

### SUMMARY

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### Future of Europe: provide answers or lose the trust of voters

EPP-affiliated group leaders met on 7 November, 2016, in the framework of the **24th Summit of Chairmen of Parliamentary Groups in National Parliaments and the European Parliament**, to discuss the “**future of Europe**”. Just before the U.S. elections, it was clear that traditional parties need to listen better to the concerns of citizens and provide concrete answers that reach the hearts and minds of Europe’s citizens.

#### No more business as usual

**Esther de Lange** MEP (NL), EPP Group Vice-Chair responsible for national Parliaments and Chair of the debates, insisted that, after Brexit, business as usual is



Hans Peter Friedrich MP, Deputy Chair of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, Paulo Rangel MEP, EPP Group Vice-Chairman, Beatrice Scarascia Mugnozza, Head of the EPP Group Service for Relations with National Parliaments, Esther de Lange MEP, Vice-Chair of the EPP Group, and Antonio López-Istúriz White MEP, EPP Secretary-General

no longer an option. “In Europe, solutions look good on paper and make sense if we look at the numbers, but if we don’t connect these solutions to real people out there, then support for the EU will continue to diminish,” she said.

The keynote speaker, **Jean-Claude Juncker**, Commission President, was equally clear about the need for change: “I do think that we have to change our wording. We should stop telling people that we are aiming at having, by the end of the day, a kind of United States of Europe. That’s not what our citizens want. They want to be what they are - nationals, locals and Europeans.”

**Mairead McGuinness** MEP (IE) agreed fully that we should not lose the connection with people on the ground. Discontent has been building for some years now, and it is mainly the result of the economic crisis and wider globalization concerns.”

### No giving-in to existential pessimism

Former Member of the European Parliament and current Spanish Government Spokesman and Minister for Education, **Íñigo Mendez de Vigo** MP (ES), reacted by calling for a fundamental analysis of the problems facing us today. However, at the same time he warned the EPP should not “be tempted by existential pessimism and not to fall victim to utopias. Let us also ask ourselves, where would we be without the EU?”



Íñigo Mendez de Vigo MP, Spanish Minister for Education and Paulo Rangel MEP, EPP Group Vice-Chairman

Former Council President **Herman van Rompuy** was asked to provide his analysis of the rise of populist and anti-European parties. “If traditional parties can’t provide the right answers, the voters are ready to believe empty promises and even lies coming from outsiders or extremists. If people are really afraid they will prefer less migration even at the cost of their own prosperity.”



Jyrki Katainen, Vice-President of the European Commission for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, Herman van Rompuy, former Council President and David McAllister MEP, Chair of the EPP UK Advisory Group

**Jyrki Katainen**, Vice-President of the European Commission for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness believed that a positive vision of the future should come from modernizing our national economies. “The world and the market around us has changed and our society has to change accordingly. This is a pre-condition of maintaining the social model of our modern economy.”

### Brexit clarity needed

The debates on the future of Europe were of course closely linked to the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom. MEP **David McAllister** (DE) was clear on the fact that the consequences of the vote should now be carried through. “We need clarity before the next European elections in May 2019. Just to remind everyone, the British have asked for this divorce, not us. “The Article 50 procedure should be triggered.” EPP Group Vice-Chairman **Paulo Rangel** MEP (PT) added that there could be no cherry picking from the four freedoms, “they belong together”, he stated.



Antonio López-Istúriz White MEP, EPP Secretary-General and Rafał Trzaskowski MP, Vice-President of the European Affairs Committee in the Polish Parliament

The EPP Group was happy to welcome a senior British Member of Parliament for NE Bedfordshire for the Conservatives, Rt Hon **Alistair Burt**, who participated in the debate on Brexit. Mr Burt called for constructive talks between the EU and the UK: “I believe the decision of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union is a profound disappointment, but it is not a disaster. Only we can make it so! [...] Somehow, we’ve got to contrive a position of mutual benefit, so that a long lasting feud or the need to settle scores should not be the hallmark of our leaving the EU”.

Other important speakers at the meeting were **Antonio López-Istúriz White** MEP (ES) and EPP Secretary-General, **Hans Peter Friedrich** MP (CDU-CSU, DE), Deputy Chair responsible for European Policy, former MEP and current Vice-President of the European Affairs Committee in the Polish Parliament, **Rafał Trzaskowski** MP.

## Young members: Innovation and defence for a strong Europe

Young MPs from EPP sister parties and young politicians from YEPP, representing different EU Members States, came together for the **9th Annual Meeting of the EPP Young Members Network** on 10-11 November 2016, in Brussels, under the presidency of MEPs **Esther de Lange** (NL), EPP Group Vice-Chair for Relations with National Parliaments and **Tom Vandenkendelaere** (BE), EPP Young Members Network Coordinator.



Esther de Lange MEP, EPP Group Vice-Chair, Tom Vandenkendelaere MEP, EPP Young Members Network Coordinator and Lara Comi MEP, EPP Group Vice-Chair

The 2-day event included presentations on EU foreign policy and on jobs, research and innovation. A presentation by **Lara Comi** MEP (IT), EPP Group Vice-Chair for Communication and Youth Strategy entitled ‘Perspectives of the European Union Defence Policy’ was followed by a panel on jobs, research and innovation. **Pablo Zalba Bidegain** MEP (ES) delivered a presentation entitled ‘EU funding of research and innovation’ and **Christofer Fjellner** MEP (SE) spoke on ‘Innovation as a tool to meet our environmental policy ambitions’. A rich exchange of views followed each of the presentations.

The main event of the annual meeting however was a ‘pitch’ with EU Commission President **Jean-Claude Juncker**. During this meeting, participants were able to express their vision on today’s European Union and propose solutions for the future. The participants’ proposals included calls for a more social dimension in



EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker meeting the participants to the 9th Annual Meeting of the EPP Young Members Network

Europe, as well as a curb on illegal immigration and the need to combat growing populism and extremism. They also presented some proposals on how to bring the EU closer to European citizens. Commission President **Jean-Claude Juncker**, listened carefully and responded to their input and proposals.

On the second day of the annual meeting, presentations such as 'Social Media Toolbox for Politicians and Policy Makers' and 'Workforce analysis and insights into skills trends' were given to participants by specialists in the field of social media.

## National Parliaments and a public reasoned debate on TTIP

At the LVI COSAC meeting in Bratislava from 13-15 November 2016, **Danuta Hübner** MEP (PL), Chair of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, a guest speaker at the session which was dedicated to the trade agreement between the European Union and the United States, talked about the **challenges, opportunities and risks related to the TTIP**. According to her, it is only natural that national Parliaments take a close interest in the EU's trade policy. As part of the domestic scrutiny, the national Parliaments should control and guide their Governments when they provide the Commission with the negotiation mandate. They should fully monitor and be informed of the negotiations - primarily by their own Governments, but also by the EU institutions. They can and should ask their respective government Ministers for regular updates on the on-going negotiations on particular trade agreements. The European Parliament is always willing and happy to engage with national Parliaments to discuss trade issues, specifically in the case of mixed trade agreements.



Danuta Hübner MEP, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs

Concerning TTIP, Prof. Hübner highlighted her concerns: "I am worried that TTIP is being sacrificed on the altar of populism. I strongly insist on respecting the Treaties in regard to the provisional application of trade agreements. National Parliaments should assist in these negotiations by informing themselves about the issues and then engaging the public in a reasoned debate." It is important to call upon the national Parliaments to do their homework on trade policy-making and particular negotiations, so as to avoid last-minute objections on issues that have been on the table for several years.

## State of Play of the Common Foreign and Security Policy

At the inter-parliamentary meeting on the State of Play of the Common Foreign and Security Policy which took place on 8 November 2016, Members of the European and national Parliaments discussed a wide range of topics relating to Europe's foreign policy. In particular, participants discussed the implementation of the EU global strategy, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and the situation in the Ukraine. One of the central themes that emerged during the debates, was how to deal with Russian aggression at Europe's borders.

### The implementation of the EU Global Strategy

One of the concrete proposals discussed came from **Mario Mauro** MP (PpI, IT), Member of the Defence Committee in the Italian Senate. He inquired if one appropriate initiative under the EU Global Strategy would regard the allocation of a part of the EU budget,



Elmar Brok MEP, Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Federica Mogherini, Vice-President of the European Commission



Michael Gahler MEP, Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

under an explicit heading, to research in the defence field.

**Francisco Millán Mon** MEP (ES) and **Michael Gahler** MEP (DE), Members of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, echoed this proposal. They said that a more permanent structural cooperation could be an important instrument for deepening the CSDP and overcoming the large amount of CSDP priorities. The Members stated that more information is still required on the implementation efforts so far and on the actions to be taken from now on.

### Implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

In the debate on the implementation of the CFSP, **Elmar Brok** MEP (DE), Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, said that his draft report on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (2016/2036(INI)) sums-up previous discussions on challenges such as terrorism, migration, the war in Syria, and the situation in Africa, Ukraine etc. The senior German Member stated that the EU will have to look for increased opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation, as well as to the unused capacities - such as the role, functioning and financing of the European Battle Groups.

### Situation in Ukraine

One of the major challenges in Europe is to advance EU-Ukraine relations. Again, Russian aggression in the country was a central theme in the debates. All speakers insisted on the need to protect Ukraine and to deliver on the visa liberalisation for the country. **Michael Gahler** MEP (DE), Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, acknowledged the positive developments and the reform efforts in Ukraine.

## Combating complexity and fraud with European funds

On Tuesday 8th of November 2016, the interparliamentary meeting of Budgetary Control Committee took place in the European Parliament to discuss how the EU could achieve **better spending in shared management: a more cooperative model of parliamentary scrutiny**. A positive development was the increased participation by MPs, compared to previous meetings.



Joachim Zeller MEP, Member of the Committee on Budgetary Control and EP rapporteur for the 2015 Commission discharge

“We are all in the same boat!” the rapporteur **Joachim Zeller** MEP (DE) said on the importance of collaboration between MEPs and national/regional Parliaments. 80% of the EU budget goes back to the Member States. State Minister of Environment and Agriculture of Saxony, **Thomas Schmidt** (CDU), supported the rapporteur’s calls for reducing the bureaucracy and complexity of the rules governing European funds. ‘We have to comply with 2000 pages of rules and regulations, and we have 12 different institutions working on it.’

In this complexity, Europe is still unable to tackle financial crime effectively with EU money. That’s the reason why **Ingeborg Gräßle** MEP (DE), Chair of the Committee, suggested the creation of a public European financial prosecutor, to protect the European budget against fraud and combat financial crimes. Even though she stated that she expects great resistance from national Parliaments on this issue, it needs to be dealt with in the future. **Eric Van Rompuy** MP (BE), Chair of the Committee for Budget and Finances of Belgian Chamber of Representatives, agreed that scrutiny on both levels of the budget should be encouraged and there should be zero tolerance in relation to fraud.

## Stronger Europol at the heart of a safer Europe

An interparliamentary meeting took place on 28 November 2016, with the participation of the European Commissioner for Security Union, **Julian King**, Europol Director, **Rob Wainwright** and representatives of the Troika. On the agenda: the EU internal security policies and Europol's role therein, as well as its parliamentary scrutiny and the further modalities of the **Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG)**.

As the EU's law enforcement agency, Europol plays a central role in supporting and strengthening cooperation and joint action among national police forces. A new **Europol Regulation**, adopted on 11 May 2016, put Europol on an even stronger footing. The new Regulation will enter into force as of 1 May 2017, and while ensuring a robust data protection regime will also provide for a flexible and modern data management system, which will allow Europol to improve its support to Member States in the fight against terrorism and organised crime.

In order to politically monitor Europol's activities in fulfilling its mission, including the impact on the fundamental rights and freedoms, and in accordance with Article 88 TFEU, the Europol Regulation establishes a **Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group (JPSG)**, it constitutes members from both national Parliaments and the European Parliament.

**Augustin Diaz de Mera** MEP (ES), Member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, and former EP rapporteur of the Europol Regulation, said that "Europol is an essential tool for European citizens' security" and that that: "democratic



Augustin Diaz de Mera MEP, Member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs and former EP rapporteur of the Europol Regulation

scrutiny of Europol needs to be carried out jointly by the European and national Parliaments."

In its position adopted in 25 February 2014, the EP mentioned that "the JPSG shall comprise of the full members of the competent committee of the European Parliament and one representative of the competent committee of the national parliament for each Member State and a substitute. Member States with bicameral parliamentary systems may instead be represented by a representative from each chamber." The EP representative in the Working Group added to this formal position that - if needed in order to reach a compromise - the number of LIBE members in the JPSG could be reduced in a reasonable manner, while bearing in mind that Art. 88 TFEU does not establish a proportionality nor a parity between the EP and national parliaments.

The Group should be presided jointly by the EP and presidency parliament, regularly once a year with possibility of extraordinary meeting where necessary. Taking into account economic, logistic and availability reasons, as well as for the availability of full interpretation and translation services, the European Parliament believes that the seat of the JPSG should always be one of the seats of the EP.

**Demetris Demetriou** MP (DYSI, CY), Deputy Chairman of the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs in the House of Representatives of Cyprus, stated that guaranteeing citizens safety is essential to show that Europe has a positive role to play. Difficulties remain, such as the impact of Brexit, the way Denmark will cooperate with Europol after the referendum, and Europol's cooperation with Frontex.

**Edita Pfundtner** MP (Most-Híd, SK), rapporteur of the Committee of the National Council of the Slovak



Edita Pfundtner MP, Rapporteur of the Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic for European Affairs in the Field of Justice and Home Affairs



Anita Schäfer MP, Member of the Committee on Internal Affairs in the German Bundestag

Republic for European Affairs in the Field of Justice and Home Affairs, and Member of the Troika Working Group on Europol JPSG Modalities, agreed that the composition, time and venue of meetings, as well as the presiding procedure of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group will be defined before 1 May 2017. The Working Group recommends further that:

**Anita Schäfer** MP (CDU/CSU, DE), Member of the Committee on Internal Affairs in the German Bundestag, supported these recommendations. Cooperation is essential to boost trust and the mutual capacity of sharing information, which in turn will reinforce the prevention efforts.

## Crisis of EU legitimacy national and European problem

At the opening of the inter-parliamentary meeting on the European Parliament's right of inquiry, the revision of EU Electoral Law and the future institutional evolution of the European Union, **Danuta Hübner** MEP (PL), Chair of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, addressed the revision of the European Union's electoral law. The procedure applying on the adoption of the EU Electoral Law under 223(1) TFEU is complex, requiring the unanimity of the Council, a qualified majority of the EP and national ratifications and emphasized the need for an update of the EU Electoral Act which has remained unchanged for 40 years. They chose not to seek a harmonized procedure, but rather to define common principles for organising the European elections while respecting the diversity of traditions in Member States. Their goal is to increase the visibility of European elections, enhance participation

by citizens and provide the elections with a real European dimension. They focused on pragmatic elements that would allow the achievement of such results: a deadline for establishment of the lists of candidates, logos and affiliations of European parties to be made visible on the ballots, a minimum threshold, and equal treatment of genders and synchronous announcement of the electoral results.

On the subject of the future institutional evolution of the European Union, Mario Monti insisted on the need to make better use of the potential of the current Treaties. Economic governance can be enhanced, first of all by restoring trust. Division may run deep, but Europe should share the commitment to sustain integration and growth. The European budget should refocus on its core business and if the EU is given new functions, it needs the own resources to deliver on it accordingly, as the High Level Working Group on own resources will conclude in its report to be presented to all institutions in January 2017. Finally, ahead of any new Treaty change, serious consideration should be given to the ratification process in order to overcome isolated blockages, taking historical examples in USA and Germany, of states refusing ratification, but accepting eventually, the constitutions to be applied on their territory (Rhode Island, Virginia, and Bavaria).



Danuta Hübner MEP (PL), Chair of the Constitutional Affairs Committee and Mario Monti, Chair of the High Level Working Group on own resources

In reaction to points that were raised during the debate with MP's, **Mario Monti** expressed his belief that the main problem is not the dysfunction of the EU, but the incompatibility of the evolutions at national level with the defence of common interests at EU level. Rapporteurs recalled that that the crisis of legitimacy is as much a national problem as an EU problem, that no specific competences have been reclaimed by the MS, but on the contrary, despite all the misgivings the EU is being given new tasks.

## MP's get involved in the EPP group

From the 28th of November to the 1st of December 2016, **Anže Logar** MP (SDS, SL) took part in the **Erasmus programme for young members of national Parliaments**. He met with several Members of the European parliament, the Secretary General of the EPP Group, **Martin Kamp** and **Antonio López Istúriz**, Secretary General of the EPP Party. He said that he was very happy “to exchange contacts with advisors from different committees that are important for my home political work”. All in all, **Anže Logar** MP (SDS, SL) warmly welcomed the initiative. “Getting together, networking and exchanging views and ideas with a young generation of active politicians from the EPP family is a positive long term strategy that could boost the voice and responsiveness of the political family in a long term.”



OVERVIEW OF DATES - first half 2017 -	
Week 5	30 January - 02 February
Week 6	06 February - 10 February
Week 9	27 February - 02 March
Week 10	06 March - 10 March
Week 17	24 April - 27 April
Week 19	08 May - 12 May
Week 22	29 May - 01 June

## Next meetings

- Meeting of the of COSAC Chairpersons Meeting, Valletta, 22-23 January 2017
- European Parliamentary Week, Brussels, 30 January - 1 February 2017
- Interparliamentary committee meeting on “Reform of the Common European Asylum System”, Brussels, 28 February 2017
- EPP Group’s European Affairs Network, Brussels, 20 March 2017
- Interparliamentary committee meeting on “Safeguarding the best interest of the child across the EU”, 22-23 March 2017
- Conference of the Speakers of European Union Parliaments, Bratislava, 23-25 April 2017
- Interparliamentary Conference on Common Foreign and Security Policy and on Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP), Valletta, 26-28 April 2017
- LVII COSAC, Valletta, 28-30 May 2017



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