



## Profile of the leaders of Parliament's political groups

**Who are the new leaders of the political groups? On the opening session of the new European Parliament we take a look at the personalities MEPs have chosen as their leaders over the past few weeks and whose personalities will affect the agenda of the Parliament over the next years.**

The European Parliament now has seven political groups. The two largest are the centre-right European People's Party and the Socialists & Democrats.

The strength of the groups and the number of MEPs they can muster from all corners of Europe reflects the results of the June European elections. Read on here to see profiles of those elected to lead them.

The political groups play an important function in the life of the European Parliament as they help to consolidate opinions of MEPs with similar political outlooks ahead of important votes, forge agreements and provide expertise and support to individual Members.

The leaders of the political groups, together with the EP President, form the "Conference of Presidents" which decides on the agenda of the Plenary meetings.

## **Joseph Daul: European People's Party – EPP**

**Joseph Daul** was born in 1947 in Strasbourg, France.

After finishing his studies in agriculture he took over the small family farm at the age of 20 which is still run today by one of his two children. Early on in his career he became active in a French farming union and various rural youth movements. He continued this by becoming involved in farming associations at a European level as his career developed.

Later, Mr Daul was Chair of the National Federation of Beef Producers in France when the industry was shaken by the European BSE outbreak which damaged farmers and consumers.

Mr Daul was first elected in 1999 to the European Parliament where he became chair of the Agricultural Committee in 2002. In January 2007 he became chair of the European People's Party/European Democrats (EPP-ED) in the European Parliament. This post was confirmed after their successful showing in the European elections in June 2009.

He speaks French, Alsatian and German.

## **Martin Schulz: Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats**

**Martin Schulz** (53) was born in the German town of Hehlrath, close to the Belgian and Dutch border.

At the age of 19, one year after he joined the Social Democrats, he started work as a bookseller in various bookshops and publishing houses including from 1982 his own shop.

In the 1980s and early 1990s he was politically active at local and regional levels.

First elected to the European Parliament in 1994 where he was active in the Human Rights and the Civil Liberties committees before taking on senior positions in the Socialist group.

In July 2003 he famously clashed with Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, in the Parliamentary Chamber when the latter jokingly recommended him for a film role as a Kapo (concentration-camp inmate appointed as supervisor).

In 2004 he was first elected leader of the Socialist group, after the 2009 elections he was confirmed as the leader of the Socialists and Democrats in the EP.

## **Guy Verhofstadt: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)**

**Guy Verhofstadt** was born in 1953 in Dendermonde, Flanders, Belgium.

In the early 70's, he was active in the Flemish Liberal Student's Union while studying law in Ghent.

In 1982, at the young age of 29, he became president of the Party for Freedom and Progress (PVV). In 1985 he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies, and became Deputy Prime Minister and Budget Minister.

Due to his initially very liberal stance in economic matters and his young age he was nicknamed "The Kid" and "Baby Thatcher".

He became Prime Minister in July 1999. After his premiership he took up the seat of Senator to which he had been elected in 2007. In June 2009 he was elected to the EP for the first time.

## **Rebecca Harms: Greens/ European Free Alliance**

**Co-Chair Rebecca Harms** (53) has led the German Green list for the European Parliament both in the 2004 and 2009 elections.

While she worked as an MEP's assistant in the 1980s, the trained landscape gardener is known in Germany especially for her involvement in the anti-nuclear power movement and civil disobedience against a planned deposit site for nuclear waste in her native state of Lower Saxony.

Accordingly, much of her work in the European Parliament has also focussed on energy policy.

**Co-Chair Daniel Cohn-Bendit** (64), son of a German father and a French mother, he came to be known in both countries through his role in the 1968 student protests in Paris. Not having French nationality he was forced to leave France in the autumn of 1968.

In West Germany he became also an influential figure of the left and a friend of one-time German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. He joined the Green party in 1984 and has been an MEP continuously since 1994, being elected alternately in both France and Germany.

## **Michał Kamiński: European Conservatives and Reformists Group**

**Michał Kamiński** was born in March 1972 in Warsaw. He became politically active at the age of 15 in national conservative and Catholic opposition movements.

Mr Kaminski was first elected to the European Parliament for the Law and Justice party in 2004 where he became a member of the Internal Market committee and vice chair of the group Union for a Europe of Nations.

In July 2007 he left the EP to work as Secretary of State in the Chancellery of Polish President Lech Kaczyński for whom Kamiński, a former journalist, acted as the spokesperson.

With the June 2009 elections he returned to the European Parliament where he was a key player in the forming of the new ECR group.

He has been described by a member of his group as a “Euro-sceptic, free-market Atlanticist” and admirer of Pope John Paul II, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. He is father of two girls.

## **Lothar Bisky: Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left**

**Lothar Bisky** was born in 1941 in Zollbrück (now Korzybie, Poland) and grew up in West Germany before deciding to move to East Germany when he was 18 where he joined the ruling Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED).

After completing university he worked as an academic on film, media and communication.

After the fall of the Berlin wall he was elected to the East German Parliament. From 1993 he was chairman of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), successor of the SED, which after a merger became in 2007 The Left (Die Linke).

Since 2007 he is the President of the European Left party. He is married and the father of three sons and was first elected to the EP in June 2009.

## **Nigel Farage & Enrico Speroni: Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group**

**Co-Chair Nigel Farage** (45) from London was a commodity broker until he became a professional politician.

From his early youth until the resignation of Margaret Thatcher he was active in the Conservative Party.

In 1993 he became one of the founding members of the United Kingdom Independence Party which seeks withdrawal from the European Union and a Europe with little political integration.

He was first elected to the European Parliament in 1999 and re-elected in 2004 and 2009.

Since 2006 he leads the UKIP party and he was co-chair of the Independence and Democracy Group in the previous term of the EP.

**Co-Chair Francesco Enrico Speroni** (62) from Lombardy was elected to the EP for the fourth time in June 2009.

Before the June elections of this year he was vice-chair of the Legal Affairs Committee.

He was a member of local, regional and the Italian national parliament for Lega Nord since the 1980s and in 1994 was Minister for Institutional reforms within the first government of Silvio Berlusconi.

He is known for positions critical of further European integration and enlargement, notably towards Turkey.

He holds a degree in political sciences and law, and a trained flight engineer.