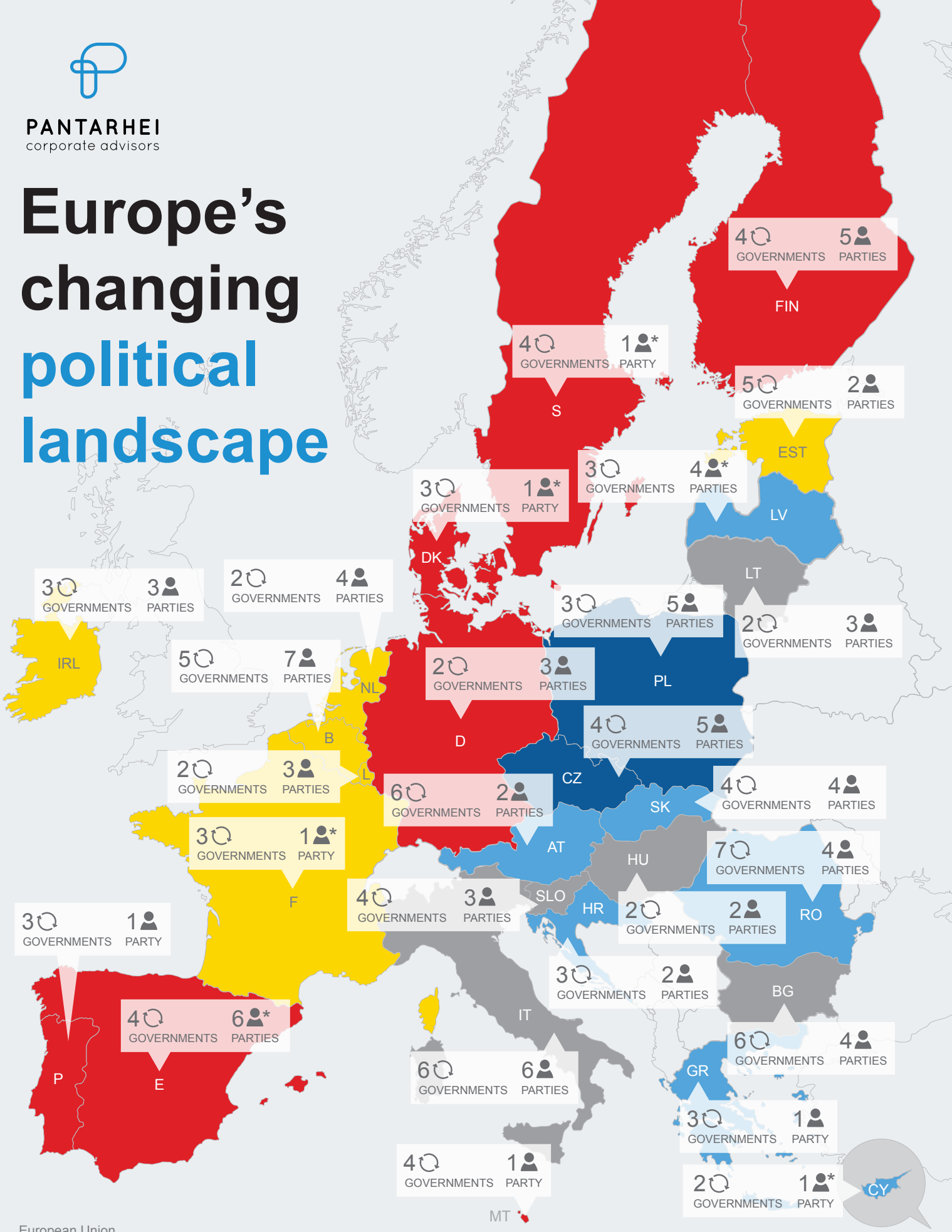




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# Europe's changing political landscape



European Union

- EPP
- PES
- Non-attached
- 🔄 Number of governments during the last two parliaments (=change of head of government)
- 👤 Number of parties in current government
- ECR
- ALDE
- \* Minority government



Ranking	Country	Index value
1.	Spain	31
2.	Bulgaria	29
3.	Italy	27,5
4.	Belgium	25
5.	Romania	20,5
6.	Czech Republic	20,5
7.	Austria	19
8.	Finland	18
9.	Latvia	17,5
10.	Slovenia	17
11.	Poland	16,5
12.	Slovakia	16
13.	Ireland	15,5
14.	Malta	15,5
15.	Denmark	15
16.	Estonia	15
17.	Croatia	14,5
18.	Greece	14
19.	Portugal	14
20.	Sweden	13,5
21.	France	13
22.	Netherlands	13
23.	Germany	11,5
24.	Lithuania	11,5
25.	Luxembourg	11,5
26.	Cyprus	11,5
27.	Hungary	10,5
	Average	16,93

## Varying levels of stability across Europe

From election systems to perceptions of minority and coalition governments – the design of European countries’ political systems has always been highly diversified. Now, the EU instability index has highlighted for the first time the significant polarity between these systems in terms of the stability and reliability of their respective models of government.

## Chronic patients and surprise contenders

The ranking confirms perceptions of countries seen as particularly volatile, such as Spain, Romania and Italy. By contrast, the performance of Austria and Finland – both of which have had several changes of government and coalition models in recent years – comes as a surprise. In Hungary, supposedly the EU’s “most stable” member state, Viktor Orban is now one of the bloc’s longest-serving heads of government – and has a tight grip on the country.

## Political life spans shortening – volatility and rotation the new normal

EU heads of government seem to be having difficulty surviving for a full term. This has resulted in a seemingly permanent state of flux, with parties almost constantly in election mode. And this limits their ability to give answers to significant and pressing political questions. With fixed terms of office, the EU Commission and the EU Parliament are the polar opposite to the increasingly volatile Council.

- Factor 1 Number of parties in current government
- Factor 2 Difference between date of scheduled election and early election
- Factor 3 Number of governments during the last two parliaments (=change of head of government)

# Europe's changing political landscape



## The End of an era

- Standing on the verge of a new world order, we are also experiencing **radical changes in Europe**. The **era of major parties** and the resulting **clear political conditions** in the EU member states appears to be **over**.
- **Governments without a majority** in their national parliaments, or coalitions comprising **three or more parties** have become the **new normal**.
- **Political half-lives are getting shorter**: there have been changes of government during the last two parliaments in 21 of the EU's 27 member states (top 3: Bulgaria 4, Austria and Italy 6, Romania 7).

## ...and its consequences

This fragmentation and volatility have had dramatic consequences:

- The **Franco-German axis** is **no longer a driving force** behind major European issues, and other alliances such as Visegrad and the Frugal Four have (for the time being) stalled at the top level.
- There is **no longer a uniform picture when it comes to the major overarching questions** that need to be solved: from the future of Europe and how to deal with the war in Ukraine to the EU's geopolitical role in competition against other systems.
- **(Small) parties on the fringes** of the political spectrum are **kingmakers** for former major parties, **causing volatility and leaving parties in permanent election mode**.
- The next two years will be an even greater **stress test for the EU system**.
- Russian meddling as a disruptive factor? As in the 2016 US presidential election campaign, there are fears that **Russia wants to weaken the European democratic model** to serve its own strategic interests.
- The European parliament elections in 2024 will be a stress test for pro-European parties. The pool of anti-European forces is threatening to expand.

## What does all this mean for public affairs at the EU level:

- The **current level of instability** is **unparalleled**. The heterogeneity in the structure of the European Council makes it seem easier to block decisions, but woe betide anyone who tries to build a majority.
- For **organisations and corporations in their role as corporate citizens**, this also extends their responsibilities in relation to strengthening our democratic values and models.
- At the same time, the EU Commission is one of the winners: **the Commission is taking on new responsibilities** and, based on the communitised approach to covid-19 vaccine procurement, is looking to expand this model (to areas such as armaments and firefighting aircraft).
- The oft-cited EU labyrinth is not getting smaller; on the contrary, new paths (and blind alleys) are being added to it. **The political system at the EU level is currently being rebuilt**.