

Europe's left/right shift: Do the terms mean anything anymore?

October 2026

Introduction

Europe's political direction has changed significantly since the beginning of 2025. However, while established centre-left parties have suffered electoral setbacks and conservative, nationalist and sovereignty-focused movements have gained influence, the



movement is not uniform - as it has been in Latin America - nor is it confined to traditional party divisions. In several countries, the electorate is challenging established political leadership regardless of its ideological position. This is understandable, given that the so-called political divisions between traditional left/right parties have become so blurred as to be indistinguishable.

The wider, underlying development therefore should be viewed as growing public dissatisfaction with their country's economic performance, immigration policies and the lack of political accountability. In fact, it's fair to say, voters are questioning whether established governments represent their interests at all or those of European institutions.

Executive summary

Voting in 2025 indicated greater political fragmentation and an increased desire for national sovereignty. Germany and Poland demonstrated substantial conservative gains, but the Netherlands was not quite so clear at first glance. That said, there was a stronger centrist representation along with continued support for nationalist parties.

In 2026, the elections results in Denmark, Hungary, Sweden and Latvia provided good examples that their public's need for change cannot just be determined by left-wing governments replaced by right-wing parties. The more significant development is actually the erosion of established party loyalties due to the increasing negative influence immigration and economic dissatisfaction are having. Public sentiment is driving the call for a retreat from globalism and a return to sovereign and nationalist policies.

The political shift in 2025

Germany's February 2025 election delivered a decisive setback to the Social Democrats. The centre-right CDU/CSU secured 28.5% of votes, while Alternative for Germany (AfD) doubled its previous support to 20.8%. The Social Democrats fell to 16.4%, demonstrating a substantial loss of confidence in the previous government's political direction. What is really telling here is that voter turnout was 82.5%, the highest turnout in forty years, which indicates the extremely high interest in the country's political state.

Poland's elections followed in June. Conservative politician Karol Nawrocki defeated liberal Warsaw mayor Rafal Trzaskowski with 50.89% of the presidential vote. The result illustrated the continuing appeal of national-conservative politics despite the presence of a more liberal parliamentary government.

The Netherlands election in October presented a more complex picture. The centrist D66 and Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom each secured 26 seats, while other conservative movements also made gains. Nevertheless, the results still highlighted dissatisfaction with existing political arrangements despite not benefiting one ideological camp.

The developments of 2026

Denmark's March election produced substantial losses for Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's Social Democrats, which fell from 50 to 38 seats. Meanwhile, the nationalist Danish People's Party increased its representation from five to sixteen. Although, Frederiksen retained power he had to form a new centre-left minority coalition. That is not a sign of strength for any government.

Hungary's April election delivered a major political upheaval. Peter Magyar's centre-right Tisza Party secured 141 parliamentary seats, defeating Viktor Orban's established national-conservative Fidesz alliance, which retained 52. This represented a change within conservative politics but was actually a result directly influenced by both the EU and the Pro-EU left-wing politicians desperate to rid themselves of Orban, seen as a serious thorn in their sides.

Sweden moved in a different direction. September's election gave the centre-left opposition 176 seats against 173 for the incumbent centre-right bloc. Yet, this result furthers the argument that a left/right political label does not shield a government if it pushes for mass immigration and globalist policies at the expense of its public's wishes.

Latvia's October election delivered 41 seats to the centrist United List. However, nationalist and sovereignty-focused parties collectively secured substantial parliamentary representation. Latvians are also sending a message to their government that they want to maintain national identity and geopolitical independence.

Elections remaining in 2026

At a time when illegal immigration has become such a serious political issue, public responses frequently extend beyond conventional economic calculations. In Spain, the extraordinary arrival of some 80,000 migrants into Ceuta from Morocco in July exposed serious border-security vulnerabilities made worse by the apparent lack of action from Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. Such events become politically decisive when voters associate their government with prolonged political failure. Sanchez has called a snap general election for the 29th of November. His already compromised Socialist government, however, looks likely to fall against the centre-right People's Party and Vox. A PP-led government supported by Vox would produce significant policy changes concerning immigration and relations with European institutions quite quickly.

Serbia's parliamentary election on 25 October will test Aleksandar Vucic's established nationalist political movement against opposition forces demanding political change. Its outcome will influence Serbia's relationship with the EU and its strategic position between Western institutions and Russia.

Conclusion

The European public's political trajectory is becoming a significant and hardening challenge to the established authority to deal with, as conservative and sovereignty-focused movements are occupying an increasingly growing and important position. This growth is born of a voting public sick and tired of political leadership refusing to listen to them and reason. If this attitude continues, and there is no real sense of it changing yet, dissatisfaction and declining confidence in established institutions will reach a point of no return.

If the leaders of EU countries do not re-evaluate their current political direction of travel soon, the upheaval across the European continent to follow will be so catastrophic that recent events in Paris and Brussels will appear like minor disagreements. It is plain to see that the European Project (the driver behind these policies) has failed utterly. The failure began more than 15 years ago, but those in Brussels and its supporters within European governments just won't let go of the dream that is soon to become their worst nightmare.

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