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Young Members debate European elections #EU2019

On 30 November 2017, young MPs from the EPP political family gathered in Brussels for the **10th Annual Meeting of the EPP Young Members Network** on the invitation of **Esther DE LANGE** MEP, EPP Group Vice President in charge with relations with national parliaments and EPP Young Members Network Coordinator **Tom VANDENKENDELARE** MEP. The topics discussed were EPP Party's preparations for the **2109 European Elections** and the future of EU financing. Besides EPP Group Chair **Manfred WEBER** MEP and EPP Party VP **Dara MURPHY** TD in charge with the election campaign, EPP Secretary General **Antonio LOPEZ ISTURIZ** MEP and **Michael SCHNEIDER** President of the EPP



l-r: Dara MURPHY TD, EPP Party VP in charge with the election campaign; Tom VANDENKENDELARE MEP, EPP Young Members Network Coordinator; Michael SCHNEIDER, President of the EPP Group in the Committee of the Regions; and Antonio LOPEZ ISTURIZ MEP, EPP Secretary General

Group in the Committee of the Regions were among the main speakers on elections. In the second part of the programme EPP rapporteur on Budget, **Siegfried MUREȘAN** MEP gave a fresh insight on the recently voted budget and the **future of EU financing**.



Manfred WEBER MEP, Chairman of the EPP Group, addressing the young members attending the Annual Meeting

Talking about the 2019 EU election campaign, Chairman **Manfred WEBER** MEP underlined the importance of telling people about the successes of the EPP both on EU and national level. We should not forget that people do not vote the past but the future. That's why we need certainty and vision, as the populists are using the uncertainty to create fear. This will be not normal campaign but a crucial one - concluded Chairman Weber.

Dara MURPHY said the EPP is fortunate as we have a very good cooperation between the EPP Party and

Groups in the European Parliament and Committee of the Regions. It is important to engage with people on the ground and to bring a positive narrative for the citizens. It is us and our prudent policies in the Members States in the past years that brought us success. Based on our successes, the EPP has a good story to tell, and we should really make sure this message reaches the citizens. A dynamic social media campaign will also be essential.

Antonio LOPEZ ISTURIZ MEP highlighted the importance of the **Spitzencandidat** process to be repeated in 2019. He underlined that the EP elections are becoming even more politicised than before and that the 2019 European Elections are of extreme importance. He informed about the **EPP Congress** in 2018 in November that will choose the Spitzencandidat but that in the meanwhile we, as EPP should concentrate on what we want and to create the EPP narrative, the EPP story. He stressed that EPP is more united than ever and that the real enemy is the populist trend.

Michael SCHNEIDER said in 2014 EPP Group in the Committee of the Regions (CoR) had an important role in the European elections campaign. EPP Group in the CoR is planning more for the 2019 campaign. EPP CoR organised more than 150 citizens' dialogue events this will continue in the future as well. Reaching citizens directly is extremely important element of a successful campaign.

Siegfried MUREȘAN MEP, rapporteur of the budget dossier - gave an overview on the newly voted EU budget and the future of EU financing. He informed the



Family photo at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the YMN



Tom VANDENKENDELARE MEP, Coordinator of the EPP Young Members Network

EPP could successfully reach additional appropriations for the EPP priorities such as sustainable growth, jobs, in particular youth employment and security.

Finally, **Tom VANDENKENDELARE** MEP, EPP Young Members Network Coordinator launched the dates for the **2018 Erasmus for young MPs programme**:

- 29 January - 1 February
- 26 February - 1 March
- 5 - 8 March
- 9 - 12 April
- 30 April - 3 May
- 4 - 7 June
- 25 - 28 June
- 24 - 27 September
- 15 - 18 October
- 5 - 8 November
- 26 - 29 November
- 3 - 6 December

The **Young MP Erasmus Programme** offers MPs from EPP sister-parties across the EU the opportunity to gain an insider view of the functioning of the European Parliament. Participants are invited to Brussels for one week, where they will follow a young MEP in his or her work. In doing so, they will gain an in-depth understanding of European decision-making, meet with influencers and decisionmakers, voters and journalists, and participate in any meetings that are relevant to their work.

COSAC: Brexit, EU-unity and Transparency

Members of the European and national Parliaments gathered in Tallinn between **26 and 28 November for LVIII COSAC**. Among the topics discussed there were the future of the European Union, the Digital Single Market, the Security Union, and migration. The EPP Group was represented by **Danuta HÜBNER** MEP, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, and **Tunne KELAM** MEP, Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Michel BARNIER, Chief Negotiator of the Task Force for the Preparation and Conduct of the Negotiations with the United Kingdom under Article 50 TEU, said that Europe needs a new momentum in the democratic debate, with national Parliaments playing a key role. The unity in Europe should extend beyond the Brexit issue, promoting a positive political agenda for challenges coming from both inside and outside the Union, including strengthening the Eurozone, deepening the Banking Union, developing the European Civil Protection Force, promoting a real Common European Foreign and Defence Policy etc. With the UK it is important to build a solid partnership, but this aim depends on three elements: striking an agreement on the orderly withdrawal of the UK, finding a commonly agreed solution on the situation of the border with Ireland, and having the UK respecting its commitments for the 2014-2020 period.



Michel BARNIER, Chief Brexit Negotiator and Danuta HÜBNER MEP, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs

Danuta HÜBNER MEP, Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, said that a good future for Europe will come by political cohesion and unity. The EU remains a Union of values and common interests, and Brexit will leave behind a more determined and agile UE. Nevertheless, the Union should look at the

how it may improve its performance, transparency, communication with citizens and between Members States. Moreover, the Union should not be focused only on its short-term challenges, but look forward to the generations to come.

For **Gunther KRICHBAUM** MP (CDU/CSU, DE), Chairman of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union, German Bundestag, digital development and digitalization of the public sector are among the key elements for improved economic results. He said that while these huge gains generated by the digital sector could be further invested in transport infrastructure, schools, hospitals etc., particular attention should be given to data protection.



Gunther KRICHBAUM MP, Chairman of the Committee on the Affairs of the European Union, German Bundestag

Interparliamentary Committee Meeting: **The Future of Cohesion Policy post 2020**

On 22 November, the **REGI Committee** in the European Parliament hosted an **interparliamentary committee meeting** with representatives of national Parliaments to discuss the opportunities, the challenges and the next steps to be taken in relation to “**The Future of Cohesion Policy post 2020**”.

Ivelina VASSILEVA MP (GERB, BG), Chair of the Committee on Environment and Water in the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, said that one of the reasons why Bulgarians citizens remain among top euro-optimists relates to the Cohesion Policy and this policy will be core to the Bulgarian presidency of the Council. “In the absence of this funding, Bulgaria’s GDP 10 years after it joined the EU would have been 10% lower and more than 350 000 job would not have been created.”



Lambert van NISTELROOIJ MEP, EPP Coordinator for the Committee on Regional Development

Lambert van NISTELROOIJ MEP (NL), EPP Coordinator for the Committee on Regional Development, said he envisages a modernisation of the policy and not a radical change, with a focus on output and not on throughput. This improvement should also consider better communication and multi-level governance.

Joachim ZELLER MEP (DE), Vice-chair of the Committee on Regional Development, added that better implementation of European policies involved avoiding gold-plating at national level.

Mónika DUNAI MP (FIDESZ, HU), Member of the Committee on European Affairs in the Hungarian National Assembly, said that for the post-2020 period the level of available founding and the access to it should be maintained. “The EU should not become synonym to conditionality’s applied to payment” and the co-financing rate should be maintained as it is today.

Fernando RUAS MEP (PT), Member of the Committee on Regional Development and rapporteur on “cohesion policy and the review of the Europe 2020 strategy”, said that given its economic, territorial, and social characteristics, the Cohesion Policy remains EU’s the main investment tool. It is important to ensure that at Member States level, the funds reach the regions which need them the most.

Interparliamentary Committee Meeting: **Sustainable development goals a priority for Europe**

The **European Consensus on Development** was signed by the Presidents of European Commission, European Council and European Parliament and of

the Member States. The deal includes one orientation for all countries and represents a common framework, which applies at European level and at level of bilateral cooperation of member States as well. The aim set to be achieved until 2030 is that every country should be able to allocate to the official development 0.7% of GDP funds.

At the **inter-parliamentary committee meeting held in Brussels on 21 November** on the implementation of the European Consensus on Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, **Bogdan WENTA** MEP (PL), EPP co-rapporteur for the EP report on the European Consensus on Development, explained that now we have seventeen SDGs and this new approach to the development policy is dictated by the need to address the international challenges. The consensus changed the framework of cooperation for the European Union, setting up new priorities to reduce poverty, to increase sustainable development, to eliminate inequalities, to address social, economic and environmental issues and many other topics linked to demographic challenges.

Interparliamentary Committee Meeting: **Violence against woman a global challenge**

Greio Institute is the monitoring organism of the Istanbul Convention, directly linked to the national institutions in order to harmonise laws, policies and actions with the Convention's provisions. They underlined the importance of exchanging information in order to have tools to measure the violence, to reshape member States policies, adjusting them to the needs, and to monitor the phenomenon.

The Istanbul Convention in the Member States: ratification and monitoring

On 21 November, at the **inter-parliamentary committee meeting** organized in Brussels on "The Istanbul Convention: combating violence against women at national and EU level", **Barbara MATERA** MEP (IT), thanked Greio's work as it was essential for understanding whether Convention's provisions are correctly implemented in every country. The EPP Group highlights the importance to ratify the deal in order to support the Member States in the fight against the violence towards women.

The path to the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention

European Union's signature of the Istanbul Convention is a positive message towards the cancellation of every type of discrimination. The Convention is an essential legal tool both to prevent the violence and to protect the victims.



Anna Maria CORAZZA BILDT MEP, Member of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

Anna Maria CORAZZA BILDT MEP (SE), EPP co-rapporteur on the EU accession to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence, said that the issue of the violence against women is still too common in Europe.

For this reason, the EU has to ratify the Istanbul Convention as well, with the aim of:

- o strengthening our common weapons;
- o having a coherent legal framework;
- o having more chance to act.

The EPP Party wants to continue its work against the violence towards women, pushing towards the ratification of the Convention from every member state.

Interparliamentary Committee Meeting: **EU perspective remains crucial for candidate countries**

MEPs and national MPs alike reconfirmed their univocal commitment to future enlargement as a key foreign policy priority, on the occasion of the **inter-parliamentary committee meeting organized by the EP's Committee on Foreign affairs on the EU accession process of the Western Balkans: a regional perspective**.

Together with the DG NEAR and the EEAS, they called for more focus on rule of law reforms and civil society support as prerequisites for helping to meet membership criteria. Speakers agreed that 2018 is a crucial year for the Western Balkans with the EU WB Strategy, expected in February, the next enlargement reports in April, the Sofia “Balkan Summit” (May 17, 2018) and London “Berlin Process Summit” in July next year. They urged to defend against the negative influence in the region of certain “external actors” who would fill in the vacuum if EU does not assume its role in the region, while good neighbourly relations and visa liberalisation for Kosovo were the recurring themes of the debate.

Hristo GADZHEV MP, National Assembly of Bulgaria, Foreign Affairs Committee, on behalf of the incoming Presidency of the Council indicated the western Balkans are one of the priorities. They have to respect rule of law and maintain good neighbourly relations. WDE should send a strong signal, a strong signal for European integration of the region.

Eduard KUKAN MEP, Chair of the AFET Working Group on Western Balkans and Co-Chair the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC), said that the integration process is

Next meetings

- Meeting of the Chairpersons of COSAC, Sofia, 21-22 January
- ICM on The European Agenda on Migration - What about Legal Avenues and Integration?, Brussels, 24 January



Eduard KUKAN MEP, Chair of the AFET Working Group on Western Balkans and Co-Chair the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC)

gaining a new momentum, which will hopefully lead to new promising developments. Bulgaria seems seriously to move integration process forward and we expect more news to reach us in the future.

Zsolt CSENGER-ZALÁN MP (Fidesz, Hungary) considered a moral duty to include the Western Balkans in the EU. Local people have done huge sacrifices. Also in our interest, it also serves our safety. Slowdown of the integration process creates a vacuum in the area. If we slow down others will step in.

- ICM on The UN Global Compacts on refugees and migrants: the role of Parliaments, Brussels, 27 February
- Young Members Network meeting on agriculture and budget, Brussels, 5 March
- EPP European Affairs Network, Brussels, 5 March



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