



Info

Hans-Gert Poettering elected President of the European Parliament

MEPs elected Hans-Gert Poettering to be the new European Parliament President with 450 votes in favour (or 65.31 per cent of the valid votes). He was elected after the first round of voting. The 61-year-old German Christian-Democrat will lead the European Parliament for two and a half years until the next European elections in June 2009.

Mr Poettering said: "The dignity of man, respect of law, and solidarity of the European peoples will be the principles of my engagement. Only if we work together, our peoples will have the possibility to defend its values and interests in the world. Whatever our political views, whatever our political ideals, our common will is to build a ever closer European Union. With all my force I want to serve the citizens of Europe, the European democracy and parliamentarism. I want to be a fair and objective president, and I hope you also judge my work in a fair and objective way."

Mr Poettering said that he would deliver his programme for his presidency in Strasbourg on 13 February at 10.00 am.

The results of the first-ballot was as follows:

Votes cast: 715

Blank or invalid votes: 26

Valid votes cast: 689

Absolute majority of votes cast required to be elected: 345

Votes for candidates:

Jens-Peter Bonde (IND/DEM, DK): 46

Francis Wurtz (EUL/NGL, FR): 48

Monica Frassoni (Greens/EFA, IT): 145

Hans Gert Poettering: 450 - Mr Poettering duly elected President of the European Parliament

Mr Poettering, who has been an MEP since 1979 and was, until recently, leader of Parliament's largest group - the EPP-ED group, replaces outgoing EP President Josep Borrell.

Under Parliament's Rules of Procedure, to be elected President, a candidate must win an absolute majority of the valid votes cast, i.e. 50 per cent plus one. Blank or spoiled ballots do not count in calculating the majority required.

Reactions of the political groups

Joseph DAUL (EPP-ED, FR), the newly elected leader of the EPP-ED group, said:

"This is a great moment for our political group. In the name of the EPP-ED Group and its 277 Members, I am delighted to warmly congratulate you on your election to the office of President of our institution. The European Parliament is the voice of the European citizens, from this day on this voice will be yours. Europe is already grateful to you for your political and personal engagement towards the reunification of the continent. Mr President, we know that the European statesman that you are, is first and foremost, concerned with the human person, with respect for his dignity and his liberty. The European Parliament and the European Institutions in general, have already benefited from your work of strengthening their competences."

Leader of the PES group, Martin **SCHULZ** (PES, DE) thanked the other candidates for a "dignified campaign". He stressed the importance of neutrality for the newly elected President. Mr Schulz pointed out that Mr Poettering had lost his father at the end of the Second World War and this had inspired Mr Poettering's career working for European re-unification.

Graham **WATSON** (ALDE, UK), leader of the ALDE group, said: "You know that my group opposed the process by which you and the Socialists carved up the House between you during this mandate. Nonetheless, I believe that the majority in my group voted for you, recognising your experience, admiring your political work in this House and convinced of your capacity to be an objective and fair President. As you know, in politics a halo is only 12 inches from being a noose and our reputations depend on our ability to meet ever-new challenges. I hope you will listen to the swelling chorus in this House in favour of reform. From having been ahead of our citizens in advancing the cause of European integration, our Member State leaders are now in danger of lagging behind."

Cristiana **MUSCARDINI** (UEN, IT) congratulated the new President but stressed the importance of facing up to the major challenges facing the Union. In particular, she pointed to the "*forgotten Africa*" and the situation in Nigeria and Somalia.

For the Greens/EFA group, Daniel **COHN-BENDIT** (DE) started by quoting Jimmy Cliff "You can get it if you really want", referring to Mr Poettering's ambitions to be the President of Parliament. He stressed the importance of independence and no longer embracing any national government. Second, the Parliament should hold a debate on the seat of the institution. Third, the European Parliament and not an intergovernmental conference, he said, was the place to solve the impasse over the European Constitution.

Francis **WURTZ** (GUE/NGL, FR) also called on the new President to be a President "for all MEPs" and he said that he had every faith in Mr Poettering who he had worked with as a fellow MEP since 1979.

Jens-Peter **BONDE** (IND/DEM, DK), a defeated candidate for President, said: "it was no great surprise that Mr Poettering had won the election". Nevertheless, he reiterated his campaigning themes of fairer representation, one seat for the Parliament, better preparation of votes and improving debates within Parliament.

For the newly formed ITS group, Bruno **GOLLNISCH** (ITS, FR) also stressed the importance of an impartial President and all of the MEPs' rights should be respected fully including the right to Parliamentary immunity.

Irena **BELOHORSKÁ**, for the non-attached MEPs, called on Mr Poettering to show patience, to recognise that the EU now had 27 Member States and to "end the discrimination against non attached MEPs:"

José Manuel **BARROSO**, President of the Commission said: "On my own behalf and on behalf of the European Commission, I want to congratulate you very sincerely. It gives me great pleasure to see you as President of the European Parliament. Today the European Parliament has elected a new leader whose qualities as a person and as a politician are uniquely well suited to this high office. I know the President as a person of political vision and integrity – qualities that will be needed in this very challenging job.

As the leader of your group, for eight years you have pursued your vision of political Europe as the only guarantee for a peaceful and prosperous Europe. Your attachment to the core values of justice, human rights, the dignity of the human person, have, for so many years, been the hallmark of your work. I want to highlight your fairness to everybody, from your insistence that everybody must be treated equally within Parliament, to the view that, in the European Union, no one country is bigger than another. We have all appreciated your honesty and transparency: with Mr Poettering you know that a done deal is a done deal and

one which he will honour and respect."

Mr President, allow me to highlight what I think will be a special responsibility for your mandate. You are the first President elected in this Parliament after this great enlargement of the European Union. That is why this is a truly historic moment: the first President elected by a Parliament representing the citizens of 27 countries! No other parliament in the world can compare to this."

Profile of Hans-Gert Poettering

Hans-Gert Poettering has been a Member of the European Parliament since the first direct elections in 1979. He was born on 15 September 1945 in Bersenbrück (Lower Saxony).

After studying law, politics and history in Bonn, Geneva and New York (doctorate 1974), he worked from 1976 to 1979 as an academic employee before being elected to the European Parliament for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) as deputy for the region Osnabrück, Emsland, Ostfriesland. In 1995, he was appointed Honorary professor and since 1999 he has been a Member of the Executive Committee and Federal Executive of CDU in Germany. For the 2004 European elections he was Head of CDU list for Germany and Lower Saxony.

From 1984 to 1994 he was chairman of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence. From 1994 to 1996, he chaired the EPP and EPP-ED working group on the "Intergovernmental Conference 1994", the results of which became the official EPP position for the Treaty of Amsterdam. In 1994, he also became vice-chairman of the EPP Group, from 1999 to the beginning of 2007 he was chairman of the EPP-ED Group.

Hans-Gert Pöttering has received various awards, such as the EPP Group Schuman Medal, the Grand Order of Merit of Germany, the Grand Decoration of the Republic of Austria or the "Mérite Européen en or". He was elected MEP of the Year for 2004. He is a Catholic and has two sons.

Duties of the President

The President chairs the plenary sittings of Parliament, the Conference of the Presidents of Political Groups and the Bureau of Parliament (made up of the President and the 14 Vice-Presidents, plus the Quaestors in an advisory capacity).

The President is responsible for the application of the Rules of Procedure of Parliament, and, to this end, oversees all the activities of Parliament and its bodies.

The President represents Parliament in all legal matters.

The President addresses the European Council prior to each of its meetings, stating Parliament's viewpoint on the subjects on the agenda in the framework of a debate with the heads of state and government.

The President represents Parliament in its international relations, and, in this connection, undertakes official visits within and outside the EU.

The President signs the EU budget into being following Parliament's vote on it at second reading. During the procedure, the President chairs the EP/Council conciliation delegations.

The President may, under the co-decision procedure, chair the EP/Council conciliation committee. Jointly with the President-in-Office of the Council, the President signs all legislative acts adopted by codecision.

When an Intergovernmental Conference is held for the reform of the Treaties, the President takes part in the meetings of the government representatives where these are organised at ministerial level.

Former Presidents of the European Parliament since 1952

Paul Henri Spaak	(1952 - 1954)
Alcide de Gasperi	(1954 - Died in office)

Giuseppe Pella (1954 - 1956)
Hans Furler (1956 - 1958 & 1960 - 1962)
Robert Schuman (1958 - 1960)
Gaetano Martino (1962 - 1964)
Jean Duvieusart (1964 - 1965)
Victor Leemans (1965 - 1966)
Alain Poher (1966 - 1969)
Mario Scelba (1969 - 1971)
Walter Behrendt (1971 - 1973)
Cornelis Berkhouwer (1973 - 1975)
Georges Spénale (1975 - 1977)
Emilio Colombo (1977 - 1979)
Simone Veil (1979 - 1982)
Piet Dankert (1982 - 1984)
Pierre Pflimlin (1984 - 1987)
Lord Plumb (1987 - 1989)
Enrique Barón Crespo (1989 - 1992)
Egon A. Klepsch (1992 - 1994)
Klaus Hänsch (1994 - 1997)
José Maria Gil-Robles (1997 - 1999)
Nicole Fontaine (1999 - 2002)
Pat Cox (2002 - 2004)
Josep Borrell Fontelles (2004 - 2007)

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