



*EU Environmental Policy Briefing**

The New European Parliament Committees: Environment, Agriculture, Fisheries and Budgets

July 2009

Background / context

The new European Parliament (EP) met for its first plenary session from 14-17 July 2009. During the inaugural session MEPs elected the Polish European People's Party (EPP) member Jerzy Buzek (from the Polish Civic Platform) as President of the EP. Prof. Jerzy Buzek, a former Polish Prime Minister and a moderate and respected voice on climate change in Poland, was rapporteur for the FP7 dossier and achieved the best election result in Poland (393,000 votes). The German Martin Schulz, leader of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats (S&D), will chair the EP for the second half of the term. MEPs also elected the 14 Vice-Presidents and the six Quaestors, who, together with the President, form the EP's Bureau. Two MEPs from the UK have been elected as Vice-President: Dianna Wallis for the Liberals and Democrats (ALDE) and Edward McMillan-Scott, the defiant Conservative who was standing for the post against the official nominee of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), the new euro-sceptic group in the EP set up by the UK Conservatives. As a result he lost his party whip and is serving now as an Independent.

The EP committees subsequently elected their chairs and vice-chairs during their opening sessions on Thursday 16 and Monday 20 July. However, the distribution of the committee chairmanships was already decided by negotiations between the political groups on the basis of the so-called 'D'Hondt method' which gives groups proportional representation according to their size. The centre-right EPP group kept ten chairs (including the chair of a subcommittee), the S&D seven (including the chair of a subcommittee) and the ALDE three, while the Greens/EFA group and the ECR group have taken one chair each. Three committees will be chaired by UK MEPs: the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON), the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) and the Committee on Transport and Tourism (TRAN).

Review of recent developments

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)

The names of the 64 members of the ENVI Committee were confirmed during its opening session on Thursday 16 July. During the meeting the Committee also elected its chair and vice-chairs.

* This work was funded by the statutory nature and landscape conservation agencies in the UK, as part of a contractual arrangement with IEEP to provide intelligence on EU environment policy and other policies which impact on the environment. It reflects the independent views of IEEP and not necessarily the views of the funding bodies. For further information contact Emma Watkins at ewatkins@ieep.eu.

Jo Leinen (S&D) has been chosen as the Chairman of the ENVI Committee. He is a member of the German Socialist Party (SPD) and has been an MEP with the Socialist (PES) Group since 1999. He was actively involved in the German anti-nuclear movement in the 1980s and was Minister for the Environment in the state of Saarland, Germany, from 1985-1994, in the government led by Oskar Lafontaine (then SPD, but now a leader of the far Left party *Die Linke*). In 1985 he was awarded the German Environment Foundation Prize. During the last parliamentary legislature, Jo Leinen was Chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and as such actively involved in negotiations on the Lisbon Treaty. He replaces former EPP member Miroslav Ouzky from the Czech Republic, who is returning to the Committee as a member of the ECR.

The four vice-chairs of the ENVI Committee are Corinne Lepage (ALDE, France), Carl Schlyter (Greens/EFA, Sweden), Boguslaw Sonik (EPP, Poland) and Dan Jørgensen (S&D, Denmark). Corinne Lepage, a first-time MEP, is a recognised lawyer specialised in environmental issues and a former Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development in the government of Prime Minister Juppé in the 1990s. Carl Schlyter was rapporteur on restrictions on the marketing and use of perfluorooctane sulfonates in the ENVI Committee and shadow rapporteur for the Greens on REACH. Dan Jørgensen is a young and very active MEP and strong on climate issues.

British MEP Chris Davies (ALDE) will return to the ENVI Committee. From June 2004 to May 2006, he led the UK Liberal Democrat Delegation in the EP. As a member of the ENVI Committee and in particular as the EP's rapporteur on the carbon capture and storage Directive, Chris Davies was a key contributor to negotiations on the climate and energy package.

Glenis Willmott, Nessa Childers and Linda McAvan (Labour) will sit on the ENVI Committee on behalf of the S&D Group. Linda McAvan has been very active and influential on climate change within the Labour Party. Martin Callanan, Julie Girling and Marina Yannakoudakis (Conservative) are on the Committee on behalf of the ECR Group.

Besides being appointed as member of the ENVI Committee, Jill Evans (Plaid Cymru) was elected as President of the European Free Alliance (EFA) and as the First Vice President of the Greens/EFA Group in the EP. She has been an MEP since 1999. Bairbre de Brún, a Sinn Féin politician and former Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for Northern Ireland, sits on the ENVI Committee as member of the Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL). Paul Nuttall, the 32-year old chairman of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and first-time MEP, sits on the ENVI Committee as member of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group (EFD). Nick Griffin, the leader of the far-right British National Party (BNP), will serve as a non-aligned committee member.

Among the other EPP members of the ENVI Committee Karl-Heinz Florenz, Peter Liese and Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines have been influential players in the past. Karl-Heinz Florenz (CDU, Germany) is an experienced and influential MEP who was rapporteur for the Temporary Committee on Climate Change (CLIM) on the Future Climate Change Strategy of the EU and an EP delegate to the COP-14 negotiations in Poznan in December 2008. Peter Liese (CDU, Germany), influential on environmental issues within the EPP, was rapporteur on the inclusion of aviation into the EU emission trading system and was also very active on eco-design legislation. Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines (Partido Popular, Spain) was rapporteur on the ongoing dossier regarding a soil framework Directive in which she sided with Member States who are demanding a great amount of flexibility in dealing with issues such as soil degradation.

Satu Hassi (Greens/EFA, Finland), a former Minister for Environment and Development Cooperation and leader of the Finnish Green Party from 1997 to 2001, also returns to the ENVI Committee. During the 2004-2009 parliamentary mandate she was vice-chair of the ENVI Committee and rapporteur on the effort sharing decision as part of the climate and energy package in 2008. She was also a member of the Temporary CLIM Committee and a delegate to COP-14. She was once again appointed as substitute in the Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) Committee.

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI)

The AGRI Committee held its opening session on Monday 20 July and elected first-time MEP Paolo De Castro (S&D, Italy) as its chairman. He is a former Italian Agriculture Minister (2006-2008 and 1998-2000), a professor of Agricultural Economics, and played a major role in the European negotiations for the 'Agenda 2000' CAP reforms. The following vice-chairs have been elected by the Committee: the 32-year old Rareş-Lucian Niculescu (EPP, Romania); the famous anti-globalisation activist José Bové (Greens/EFA, France); Marit Paulsen (ALDE, Sweden), a well-known figure in the Swedish public debate on environmental and food quality issues; and Janusz Wojciechowski (ECR, Poland).

The political groups have also agreed on their 'coordinators' for each policy area, i.e. the group's spokesperson for each Committee, who also has a decisive influence on how the group votes in Committee and subsequently in Plenary. On agriculture policy, Bavarian farmer Albert Dess will be the coordinator for the EPP. For the S&D Group, former Portuguese Farm Minister Luis Capoulas Santos retains the position which he held in the previous legislature. He was rapporteur on the Health Check proposals. The newly elected former NFU Scotland President George Lyon will be the coordinator for the ALDE Group. The new German MEP, organic farmer Martin Häusling, will be coordinator for the Greens/EFA Group.

Other UK members are: Alyn Smith (Greens/EFA), Richard Ashworth (ECR), James Nicholson (ECR), John Stuart Agnew (EFD) and Diane Dodds (non-aligned).

Committee on Fisheries (FISH)

Carmen Fraga Estévez (EPP, Spain) was elected chair of the FISH Committee. The following vice-chairs have been elected: Struan Stevenson (ECR, UK), Alain Cadec (EPP, France), Guido Milana (S&D, Italy) and Carl Haglund (ALDE, Denmark).

Carmen Fraga Estévez has been an MEP for the Spanish Partido Popular in 1994-2002 and held the position of chair of the FISH Committee in 1997-1999. She was Secretary-General for Maritime Fisheries between 2002 and 2004 and gave her support to the EU shark action plan.

Struan Stevenson was previously vice-chair of the EP Sustainable Development Intergroup (1999-2004), co-chair of EPIC (European Parliamentarians and Industrialists Council) (1999-2004) and chair of the FISH Committee (2002-2004). He has a wide background in fisheries and has been acting as rapporteur on proposals for recovery and management plans and the CFP's external fisheries agreements.

Other UK members are: Ian Hudghton (Greens/EFA) and Nigel Farage (EFD). Ian Hudghton has been an MEP for the Scottish National Party (SNP) since 1998 and is currently SNP's President. He has been rapporteur on several fisheries dossiers, amongst others on the Commission's Communication on rebuilding stocks of cod and hake in Community and adjacent waters. Nigel Farage from the UK Independence Party (UKIP) is a newcomer to the FISH Committee and to fisheries in general.

Committee on Budgets (BUDG)

Alain Lamassoure (EPP, France) was elected chair of the BUDG Committee. His German predecessor, Reimer Böge (EPP, Germany) will remain influential: he was appointed as rapporteur for the EP's opinion on changes to the EU Budget for the post-2014 period based on the work of a new special committee to be chaired by the German Socialist, Jutta Haug. Vice-chairs are in order of precedence: Jutta Haug (S&D, Germany), Alexander Alvaro (ALDE, Germany), Jean-Luc Dehaene (EPP, Belgium) and Ivaylo Kalfin (S&D, Bulgaria).

Jean-Luc Dehaene is a former Belgian Prime Minister (1992-1999), was vice-chair of the European Convention (2001-2003) and played a major role in the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, as author of a report on the impact of the Lisbon Treaty on the power balance within the EU which was adopted by the EP earlier in 2009.

Another potentially influential member is Daniel Cohn-Bendit (Greens/EFA, France) who has been an MEP since 1994 and co-chairman of the Greens/EFA since 2002. The Conservative James Elles (ECR) is the only full member from the UK.

Key future developments / upcoming events

The rapporteurs for individual legislative dossiers will be appointed on a case-by-case basis. Just like the election of the committee's chairs and vice-chairs, the election of rapporteurs is the result of horse-trading among the political groups and the application of the 'D'Hondt method'. The same is true for the shadow rapporteurs who are now mentioned in the EP's rules of procedure, reflecting their growing influence in EP and EU decision-making – shadow rapporteurs have been increasingly involved in negotiations with the Council and Commission.

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