

# BULLETIN

## European Affairs in the Croatian Parliament



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The “European Affairs in the Croatian Parliament” bulletin is published monthly by the European Affairs Department. It provides the reader with an overview of parliamentary activities in the field of EU affairs and inter-parliamentary cooperation as well as with access to EU documents forwarded to national parliaments.

### In Focus

#### Interparliamentary Conference

#### The Role of Parliaments in Shaping the Future of Food and Farming

The Interparliamentary Conference “The Role of Parliaments in Shaping the Future of Food and Farming”, organized by the Agriculture Committee, was held at the Croatian Parliament on November 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018. The conference was opened by the Speaker of the Croatian Parliament, Gordan Jandroković.

The two-day event welcomed the participants from 20 EU Member States, representing national parliamentary committees dealing with agriculture and food, along with the representatives of the European Parliament and European Commission, Copa-Cogeca and numerous Croatian institutions and stakeholders.

The members of national parliaments discussed key issues of the future of European agriculture with Phil Hogan, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Czesław Siekierski, Chair of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) of the European Parliament, as well as Croatian Members of the European Parliament, Marijana Petir, Ivan Jakovčić and Ruža Tomašić.

The conference provided an opportunity for networking to the members of national parliaments in the period when the European Union is deciding on its next Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. The European Commission proposals relevant for the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) foresee important changes in the financing of CAP, along with a greater responsibility of the Member States for the organization of their national agricultural policies and projects through the national CAP Strategic Plans.

At the invitation of the host, the Chair of the Croatian Parliament’s Agriculture Committee, Tomislav Panenić, the Conference was co-chaired by Martin Preineder, Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry of the Austrian National Assembly. As a chair of the second day of the conference, Preineder addressed some specific features of Austrian agriculture, as well as the position of the current Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Four sessions were held during the first day of the Interparliamentary Conference on the following topics: 1. The process of adoption of CAP national strategic plans; 2. Generational renewal; 3. Local government and rural development; and 4. Research in agriculture, safety and quality of food.

The debate of the first session addressed possible consequences of imposing the obligation of drawing up national CAP Strategic Plans in the form proposed by the European Commission. The participants pointed out that the priority of CAP reform should be genuine simplification: the policy should be more comprehensible for farmers and simpler to implement in the future; increased flexibility for Member States was welcomed. It was underlined that small and medium-sized farms should be at the heart of the policy and that programming should be focused on meeting their needs. It was also noted that introducing new elements of conditionality with respect to climate and environment should be voluntary.



for the Member States and sufficient funds should be provided to reduce the impact of the elements of conditionality on the competitiveness of the economies. It was stressed that the financing of the Common Agricultural Policy in the future should remain at least at the current level, especially given the importance of the agricultural community in world population nutrition, rural areas' sustainability and ecological contribution. It was emphasized that additional efforts were needed to avoid the risk of delays in the adoption of the legal framework and, consequently, of national strategic plans, as well as postponement of the payment of subsidies to farmers after 2020.

The second session dealt with the future measures for encouraging young farmers. Basic problems related to the generational renewal of rural areas such as revenues that lag behind other sectors, unpredictable business risks, access to land, conditions related to loans and unfair trade practices in the supply chain were discussed. The participants noted that definition of „young farmer" needs to be adjusted and that measures of early retirement schemes for farm holders could stimulate the transfer of farms between generations. Support for enterprise creation should be differentiated from income support to young people. It was also underlined that the appropriate level of funding for young farmers should be ensured not only from the agricultural budget, but in synergy with other EU funds.

The third session was focused on the role of regional and local authorities in implementing the rural development policy and possible improvements in the next financial period. The following constraints were identified: administrative capacities at regional and local level; budget cuts for rural development measures; greater conditioning of support to additional ecological and climate goals. The debate pointed to the problems facing individual regions in the Member States, and to the problems facing the Member States located at the external border of the Union. The discussion also highlighted the complexity of administrative requirements in the implementation of the LEADER initiative. The participants expressed their support for the model of public-private partnership in providing additional financing resources.

At the fourth session, the participants exchanged views on the importance of research in agriculture and the ways science can be used to upgrade food quality and safety. The increase in the budget for financing agricultural research in the next programming period was positively assessed. The discussion pointed to the need of: stronger involvement of younger Member States in EU research programs; a stronger link between research and digitization in agriculture with agricultural production; training of experts and scientists with a view to developing more innovative systems and technologies.

The views of the **European Parliament** were presented by Czesław Siekierski, Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, and Croatian Members of the European Parliament. It was underlined that the CAP cannot solve all the problems in the EU's agriculture since the situation also depends on external factors – trade, standards, quality, as well as different international agreements. Furthermore, it was stressed that the design of the CAP should take into account diversity among Member States, respecting the differences of agriculture in the north and south and between old and young EU members.

Adequate support instruments should be devised that would be intended for everyone, but along with financial support, more efforts should be invested in increasing agricultural income and improving the living standards of farmers. The co-operation among national parliaments needs to continue, and it is important to provide national parliaments with the opportunity to discuss national Strategic Plans for CAP.

In his closing remarks, the Conference host Tomislav Panenić emphasized the importance of the active role of national parliaments in making key decisions, but also the active role of agricultural producers. He stressed that everyone in the European Union wanted a safe and sustainable agricultural production and that the CAP should be an effective mechanism for addressing market instabilities and providing adequate ways for boosting the resilience of agriculture to climate change.



Direct payments in agriculture are crucial for the further development of agricultural production, and development of agricultural production is the key to rural development, Panenić concluded.

### **Statement of Readiness for Developing Cooperation and Partnership signed in the Croatian Parliament between the Croatian and Romanian Committees**

Underlining the importance of the future of CAP specifically in the context of the upcoming Trio Presidency of the Council of the EU (Romania, Finland, Croatia), Doina Silistru, Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, Food Industry and Rural Development of Romanian Senate, Alexandru Stănescu, Chair of the Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Food Industry and Special Services of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies and Chair of the Croatian Parliament's Agriculture Committee, Tomislav Panenić signed a Statement of Readiness for Developing Cooperation and Partnership in the Process of Further Discussions on the EU's Common Agricultural Policy.

## **Activities of the Croatian Parliament in the Decision-Making Process**

### **Activities of the parliamentary committees**

Parliamentary committees discussed European documents in accordance with the Work Programme for the Consideration of the Positions of the Republic of Croatia for 2018.

### **Monitoring the work of the Government in the European Union institutions**

#### **European Council**

In November, Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia submitted to the Parliament written [Report on the European Council meetings held in Brussels on 17 and 18 October 2018](#).

Prime Minister presented reports on the European Council meetings held in June and in October 2018 at the [session](#) of Parliament on 14 November 2018. The reports were adopted on 21 November 2018.

#### **Council**

The Croatian Government submitted to the relevant parliamentary committees its positions for November Council meetings:

- 3646 Economic and Financial Affairs Council
- 3647 Foreign Affairs Council (Trade)
- 3648 General Affairs Council
- 3649 General Affairs Council (Art. 50)
- 3650 Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Budget)
- 3651 Agriculture and Fisheries Council
- 3652 Foreign Affairs Council
- 3652 Foreign Affairs Council (Defense)
- 3653 Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council
- 3654 Foreign Affairs Council (Development)
- 3656 General Affairs Council (Art. 50)



## Application of EU law

In November 2018, the Croatian Parliament enacted [4 laws](#) in the process of implementation of European Union law.

### EU documents Forwarded Directly to the Croatian Parliament

According to the Protocol (no 1) on the Role of the National Parliaments in the European Union, all draft laws and communications shall be forwarded directly to the national parliaments.

The Croatian Parliament publishes on a daily basis the EU documents received, along with the information on: document number, adoption procedure, transmission date and subsidiarity deadline.

In November 2018, EU institutions forwarded to the Croatian Parliament [63 documents](#): 22 draft laws, 41 communications and other non-binding documents.

### Interparliamentary Cooperation in the European Union

Interparliamentary cooperation in the European Union encompasses the cooperation between the European Parliament and the national parliaments and the cooperation among the national parliaments in the frame of the parliamentary dimension of the Council Presidency.

In November 2018, the Croatian Parliament representatives participated in the following meetings:

**8 November – Paris** - Interparliamentary meeting “European Citizens Faced with the European Union”

**18 – 20 November – Vienna – LX COSAC meeting**

Domagoj Ivan Milošević, Chair of the European Affairs Committee and Davor Ivo Stier, Member of the Committee, participated at the Meeting which was co-chaired by Reinhold Lopatka Chair of the Standing Sub-Committee on EU Affairs of the Austrian National Council and Christian Buchmann, the Chair of the Committee on EU Affairs of the Austrian Federal Council.

The representatives of the European Affairs Committees of the European Union Member States, the European Parliament and the National Parliaments of the candidate countries, potential candidates and special guests discussed the state of play of the Austrian Presidency of the Council the EU, Brexit, climate policy and Energy Union, as well as a transparent European Union closer to its citizens. Topics dominating all debates were Brexit and migration, the biggest challenges the Union is currently facing.

In the margins of the COSAC meeting, Domagoj Ivan Milošević, Chair of the European Affairs Committee and Markus Töns, Vice-Chair of the Committee of European Affairs in the German Bundestag, met with Mairead McGuinness, First Vice-President of the European Parliament. Milošević and Töns underlined the importance of adopting the European Parliament's calendar for 2020 before dissolving the EP for the European elections, since the calendar of the European Parliament is important for planning the parliamentary dimension of the presidency of the Council of the European Union. McGuinness has expressed willingness to convey the common Croatian-German request to the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament.

The Croatian European Affairs Committee will host, among other events, two COSAC meetings in the first half of 2020.



LX COSAC meeting was concluded by adoption of the Contributions and Conclusions, final documents that translate COSAC's views on the topics of the meeting to the institutions of the European Union. The Delegation of the European Affairs Committee has amended the COSAC Contribution text by including the reference to enlargement of Schengen Area as an important factor in the protection of the EU's external borders, which is Croatian strategic priority. The proposal of the Croatian parliamentary delegation was also accepted in the part of the Contribution dedicated to digitalization of the EU, calling for the development of the regulatory framework in line with rapid technological progress.

The COSAC meeting in Vienna was the last in the parliamentary dimension of the Austrian presidency of the Council of the EU. On 1 January 2019, Romania will take over as the first state of the upcoming Trio presidency (Romania, Finland and Croatia). The meeting of the COSAC chairs will take place in Bucharest on 20 and 21 January 2019.

**19 – 20 November – Bruxelles** – Interparliamentary Committee Meeting “European Cultural Heritage” hosted by Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament

**20 November – Bruxelles** - Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on 'Human rights and external actions of the EU and Member States' hosted by Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) of the European Parliament

**22 – 23 November – Zagreb**- Interparliamentary Conference “The Role of Parliaments in Shaping the Future of Food and Farming” hosted by Agriculture Committee of the Croatian Parliament

**22 – 23 November – Tallinn** – IPEX Correspondents meeting

**27 November – Bruxelles** - Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the Empowering Parliaments and enforcing citizen's rights in the implementation and application of Union law co-hosted by the European Parliament Legal Affairs Committee (JURI) and Petition Committee (PETI)

