



23rd Summit of Chairmen of EPP Parliamentary Groups in the National Parliaments and the European Parliament

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A message on the European migration policy and the British referendum by the EPP Chairmen of parliamentary groups

Europe is not an abstract concept, we are Europe - and cross-border problems such as migration and the fight against terrorism would be much more difficult to manage without European cooperation. This was the key message of the participants at the **23rd Summit of Chairmen of EPP Parliamentary Groups in the National Parliaments and in the European Parliament**, which took place on 20 June 2016.

An holistic migration policy

The Italian Minister of the Interior, **Angelino ALFANO**, appealed to his colleagues for an holistic migration policy to demonstrate European effectiveness. "Once external borders are effectively guarded, hotspots are allocated, and relocation is carried out as promised, all our energy needs to be focused on agreeing with third countries that they take back migrants who do



Angelino Alfano, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, Minister of the Interior, Italy



Koen Geens, Minister of Justice, Belgium

not have any asylum prospects on our continent. Returning migrants should now be our principle priority.” The Belgian Minister of Justice, **Koen GEENS**, also contributed to the lively meeting by underlining the importance of a common European agenda on security.

The British referendum

Esther DE LANGE MEP, EPP Group Vice-President responsible for relations with national Parliaments stated: “We need to show European citizens that we are in control, and that we can deliver concrete results on issues such as security and migration. In the United Kingdom we are witnessing first-hand what happens when the image of an ineffective EU takes root in public debate.”

The Chairman of the EPP Group, **Manfred WEBER** MEP, focused on the imminent United Kingdom European Union membership referendum: “We are at the beginning of a week that will be remembered in the history books. Whatever the outcome of the



Chairman Manfred Weber MEP (DE) with Esther de Lange MEP (NL), Vice-Chair of the EPP Group, responsible for relations with Parliamentary Groups of the national Parliaments, and Matin Kamp, Secretary-General of the EPP Group

referendum, we will respect it, and whatever the outcome, a quick response will be necessary. If the UK votes to leave the EU, it is clear that the response will also have to be strong. British cherry-picking will no longer be accepted.”

Hans-Peter FRIEDRICH, Vice-Chair of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group, Bundestag, Germany, reflected on a possible Brexit and the need for the remaining 27 EU Member States to work closely together. “If Brexit is decided then the process should be implemented in a way which will avoid spill-over effects from other countries. Countries cannot pick and choose the policies they want and disregard the rest,” Mr Friedrich stated. However, he also proposed it could be an “electric shock” for the EU, “an opportunity to think about the future and the identity of the EU, in order to justify its existence to the citizens. The EU needs to find a new justification for its existence as the project of peace has slowly been forgotten.”



Hans-Peter Friedrich MP, Vice-Chair of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group, Bundestag, Germany

Bringing results

During the meeting there was an in-depth debate on the need to show voters that Europe is able to bring about concrete results for European citizens. The EU needs to deliver on economic growth, safety and migration.

Rafał TRZASKOWSKI MP, Vice Chair of the European Affairs Committee, Sejm, Poland, stated that the EU is simply not achieving enough successful results: “Too often European policies over-promise and under-deliver.” **Roberta METSOLA** MEP, also mentioned some crucial areas where results are needed, particularly in the fight against terrorism, such as tackling “hate speakers” and the recruitment of terrorists in Europe. “At the end of the day, citizens throughout Europe want to be able to live their lives normally.”



Jean Bizet MP, Chairman, European Affairs Committee, Sénat, France

Chairman of the French Senate Committee on European affairs, **Jean BIZET**, elaborated on the increasing tension between the mounting supranational threats and the diminishing ability of Europe to act effectively, due to the rise of Eurosceptics. The weak links in the European security chain need to be tackled. The sovereignty concerns of some Member States need to be addressed," Mr Bizet stated. "We have a feeling that Member States are not working together in full harmony. If we have the ability but are not using it, we are not doing what we can and should do, to guarantee the safety of our citizens. We urgently need collective and efficient responses to the real threats that are present in our countries." In addition, Mr Bizet strongly criticized "the left" for hijacking and blocking the exchange of passenger information (PNR).

Humanitarian challenges at EU border

Christos STYLIANIDES, European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, a guest speaker at the Summit, gave a thoughtful speech about the greater external threats and challenges that we are facing. He described the painful reality of the refugee crisis in the Middle East: "More than 65 million people are living in a bad situation, 4 million are in a desperate situation and aid cannot reach them, as sometimes medical personnel are also being attacked. Lebanon is hosting 1.5 million refugees which is close to 30% of its population. Turkey is hosting more than 3 million Syrian refugees. More than 4.6bn Euro has been mobilised. These funds go to Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt. The Syria Trust Fund provides support in various fields. A new programme is helping 1 million migrants in Turkey."

The Commissioner insisted that we cannot leave Greece to manage the consequences alone. "Humanitarian problems always need political solutions. We all



Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management

realise that this crisis is unprecedented, this is a global crisis that needs a global response."

In addition, Commissioner Stylianides stated that the importance of education in developing countries cannot be underestimated. That's why we need a new proposal against forced displacement."

The Future of Europe. Perspectives and initiatives by young politicians

Between 31 May and 1 June, 2016, young MPs and MEPs gathered in Nice for the **EPP Young Members Network meeting**, an event which was organised alongside the EPP Study Days.

The event began with introductory remarks by **Manfred WEBER** MEP, Chairman of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, who spoke about the importance of these meetings with representatives



Manfred Weber MEP (DE), Chairman of the EPP Group and Tom Vandenkendelaere MEP (BE), Coordinator of the EPP Young Members Network together with your members of national Parliaments and the European Parliament

of national Parliaments. “If we want to effectively respond to the challenges of this century, Europe needs to connect with the values of local communities everywhere in Europe.”

Tom VANDENKENDELAERE MEP, Coordinator of the EPP YMN, welcomed the participants and introduced the EPP YMN activities to date and the ongoing projects, such as the Young Members Erasmus Programme which will begin in June 2016. “I am the proud coordinator of these young Members and I am very grateful for the opportunities given to us by the EPP Group”, he concluded.

The highlights of the EPP Group study days were the exhaustive discussions on the “Future of Europe”. The YMN Members actively contributed to the debate and to the proposals that were made by the group. During the debates **Manfred WEBER** MEP, Chairman of the EPP Group in the EP said: “Populists are not interested in providing solutions for our citizens, they are only interested in creating fear. We are the only responsible political group that citizens trust to find solutions and we must deliver them.” Speaking on the panel, **Joseph DAUL**, President of the European People’s Party underlined: “only by achieving concrete results on the current issues can we challenge the populists who are trying to undermine the European project and deprive the EU of its future.”

Exchange of best practices and debates on rule of law and migration at the COSAC meeting in The Hague

On the 12th and 13th of June, 2016, the Dutch ‘Eerste’ and ‘Tweede Kamer’ presided over the final inter-parliamentary meeting of the Dutch Presidency



Danuta Hübner MEP (PL), Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs



Elmar Brok MEP (DE), Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

of the EU. The main subject on the table was the parliamentary dimension of democratic scrutiny of European affairs in the EU. Best practices were exchanged and the debate also focused on two particular topics, namely the rule of law and migration.

From the EP perspective, **Danuta HÜBNER** MEP underlined the importance of the work of the shadow rapporteurs from the different European Parliament political groups towards achieving the final agreement, as well as the possibility for standing rapporteurs on different files to bring up subjects that may be of importance.

During the debates on migration **Elmar BROK** MEP sharply criticized the Member States and the EU, as they did not live up to their responsibilities. He stated that with regard to EU-Turkey Agreement, the EU had now began assuming its responsibilities towards the refugees with 6 billion Euros for schooling, medical assistance and fighting smugglers.

EU and national politics go hand-in-hand: Erasmus for young politicians

All too often the gap between national Parliaments and the European Parliament appears to be very wide. MPs from national Parliaments often only have a reduced awareness of what goes on in Europe. MEPs can also benefit from closer ties with the national Parliaments in times when so many people are turning their backs on Europe.

Because national politics and EU politics go hand-in-hand, the EPP Young Members Network (YMN) - under the leadership of **Tom VANDENKENDELAERE** MEP - is launching a unique and novel exchange programme. The Young MP Erasmus Programme offers young

MPs, who are members of an EPP sister-party, the opportunity to gain an insider view of the workings of the European Parliament.

Tom VANDENKENDELAERE: “As part of my studies I spent several years in the UK, Germany and Poland - a real school of life which influenced who I am today and what I do today. The Young MP Erasmus Programme is based on the same simple idea of spending some time in a completely different environment – hopefully it will have the same long-term effect in bringing people together and tearing down walls. I’m therefore very happy to see my idea taking shape and I am delighted to welcome **Sarah CLAERHOUT** MP, Belgian Federal Chamber, and **Noel ROCK** TD, Dáil Éireann, Ireland, as the first participants of the Young MP Erasmus Programme after the summer.”

Participants are invited for one week to the European Parliament, in Brussels, where they will collaborate with MEPs on a defined topic of interest linked to their daily work. They will take part in Group meetings, committee meetings and plenary sessions and meet with their European counterparts, decision-makers and stakeholders. It is a great opportunity to experience first-hand how European legislation is drafted. In addition, participants will have an opportunity to expand their network through this experience, which is beneficial to their daily work.

Next meetings

- Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP), Bratislava, 2-4 September 2016



Tom Vandenkendelaere MEP (BE), Coordinator of the EPP Young Members Network

Tom Vandenkendelaere: “I hope Sarah and Noel will experience that our work here in Europe is complementary and of crucial importance to their work in the Federal Chamber and Dáil Éireann respectively. At the same time, I hope to learn from Sarah, Noel and other MP Erasmus candidates: they are best placed to tell us why so many people today turn away from Europe and how we can tackle this together. I hope many more young members from national Parliaments are inspired by Sarah and Noel’s example and that the Young MP Erasmus Programme lays the foundations of a network of young politicians who together will build the future of Europe.”

- Interinstitutional Conference on the Future Financing of the European Union, Brussels, 7-8 September 2016
- Exchange of views on the 2016 cycle of the European Semester, Brussels, 28 September 2016



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