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1. European Elections 2019

Attention in Brussels is turning to the next European elections which will take place 23 to 26 May 2019 in the different countries of the EU. Elections for the directly elected European Parliament take place every five years. In preparation, the main political parties are appointing their candidate or "Spitzenkandidat" for the most influential positions (the presidencies of the European Parliament, Commission and Council). The candidate is put forward by national leaders in the European Council, taking account of the results of the European Parliament elections. He or she needs the support of a majority of members of the European Parliament in order to be elected. In the last elections in 2014 the EPP (European People's Party) won the elections and Jean-Claude Juncker, the EPP's "Spitzenkandidat", became President of the European Commission. The current Commission's term runs until 31 October 2019. Jean-Claude Juncker has said that he will not seek a second term as Commission President.

The main political parties each have their own timetable for the appointment of their candidate. For the EPP applications have to be submitted between 6-17 September and the candidate will be elected on 7 November at the EPP Congress in Helsinki. So far, the Chairman of the EPP, Manuel Weber (DE), has declared his candidacy. The PES (Party of European Socialists) requires applications to be submitted by 18 October and elections to take place on 1 December; the official appointment will be confirmed on 7-8 December at the PES Congress in Lisbon. The ACRE (Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe) will appoint their candidate in an informal procedure to be concluded around October. For ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe) applications are to be submitted by 1 February 2019 with the candidate to be appointed immediately thereafter. The European Greens will present a dual candidacy and the two candidates will be appointed during their Congress on 23-25 November in Berlin. The European Left will appoint its candidate at a general meeting on 30 September in Brussels.

Work in the current term of the European Parliament will end on 18 April 2019, with the first session of the newly elected parliament to take place on 2 July 2019.

2. State of the Union Address

On 12 September European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker delivered his final annual State of the Union address. He presented his priorities for the year ahead and vision for the EU. He said that "The geopolitical situation makes this Europe's hour: the time for European sovereignty has come. It is time Europe took its destiny into its own hands. This belief that "united we stand taller" is the very essence of what it means to be part of the European Union. Sharing sovereignty – when and where needed – makes each of our nation states stronger."

President Juncker's speech in the European Parliament was accompanied by the adoption of 18 concrete initiatives by the European Commission on migration and borders, security, free and secure elections, the European Union's partnership with Africa and the EU as a global actor. These include a proposal to further strengthen the supervision of EU financial institutions to better address money-laundering and terrorist financing threats by amending the Regulation on the European Banking Authority (EBA) in order to strengthen the EBA's role and give it the necessary tools and resources to ensure effective cooperation and convergence of supervisory standards.

This proposal is part of a broader strategy to strengthen the EU framework for prudential and anti-money laundering supervision for financial institutions, set out in a Communication. The Fifth Anti-Money Laundering Directive provides for stronger supervision of money-laundering issues in the EU. The Directive sets up a system for better cooperation and exchange of information between

money-laundering and prudential supervisors. However several recent cases of money laundering in European banks have given rise to concerns about weaknesses and gaps in the implementation of the legislative framework by the EU's network of different supervisors.

3. Criminalisation of Money Laundering

Money laundering is a criminal offence in all EU countries, but definitions and sanctions vary. On 12 September MEPS in a plenary session of the European Parliament approved two new measures aimed at preventing money laundering and terrorist financing introduced as part of the EU's action plan against the financing of terrorism.

The first of these measures is the proposed directive on countering money laundering by criminal law. It aims to strengthen the EU legal framework by providing EU-wide definitions and minimum penalties for money laundering. The definition of 'criminal activity' within the meaning of the Directive includes any type of criminal involvement in carrying out terrorism and related criminal tax offences. EU-wide minimum penalties will include a minimum of four years of imprisonment for money laundering and new additional sanctions such as barring those convicted of money laundering from running for public office, holding a position of public servant and excluding them from access to public funding.

Member States must provide for the confiscation of all property and proceeds derived from, and instrumentalities used or intended to be used in the commission of, any criminal activity as defined in this Directive. They shall also take the necessary measures to ensure cooperation in the freezing and confiscation of property derived from any of the offences. The new rules on the criminalisation of money laundering were approved by 634 votes to 46, and 24 abstentions.

The second measure is the proposal for a regulation on controls on cash entering or leaving the Union. The term 'cash' includes four categories: cash, bearer negotiable instruments, highly liquid value goods and certain types of anonymous prepaid cards. Authorities will be able to register information about cash movements below the current €10,000 threshold and to temporarily seize cash if they suspect criminal activity. The new rules also require disclosure of unaccompanied cash sent by cargo or post. There will be a coordinated set of penalties across the EU in the case of non-compliance. The new rules on cash flows were approved by 625 votes to 39, and 34 abstentions.

Both new measures still require the formal approval of the European Council. Member States will have 24 months from the date of entry into force of the criminalisation of money laundering directive to bring the new rules into force. The rules on cash controls will apply 30 months from the date into force of the regulation.

4. Development of a Smart Readiness Indicator for Buildings

The revised Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) requires the development of a voluntary European scheme for rating the smart readiness of buildings: the "Smart Readiness Indicator" (SRI). The SRI aims at making the added value of building smartness more tangible for building users, owners, tenants and smart service providers. The indicator is intended to raise awareness about the benefits of smart technologies and ICT in buildings (from an energy perspective), motivate consumers to accelerate investments in smart building technologies and support the uptake of technology innovation in the building sector. DG Energy of the European Commission has now published a report summarising the main conclusions of a technical study commissioned towards the development of the SRI.

A greater uptake of smart technologies is expected to lead to significant energy savings in a cost-effective way, while also helping to improve in-door comfort for occupants of buildings. Impact categories considered include: energy; flexibility for the grid; self-generation; comfort; convenience; well-being and health; maintenance and fault prediction and information to occupants.

For the SRI assessment procedure, the assumption is that a competent assessor will make a site visit to the premises to conduct the SRI assessment and compute its score. This may evolve over time into other assessment processes such as for example the use of Building Information Models (BIM) to facilitate the assessment process and the emergence of some form of standardised labelling of smart-ready products. Two case study buildings were used, a single family house in Manchester (England) and an office building in Genk (Belgium). Further information is available from the website of the project (shown in useful links below).

Useful links

www.cepi.eu

European Elections

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections-press-kit/key-dates/>

State of the Union 2018

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/state-union-2018-hour-european-sovereignty-2018-sep-12_en

European Parliament Procedure File on the criminalisation of money laundering

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2016/0414\(OLP\)](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2016/0414(OLP))

European Parliament Procedure File on controls of cash

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2016/0413\(COD\)](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2016/0413(COD))

Smart Readiness Indicator for Buildings

<https://smartreadinessindicator.eu/>