine at all. GUE/NGL does not care about Ukraine's success, but demands that Ukraine does more if it wants to get European money. RE, the ECR, and the Greens/EFA did not explicitly comment on the issue, but their stance on Ukraine will probably boil down to the continuation of financial support to help Ukraine implement reforms. Therefore, the European Union will keep on nurturing Ukraine's capacity to introduce reforms; however, it will also want to see more efforts from Ukraine as well.

The European Parliament really cares about minorities, and almost all political groups (except for ID) bring up this issue in their relations with foreign countries. When it comes to Ukraine, three political groups (EPP,

S&D, and Greens/EFA) that will constitute a majority in the new Parliament raised their concerns about the situation with minorities in Ukraine. This can be both a problem and an opportunity for our relations with the European Parliament. If we pay more attention to minority rights in Ukraine, especially rights of Roma and Sinti, it will have a positive impact on our relations with the EP. Ukraine will prove it is a responsible partner that respects the principles the EU is based upon. It also will enable Ukraine to attract more money and assistance from the EU. On the contrary, if we ignore the issue, it will inevitably generate criticism from our European partners and make an agreement between us more difficult in the future, including on financial matters.

Dialogue with Moscow, Common Framework in Cyberspace

Although the European Parliament takes and will continue to take a firm stance towards Russia, the idea of fostering a dialogue with Russia is in the air. Different political groups understand the dialogue in different ways. For example, ID wants to launch a full-scale cooperation with Russia and get rid of sanctions altogether. While the EPP and S&D believe that Russia should bear responsibility for the actions it takes (towards Ukraine in particular), they admit that there are areas that require cooperation with Russia as a major player on the world stage. Therefore, it is inevitable that initiatives expanding cooperation with Russia in crucial spheres for the EU will find wide support in the EP.

One of such areas can be a common framework in cyber security and data management. The S&D and RE are very supportive of it. GUE/NGL's and ID's positive stance towards any kind of cooperation with Russia can lead us to assume that they will support such cooperation as well. This mix of political groups falls short from the majority by two votes, but it is highly probable that

the issue will find more support among other political groups or non-affiliated MPs.

> *Therefore, the EPP, S&D, and Greens/EFA, who have 408 MPs together, propose to scrutinize more thoroughly Russian investments and to develop new improved measures to fight money laundering with a special emphasis on the Russians*

Moreover, if the United Kingdom leaves the EU, the share of these four political groups in the EP will rise. We should be ready for such cooperation and be proactive. At the very least, we must secure deeper cooperation with the EU in cyberspace earlier than Russians do and agree upon a uniform approach towards Russia in this sphere. We must emphasize our potential and experience, i.e. a large number of IT specialists and successful cases of countering cyber threats.

Measures against Money Laundering and Nord Stream 2

Unexpectedly, many political groups are very concerned about Russian investments and money laundering. Both are believed to augment the influence of Russian oligarchs close to Putin and give Russia leverage to shape policies of European countries. Therefore, the EPP, S&D, and Greens/EFA, who have 408 MPs together, propose to scrutinize more thoroughly Russian investments and to develop new improved measures to fight money laundering with a special emphasis on the Russians. This is a tremendous opportunity for Ukraine to combine efforts with the Europeans in tackling Russian financial encroachment, as Kyiv also struggles with Russia's extensive economic influence and has a rich experience in reducing it.

At the end of the tenure of the outgoing European Parliament, five political groups (EPP, S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA, and ECR) voted for the recommendation to the European Commission to extend the application of the Third Energy Package to third parties, which was clearly targeted at Nord Stream 2. In the current Parliament,

> **The majority of the EP supports the prospect of the EU membership for Ukraine in general, but even for the European parliamentarians it is a matter of a very distant future**

these factions will constitute a majority, so the position of the legislature is not likely to change. At the same time, there are differences inside this large coalition concerning how to approach the issue.

The EPP and S&D are not very vocal in terms of countering Nord Stream 2. The reason may be the interests of two big German political parties that joined the coalition (CDU and SPD) and support the construction of the pipeline, arguably benefitting German energy industry. On the contrary, the Greens/EFA and ECR are tougher towards the project. The latter even proposes a stronger regulation for Nord Stream 2, as the one recommended by the EP previously, in their opinion, has many loopholes that Gazprom can take advantage of. However, these two groups constitute only 136 MPs, and therefore the EP's position will not become tougher than it is now, and the European legislators will not be championing against the Nord Stream 2 project as such (the approach that has been pursued by the Ukrainian authorities for the past five years). We need to acknowledge that the European Parliament will not be our ally in preventing Nord Stream 2 from being constructed.

Conclusions

The analysis shows that, despite the deterioration of the political landscape in the new EP, Ukraine will be able to secure the legislature's support on the most important issues – non-acceptance of the occupation of Crimea and Russia's destabilization efforts in the east of Ukraine, sanctions regime, freedom of navigation in the Azov Sea, pressure on Russia to release political prisoners.

The majority of the EP supports the prospect of the EU membership for Ukraine in general, but even for the European parliamentarians it is a matter of a very distant future. There are two questions that can be either a headache or an opportunity for the Ukrainian-European relations, namely minority rights and reforms, especially in the fight against corruption. Ukraine can posture itself as a reliable partner by making progress in these areas. Lack of progress, on the contrary, will complicate the relations with the Union.

The EP will not be blocking the Nord Stream 2 project, although they support the idea of making Gazprom abide by the European regulation of competition on energy markets. Finally, Ukraine needs to seize the opportunities that the upcoming proposals of the European Parliament might bring. Ukraine should not stand idly and watch the emergence of a common cyber security framework between the EU and Russia, but should make its own proposal instead. And Ukraine can also help the Europeans tackle money laundering and influence of Russian money on their politics while they are ready to do it themselves.

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