

# European Parliament Press Kit for the informal meeting of the heads of state and government on 23 February 2018

[22-02-2018 - 16:50]

In this press kit you will find a selection of press releases from the European Parliament that show MEP's priorities and what they have been pushing for in relation to the topics on the summit agenda, as well as contact details of the MEPs involved. All documents and resolutions printed in the press kit, plus additional information, can be found on the European Parliament's website.

Parliament is **ready to reject any contender for EU Commission President who is not nominated as a "lead candidate"** parties ahead of the 2019 EU elections. The so-called "**Spitzenkandidaten**" (German for lead candidate) **process**, in which European political parties designate one candidate each for the post of EU Commission President, ahead of the European elections, **cannot be overturned**, MEPs say.

The **European Parliament should shrink from 751 to 705 MEPs when the UK leaves the EU**. Besides reducing Parliament's size, a proposed re-distribution of seats, approved by the Parliament as a whole on 7 February, would also place **46 of the 73 UK seats in a reserve**, leaving room for possible new countries joining in the future. The remaining **27 British seats should be re-distributed among the 14 EU countries** that are slightly under-represented, to even out current inequalities in their representation in the House, say MEPs.

Budget Committee MEPs want the EU to be **more ambitious** to finance both existing and new priorities and want the **EU budget to reflect a political project and long-term strategy for a stronger and more sustainable Europe**. In a vote on 22 February they call for, inter alia, post-2020 expenditure (MFF) to be set at the level of 1.3% of the EU's gross national income (GNI) in order to be able to continue to support existing policy areas, like agriculture and cohesion policies, as well as provide sufficient funding to deal with new challenges such as security, defence or migration.

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# Background

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# Background

## Elections 2019 - “Spitzenkandidaten” process cannot be overturned, say MEPs

[“Spitzenkandidaten” process cannot be overturned, say MEPs](#)

(07/02/2018)

- EP ready to reject all those standing for European Commission President who are not “lead candidates” of European political parties
- “Spitzenkandidaten” (lead candidate for Commission President) process proved to be a success, 2019 elections to consolidate the practice
- Serving EU Commissioners will be allowed to be designated as “Spitzenkandidaten” ahead of EU elections

Parliament is ready to reject any contender for EU Commission President who is not nominated as a “lead candidate” ahead of the 2019 EU elections.

The so-called “Spitzenkandidaten” (German for lead candidate) process, in which European political parties designate one candidate each for the post of EU Commission President, ahead of the European elections, cannot be overturned, MEPs say. This system was first used in 2014, to select current Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker.

Parliament’s report also warns that the European Parliament is ready to reject any candidate for Commission President who has not been nominated in this way.

By establishing a link between the choice of Commission President and the outcome of the European elections, MEPs also consider that the 2014 “Spitzenkandidaten” process proved to be a success, and stress that the 2019 elections will be the occasion to cement the use of the same practice.

### **Serving EU Commissioners may run as “lead candidates” ahead of EU elections**

In the report adopted on Wednesday, MEPs also approved proposed changes to the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission by 457 votes to 200, with 20 abstentions.

The proposed changes will:

- allow serving EU Commissioners to run for election to the European Parliament, and to be designated by European political parties as so-called “lead candidates” - or “Spitzenkandidaten” - to become EU Commission President, without first having to take an unpaid leave of absence,
- oblige the Commission President to inform MEPs of measures taken to ensure that Commissioners standing in electoral campaigns for the EU elections respect rules on independence and integrity,
- require that Commissioners do not use the human or material resources of the Commission for any activities linked to electoral campaigns.

### **Quote**

“The EU has to be more democratic, more transparent, or it simply will not be. The fact that citizens know the candidates for President of the European Commission before the elections is an important step in the right direction”, said Parliament’s rapporteur [Esteban González Pons](#) (EPP, ES).

### **Background**

The suggested changes to the inter-institutional agreement are the result of negotiations between [Parliament’s Conference of Presidents](#) (President and political group leaders) and the Commission. They were approved by the Constitutional Affairs Committee on 23

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January 2018.

The modifications of the agreement will enter into force once they have been approved by Parliament and formally endorsed by the College of Commissioners.

## **More information on the “Spitzenkandidaten” process**

The Lisbon Treaty requires the European Council, acting by qualified majority, to nominate a Commission President for the European Parliament’s approval, while taking into account the results of the European Parliament election. However, the so-called “lead candidate” - or “Spitzenkandidat” – procedure is not mentioned in the EU’s treaty. When it was used for the first time in 2014, it was primarily an agreement between EU leaders in the European Council, the European Parliament and European political parties on how to interpret the wording in the treaties.

The Spitzenkandidat procedure hands the Commission Presidency to the “lead candidate” from the European political party winning the most seats in the European Parliament. This was the case in 2014, when the European People’s Party’s lead candidate Jean-Claude Juncker was appointed Commission President. A European political party is a political party operating on European level, which could be funded by the European Union, and which is made up of national parties based in the member states.

Ahead of the 2014 European elections, five European political parties appointed their “lead candidates”.

## ***MEP to contact***

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# Background

## Elections 2019 - Size of Parliament to shrink after Brexit

[Size of Parliament to shrink after Brexit](#) (07/02/2018)

- MEP numbers to be cut from 751 to 705 after Brexit
- 46 of the 73 UK seats freed up by Brexit available for possible EU enlargement
- 27 UK seats to be shared out among 14 under-represented EU countries

**The European Parliament should shrink from 751 to 705 MEPs when the UK leaves the EU, whilst leaving room for possible new countries joining in the future.**

Besides reducing Parliament's size from 751 to 705 elected representatives, a proposed re-distribution of seats, approved by the Parliament as a whole on Wednesday, would also place 46 of the 73 UK seats to be freed up by Brexit in a reserve.

Some or all of the 46 seats in the reserve could then be reallocated to new countries joining the EU or preserved to keep the institution smaller.

### **New allocation of seats among 27 member states**

The remaining 27 British seats should be re-distributed among the 14 EU countries that are slightly under-represented, to even out current inequalities in their representation in the House, say MEPs.

[Proposed allocation of seats \(table\)](#)

They also stress that this allocation would apply only if the UK actually leaves the EU. Otherwise the current arrangements would stay in place until further notice.

### **Pan-European electoral lists**

A proposal by the Constitutional Affairs Committee calling for a number of MEPs to be elected from an EU-wide electoral constituency, was rejected by the full House.

The proposal for a European Council decision was approved on Wednesday by 431 votes to 182 with 61 abstentions.

### **Quotes**

Co-rapporteur [Danuta Hübner](#) (EPP, PL) said: "In times when democracy as a system is called into question, it is our duty to re-ignite citizens' passion for democracy. I hope we can take a step in the right direction by approving a distribution of the European Parliament's seats that is fair, that follows objective principles, and that respects the EU's Treaty."

Co-rapporteur [Pedro Silva Pereira](#) (S&D, PT) said "This vote is an important step forward for European democracy. The new allocation of seats means that we will reduce the overall number of MEPs from 751 to 705 while ensuring no loss of seats for any member state. Currently under-represented countries will get 27 of the 73 UK seats available after the UK leaves the EU. This will make the European Parliament a fairer reflection of the citizens it represents".

### **Next steps**

Now that this legislative initiative has been approved by the full House, it will be put to the European Council (EU heads of state or government) for a unanimous decision, and then returned to Parliament for a final yes/no vote. The composition of the European Parliament for 2019-2024 is one of the topics expected to be debated by EU leaders during the informal EU summit later in February.

### **Background**

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According to Article 14(2) of the Treaty on European Union, the number of Members of the European Parliament cannot exceed 750, plus the President. It also requires representation to be “degressively proportional”, with a minimum threshold of 6 members per member state, and states that no member state is to be allocated more than 96 seats.

In simplified terms, “degressive proportionality” should meet two requirements:

1. no smaller state shall receive more seats than a larger one, and
2. the population/seats ratio shall increase as population increases, before rounding to whole numbers.

A broad majority of MEPs endorsed the mandate, drawn up by the Civil Liberties Committee, in a vote on Thursday (390 to 175, with 44 abstentions). Parliament can now begin talks with the Council as soon as EU member states have agreed their own negotiating position.

The proposed changes to the Dublin rules aim to remedy weaknesses in the current system and ensure that all EU countries accept their fair share of responsibility for hosting asylum seekers in the EU.

Under the reform, the country in which an asylum seeker first arrives would no longer be automatically responsible for processing his or her asylum application. Instead, asylum seekers should be shared among all EU countries, by being swiftly and automatically relocated to another EU country.

## Proposed allocation of seats

Member State	Current distribution of seats	New Distribution	Difference
Germany	96	96	=
France	74	79	+5
United Kingdom	73	-	-73
Italy	73	76	+3
Spain	54	59	+5
Poland	51	52	+1
Romania	32	33	+1
Netherlands	26	29	+3
Greece	21	21	=
Belgium	21	21	=
Portugal	21	21	=
Czech Republic	21	21	=
Hungary	21	21	=
Sweden	20	21	+1
Austria	18	19	+1
Bulgaria	17	17	=
Denmark	13	14	+1
Slovakia	13	14	+1
Finland	13	14	+1
Ireland	11	13	+2
Croatia	11	12	+1
Lithuania	11	11	=
Slovenia	8	8	=
Latvia	8	8	=
Estonia	6	7	+1
Cyprus	6	6	=
Luxembourg	6	6	=
Malta	6	6	=
<b>TOTAL</b>	751	705	

# Background

## ***MEPs to contact***

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# Background

## Long-term EU budget - Post-2020 EU budget reform must match EU's future ambitions

[MEPs advocate stronger EU foreign and defence policy](#) (13-12-2017)

- Post-2020 expenditure (MFF) ceiling should rise to 1.3% of the EU's GNI
- Multi-annual budget period should be aligned with 5 year parliamentary mandate
- Abolish all rebates and corrections

Budget MEPs set out their position for negotiating the next long-term EU budget, which should finance new priorities as well as make up for any shortfall following the UK's departure.

The Committee on Budgets on Thursday adopted two reports on the expenditure and revenue sides of the next multi-annual financial framework (MFF), to apply from 2021.

### Expenditure (The next MFF)

Budget Committee MEPs want the EU budget to reflect a political project and long-term strategy for a stronger and more sustainable Europe. They demand that the current 1% ceiling for the EU's expenditure be increased to 1.3% of the GNI, in order to be able to continue to support existing policy areas, like agriculture and cohesion policies, as well as provide sufficient funding to deal with new challenges such as security, defence or migration.

Key proposals include:

- boosting research programmes, Erasmus+, the Youth Employment Initiative and support for SMEs as well as infrastructure investment through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF);
- aligning the MFF's duration to the legislative cycle of Parliament and EU Commission better, so that after 2027 it would apply for 5+5 years, with a mandatory mid-term revision;
- greater flexibility to increase financial means in the event of unforeseen circumstances, guaranteeing that unspent funds remain in the EU budget;
- integrating off-budget mechanisms, like the European Development Fund, European Stability Mechanism, financial instruments and external trust funds or facilities, into the EU budget, with corresponding financial means;
- MEPs demand a mechanism whereby member states which do not respect EU values (Art. 2 TEU) could be subject to "financial consequences" but not through the European Union budget, so that beneficiaries such as regions, organizations or citizens are not harmed financially.

MEPs warn that "no agreement can be concluded on the MFF without corresponding headway being made on own resources" – i.e. the revenue side of the EU Budget. Expenditure and revenue should thus be treated as a single package.

### Revenue ('Own Resources' reform)

The draft resolution builds on the [Report of the High Level Group on Own Resources](#) chaired by Mario Monti, and calls, on the revenue side, for maintaining the existing own resources and progressively introducing new own resources. The new own resources could be based on the following:

- a revised VAT,
- a share of the corporate income (CCCTB),
- taxation of financial services

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- a share of the taxation of companies in the digital sector
- a share of a set of possible environmental taxes.

The new own resources should:

- bring about a substantial reduction (aiming at 40%) in the proportion of GNI-based direct contributions, thus creating savings for member state budgets, while at the same time doing away with the logic of “fair return” leading to a “zero-sum game” between net payers and beneficiaries;
- abolish all rebates and corrections which benefit only some member states;
- enable the financing of a higher level of EU spending under the post-2020 MFF;
- cover the ‘Brexit gap’;
- not increase the overall fiscal burden for EU taxpayers.

The draft report by co-rapporteurs [Jan Olbrycht](#) (EPP, PL) and [Isabelle Thomas](#) (S&D, FR) for the post-2020 EU long-term budget was adopted by 29 votes against 4, with 3 abstentions.

The draft report by co-rapporteurs [Janusz Lewandowski](#) (EPP, PL) and [Gérard Deprez](#) (ALDE, BE) on the reform of the EU’s system of own resources was adopted by 31 votes against 4, with 1 abstention.

## Next steps

The European Parliament first establishes its negotiating position on the EU Budget post-2020. The two draft reports will be voted on in Plenary in the March II session in Strasbourg. They provide Parliament’s input to the Commission’s legislative proposals on these matters due in May 2018. The adoption of a new MFF Regulation requires Parliament’s consent.

The reports call for discussions to be launched without delay between the three institutions in order to try to reach an agreement before the European elections.

## MEPs to contact

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# Background

## Annexes

[Revision of the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission](#)

[European Parliament resolution of 7 February 2018 on the composition of the European Parliament \(2017/2054\(INL\) – 2017/0900\(NLE\)\)](#)

# Background

## **At a glance - European Parliament's role in the EU ordinary legislative procedure**

Most EU laws are passed via the ordinary legislative procedure, also known as “co-decision”. The European Parliament is one of the two EU co-legislators - the other is the Council (representing the governments of the 28 EU countries).

When the EU Commission proposes a new EU law, Parliament examines it, changes the draft if it finds this necessary and then negotiates with the Council to agree on the final wording of the law. Parliament's formal approval is also needed to finally enact the law.

In some exceptional cases, procedures other than the ordinary legislative procedure are used. This is the case, for instance, with fiscal legislation.

# Background

## About Parliament

The European Parliament is made up of 751 Members elected in the 28 Member States of the European Union. Since 1979, MEPs have been elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year period.

Each country decides on the form its election will take and a secret ballot. EU elections are by proportional representation.

Seats are allocated on the basis of population size of each Member State, but by "degressive proportionality", i.e. the largest member states actually have fewer members than could be expected on the basis of population size alone and the smallest member states have more. Slightly more than one third of MEPs are women. MEPs are grouped by political affinity, not nationality.

On top of making EU laws, Parliament scrutinizes the work of the EU Commission, approves EU budgets (together with the Council), has veto rights over the EU's international agreements and can suggest new laws to the Commission.

# Background

## Political groups in the European Parliament

(situation on 13.12.2017)

European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	217
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the EP	189
European Conservatives and Reformists	74
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe	68
European United Left - Nordic Green Left	52
The Greens/European Free Alliance	51
Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group	45
Europe of Nations and Freedom	37
Non-attached Members	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>751</b>