
PRIMUS INTER PARES

MY VISION FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

EUROPE WILL SUCCEED

Europe will succeed. As long as it returns to acting as a united Europe. The British referendum, the migration crisis, terrorism and changes in the geopolitical landscape have all radically changed the situation for Europe. We must not be afraid of these changes.

The European Parliament – and each one of us – can be a driver for change in the eyes of European citizens, if we are brave enough to realise that we need to raise the bar.

Our institution needs to act as the heart of European democracy, providing a platform for open, free and lively debate. Europe needs to restore a sense of belonging for Europeans by fully recognising the importance of a dynamic democratic debate, without flinching from conflict, by confronting differences and seeking innovative policies. The Parliament is also the very place where this new European spirit needs to manifest itself and be expressed. We need targeted action and a new impetus from all the EU institutions. That is why the concept of a privileged relationship between

certain major political groups, the so-called ‘grand coalition’, has become outdated. Although it made sense during the ‘exceptional’ political period after the 2014 elections and helped to reaffirm the *Spitzenkandidaten* principle, it has now outlived its purpose.

It is time to return to healthy alternatives between different political forces. Citizens need to hear about and compare different visions of Europe so that they can make a decision on them in 2019.

To strengthen this European debate and comparison, genuine discussion is needed where participants can explain their opinions freely and without ready-made soundbites. We therefore need to increase the democratic energy of this institution. That is why – now more than ever – we need a president who can act as guarantor; a European Parliament president who will give all MEPs and all groups the opportunity to speak and influence the decisions of this institution. A president who is ‘first among equals’ and who values pluralism.

A PARLIAMENT THAT VALUES PLURALISM

The European Parliament represents all European citizens, in all their diversity. During my presidency, I will therefore work to promote pluralism within this institution. Our internal work will be organised in line with the following rule of thumb: the decisions taken by the Conference of Presidents must be the result of healthy discussions between the groups, without restrictive filters, ensuring political fairness and a truly level playing field.

AN EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENT

The absence of restrictive political coalitions will in no way hinder the European Parliament's capacity to take decisions on the various legislative and non-legislative topics.

These decisions will be taken following discussions with all groups and with individual MEPs, as in previous legislatures. A pluralistic Parliament, which can make use of all the political energies within it, will be capable of tackling the main priorities on our political agenda, including boosting investment as part of a more expansive economic policy which creates jobs, the fight against fraud and tax evasion, a European policy for managing influxes of migrants and refugees, and the fight against climate change.

A HOUSE OF GLASS

One of the requirements for a healthy democracy is that decision-making processes must be understandable and clear to citizens. In terms of transparency, the reports adopted recently by the European Parliament represent a significant step forward. We must continue our work in this direction.

Starting in the next few weeks, all the institutions will need to work together to conclude the negotiations on the transparency register. The Parliament will need to express a positive attitude towards access to information on international negotiations. The TTIP negotiations have demonstrated that our institution needs more efficient and complete access to these documents. When it comes to committees of inquiry, in particular for the committees investigating the Panama Papers and ‘Dieselgate’ emissions scandals (PANA and EMIS), our members need guaranteed access to all the relevant documentation.

AN ASSERTIVE VOICE OF THE CITIZENS

The democratic divide between citizens and European leaders is growing ever wider.

To bridge this gap, we need to act on two fronts: firstly by strengthening the link between the Parliament and Commission, and secondly by incorporating more grassroots participation to open up the Parliament to citizens.

The 'community method' should be emphasised, because the European Union will only be able to achieve tangible results if there is a strong relationship between the Parliament and Commission.

Our institution must play a constructive role in the Brexit negotiations to achieve a fair Brexit, which lays the foundations for a mutually beneficial relationship between the United Kingdom and the EU.

This year will be the 60th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. Inspired by this anniversary, the European Parliament should also lead the debate on the future of Europe and directly discuss ways to make the European Union more efficient, democratic and successful with citizens, civil society organisations and national parliamentarians through a series of citizens' conventions in the member states. The European Parliament is ready to explore all possible avenues.

Simply reaffirming the role of parliamentary democracy is not sufficient.

The Parliament must also empower citizens to directly participate in the decision-making process at the grassroots level. In this sense, the Parliament will be a defender and a supporter of the European Citizens' Initiative, by supporting this tool politically and also encouraging more awareness and use of it by the citizens.

Finally, the European Parliament will also be a catalyst for intermediary groups such as NGOs, associations and individual citizens who want to participate and engage in the debate and in the decisions on the future of Europe. From now to 2019, the European Parliament will host several major international forums to discuss the regulation of the financial system, the promotion of European culture and the issues around climate change and energy transition.

A PARLIAMENT CLOSER TO CITIZENS

Europe is not only in Brussels. We need to make all citizens and all regions feel fully European.

Our institution should be a better reflection of the society that it represents by getting closer to it.

The number of women with managerial roles in this institution is too low. We need to look at ways of using affirmative action to make sure that all under-represented groups can feel closer to the Parliament.

In addition, the European Parliament should become a more open place for children and young people, including in its communications and through the use of new technologies. All of the European Parliament's activities for children and young people should be better co-ordinated by dedicated staff in the administration who can track its progress, ensure it is embedded in the work of all the different committees and provide visibility for the Parliament's work with younger people. Greater attention should be paid to those 'millennials' who will vote for the first time in the 2019 European Parliament elections.

The Parliament should be an example of inter-generational cohesion and should put in place measures to encourage older people to participate in its activities.

Our institution should also be at the forefront in defending and representing people with disabilities, bringing the Parliament closer to them.

More globally, it is necessary to launch a greater communication effort to connect the Parliament and its members with citizens. This can be done by improving the contacts between the local press and MEPs, and by putting the offices of the Parliament in the 28 member states at the complete disposal of the MEPs. The activities of our members should become more and more visible at the local level.

A WATCHDOG

Greater control and scrutiny of the European Commission is needed, in particular regarding the hearings of commissioners, which should be a real chance to assess the profile and abilities of the individual candidates.

We need to strengthen the European Parliament's powers to hold the European Commission to account. From this point of view, an official annual debate should be introduced to analyse whether the Commission Work Programme and the actions put into place by the European Commission correspond to the priorities supported by the European Parliament.

The European Parliament should formalise its evaluation of the European Commission's actions with an annual assessment. The European Parliament must be a defender of EU values and principles, and should mirror the concerns of the citizens and have the necessary powers to scrutinise and investigate scandals like the Panama Papers and emissions scandals. The Parliament's inquiry committees must be able to act independently and have the necessary powers to fulfil their task. By reinforcing the role of the inquiry committees, the European Parliament can become the citizens' watchdog. In addition, the European Parliament should affirm its political role as guardian of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, a great achievement that must be relaunched and fully implemented.

A PRESIDENT FOR EVERYONE

If elected president, I will dedicate every Friday to meeting with MEPs, regardless of their role and function. The importance of pluralism will also be put into practice with a diverse and pluralistic team.



TEN CONCRETE PROPOSALS FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1

Make the Conference of Presidents a forum for real, open debate

2

Conclude a more ambitious inter-institutional agreement which guarantees access to important and relevant documents for all MEPs

3

Strengthen the political role of the committees of inquiry by giving them the necessary powers to fulfil their tasks

4

Be an inclusive president of the European Parliament available to all MEPs, regardless of their role and function

5

Meet the target of at least 40% of women in managerial roles in the European Parliament administration by 2019

6

Create a European prize to show appreciation for those who work to promote gender equality

7

Increase the number of traineeships for young people in the European Parliament, with higher quotas for disabled people, and create a European Parliament fit for children and young people, with a more efficient allocation of the current resources

8

Organise high-level international forums with international institutions, NGOs, associations and citizens on the regulation of the financial system, the relaunch of European culture, and on climate change and energy transition

9

Extend and reinforce the role of the European Parliament Information Offices in the 28 member states as a platform for promoting the legislative activities of the MEPs in their own constituencies

10

Launch a communication campaign to make the work of each MEP more visible to citizens by reinforcing relations with local press and with more tools and resources for MEPs to communicate online