

# 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

## Slovenian presidency of the Council of the European Union 1 July – 31 December 2021

This is the second time that Slovenia will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Slovenia will round off the work of the current Trio, which also includes Germany and Portugal, and with its initiatives and activities, pave the way for the next Trio to take over. Most of discussions connected to [the Conference on the Future of Europe](#) will take place under the Slovenian Presidency.

With this in mind, Slovenia has prepared its [six-month programme of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union](#). The programme is based on [the EU's Strategic Agenda for 2019–2024](#) and is consistent with [the 18-month programme](#) of the Council, which covers the period of the Trio Presidency. The programme details Slovenia's main priorities and guidelines for its activities during the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU from 1 July to 31 December 2021.

Slovenia's six-month programme of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union is based on four priorities. Under the slogan "Together. Resilient. Europe.", Slovenia will strive to facilitate the EU's recovery and reinforce its resilience, reflect on the future of Europe, strengthen the rule of law and European values, and increase security and stability in the European neighbourhood.

### The resilience, recovery and strategic autonomy of the European Union

The current large-scale health emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic affects all member states, which are unable to appropriately respond on their own, and, therefore, requires a collective response at the EU level. That is why Slovenia has highlighted the **strengthening the resilience of the European Union** as one of its main priorities.

To enhance the role of the EU and equip it with the appropriate tools to protect the health of European citizens, the Slovenian Presidency will focus, in particular, on building a **European Health Union**. Slovenia wants to strengthen **the strategic autonomy of the EU** and improve its capacity to ensure the availability of medicinal products and medical devices, and facilitate their research, development and production. Slovenia supports the ambitious proposal to establish a Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (**HERA**).

The Slovenian Presidency would like to encourage further reflection on the **lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic** in all relevant areas of the EU's activity and ensure that it is prepared to deal with different challenges.

The COVID-19 pandemic, during which life and work have moved online, has increased our vulnerability to cyberattacks. That is why Slovenia will focus on strengthening **European cyber resilience**. More needs to be done in order for us to be better prepared and to be able to respond in a coordinated manner to potential large-scale cyberattacks.



At the same time, Slovenia must ensure a lasting recovery in all sectors of the economy and public life. To mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency will be the effective implementation of the **Next Generation EU** instrument and the **Recovery and Resilience Facility**, with the aim of facilitating the adoption of national recovery plans as soon as possible. It is Slovenian wish to make the most of the implementation of these two instruments to accelerate the **green and digital transition**, which will create jobs, strengthen the resilience of our societies and ensure the health of our environment.

The European Union is committed to the objective of achieving a climate-neutral EU by 2050 and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. This also provides guidelines for the Slovenian Presidency, which will strive for the transposition of the set objectives into binding European legislation. The **COP26** conference in Glasgow will provide an additional opportunity for the EU to show its determination and convince the rest of the world that we must take action now.

Digital transformation was one of the EU's objectives even before the pandemic, an event that has only further accelerated this process. Digital technologies have become essential for working, doing business, learning, socialising and accessing everything from health services to culture. Since the applicable legislation no longer satisfactorily addresses current challenges, progress needs to be made on **digital services and markets** in order for the EU to set new standards in the use of digital platforms.

The Slovenian Presidency will strive for the digital sovereignty of Europe and the ethical use and development of **artificial intelligence**, which, in connection with the availability of big data, is being identified as one of the key technologies of the future.

### **Conference on the Future of Europe**

In view of the many challenges the EU has faced in recent years, there is a need, now more than ever, for a comprehensive debate on our common future. The Conference on the Future of Europe officially began on 9 May 2021 and is expected to conclude in the spring of 2022. Its purpose is to provide a forum for a Europe-wide debate on what the EU should look like in the future to meet the expectations of its citizens.

At the EU level, discussions will take place in the form of plenary meetings and citizens' forums, and via a digital platform that is accessible to all. Special attention will be devoted to this process, conducted in close cooperation with the three main EU institutions, and to ensuring that the Council of the EU and the member states have an appropriate role in it. In this context, discussions will also be held in Slovenia about the aspects of life in Europe, both today and in the future.

### **A union of the European way of life, the rule of law and equal criteria for all**

Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union stipulates that the European Union is founded on common values that are the foundation of our societies and our common identity. Slovenia will focus our efforts on strengthening **the rule of law as one of common European values**.

On the basis of the European Commission's annual report, the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU will lead an annual dialogue on the situation in relation to the rule of law in the European Union and in individual member states. Aim is to promote a culture of the rule of law throughout the EU and, through inclusive debate, enable member states to learn from each other's experiences. At the same time, we would like to show how the rule of law can be further strengthened in full respect of national constitutional systems and traditions.

Slovenia will also draw attention to the need to counter negative **demographic trends** in the EU.



## **A credible and secure European Union, capable of ensuring security and stability in its neighbourhood**

The Slovenian Presidency, supporting the work of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, will take all the necessary steps to strengthen **transatlantic relations**. Close cooperation with the United States and NATO based on common principles, values and interests is the best guarantee for strengthening the position of the EU in the international community and for facilitating the pursuit of common interests by the member states.

Special attention will be devoted to the **Western Balkan** countries, their future in Europe and the credible continuation of the EU enlargement process. We will strive for the economic recovery of countries in the region. To ensure sustainable development, Slovenia want to work with them to make the green and digital transition a reality, and improve connectivity within the region and with the European Union. The Slovenian Presidency will focus on improving the region's resilience, including its cyber resilience. The guiding principle behind our efforts will be to build a positive future for young people. To this end, Slovenia will host the **EU–Western Balkans Summit** in the autumn.

During its presidency, Slovenia will also put the strengthening of the security of the EU at the centre of its efforts. In this context, the Schengen regime is of paramount importance. The Slovenian Presidency will focus on building a stronger, more robust **Schengen area** that is prepared for the challenges ahead and on its full functioning.

With a view to effectively managing migration pressures, Slovenia will strive to make progress in the negotiations on the **New Pact on Migration and Asylum** and strengthen the role of the European Union in the external dimension of migration.

### **Calendar of interparliamentary meetings organised during the Slovenian Presidency**

**19 July** – COSAC Chairpersons Meeting

**8 – 9 September** – Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Common Security and Defence Policy

**28 September** – Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union

**25 – 26 October** – 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol)

**28 – 30 November** – LXVI COSAC Plenary Meeting

**30 November** – Interparliamentary Committee meeting on the Evaluation of Eurojust's activities

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

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

European Affairs Committee

**20<sup>th</sup> session** held on 25 May 2021

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



## Other committees

### **EU Funds Days**

As part of the [EU Funds Days in the Croatian Parliament](#), the following thematic sessions were held on 29 and 30 June:

[Joint session](#) of the Committee on Regional Development and European Union funds and the Committee on European Affairs on the topic: Presentation of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027

[Joint session](#) of the Committee on European Affairs and the Committee on Internal Policy and National Security on the topic: Programming of EU funds under shared management for the implementation of EU security policy

[Joint session](#) of the Committee on Health and Social Policy and the Committee on Regional Development and European Union Funds and members of the Committee on Family, Youth and Sports and members of the Committee on Labour, Retirement System and Social Partnership: Operational Program Efficient Human Resources 2021-2027

[Joint session](#) of the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on European Affairs on the topic: Strategic Plan of the Common Agricultural Policy of the Republic of Croatia and the Operational Program for Fisheries and Aquaculture of the Republic of Croatia for the period 2021-2027

[Joint session](#) of the Committee on Regional Development and European Union on the topic: Presentation of the Operational Program Competitiveness and Cohesion 2021-2027, the Integrated Territorial Program 2021-2027 and cross-border and transnational programs.

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

### Council

The Croatian Government submitted to the relevant parliamentary committees its positions for 10 Council meetings held in June 2021.

## **Application of EU law**

In June 2021, the Croatian Parliament enacted [2 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 June 2021, EU institutions forwarded to the Croatian Parliament [67 documents](#): 23 draft laws and 44 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.

### **14 June – videoconference – The Second High-level Interparliamentary Conference on Migration and Asylum in Europe**

The Second High-level Interparliamentary Conference on Migration and Asylum in Europe was held under the joint auspices of the European Parliament and of the Portuguese Parliament and was organised in cooperation with the German and Slovenian Parliaments.

Members of Croatian Parliament Davor Ivo Stier and Josip Šarić participated at the Conference.

The aim of the second edition of the Conference was to promote a broad dialogue on the management of migration in Europe, deepening the inter-parliamentary process launched in November 2020, when the first edition of the event took place. The meeting was designed to help define comprehensive and sustainable approaches to migration challenges, which were exacerbated by the pandemic.

The conference brought together political leaders, policymakers and also practitioners. A particular focus was placed on the external dimension of asylum and migration policies: how to build comprehensive partnerships with countries of origin and transit, tackling root causes of migration, and promoting a stable socio-economic environment in third countries

### **16 June – videoconference – Conference on Rural Development, Agriculture and Territorial Cohesion organised by Parliamentary dimension of the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union**

Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Regional Development and European Union funds Marko Pavić and Marin Lerotić and Chairwoman and Deputy Chairwoman of the Agriculture Committee Marijana Petir and Ružica Vukovac actively participated at the Conference.

The President of the *Assembleia da República*, Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues presided over the opening session. The sessions were moderated by the Chair of the Committee on Agriculture and the Sea, Pedro do Carmo.

In Session I, dedicated to the exploration of the relations between Territorial Cohesion and Rural Development, the Alqueva multi-purpose venture was presented as a case study - a project that seeks to mitigate the water crisis that historically characterises the Alentejo territory, through the establishment of irrigation structures, the development of tourism projects and the creation of socioeconomic dynamics capable of combating depopulation of the territory and, in short, rural abandonment.

The importance of reflecting on rural development beyond agricultural policy was also stressed, taking note of the vectors of the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas to be presented by the European Commission on 30 June: greater accessibility to public services; greater connectivity - digital, but also in the field of transport - and the social, climatic and environmental sustainability of rural development.

Finally, the centrality of a re-foundation of the decision-making processes was also addressed, one that is capable of collecting the contributions of civil society and, above all, committed to involving local decision-makers in the definition of regional development strategies.

Session II was devoted to the new Common Agricultural Policy. Taking stock of the state of play of the ongoing negotiations, the debate focused on the responses that are required of the new CAP, given the challenges of climate transition and the macroeconomic effects of the pandemic crisis, but also those of the ageing of European farmers and the economic viability of agriculture.



## **19 June – Strasbourg/videoconference – Plenary meeting of the Conference of Future of Europe**

Following opening statements by the Co-Chairs of the [Executive Board](#), representatives – including citizens – discussed the purpose and expectations of the Conference, comprising the European Citizens' Panels, the National Panels and events, and the [Multilingual Digital Platform](#).

The second part focused on more procedural matters including the [calendar](#) of the Conference Plenaries, the European Citizens' Panels and the European Citizens' Event.

Chairman of the Foreign Policy Committee Gari Capelli, Chairman of the European Affairs Committee Domagoj hajduković, Chairman of the Committee on Regional Development and European Union funds Marko Pavić Deputy Chairwoman of the Agriculture Committee Ružica Vukovac

The European Citizens' Panels will convene in September and October to prepare their input to future plenary debates, including a set of recommendations for the Union to follow-up on, based on citizens' contributions collected via the Platform. The Conference is committed to giving maximum space to young people and in this vein, preparations for the European Youth Event organised by the European Parliament on 8-9 October will also continue. The next Plenary session is scheduled for 22-23 October.

Citizens across Europe can already take part in the Conference through the Multilingual Digital Platform, available in all 24 official EU languages.

### **Inter-parliamentary activities in July 2021**

**19 July 2021** – videoconference – COSAC Chairpersons Meeting

