

Article – Croatian Council presidency: what MEPs expect



Busy period ahead

Croatia will presided over the Council of the EU during a busy period, when there will be negotiations on the EU's long-term budget as well as on future relations with the UK. However, MEPs expect to see other topics on the agenda too.

[Karlo Ressler \(EPP\)](#) sees the presidency as a great opportunity for Croatia to further position itself politically, economically and diplomatically within the EU. "Croatia will continue to address the issue of Brexit and lead the negotiations on a budget for the next seven years. One of the key events will certainly be the summit in Zagreb, with a focus on the European perspective of Southeast European countries."

[Biljana Borzan \(S&D\)](#) said protecting the rights of workers and consumers, as well as public health and the rule of law should be at the forefront. "I hope that the negotiations on [the EU's long-term budget] will be successful because implementation of programmes and politics for which citizens voted on during the European elections, like the European Green Deal, depends on it"

[Valter Flego \(Renew Europe\)](#) said: "Croatia needs to act as a neutral mediator and ensure successful cooperation and continuous implementation of the [EU's] programme". He also believes that Croatia will have an opportunity to "directly show to its people what Europe does for them".

[Ruža Tomašić \(ECR\)](#) expects lobbying in the national interests. "The most

important document from the previous term, the report on the multi-annual plan for fish stocks in the Adriatic Sea, is still at a dead end in the Council. I expect this will change during Croatia's presidency". She also wants to see progress on direct payments in agriculture and the activation of unused agricultural land.

Article – Coming up: proposals for creating a better Europe in 2020



Climate emergency

Tackling the climate emergency is one of the EU's top priorities. The European Commission is working on a [Green Deal](#) to make the EU climate-neutral by 2050. Expect proposals on sustainable food, more durable products, pesticides, a biodiversity strategy for 2030, as well as plans for fewer harmful [emissions from aviation and shipping](#).

EU's long-term budget

Negotiations on the EU's budget for 2021-2027 will continue. Parliament is calling for more money to fight climate change, boost innovation and protect our borders.

Digital services

The Commission is expected to launch a proposal for a Digital Services Act as

well as one regarding artificial intelligence. The latter should clarify legal issues and help to boost investment for companies dealing with it in Europe. Parliament will be looking into whether automated decision-making systems can be biased due to the algorithm being used.

Banking Union

The euro zone crisis showed the need for further integration of the EU's financial system. In 2020 the Parliament will work on proposals for completing the Banking Union, including a scheme to protect savings and backup measures in case a bank goes bust.

Trade deals

Parliament will vote on trade and investment agreements with Vietnam, which would remove 99% of tariffs. In addition, the EU will continue working on new deals with other countries, including Australia and New Zealand, Chile, Indonesia, the Philippines, Morocco and Tunisia. Talks for an investment agreement with China are also ongoing.

Health

Early next year the European Commission is expected to come up with an action plan to fight cancer, which will be examined by the Parliament.

Passenger rights

A new proposal seeks to update passenger rights for people travelling by air or rail. MEPs are especially keen to boost the rights of people with a disability.

Enlargement

Talks will continue with countries wanting to join the EU. The Parliament is pushing for the EU to launch accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia as they have met the requirements. MEPs will also debate the prospects of Western Balkan countries joining.

Brexit

The UK is currently due to leave the EU on 31 January 2020, although it is possible for the country to leave earlier if the withdrawal agreement has been approved by the UK and the European Parliament.

Once the withdrawal agreement has been approved, the [next step](#) would be to negotiate an agreement on future relations, which would include issues such as trade and cooperation on defence, the environment and the fight against terrorism.

Security

Parliament and the Council are currently negotiating proposals to combat the dissemination of terrorist content online. Temporary border controls in the

Schengen area are also under discussion and . In addition the Commission is expected to come up with a proposal to secure EU borders next year.

Schuman declaration

On 9 May it will be 70 years since French foreign minister [Robert Schuman](#) [proposed](#) creating a European Coal and Steel Community, the first step on the path to the current EU.

[Article – Five ways the EU protects you when you shop online \(video\)](#)



Thanks to the [digital single market](#), online shopping has become much safer and easier.

Key rights

You can now shop online for goods or services from any EU country. Retailers can no longer redirect you to a local store with different prices and products, a practice known as [geo-blocking](#). The [regulation putting an end to unjustified geo-blocking](#) was approved by MEPs and entered into force on 3 December 2018.

In addition, online sellers must make all costs clear from the start – no more nasty surprises at checkout. They must provide [clear information about](#)

[the total price](#), including all taxes and additional charges. If there are [additional fees for services](#) such as express delivery or travel insurance, you cannot be charged for them unless you actively select them. You also cannot be charged extra for using your credit or debit card.

Right to return or cancel

You have [14 days to return an order you made online](#) for any reason and still get a refund. There are some exceptions, such as train and plane tickets, concert tickets or hotel bookings. You must also inform the trader that you want to cancel the purchase.

You also have the right to [cancel an order if it is not delivered](#) at the agreed time or within 30 days and receive a refund.

Two-year guarantee

All goods bought in EU countries as well as in Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway are covered by a minimum [two-year guarantee](#). National rules may provide extra protection and a trader may also offer an additional guarantee, but this does not replace or reduce the two-year guarantee.

If the product you bought was damaged during delivery, is faulty or does not look or work as advertised, the seller is obliged to repair or replace it free of charge or give you a price reduction or a full refund. The guarantee also covers second-hand goods bought from a trader, but not from private individuals.

[Germany: Investment Plan for Europe – EIB provides EUR 185m for modernising regional rail in Greater Berlin](#)

- **Funds will go to Ostdeutsche Eisenbahn GmbH for acquiring new trains**
- **EIB financing under the Investment Plan for Europe (Juncker Plan)**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) is providing EUR 185m for modernising regional rail in Greater Berlin. DAL Deutsche Anlagen-Leasing is set to lease new, EIB-financed rolling stock to Ostdeutsche Eisenbahn GmbH (ODEG), which in January 2019 won Lots 1 and 4 of the Europe-wide tender launched by Verkehrsverbund Berlin-Brandenburg (VBB) for the modernisation of the “Elbe-Spree” network. The EU bank loan is guaranteed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the central pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe. The EIB and the European Commission work together as strategic partners on this initiative, with the EU bank using its financing to help make the European economy more competitive.

The EIB is supporting ODEG with the implementation of Lot 1. This lot covers the purchase of an initial 21 six-car “Desiro HC” trains, which are expected to enter service on the RE1 regional express line linking Magdeburg with Cottbus via Berlin and Frankfurt (Oder) by the end of 2022. The new trains offer a considerable improvement in comfort and have generous space for bicycles, prams and wheelchairs and an accessible toilet in each multi-purpose carriage. They also have wider doors to enable faster boarding and free WiFi for the convenience of passengers.

EIB Vice-President Ambroise Fayolle, who is responsible for EFSI and operations in Germany, said: *“This financing for new trains will give a major boost to the modernisation and development of regional rail in Greater Berlin. At the EU bank, we are convinced that a well-functioning rail network with good connections and offering enhanced comfort for passengers can make a vital contribution to reducing the number of cars on the roads and in this way lower pollution and mitigate climate change.”*

Andreas Geue, Chairman of the Board of DAL Deutsche Anlagen-Leasing, added: *“The implementation of Lots 1 and 4 is a milestone for regional rail in the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan area. It offers not only an outstanding transport concept, but also an innovative financing structure. We’re happy to literally get this project on track as leasing provider.”*

Background information

DAL

Part of Sparkassen-Finanzgruppe, DAL Deutsche Anlagen-Leasing offers tailored, asset-based financing solutions in its target markets of large corporates, real estate, supply and infrastructure, transport and logistics, and IT and healthcare. With transaction volumes of over EUR 2.5bn a year, the company is a leading specialist in implementing large-volume investment projects in Germany.

[Article – Merry Christmas from everyone at the European Parliament!](#)



It has been quite a year. From European elections, which brought many new faces to Parliament, to electing the new European Commission and approving laws, 2019 was busy.

Check out our [photo gallery](#) to catch up with some of the highlights of the year and [read our article for a reminder of key moments](#): from the [hearings of candidate commissioners](#) to approving a ban on [single use plastics](#) and [cutting emissions](#).

In 2020, the [new Parliament and Commission](#) will have to live up to the pledges made to the people of Europe in the context of the elections. Find out about some of the key issues coming up in our article on 1 January.