

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

Work begins on the Conference on the Future of Europe

The Conference on the Future of Europe is a citizen-led series of debates and discussions that will enable people from across Europe to share their ideas and help shape our common future.

The Conference is the first of its kind: as a major pan-European democratic exercise, it offers a new public forum for an open, inclusive, and transparent debate with citizens around a number of key priorities and challenges.

The Conference aims to reflect our diversity, and to bring Europe beyond its capital cities, reaching every corner of the EU, strengthening the link between Europeans and the institutions that serve them. It does so through a multitude of Conference-events and debates organised across the EU, as well as through an interactive multilingual digital platform. Young people in particular are encouraged to take part and share their ideas. European, national, regional and local authorities, as well as civil society and other organisations can also organise events to involve as many people as possible.

Just two weeks after the [Joint Declaration](#) on the Conference on the Future of Europe was signed in Brussels by the European Parliament President, David Sassoli, Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council, and by the Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the Executive Board of the Conference on the Future of Europe held its constitutive meeting on **24 March 2021** in Brussels.

The Executive Board is composed of representatives from the three institutions (European Parliament, Council and Commission), on equal footing. The Executive Board oversees the work, process and organisation of the Conference.

At this first meeting, the Executive Board agreed on a series of essential items needed to get the Conference started. They took the first steps to ensure that citizens can soon start to contribute to the Conference without delay, in particular on the multilingual Digital Platform, including the Charter for citizen's participation and the visual identity. The Board also held an exchange of views on its internal working methods.

The Executive Board also discussed the possibility of a formal event on 9 May in Strasbourg as well as to hold the first Conference Plenary on 10 May, depending on the public health conditions (or subject to restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

Representatives from COSAC, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and social partners were also invited as observers to this meeting.

The Digital Platform will be launched on 19 April.



Activities of the Croatian Parliament in the Decision-Making Process

Activities of the parliamentary committees

European Affairs Committee

14th session held on 9 March 2021

After receiving the notifications from the working bodies, the Committee issued the Work Program for Considering the Position of the Republic of Croatia for 2021.

15th session held on 23 March 2021

Committee discussed [European documents](#) in accordance with the [Work Programme for the Consideration of the Positions of the Republic of Croatia for 2020](#).

16th session held on 31 March 2021 (*electronically*)

Committee discussed [European documents](#) in accordance with the [Work Programme for the Consideration of the Positions of the Republic of Croatia for 2020](#).

European Affairs Committee has forwarded 3 [European documents](#) to relevant committees for the consideration of the Positions of the Republic of Croatia for 2021.

Other committees

Other parliamentary committees discussed [European documents](#) in accordance with the [Work Programme for the Consideration of the Positions of the Republic of Croatia for 2020](#).

Monitoring the work of the Government in the European Union institutions

Council

The Croatian Government submitted to the relevant parliamentary committees its positions for 9 Council meetings held in March 2021.

Application of EU law

In March 2021, the Croatian Parliament enacted [5 laws](#) in the process of harmonization with 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 March 2021, EU institutions forwarded to the Croatian Parliament [43 documents](#): 26 draft laws and 17 communications and other non-binding documents.



Inter-parliamentary Cooperation in the European Union

Inter-parliamentary 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.

3 - 4 March – videoconference – Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP)

The delegation of the Croatian Parliament, consisting of the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee Gari Cappelli, Chair of the Defence Committee Franko Vidović, Chair of the Domestic Policy and National Security Committee Nikša Vukas as well as the Head of the Delegation of the Croatian Parliament to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly Ante Bačić, participated in the Inter-Parliamentary Videoconference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union, hosted by the Portuguese Assembly of the Republic.

The Inter-Parliamentary Conference was opened and addressed by the President of the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, the Chair of the Committee on National Defence of the Portuguese Parliament Marcos Perestrello and the Chair of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs David McAllister.

At the beginning of the conference, the participants were addressed by the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Jens Stoltenberg, who spoke about cooperation between NATO and the EU and pointed out that NATO and the EU could work even closer on issues such as cybersecurity, resilience and climate change. He also referred to a new era in the future of the transatlantic partnership.

The Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union covered topics dedicated to defence cooperation between the European Union and NATO, as well as the European Union's strategy towards Africa. The participants had the opportunity to discuss the European perception and positioning of the European Union in relation to current issues of the common foreign and security policy with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell i Fontelles.

During the discussion, at the first session dealing with the issues of European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance cooperation and the needs of strategic consideration, Ante Bačić in his address to Stoltenberg commented on the importance of further cooperation between the EU and NATO in the context of further strategic documents which would define future developments in the field of security and defence. - Global competition and growing uncertainties clearly emphasize NATO's role and that is why the Union needs to strengthen its global role and work on defence initiatives to directly contribute to strengthening Euro-Atlantic security as a whole. This has a special value for Croatia, as a member of both organizations, especially considering our immediate neighbourhood - Southeast Europe, said Bačić.

During the second day of the Conference, a discussion was held with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrell i Fontelles, as well as a second session dedicated to the European Union's comprehensive Strategy for Africa. Gari Cappelli, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, emphasized the importance of further efforts and investments in the development of the European Union's relations with the Western Balkans, as well as the importance of continuing to support those countries on their European path since there has been no significant shift within the enlargement policy in the second part of the year 2020. He briefly commented on current events in the Western Balkans, and in that sense asked Borrell questions related to the recent elections in Kosovo, future relations with Serbia, as well as the situation in Southeast Europe, whose stability and progress represent European Union's greatest interest.



4 March – videoconference – Inter-parliamentary Committee Meeting on International Women's Day 2021-Women's empowerment and leadership in COVID-19 times, organised by the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)

On the occasion of the 2021 International Women's Day, the European Parliament Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), in cooperation with the Legislative Dialogue Unit of the Directorate for Relations with national Parliaments, invited Members of national Parliaments of the EU Member States to attend a virtual Interparliamentary Committee Meeting (ICM). Chairwomen of the Gender Equality Committee Marija Selak-Raspudić participated at the meeting.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for gender equality and women's economic empowerment in order to build resilient societies, boost rules of employment, social security and pensions for all women, especially in female dominated sectors, and more generally change models in the provision of care and value of work (including unpaid care work). At the same time, the necessity was confirmed of equal representation of women and men in leadership and the decision-making process when enacting and lifting measures in crises, as well as in all stages of the design, adoption and implementation of recovery plans. This ICM provided a global forum for an exchange of best practices and knowledge sharing. At the same time, it allowed to gain insights into the recent developments in advancing women's empowerment during crises triggered by COVID-19.

11 March – videoconference – Interparliamentary Conference of committees for agriculture organised by the Hungarian Parliament

Marijana Petir, Chairwoman of the Agriculture Committee of the Croatian Parliament, and Committee Members Stipan Šašlin and Ljubomir Kolarek participated in the inter-parliamentary videoconference of committees responsible for agriculture organized by the Hungarian National Assembly within the Twinning Project “Empowerment and further support to the Parliaments of Bosnia and Herzegovina in EU integration tasks”.

The leading partner of the Project's implementing consortium is the Hungarian National Assembly, while the Croatian Parliament and the Austrian Parliament are junior partners. This was the second videoconference in a series of online events planned as part of the Twinning Project. It was attended by Hungarian, Croatian and Austrian parliamentary committees responsible for agriculture, forestry, rural development and water management, as well as line committees of BiH parliaments (BiH Parliamentary Assembly, Republika Srpska National Assembly and the District Brčko Assembly).

The discussion focused on the experiences in preparing and implementing activities in the field of the Common Agricultural Policy in the pre-accession period, the need to harmonize the BiH legislative framework with the *acquis communautaire*, the economic, social, political and institutional adjustment, and the indispensable strategic planning in agricultural policy.

Marijana Petir pointed out that the negotiations in the chapter on agriculture included a large number of mandatory rules. It is therefore important that they are properly applied in the process of harmonization and effectively implemented and supervised by a well capacitated public administration. She pointed out to the need to produce integrated statistics of agricultural holdings at the level of BiH and to build the necessary administrative structures for the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy. She underlined the importance of recognizing the goals and the needs of sectoral groups in agriculture in this process in order to work simultaneously on improving their competitiveness. She also mentioned the advantages of Croatia's EU membership, especially in terms of the support measures approved by the European Commission to help Croatia overcome the crisis caused by the coronavirus outbreak. She said that, on its European path, BiH could count on Croatia's further support and the transfer of recent experiences in the field of the Common Agricultural Policy.



Speaking about the experiences in using European funds at the local level, Stipan Šašlin warned of the importance of conducting trainings on the methods and conditions of using European funds at the regional and local level. He also warned of the need for the primary agricultural producers to receive continuous education, information and training about the importance of the ecological component of agricultural production.

23 March – videoconference – Interparliamentary Conference of committees for economy organised by the Croatian Parliament

Chairman of the Committee on the Economy Žarko Tušek and Committee Member Danica Baričević hosted an inter-parliamentary videoconference on the economic aspects of European integration. The conference was attended by the parliaments of Hungary, Austria and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

This was the third in a series of conferences organized within the framework of the Twinning Project “Empowerment and further support to the Parliaments of Bosnia and Herzegovina in EU integration tasks”, very successfully implemented by a consortium composed of three EU member states parliaments – Hungary, Croatia and Austria.

The meeting discussed the green transition, the European Union's Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans and the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans as a strategic opportunity for growth, as well as a tool for intensifying the process of accession to the European Union. All conference participants agreed that these topics were to impact all segments of our lives in the future and that the “green criteria” represented an opportunity for new economic momentum. The conference underlined the interest in fundamentally transforming the way we produce, consume and live in order to be able to continue using natural resources to our benefit.

Committee Chairman Tušek pointed out that European policies could only be effective if implemented globally and in a coordinated manner. It is especially important that the EU's closest neighbours participate in these policies, he added. He emphasized the European Union's commitment to this topic and to the Western Balkan region, which is reflected in the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans.

Member of the Committee on the Economy Danica Baričević pointed out that Croatia was the only EU member state bordering Bosnia and Herzegovina and that Croatia's strategic interest was to have a stable, secure and prosperous neighbour. She also referred to the Foreign Affairs Council held in Brussels on March 22, 2021, where the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of Croatia Gordan Grlić Radman presented Croatia's initiative on Bosnia and Herzegovina, i.e. the "non-paper" co-signed by Slovenia, Hungary, Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria, all in order to give the political issues of Bosnia and Herzegovina the attention they deserve and to encourage progress in all those areas that are important for the country to achieve candidate status as soon as possible.

In conclusion, Tušek underlined Croatia's strong support to the European path of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the neighbouring country to which it is bound by unbreakable ties. Acquiring candidate status is of the utmost importance for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and meeting the 14 priorities set out in the European Commission's Opinion is the right path to that status. He welcomed all the efforts that Bosnia and Herzegovina is making in this respect and stressed Croatia's readiness to share its experiences and continue to strengthen cooperation in all fields, underlining the particularly great cooperation potential of green policy projects.

29 March – videoconference – Meeting of the Secretaries General of the European Union Parliaments

The Assistant Secretary of the Croatian Parliament Andrea Sever-Koren and the Head of the Office for International and European Affairs Andrea Halambek participated at the meeting that was held within the parliamentary dimension of the German Presidency of the Council of the EU.



The Secretaries-General expressed the view that all of the parliaments had managed to remain operational at all times over the past 14 months. One of the purposes of the meeting, chaired by Dr Ute Rettler, Secretary General of the Bundesrat, and her Bundestag counterpart, Dr Lorenz Müller, was to prepare the ground for the Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments in May.

Inter-parliamentary activities in April 2021

6 April – videoconference – COSAC Chairpersons meeting

7 April – videoconference – COSAC Chairpersons meeting with Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis

13 April – videoconference – Meeting of the Chairman of the European Affairs Committee Domagoj Hajduković with the Chairman of the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs of the Irish Parliament Joe McHugh

13 April – videoconference – Interparliamentary Conference on Covid-19: health impact and social effects organised by the Parliamentary Dimension of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union

22 April – videoconference – Meeting of the European Affairs Committee with the First Vice-President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola

