



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

Future of Europe

Although calls for reform of the EU have increased in recent years, in particular as a consequence of the various challenges the EU has faced, the UK's vote in June 2016 on its EU membership has accelerated this process. In this context, the main EU institutions have all contributed to the debate, while individual Member States or groups of Member States have also brought forward initiatives.

One first visible effect was the establishment of the practice of the EU-27 leaders meeting autonomously informally, in parallel with the European Council. The idea was that the EU-27 leaders would concentrate on the future of the EU. Discussions of the EU-27 leaders culminating in the [Rome declaration](#) of 25 March 2017. The Rome declaration expressed a vision for the EU for the next ten years, organised around four main priorities: a safe and secure Europe, a prosperous and sustainable Europe, a social Europe, and a stronger Europe on the global scene. To mark its all-encompassing nature, the Rome declaration was signed by the EU-27 leaders and by the Presidents of the European Parliament and the European Commission.

From Jean-Claude Juncker's [State of the Union address](#) on 14 September 2016 to the [White Paper on the future of Europe](#) of 1 March 2017, the Commission has sought to stimulate debate on the future of the EU. The White paper is being complemented by a number of [reflection papers](#) to be issued gradually up to June 2017, on the [social dimension of Europe](#), [harnessing globalisation](#), [deepening the economic and monetary union](#), [the future of European defence](#) and [the future of EU finances](#).

The European Parliament has actively contributed to discussions on the future of the EU, in particular through resolutions on [‘Improving the functioning of the European Union building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty’](#) [‘Possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union’](#) and [‘Budgetary capacity for the euro area’](#).

The EP has decided to invite all EU heads of state and government to the EP to discuss the future of Europe in open debates. The EP approaches these debates with an open mind and open spirit, and the discussions on the future of Europe will conclude on May 9, 2019 when an informal meeting of EU leaders will take place in Sibiu, Romania. The series started with the visit of the Prime Minister of Ireland.

Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenković was the second EU leader to [debate](#) the future of Europe with MEPs. Mr Plenković said “Our path needs to lead forwards, not backwards. Croatia has entered the European Union to build and develop the European project together with our partners, to build a future based on equality - equality of states, of citizens and of opportunities.” Laying out his vision for the future of Europe, the Prime Minister stressed that solidarity must remain “one of the cornerstones of our actions” and that a united Europe is key, “because we can only move ahead if we are together.”



Member States have also contributed to the debate on the future of Europe. The European Affairs Committee of the Croatian Parliament has, on its 14th session held on April 7, 2017, discussed the White Paper on the Future of Europe. After the discussion, the Committee has adopted [Conclusions](#), which have been sent to the European Commission on April 21, 2017, within the political dialogue framework. In its Conclusions, the Committee emphasizes on the special role and responsibility of the national parliaments and governments in bringing the Union closer to the citizens.

Activities of the Croatian Parliament in the Decision-Making Process

Activities of the parliamentary committees

European Affairs Committee discussed [European documents](#) in accordance with the [Work Programme for the Consideration of the Positions of the Republic of Croatia for 2017](#) on its 27th session on 16 February 2018.

Monitoring the work of the Government in the European Union institutions

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

- 3599 General Affairs Council;
- 3600 General Affairs Council (art. 50);
- 3598 Foreign Affairs Council;
- 3897 Economic and Financial Affairs Council;
- 3596 Agriculture and Fisheries Council;
- 3595 Education, Youth, Culture and Sport

Application of EU law

In February 2018, the Croatian Parliament enacted [9 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 February 2018, EU institutions forwarded to the Croatian Parliament [44 documents](#): 19 draft laws, 25 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 February 2018, the Croatian Parliament representatives participated in the following meetings:

13 February – Zagreb - Committee on European Affairs, Committee on the Economy, and the Committee on Information, Computerization and Media meets with European Commission Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, Andrus Ansip

Zagreb - The European Commission Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, Andrus Ansip, said in the Croatian Parliament that the digital single market was very important for Europe's future. Ansip met with members of the Committee on European Affairs, the Committee on the Economy, the Committee on Information, Computerisation and Media to inform them about the current status and future plans for the development of the digital single market. Ansip said that the digital single market was very important for the European future. Currently we have 28 small fragmented markets, and unless we achieve a single market, we will face economic damage in competition with large countries such as the United States, China or Japan, as well as emigration of young people and startups to more advanced countries outside Europe, he added. He noted that it was almost impossible for small and medium businesses and startups to understand 28 different legislations, and that such an economic environment was too expensive for them. The chairman of the Committee on European Affairs, Domagoj Ivan Milošević, said that Croatia supported the digital single market with the aim of increasing the level of competitiveness and achieving economic goals. As the implementation of the strategy for the digital single market enters the final phase, the European Commission has presented proposals for nearly all initiatives and the focus right now is on achieving a political agreement with the European Parliament and the Council on key initiatives such as the reform of the copyright protection framework and the telecommunications and audiovisual media content packages. Of 24 legislative proposals, the European Parliament and the Council adopted only eight of them. The Commission underscored political responsibility to finalise the legislative proposals until the end of 2018, identifying three main areas that required further action on the EU level: building a European data economy, tackling cyber security challenges and regulating online platforms. During his meeting with Croatian lawmakers, Ansip asked for their support for these proposals. Ansip also spoke of the issue of telecommunications infrastructure and connectivity. Croatia ranks at the bottom of the DESI 2017 index on connectivity and is considerably below the EU average on advanced network coverage, coverage in rural areas and 4G coverage, so it needs measures to encourage investment in advanced networks, it was said during the meeting. The meeting underlined the need to remove regulatory barriers and it also discussed high-performance computing, which Ansip said all member states should support. In mid-January the Commission unveiled a plan for investing in European supercomputing infrastructure as the driver of the digital economy, and the aim of the EuroHPC initiative is to provide European researchers and companies with supercomputers by 2020.

15 – 17 February – Sofia - Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy

Sofia – The Chair of Foreign Policy Committee Miro Kovač and Chair of Defence Committee Igor Dragovan participated in Inter-Parliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).



The meeting was hosted by the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Defence Committee of the National Assembly. Over 200 delegates from the foreign affairs and defense committees of the national parliaments of EU Member States, the Western Balkan and the Eastern Partnership countries, as well as representatives of the European Parliament took part in the conference on foreign, security and defence policies of the EU. During the first day of the conference the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini presented to the parliamentarians the current priorities and goals of the Union in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy. The European perspective for the Western Balkans and the acceleration of reforms in the region was the main focus of the discussions on the second day of the conference, with the participation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria Ms Ekaterina Zaharieva, the Managing Director of the European External Action Service for Europe and Central Asia Mr Thomas Mayr-Harting, MEP Mr Eduard Kukan and the Founding Chairman of the European Stability Initiative Mr Gerald Knaus. Participants on the Conference also debated on implementation of the Global Strategy on CSDP and the situation in the Black Sea region. During the workshops on the second day participants paid special attention to the strategic energy and transport connectivity of the Western Balkans, the Danube strategy and EU-China relations.

19 – 20 February – Brussels– European Parliamentary Week 2018

The chair of the European Affairs Committee Domagoj Ivan Milošević, the chair of the Finance and Central Budget Committee Grozdana Perić and the chair of the Labor, Pension System and Social Partnership Committee Gordan Maras participated in the European Parliamentary Week, which covers the European Semester Conference and the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU. In addition to the four plenary debates, the interparliamentary meetings of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Budgets of the European Parliament were held.

At the plenary session dedicated to the policy priorities of the European Semester cycle, Domagoj Ivan Milošević, as one of the panelists, referred to the importance of structural reforms and the creating of a more favourable business environment, especially emphasizing the importance of investing in all levels of education and its linkage with the public and private sector. He stressed the importance of cohesion for achieving convergence among Member States and pointed out that the benefits of cohesion are shared not only by the so-called net beneficiaries of the EU budget, but by all Member States. He noted with satisfaction that Croatia has recorded stable economic growth and a reduction in public debt over the last two years with a balanced state budget. He pointed out that the European Semester, in which Croatia has been involved since 2012, has contributed to directing national reforms and bringing Croatia closer to the Eurozone as a strategic goal. In conclusion, he called for the continued implementation of structural reforms, so that the Union would maintain its global position and remain an area of prosperity for its citizens.

At the Interparliamentary Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the EU, with main focus on strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union, during the plenary debate the chair of the Finance and Central Budget Committee Grozdana Perić emphasized that Croatia meets almost all criteria for the introduction of the Euro, which is why we pay close attention to the Commission's initiative on deepening the Economic and Monetary Union.

Grozdana Perić also participated in the debate on the taxation of digital economy, held during the Interparliamentary Meeting of the EP Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs. She stressed that Croatia supports the Commission's initiative for fair taxation of the digital economy, especially given the need to redefine the existing and to adopt new taxation rules under the conditions of business digitization of almost all sectors of the economy.



The chair of the Labor, Pension System and Social Partnership Committee Gordan Maras participated in the work of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament at the Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the impact of digitization on the labour market and social inequalities in EU Member States.

The European Parliamentary Week concluded with debates on the role of national parliaments in transition from ESM to EMF and on the Multiannual Financial Framework beyond 2020. EP President Tajani stressed that a total of 123 members of national parliaments of the EU Member States participated in the conferences and interparliamentary meetings of the European Parliament during this year's European Parliamentary Week, which is the highest figure to date and indicates the importance of economic and financial issues on European level.

27 February – Brussels – Inter-Parliamentary Committee Meeting on the UN Global Compacts on refugees and migrants and the role of Parliaments

The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) of the European Parliament organized an inter-parliamentary committee meeting on the UN Global Compacts on refugees and migrants and the role of Parliaments. The meeting brought together MPs from 19 EU Member States, Norway and the European Parliament as well as representatives of UN agencies, the Holy See, EU institutions and services and the civil society to exchange positions on the content of the drafts of the UN Global Compacts and to support the work of the European External Action Service (EEAS) and of the Member States in the final stage of the process leading to the adoption of the Compacts. A 'zero draft' of the Global Compact on refugees and a 'zero draft' of the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration provided the basis for the discussions.

Introductory presentations were given by Mr Claude Moraes, chair of the LIBE Committee, Mr Andi Cristea, vice-chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) and Mr Dimitris Avramopoulos, European Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship. Mr Avramopoulos referred to the adoption of the Global Compacts as a critical moment in the history of international cooperation and an opportunity to reach a common global understanding on how to manage migration together. He called on the national parliaments to engage in a constructive dialogue with their respective governments on the developments in the intergovernmental negotiations on the two Compacts.

In the debate, most speakers welcomed the balanced "zero drafts" of the Global Compacts that provide a good basis for further discussion. Some MPs called for the introduction of more binding formulations in the Compacts given their non-binding nature. In the concluding remarks, AFET vice-chair Ms Dubravka Šuica reiterated the importance of the Global Compacts, highlighted the important role of parliaments in this regard and underlined the need to reach a consensus on this issue at EU level.

Inter-parliamentary activities in March 2018

2 March – Stockholm – IPEX Users Conference

8 March – Bruxelles - Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on the occasion of the 2018 International Women's Day on "Empowering women and girls in media and ICT: key for the future"

8. March – Zagreb– Joint Meeting of the European Affairs Committee and Finance and Central Budget Committee with Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources Günther Oettinger

18 – 19 March – Sofija – Meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Scrutiny Group on Europol

26 March – Bruxelles - COSAC Working Group Meeting

