

Nine EPP Members in Budapest to strengthen EU-US partnership

Following the last Inter-Parliamentary Meeting in San Francisco on 2-6 December 2010, a delegation of nine EPP Members in the EU/US-Delegation of the European Parliament played a key role in reasserting the importance of a regular dialogue on political, economic and environmental challenges that affect all the citizens on both sides of the Atlantic.



The Co-Chairs, Elmar Brok and Cliff Stearns

Under the Chairmanship of Elmar Brok (Germany), eight additional EPP Group Members participated in the 70th Interparliamentary Meeting (Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue) between the European Parliament and the United States House of Representatives which was held in Budapest from 29 June to 1 July 2011.

These Members were: Karl-Heinz Florenz (Germany), Marietta Giannakou (Greece), Ágnes Hankiss (Hungary), Danuta Hübner (Poland), Francisco Millán Mon (Spain), José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (Spain), Jozsef Szájer (Hungary) and Rafal Trzaskowski (Poland).

This meeting comes after Congress elections with changing majorities in the House of Representatives, and a new Chairman on the American side, Rep. Cliff Stearns (Republican - Florida).

The two delegations reviewed the current state of the economy and financial markets on both sides of the Atlantic, looking at ways to promote economic growth, to reduce budget deficits and to create jobs. Progressively eliminating non-tariff barriers was identified as an essential means to achieve these goals, and Members of both sides emphasized the need to make optimal use of the TEC (Transatlantic Economic Council) including regular consultations with our legislative bodies.

In recognition of shared threats confronting the European Union and the United States, a focused discussion was held regarding ongoing joint security operations and concerns. "In particular, our Members exchanged views on the effectiveness of EU-NATO cooperation, the continuing multinational operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. We discussed the impact of fiscal constraints in both the EU and US in meeting our common military and security obligations in NATO and other multilateral defence efforts", said José Ignacio Salafranca. One challenge is to maintain public support for necessary defence expenditures as the European Union and the United States deal with deepening budget constraints. This challenge is more urgent as EU and US governments confront the need to complete the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Members agreed that this could necessitate a reassessment of the burden sharing for military and civilian operations and prevention policies to ensure an equitable distribution.

The Chairman, Elmar Brok, reiterated that the European Union and the United States are founded upon the core principles of freedom, democracy and respect for human rights. "Building



The US Secretary of State, Mrs Hillary Clinton

upon the strength of these shared values and ties, we discussed the complementary efforts for the promotion of freedom and human rights around the world. Specifically, the dialogue focused on the opportunity for positive reforms brought about through the so-called "Arab Spring", and the most effective policies to encourage concrete democratic reforms in all authoritarian regimes", underlined the Chairman. All Members from the European Union and the United States condemned the aggressive approach by leaders in Libya and Syria on their population. They emphasized the importance of the US and EU sanctions regimes against Syria and Iran, and reaffirmed the need for strict oversight and enforcement mechanisms in order to ensure the effectiveness of these measures. The meeting also discussed the political and human rights situation in Cuba, Belarus and China.

Members emphasized the need to reach agreement on PNR (Passenger Name Record) and the EU-US data protection agreement expeditiously with the aim to ensure better cooperation in these fields. It remains to be noted that the delegations of the European Parliament and the House of Representatives of the United States attended the Inauguration Ceremony of the Tom Lantos Institute with the Keynote Speaker Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State.

Rupert Krietemeyer & Jesper Haglund

EU-Russia Relations: Learning from the past to build a common future

At the Polish Parliament, the 14th PCC meeting started with an At the national Polish Parliament, the 14th EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (PCC) meeting started with an exchange of views with Mr. Vladimir Sedyh (Deputy Director, European Department) and Mr. Marek Calka (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Director). From the EPP side members present



were Vice-Chairman MEP Peterle, Gardini, Nitras and Lisek.

During the opening remarks, Mr. Alojz Peterle stressed the importance of learning about the past and highlighted the key role of reconciliation.

Vice-Chairman Peterle with the Russian Co-Chair Gennady Gorbunov

The first working session centred on a debate entitled "Two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall - impacts for the region, the European Union and the Russian Federation" where Mr. Peterle expressed that 20 years ago, both partners of the PCC were divided and had different views. Nowadays, there is no division anymore despite having still some different views. He also clarified the meaning of OECD standards for electoral observation mission.

The second working session of the EU-Russia PCC started with a statement by Mr Vladimir Chizhov, Russian Ambassador to the EU. The PCC meeting continued with an exchange of views on the special status of the Kaliningrad region in the EU visa policy. The main question raised was the visa-free regime to facilitate the free movement to and within the enclave. The common steps to the visa waver agreement have been debated in details at the last EU/Russia bilateral summit, without achieving a final agreement.

The discussion in the PCC produced a follow-up on the works of the Working Groups on "Common neighbourhood issues and policies", "Science and Research cooperation, rural development, and environmental protection", and "Sport, sport infrastructures and youth policies".

Finally, the PCC hold a very interesting debate on the coming elections (Douma/Presidential), which will be followed by international observation missions with the intervention of Ms Beata Martin-Rozumilowicz, Head of ODIHR's Election Department and Mr. Shaper, Member of the Russian Central Electoral Committee. According to ODIHR, while national

electoral committee enjoyed general trust, lack of confidence persists at the local implementation level. The registration of candidates and parties is still a problem, as well as the access to press coverage and election campaign. Despite the progress made, ODIHR recommends that both elections should be followed by a long-term mission. Mr. Shaper explained the improvement made recently, namely by modifying the national electoral law facilitating the opposition parties to be registered. He underlined the lack of transparency of the OECD standards, stressing that progress has been recognized already in the 2004 and 2007 elections. He refused long-term observation mission coming from any international institution where Russia is not an active partner. Mr. Nitras stressed the importance of having a long-term mission as well as an EP delegation to observe both elections.

Alfredo Sousa de Jesus

European Parliament participates in ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)

An observer delegation of the European Parliament - chaired by Dr Werner Langen (EPP, Germany), Chairman of the ASEAN-Delegation of the European Parliament - participated in the 32nd General Assembly of AIPA (19 - 23 September) in Cambodia.

In addition bilateral meetings with the Cambodian Government, Members of the Opposition and NGO's as well as special meetings with Members of Parliament of the other ASEAN member states had been part of the programme of the EP-Delegation.

The General Assembly of AIPA (the annual meeting of Members of Parliament from the 10 Member states of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations)) intends to promote solidarity, understanding, cooperation and close relations between Parliaments of ASEAN member states, AIPA Special Observers and other parliamentary organisations.



Chairman Werner Langen addressing AIPA

"The European Union wants to be a reliable partner of ASEAN, politically and economically, and we know there is no alternative to a strong and stable Euro, in our interest, and in the interest of our partners in the international community," said Dr. Langen during the first plenary session of the AIPA.

Markus Arens

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EU-BRICS Relations

G20 Summit and the 5th EU-Brazil Summit in October

BRICS in the G20 - Support for the Euro-Zone?

The "BRICS" is an acronym originally derived from the four emerging countries, Brazil, Russia, India and China, who started a process of political dialogue in 2006. South Africa has been included as a new member in 2011. Since 2009, leaders of BRIC(S) meet annually to discuss a wide range of policy issues and despite their remaining differences, attempt to have collective views. The BRICS group is believed to have greater political influences in the international arena as their economic weights increase.

In the process of the on-going international economic crisis, the role of the BRICS country is increasingly becoming more relevant. In this light, it is generally regarded that the BRICS could be a positive force in overcoming the Euro-crisis. Therefore, China, with its over \$3 trillion in foreign-exchange reserves, is seen as a possible investor in the debt-troubled Eurozone. The recent visit by Klaus Regling, the head of the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), to China further spurred rumours about Chinese support in overcoming the crisis.

At the same time speculations about a Russian involvement are also circulating. As the country with the third largest foreign reserves Russia certainly has the potential to aide some European economies. Both Russia and China however are keen on channelling their support through the IMF. Statements made by other leaders of the BRICS countries mirror this position. The Euro-crisis was therefore also high on the agenda of the visit of Christine Lagarde, the Managing Director of the IMF, to Russia in early November.



Leaders of the five BRICS countries at this years' summit in May in China

Given the on-going economic crisis, prior to the 2011 G20 Summit in Cannes the BRICS leaders held informal discussions to seek a joint stance on the euro zone crisis. Statements made after the meetings indicate the BRICS' hesitation about direct support for the euro zone. In this light Chinese President Hu Jintao repeated that it is the euro zone's responsibility to solve the debt problems; other countries could only play a supportive role. He highlighted that the BRICS countries are however "open

and ready" to help the euro zone. However, such support would have to be channelled through the International Monetary Fund. In the context of the increased relevance of the IMF, it is important to note that the BRICS countries also use the current crisis to demand a greater say in the decision making process in international financial organisations, which would reflect upon their increasing economic power.

One of the latest key events in EU-BRICS relations was the EU-Brazil Summit in Brussels on 4 October 2011. EU-Brazil bilateral relations date back to 1960 when diplomatic relations were established. The 1992 Framework Cooperation Agreement established the legal basis for bilateral cooperation. In recognition of both sides' political and economic importance the EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership was established in July 2007 during the first bilateral Summit held in Lisbon. Next to the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement, which is currently being negotiated, a number of other topics are high on the list of EU-Brazil relations. Central topics are global multilateralism, climate change, sustainable energy, the fight against poverty, Mercosur's integration process as well as Latin America's stability and prosperity. Given its global importance through the partnership, Brazil, the Mercosur region and South America as a whole are being put high on the EU's political map.

During the recent summit on 4 October, which was the fifth EU-Brazil summit overall, a number of steps were taken to consolidate the Strategic Partnership between the EU and Brazil. The final joint statement was of a very comprehensive nature and addressed issues of bilateral, regional and global nature. Key items were related to climate change, energy, Rio+20, EU-Mercosur cooperation and matters related to the G20.

The Summit outlined energy as one of the building blocks of the EU-Brazil Partnership. The EU and Brazil are leading global efforts on the use of renewable energy sources and recognise the importance of stable and transparent energy markets. Three letters of intent were signed in the areas of tourism, space policy, and scientific cooperation. In addition, both sides highlighted the need to further work together for the future development of Libya, particularly in the framework of the UN-led efforts.

In terms of trade relations, Brazil lists as the EU's 10th trading partner, accounting for 2.2% of the EU's total trade worth €63.6 billion. Main items exported to Brazil are manufactured goods (cars, medicines and aircraft). However, the EU's relative importance in Brazil's imports diminished slightly over the last few years, mainly due to the strong growth of Chinese exports to Brazil. The EU is Brazil's biggest trading partner accounting for 21.7% of its total trade. The largest Brazilian export product to the EU is iron, which together with other minerals and crude materials represents about 34% of Brazilian exports to the EU. The second export category is food and live animals, representing 26% of Brazil's exports into the EU.

Benjamin Oppermann (& Paula Hsu)

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Croatia: an EU Member State-in-waiting

The 14th meeting of the EU-Croatia Joint Parliamentary Committee, taking place on 11 October 2011, was the first to take place after the conclusion of Croatian accession negotiations and the mood, the discussion as well as the adopted recommendations reflected the fact that Croatia was now an EU Member State-in-waiting. While the country was deemed sufficiently prepared to assume the burdens of EU membership, Committee Members on both sides agreed there was a need to remain vigilant and follow the process until Croatia would find itself formally a full EU Member.

Polish Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister Grażyna Bernatowicz, Croatian State Secretary for European Integration Andrej Plenković and Chief Negotiator Vladimir Drobnjak, and Dirk Lange, Head of Unit for Croatia in DG Enlargement, addressed the meeting.

EPP Group MEPs present were Gunnar Hökmark MEP (Chairman), Bernd Posselt MEP, Zoltan Bago MEP, Alojz Peterle MEP, Antonio Cancian MEP and Doris Pack MEP.



The two Co-Chairs of the JPC Gunnar Hökmark and Marija Pejčinović Burić

In his opening address, Chairman Hökmark looked back on the work of the JPC during the 6-year long process of Croatian EU negotiations. The Joint Parliamentary was very successful in pushing the process forward and provided important political backing at several key stages of the process. For Croatia, they were six long years, but very much rewarded as reforms have brought benefits to the country. Enlargement was high on the agenda for both the preceding Hungarian Presidency, and the current Polish Presidency.

The ball is now in the court of the European Parliament to give consent to the Croatian Accession Treaty before it is signed. The EP green light is foreseen during its November II session, in time for the signing of the Treaty by the Council in December.

As an important message for the European public, the EU will continue to closely monitor developments in Croatia until accession in order to ensure sustainability of reforms. In key chapters Chapters 8 (Competition), 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights) and 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security), sustained efforts are needed in order to achieve full membership. The Treaty does not foresee any post-accession monitoring.

Messages for the Croatian public were also an item of discussion. The question of EU membership will have to put to the Croatian citizens for a vote in a referendum. An information campaign is

underway and polling suggests as high as an 80% positive vote among people who will surely participate in the referendum.

During the course of discussion, Members often referred to the regional aspect of Croatian membership. The Croatian case is crucial for the future of the enlargement process because it makes enlargement more tangible for other countries in the region. In the coming months the Croatian Parliament will adopt a Declaration on the European values of South-East Europe in support of EU aspirations of its neighbours.

Finally, the JPC discussed the imminent arrival of Croatian Observers to the EP. Following the signature of the Accession Treaty, the EP President will invite Observers in a letter to the President of Croatian Parliament, who will then appoint them. With Parliamentary elections scheduled for 4 December, the 12 Croatian Observers will come from the new composition of the Croatian Parliament in proportion to the election results.

Lada Jurica

EU - Iceland relations: Negotiations for EU membership are on track

The third meeting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee was held in Brussels beginning of October.

As usual - and not surprisingly - the main occupation of the joint committee is to evaluate and discuss the progress and the problems in relations between the EU and Iceland.

As Iceland is a member of the EEA since it entered into force in 1994, the tiny country has adopted substantial parts of EU legislation already. Thus negotiations are making real progress and already a year after negotiations were opened 4 chapters of the acquis and two chapters were immediately closed. Reports to the committee were optimistic on the possibility to open negotiations on virtually all others within the upcoming half year or so.



Discussions on current relations concentrated on recent developments in the Schengen zone, where Iceland is a fully engaged partner since 2001, the recent Commission proposal on the Fisheries policies as well as the

developments in the Arctic region. And of course a thorough evaluation of the current economic crisis not the least in light of the economic recovery of Iceland from the blow caused by the banking crash 2008.

EPP Group MEP's Paul Rübig, Petru Luhan and vice chairman of the JPC Thomas Ulmer took part in the deliberations and contributed to the discussions on different subjects.

Per Heister

EU-Montenegro relations: Working towards progress

The European Union - Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (SAPC) held its 3rd meeting on 3-4 October 2011 in Brussels, under the co-chairmanship of Mr Eduard Kukan for the European Parliament Delegation and Mr Ranko Krivokapić, Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro, for the Montenegrin Parliament Delegation. In presence of Mr Milan Rocen Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Integration on behalf of the Government of Montenegro and Mr Stefano Sannino, Director General for Enlargement on behalf of the European Commission.

The Chairman of the SAPC noted with satisfaction the good progress in fulfilling the key priorities necessary for Montenegro's application for membership of the European Union which was announced on 9 November 2010 and expressed its expectation that in December the Council will decide about the opening the EU membership negotiations. The Committee further discussed current EU-Montenegro relations and remaining requirements for opening membership negotiations such as provisions of laws on elections and financing of political parties, evolutions in protection of fundamental rights, progress made in fight against organised crime and corruption and economic developments.



Chairman Eduard Kukan with Ranko Krivokapić, Speaker of the Parliament of Montenegro

Furthermore EPP members welcomed the fact that after several years after gaining the independence and after long negotiations the process of establishing the legal and constitutional framework of the country is almost finalised with the adoption of a new election law and expressed its satisfaction with amended general education law which is to safeguard the multiethnic character of Montenegrin society and to overcome the remaining cultural and national divisions.

The EPP Members of the SAPC Montenegro Committee highlighted that freedom of expression, as a fundamental element of a functional democracy and expressed concern about the insufficient progress by the Montenegrin authorities to ensure the freedom of media and called on the Montenegrin authorities to amend existing legislation on freedom of information in such a way that it would not lead to restricting access to information and limiting transparency and could thus weaken an effective fight against corruption.

The European Union - Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee adopted with a broad consensus Declarations and Recommendations to the Stabilisation and Association Council and to institutions of Montenegro and of the European Union in which the Committee welcomed the adoption

of a set of sub-constitutional laws in the Parliament with the aim to strengthen judicial independence; noted with satisfaction the adoption of the draft constitutional amendments in order to guarantee a de-politicised judiciary but advised to take further steps in order to adopt constitutional provisions which would fully guarantee independence of judges from the executive and legislative branches of power. The Committee also welcomed further steps taken by Montenegro in order to fight against corruption and organised crime in particular by signing extradition agreements with Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, as well as by concluding cooperation agreements with financial intelligence services of other countries. The Declarations underlined, however, that corruption is still prevalent in many areas and that the fight against corruption still needs to be intensified.

Finally the Committee welcomed efforts that Montenegro has taken in order to implement structural reforms and systematic changes in certain areas, mostly the ones related to establishing fiscal and financial stability which brought the Montenegrin economy back to positive growth rates.

Alena Carna

EU-South Africa IPM

"A changing world requires new answers"

The European economic crisis was at the heart of the discussions and deliberations. Mr. Alain Cadec, in his address to his South-African counterparts, described 2011 as the year of changes and lack of confidence on a global scale; the European model of development was put at risk.

Members discussed in great detail the severe impact of the EU economic crisis on South Africa and the entire region.

The biggest trading partner of South Africa is the EU, and this persisting crisis is affecting the volume of trade and therefore it is having a negative impact on South African income. South African partners stated that their country's financial institutions were not under pressure of the Greek financial situation.

Further to this, the South African Members illustrated the intense preparatory work that is under way to the Durban Conference on Climate Change; it should remain a topical political issue and a global priority.

SA Members also expressed their concern at the growing number of political and economic immigrants from the African continent turning to South Africa to seek for asylum in stead of Europe. South Africa does not have the same response capacity and is facing absorption problems. The existing financial and social framework to assist this important arrival flow is fragile and insufficient.

The IPM also discussed, with some concern, the growing right-wing extremist movements in Europe, with a special focus on



the Dutch case - underlining that here there is no link between (youth) unemployment and extremism, as Dutch unemployment is the lowest in the EU - and the recent extremist attacks in Norway. Mr. Alf Svensson expressed his surprise at the "soft" approach of the Norwegian authorities and people.

Mr. Alain Cadec focussed his intervention on two important subjects of his choice: the Arab Spring and the South African relations with Zimbabwe:

A changing world requires new answers and we do need a credible political, economic and cultural dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean. A new start should be given to the Union for the Mediterranean Agenda.

On Zimbabwe, Mr. Cadec reiterated the important role the South Africans have in providing the support for a transition to democracy in this country. He also reminded Members present that insufficient steps have been taken in the fields of human rights, freedom of speech and lack of transparency of the government with regard to public affairs. Mr. Cadec reiterated his interest in getting an update on the ANC's reaction on the political deadlock in Zimbabwe.

Catarina Caldeira

EU-Canada relations: Dialogue is the way to success

On 13 September the 34th EU-Canada Interparliamentary Meeting (IPM) took place in Strasbourg. Both sides expressed their deep and strong partnership which is reflected through a long and deep parliamentary friendship. From the EPP side MEPs Jeggler, Bodu, Patrao Neves, Zaborska, Kasoulides, Kelly and Karins attended the IPM. In context of the meeting EP Vice-President Wieland hosted a lunch to honour the delegation.



Meeting room in Strasbourg

A key issue at the meeting was the discussion about a new Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which is still being finalised. Furthermore, the meeting centred on the on-going discussion about how to tackle the economic crisis and how to overcome the crisis of the Euro. Members pointed out that Canada is not as affected as other regions due to solid and conservative economic policies. Given their low deficit both the IMF and OECD forecast that Canada will remain one of the key economies for the years to come.

Recalling the long and deep friendship, the meeting also

addressed more sensitive issues, where both sides do not necessarily share each others opinion. Next to immigration policy, where Canada is known for its targeted approach, the issues of granting visas to Canada and NATO cooperation were addressed. MEPs critically pointed out that Canada is refusing to apply a common position towards all EU Member States when it comes to issuing visas. On the other side Canadian MPs referred to the fact that the EU Member States inside NATO fail to speak with one voice, which often leads to complications and increased inefficiency. Further contentious issues are mainly limited to trade and economic issues. Among others, referring to investments, it was noted that the ten Canadian provinces would have to treat all EU Member States equally. Furthermore, a common position has yet to be found on the issues of product labelling, drug licensing and the usage of genetically modified nutrition. At the same time, MEPs made it clear that the EU will continue to uphold its ban on seal products. Ms. Elisabeth Jeggler, MEP and First Vice-Chair of the Delegation for relations with Canada after the meeting stated that "the CETA is an important agreement and both parties will profit from its conclusion. But there are still some sensitive issues that have to be discussed and compromises need to be found, including within the agricultural chapter".



European Parliament in Strasbourg

Given the long history of the Canada delegation, the open and frank discussions clearly reflect on the deep and sincere friendship and partnership between the EU and Canada. Both sides emphasised this point and have expressed their conviction that, as in the past, an acceptable solution to all open issues will be found, which would then again further strengthen the EU-Canada partnership.

Michael Speiser

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