

Con-Lib Coalitions are now the norm in Europe

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The novelty of a peacetime coalition government in the UK has meant that most media commentators have been alternately baffled or sceptical about its prospects – on the grounds that novel things must fail. Yet [Simon Hix's](#) survey of European governments shows that coalitions are very common indeed, and that the largest group of governments across the continent are centre-right coalitions.



For people who thought that a Lab-Lib 'progressive coalition' was more natural than a Con-Lib coalition, it might come as a surprise that a coalition between a mainstream centre-right party (either Conservatives or Christian Democrats) and a Liberal party is now the most common form of government in Europe. For example, amongst the 27 EU member states the current government formations are as follows:

Ten countries (including three of the big four EU countries) have a Cameron-Clegg style coalition between the mainstream party on the centre-right (either Conservative or Christian Democrat) and a one or more liberal parties:

France	Germany	UK
Denmark	Sweden	Estonia
Latvia	Lithuania	Finland

Belgium (plus one of the two Belgian Socialist parties)

Also on the right, five more countries currently have centre-right governments (either single-party or coalition governments):

Italy (coalition)	Poland (coalition)	Hungary
Bulgaria	Malta	

Four further countries have a "grand coalition" between the main centre-right and centre-left parties:

Netherlands (plus the Calvinists)	Austria	Romania
Luxembourg		

Four countries (all in Southern Europe, and three with major public spending problems) have centre-left governments:

Spain	Greece	Portugal	Cyprus
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Two countries have a government that might be considered a "progressive coalition" between social democrats and liberals:

Slovenia	Slovakia (although this government also includes a party on the radical right!)
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And then there are some harder-to-classify cases. One country – Ireland- has a coalition between a centre-right party and a Green party. And finally one country – the Czech republic – has a technocratic government led by an independent politician

In this sense, at least, Cameron and Clegg have put Britain squarely in the mainstream of recent political trends in Europe.