

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT UPDATE

July 2009



Welcome to the third edition of Hill & Knowlton's European Parliament update!

The shape and character of the 7th European Parliament has become clearer by the end of its first Strasbourg plenary session. In our third H&K Update, we provide insights into this week's key appointments, from that of President to those in the EP's committees – the engine room of the Parliament's work.

Only five years after the accession of Poland to the EU, MEPs elected **Jerzy Buzek**, a former prime minister, as President by a decisive majority. He won 555 of the 644 votes cast on 14 July. His path to power was made easier by the withdrawal of his only serious rival, former liberal ALDE group leader Graham Watson, following a closed door deal between leaders of the centre-right EPP and centre-left Socialists and Democrats (S&D). As a result, the five year presidential term will be shared between Buzek and an as yet undefined Socialist and Democrat.

Also appointed were 14 Vice-Presidents who, together with the President and five Quaestors, make up the **Parliament's Bureau** – the body responsible for decisions relating to budget, administration, organisation and staff.

So what are **Vice-Presidents** for? Their most visible function is chairing plenary sessions when the President is unavailable. In addition to such ceremonial duties, each of the 14 has a specific role. For example, two VPs are entrusted with the implementation of the relations with national parliaments and three are chosen to serve as the Parliament's representatives in the conciliation process.

Unlike the Vice-Presidents, the five **Quaestors** – a term first used in ancient Rome to describe elected officials with responsibility for taxes and the republic's budget – are not entrusted with ceremonial but rather practical duties. Their time is taken up by such mundane but important matters as security, staffing and equipment, as well as visitors' groups. Additionally, they have the final say on exhibitions that MEPs may wish to host, a role which can sometimes be controversial!

The Parliament's 22 committees are where the policy work in the Parliament is done. Rumours as to who will steer their progress have circulated through the Brussels landscape in the previous days and weeks. On 16 July, the **chairs and vice-chairs of 12 of the committees** were confirmed at constitutive meetings of the committees. The top positions on the remaining 10 committees – and other roles such as those of coordinators - will be formally filled next week.

We hope you enjoy reading H&K's insights into developments during a week where the Parliament's politics and personalities have come alive.

Libor Roucek: travelling Vice President

If your experience of life could be measured by the variety of countries lived and worked in, Czech Socialist Libor Roucek's cup is overflowing. His jobs and travels have included being a miner in Czechoslovakia, bottle separator for Coca Cola, Doctor of Philosophy in Austria, editor of the Voice of America in the US, and researcher at the Royal Institute of International Affairs. In the mid-90s, Roucek returned to his native Czech Republic to serve as a government spokesman and became a Member of the Czech Parliament. He has been in the European Parliament since his election in 2004. Overall, his patchwork of experiences will come in handy in his new function as a Vice-President

Did you know...

- **Jerzy Buzek** is the 13th President of the EP since 1979. Let's hope that the number will not bring him any bad luck!
- Of the Parliament's 13 Presidents, only two have been **women**. And both were French!
- The oldest President of the EP was **Pierre Pflimlin**, again French, who entered the office at the age of 77.
- At the opposite end of the spectrum, **Enrique Barón Crespo**, a Spaniard, counts as the youngest President having taken up his role at the age of 45.
- **France** and **Germany**, the continent's odd couple, have had three Presidents each. Let's see which one of them will step ahead.
- The EP works in **23 languages**. The new President will have to do his best not to get lost in translation.
- During plenary sessions in **Strasbourg**, 3.5 tonnes of fresh oranges are crushed every day for orange juice. We wish good health to new MEPs!

Jerzy Buzek: the new EP President

Surprisingly, **Jerzy Buzek (EPP)** is not the first Pole to seek the European Parliament's top job. As early as 2004, Bronisław Geremek (ALDE) campaigned for Presidency, not knowing of the EPP-PES agreement which made a successful candidature on his side impossible. This time, ALDE candidate Graham Watson wisely withdrew his candidature a week before the election in light of yet another deal between centre-right EPP and the social democratic S&D on a shared Presidency during the new legislative term.

In any case, Buzek is a case in point that the European Parliament is increasingly becoming an attractive destination for former national political heavyweights. The Pole is only the second President of the European Parliament since its direct election in 1979 to have previously served as Prime Minister. The first was Pierre Pflimlin (EP President from 1983 to 1987) who served as the penultimate Prime Minister of the French Fourth Republic in 1958, before being replaced by Charles de Gaulle during the Algeria crisis.

Edward McMillan-Scott: surprise of the week

One might be forgiven for thinking Vice-Presidents are relatively unimportant given there are 14 of them and their largely symbolic role and duties. In a reminder that chance can play role in EU politics, **MEP Edward McMillan-Scott** followed his own conscience (and some might say personal ambition) and decided to campaign for a vice-presidential position. Surprising some, the British Conservative was elected to one of the 14 positions on 15 July.

A respected Vice-President in the last legislature, **Edward McMillan-Scott** had no problem being re-elected despite the lack of support from his own group – the new European Conservatives and Reformists, sparing the European Parliament the embarrassment of being officially represented by Polish MEP Michal Kaminski, whose sometimes divisive comments have already raised concerns. The only problem is that McMillan and Kaminski are in fact colleagues in the newly established European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group and that McMillan-Scott's solo efforts have now destroyed fellow Brit's, Geoffrey van Orden's, hopes of ECR leadership... Might the EPP get a British Member afterall?



Spotlight on... Committee chairmanships



Agriculture: The EP's Agriculture Committee will gain considerable weight under the Lisbon Treaty, as most of its dossiers will be voted under the co-decision procedure. All the more important that the new chair is well-qualified for the job: **Paolo De Castro (S&D)** has served as Italian Minister of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policies under numerous governments. Furthermore, he is no newcomer in Brussels either, having served as a special advisor to Romano Prodi during his time as President of the European Commission.



Environment and Health: After more than 10 years of EPP leadership, the ENVI committee is back in the hands of the European Socialists (S&D for the first time since Scottish ex-MEP Ken Collins). **Jo Leinen's** environmental credentials may be a bit dusty – the more high-brow constitutional affairs committee having been his playing field over the past 9 years – but are nonetheless impressive: Vice-President of the European Environmental Bureau from 1979 to 1984 and Minister of the Environment in the German Saar region after that. If he should need a refresher on matters relating to environment, food safety and health, his party colleague Dagmar Roth-Behrendt will surely give him some useful advice. The long-standing ENVI member might have been a candidate for the job herself, but can now look forward to some long nights leading the EP delegation as Vice-President during conciliation.



Economic and Monetary Affairs: In negotiations over the committee chairmanships, representatives of Her Majesty's Government in Brussels were desperate to claim leadership of ECON for one of their own. Fearful of the threat of EC regulation, City bankers may have lost their stiff upper lip, if a French or German national had taken up the role. Now they can relax in the knowledge that **Sharon Bowles**, a market-friendly British Liberal Democrat, will fill the position. They might have overlooked, however, that the "rapporteur" role on the Commission's proposals for a reform of the financial market system will be far more important than that of chair.



Industry, Research and Energy: Having been placed by the CDU low down on the regional list in his native North-Rhine Westphalia, **Herbert Reul** only just made it back into the European Parliament. This, however, did not prevent him from winning one of the Parliament's most prestigious chairmanships. A former teacher, Reul's main focus might have originally been education but, since his first election to the EP in 2004, he has built his portfolio step by step around energy and industrial matters. Eloquent and sharp, Reul is not afraid of expressing his opinion – be that within the German CDU/CSU delegation, in committee or in discussions with the Commission.



Budget Control: Highly popular in his native Italy, liberal **Luigi de Magistris** achieved the second highest result during EP elections in June. A public prosecutor since 1995, his investigations have frequently focused on links between the Mafia and politicians. Most famous is his work during the "Poseidone" investigation into misuse by politicians of European Community subsidies for sewage filter systems and other business projects in Calabria. Rather ironically, Clemente Mastella, the Minister of Justice who controversially removed de Magistris from his investigation, is now a fellow MEP for the EPP.



Women's Rights: The 4th vice-chair of the European Parliament's committee on women's rights and gender equality might not be the most influential position the Parliament has to give. Nonetheless, EPP MEP **Barbara Matera's** rise to the position has been quite a remarkable proof that in Italy equal opportunities are available to all!

Coming soon

Look out for this space for in-depth analysis on the formation of new committees and rapporteurships in the upcoming weeks!

Are you ready for change?

To help you assess what the new European Parliament means for your organisation, Hill & Knowlton offers you:

- A tailored analysis of the new Parliament, including profiles of the most relevant MEPs, outlining their political background, their position on key policy issues and degree of influence within the new Parliament;
- An assessment of the political balance within key Committees;
- Analyses and timelines of key dossiers;
- Ongoing political intelligence, with flash updates on relevant developments;
- Outreach support to help you be among the first to establish meaningful contacts with those MEPs who matter most.

To find out how Hill & Knowlton can help your organisation on EU policy matters, please contact: Elaine Cruikshanks, Head of Global Public Affairs, CEO Brussels, Email: ecruiksh@hillandknowlton.com, Telephone: +32 2 737 95 00