BULLETIN

European Affairs in the Croatian Parliament

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

Lead candidates for the European Commission presidency

The lead candidate (*Spitzenkandidat*) process, first used in the 2014 European elections, gives European citizens a say on candidates for EU Commission President.

Based on the results of the European elections, one of the lead candidates will be elected President of the Commission by the European Parliament, after being formally proposed by heads of state or government, who will take account of the outcome of the European elections.

This was the case for the first time in 2014, when the European People's Party's lead candidate Jean-Claude Juncker was appointed Commission President. Ahead of the 2014 elections, five European political parties had named their "lead candidates".

A European political party is one that operates at European level and comprises national parties with elected parliamentarians in at least a quarter of the member states. New funding rules for European political parties and foundations were approved in April 2018.

Lead candidates

The European People's Party (EPP) elected **Manfred Weber** (CSU, Germany) as its lead candidate for the European elections on 8 November 2018, at the Helsinki party congress.

The lead candidate of the Party of European Socialists (PES), **Frans Timmermans**, was nominated by the members' congress in Lisbon on 7-8 December 2018.

Jan Zahradil (ODS, Czech Republic) was designated as the lead candidate of the Reformists Alliance of Europe (ACRE) – ECR group for his party on 14 November.

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) party nominated its team of seven lead candidates (Team Europe) for the European elections: **Margrethe Vestager** (Radikale Venstre, Denmark), **Nicola Beer** (FDP, Germany), **Emma Bonino** (Più Europa, Italy), **Violeta Bulc**, (SMC, Slovenia), **Katalin Cseh**, (Momentum Mozgalom, Hungary), **Luis Garicano** (Ciudadanos, Spain), **Guy Verhofstadt** (Open VLD, Belgium).

European Green Party (EGP) nominated **Ska Keller** and **Bas Eickhout** as their two lead candidates for the European elections at its 23-25 November congress in Berlin.

The European Free Alliance (EFA) has appointed **Oriol Junqueras** (ERC, Spain) as its lead candidate for the European elections in the EFA General Assembly in Brussels on 7 March 2019.

The Party of the European Left has elected **Nico Cué** and **Violeta Tomič**, as its lead candidates.

Presidential Debate on 15 May

The Presidential Debate – EU elections 2019 is organised by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and will be hosted by Parliament in the Brussels chamber on 15 May. It will start at 21.00 (CET) and will be broadcast by Eurovision via the EBU's network of European broadcasters. Read the Media advisory for journalists wishing to attend the debate.

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 2019.

Monitoring the work of the Government in the European Union institutions

European Council

In November, Prime Minister of the Government 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 are adopted on 21 November 2018.

Council

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

- 3684 Foreign Affairs Council
- 3685 General Affairs Council
- 3686 Agriculture and Fisheries Council

Application of EU law

In April 2019, the Croatian Parliament enacted 3 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 April 2019, EU institutions forwarded to the Croatian Parliament 45 documents: 25 draft laws, 20 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 April 2019 the Croatian Parliament representatives participated in the following meetings:

1 April – Bruxelles – Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on "Current challenges for EU Foreign and Security policy"

Chair of the Foreign Policy Committee, Miro Kovač participated in an interparliamentary meeting organized by European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) in order to exchange views on the future of the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy, Brexit, future of enlargement policy and European neighbourhood policy.

The meeting brought together representatives from 20 EU Member States and the European Parliament to exchange views on strengthening the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, as well as the European Commission's proposal to move from unanimity to qualified majority voting in certain areas of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy – human rights, effective sanctions and civilian security and defence missions.

The participants of the meeting discussed, together with the European Chief Negotiator for the United Kingdom Exiting the European Union, Michel Barnier future relations between the European Union and the United Kingdom after Brexit, and with the European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations Commissioner, Johannes Hahn the future of EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy. Annual report on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy was also presented during the meeting.

2 April – Bucharest – Interparliamentary Conference on the Future of EU

Chair Domagoj Ivan Milošević and members of the European Affairs Committee Joško Klisović and Davor Ivo Stier took part in the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the Future of EU. The Conference represents a parliamentary contribution to the EU Summit addressing the same topic which will be held on Europe Day, May 9, in Sibiu.

The participants discussed policies of the future, the society of the future, the economy of the future and the European neighbourhood and highlighted that national parliaments, as citizens' representatives, should set the course of the discussions on the future of the European Union.

At the end of the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the Future of EU, the participants adopted a Declaration, which among other things emphasizes the importance of regaining the citizens' trust in the European project and the responsibility that the citizens' elected representatives have in that respect. The Declaration also states that the power of the European Union's stands in its transformative power, both internally and at the global stage.

8 – 9 April – Vienna – EU Speakers Conference

The Conference brings together parliament speakers of the EU member states, the European Parliament, EU candidate countries, as well as parliament presidents from Western Balkan countries -- candidates for EU membership -- as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina which does not have candidate status but was invited as a special guest. The Conference is organised as part of Austria's EU presidency.

Croatian Parliament Speaker Gordan Jandroković said in a debate on the challenges of elections for the European Parliament, set for May, that the elections provided an opportunity to respond appropriately to current crises such as Brexit, sustainable development and security threats.

The EU must respond to such threats by being more active on the international scene and by promoting the principles of unity, responsibility and partnership in its structures, said Jandrokovic. He warned that the existing challenges had affected citizens' trust in the European project, creating room for Euro-scepticism. The coming elections for the European Parliament will show if we have managed to establish an open dialogue with citizens and fulfill their expectations and needs, Jandroković said, adding that it was necessary to reassure citizens that the EU was not only a market but a project of peace, security and freedom. He called on EU members to respond resolutely to disinformation campaigns in order to make the elections free and ensure the highest possible turnout.

Bundestag President Wolfgang Schaeuble warned that 2019 could be a watershed year for the EU, which, he said, had to show that it was capable of overcoming problems. He said the latest surveys showed that 72% of EU citizens viewed the EU positively while two-thirds believed that they benefited from the EU. Results as good as those were not recorded since 2003, however, the question now is whether EU bodies are able to deal with problems, the German official said. He warned that institutions such as the European Parliament were not accepted sufficiently well and that big promises had not yielded results.

Gerard Larcher, President of the French Senate, said that "we have to redefine Europe and assess its efficiency." "Our citizens want an EU that will primarily protect them," Larcher said, adding that it was therefore necessary to reform the Dublin and Schengen agreements as well as the European asylum policy.

Slovenian Parliament Speaker Dejan Zidan warned that the EU had to realise that Brexit was also its own failure which showed what populism and false promises could result in. "We firmly believe in the EU and will be its committed members," said Zidan.