Country Profiles — Major EU Member States

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Last updated: 25 May 2026

?? Germany

Chancellor: Friedrich Merz (CDU) **Government:** CDU/CSU-SPD grand coalition (since Feb 2025)
Next election due: 2029 (but coalition could collapse earlier)

State of the nation:

- Economy struggling — tax revenues slashed by ~€70bn for 2026-2030, blamed on Trump's Iran war causing global energy shock
- Economy has been stagnant for years with high energy costs and weak export demand
- Major transatlantic tensions: Merz publicly said US was "humiliated" by Iran; Trump responded by cutting 5,000 US troops from Germany
- Migration policy shifted right under Merz — "asylum turnaround," pushbacks at borders
- Asylum seeker numbers down
- Merz proposed "associate EU membership" for Ukraine — Zelenskyy rejected it
- **Key challenge:** Merz's weak mandate, internal coalition tensions, and an emboldened AfD at ~20%

?? France

President: Emmanuel Macron (lame duck — serving final year, cannot run again) **Next presidential election:** April-May 2027

2027 Presidential Race:

- **Édouard Philippe** (ex-PM, Horizons, centre-right) is clear early favourite — only candidate who can beat RN in round two
- **Marine Le Pen** (RN, 57) — still strong but facing potential EU embezzlement trial appeal verdict (7 July 2026), which could bar her from standing
- **Jordan Bardella** (RN, 30) — will stand if Le Pen is barred
- **Jean-Luc Mélenchon** (LFI, 70) — declared candidacy. Platform: dismantle billionaire media empires, heavy taxes on business, opt-out from EU rules
- **Gabriel Attal** (Renaissance) — declared on Friday (date TBC)
- **Bruno Retailleau** (Republicans) — centre-right risks splitting the vote
- Macron has said he won't step down early

State of the nation:

- RN remains the dominant opposition force (polling ~30%+ in European elections)
- Fiscal situation stretched — high debt-to-GDP ratio, pension reform still contested
- Economy performing better than Germany but below expectations

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?? Italy

Prime Minister: Giorgia Meloni (Fratelli d'Italia) **Government:** FdI-Forza Italia-Lega coalition **Next general election:** 2027

State of the nation:

- Meloni lost the **constitutional referendum on 23 March 2026** — 54% No vs 46% Yes (turnout ~60%)
- The reform would have separated judges and prosecutors; opponents said it threatened separation of powers
- First significant electoral defeat for Meloni's government
- Local elections (May 2026) showed coalition still performing well
- Economy stagnant — Trump's Iran war hitting energy costs hard
- EU relations: Meloni a close Trump ally domestically unpopular
- Press freedom concerns remain (Politico: "A dangerous new phase")
- Next general election due 2027

?? Spain

Prime Minister: Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) **Government:** PSOE-Sumar coalition, dependent on Catalan separatist and Basque parties **Next election:** TBC (currently serving full term to 2027)

State of the nation:

- Sánchez still in power but embattled since corruption scandal involving wife Begoña Gómez (Apr 2024)
- Catalan amnesty law passed May 2024 — controversial, approved by slim majority
- Coalition with Sumar is fragile — depends on Junts, ERC (Catalan separatists) and Bildu, PNV (Basque)
- Economy performing relatively well — "envy of Europe" per BBC (tourism boom, strong services sector)
- Sánchez took strong anti-Trump line on Iran war trade threats
- **April 2026:** Spain moves to grant legal status to 500,000 unauthorised immigrants — direct challenge to Vox
- Far-right Vox remains significant opposition at ~12-14%

?? Netherlands

Prime Minister: Rob Jetten (D66) — from 23 Feb 2026 **Government:** Minority coalition — D66 + VVD + CDA

State of the nation:

- **Dramatic political shift in 2026:** Schoof cabinet (with PVV support) collapsed Feb 2026 after PVV withdrew June 2025 and NSC withdrew Aug 2025
- New election Oct 2025: D66's Rob Jetten (38) narrowly beat Wilders
- Jetten became Netherlands' youngest ever and first openly gay PM
- Wilders (PVV) now in opposition, vowing to oppose everything
- Minority coalition means every reform must be negotiated vote-by-vote
- Key policies: migration/asylum reform, €19bn extra defence spending, healthcare/benefits cuts

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?? Poland

Prime Minister: Donald Tusk (Civic Coalition) **Government:** KO-Third Way-Left coalition
President: Karol Nawrocki (PiS-aligned, from 2025)

State of the nation:

- Tusk's pro-EU coalition government in power since late 2023
- EU funds unblocked after rule-of-law restoration efforts (€137bn)
- Rule of law restoration ongoing — reversing PiS judicial reforms
- **President Nawrocki (PiS-aligned) elected 2025** — gives PiS veto power and ability to block legislation
- PiS remains largest single party (~33-35%)

- **Recent blow:** Politico (25 May 2026): "Poland's right wing topples Kraków's liberal mayor in fresh blow to Tusk" — local election setbacks
- Tusk pushing military training for all men; accusing Russia of sabotage
- Former PiS justice minister Ziobro a fugitive in US facing 26 charges

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?? Sweden

Prime Minister: Ulf Kristersson (Moderates) **Government:** M-KD-L coalition with confidence-and-supply from Sweden Democrats **Next election:** 13 September 2026

State of the nation:

- Kristersson in power since Oct 2022 via Tidö Agreement with SD
- Most restrictive migration policy in Swedish history enacted under SD influence
- Government still in office — polls suggest tight election ahead
- Sweden backed Ukraine's NATO path
- A September 2026 election will test whether SD can break into formal government

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?? Austria

Chancellor: Karl Nehammer (ÖVP) — caretaker **Incoming:** Likely Herbert Kickl (FPÖ) **Government situation:** FPÖ won Sept 2024 election (~28.8%, first place). ÖVP initially refused coalition but now signalling willingness. **FPÖ-ÖVP coalition most likely outcome.**

State of the nation:

- If Kickl becomes Chancellor, he would be Austria's first far-right leader since WWII
- Politico: "In Austria's Kickl, the EU has its next Orbán"
- Kickl uses term "Volkskanzler" (Nazi connotations) and calls for "remigration"
- EU nervously watching — Kickl would significantly alter the Council's political balance
- Joined PfE grouping in European Parliament

?? Belgium

Prime Minister: Bart De Wever (N-VA) **Government:** Right-wing coalition with Flemish separatists **Formation history:** June 2024 election — 7+ months of negotiations. De Wever became PM on 31 Jan 2025. Longest formation crisis in Belgian history finally resolved.

State of the nation:

- N-VA (Flemish nationalist) largest party after June 2024 election, surprisingly beating Vlaams Belang
- Government is right-wing coalition with Flemish separatist at helm
- Ongoing tensions with French-speaking parties
- Belgium's complex federal structure continues to make governance difficult
- De Wever: the man who previously wanted to destroy Belgium now running it (Politico)

Sources

- BBC News — various country profiles and election coverage
- Politico Europe — country-by-country analysis (May 2026)
- BBC News — "Merz wins German election, CDU returns to power" (Feb 2025)
- Politico Europe — "The incredible shrinking German chancellor" (May 2026)
- BBC News — "Race for French presidency sees ex-PM Philippe as early favourite" (May 2026)
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- BBC News — "Sánchez government survives but weakened"
- Politico Europe — "De Wever: the man who wants to destroy Belgium reluctantly heads toward running it" (2024)
- Politico Europe — "Netherlands: Jetten ousts Wilders in shock election result" (Oct 2025)
- Politico Europe — "Poland's right wing topples Kraków's liberal mayor" (25 May 2026)
- Wikipedia — various country election pages and government pages

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