

# **CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION PARLIAMENTS**

## **- THE FUTURE OF EUROPE -**

**Budapest, 11-12 May 2025**

**Conclusions of the Presidency**

## **Introductory remarks**

The Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments was held in Budapest on 11-12 May 2025, attended by the Speakers/Presidents, Deputy Speakers/Vice Presidents or their representatives from 34 Parliaments/Chambers of 25 Member States as well as by Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament. In addition, the Speakers/Presidents or their representatives from 7 candidate countries were also present, and the Speakers, Deputy Speakers from the Parliaments of an additional 2 countries, as well as the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, participated as observers. The conference was hosted by László Kövér, Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly.

Recalling paragraph 5.1 of the Stockholm Guidelines, the Presidency acknowledges that, due to their constitutional status, some Parliaments and Chambers cannot directly associate themselves with substantive political statements and therefore should not be seen as indicating specific support for all sections. Nonetheless, the Speakers/Presidents concerned, on behalf of their Parliaments and Chambers, recognise the significance of the issues raised and the intention of their colleagues in proposing particular ways forward.

The Conference consisted of two sessions on:

- I. The future European Union
- II. Regionalism in Europe, and safeguarding Europe's cultural identity

### **I. The future European Union**

#### The Speakers/Presidents

- (1) agree that the EU needs a clear strategic plan, including common and resilient answers, in the current challenging global environment, with a strong focus on security, digital transformation, climate change and on upholding the fundamental values of the EU.
- (2) welcome the key EU objectives set out in the Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 to promote a Europe that is free and democratic, strong and secure, prosperous and competitive, through which Europe can be better equipped to deal with immediate and future challenges, risks and threats.
- (3) welcome the opening of the debate on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period after 2027, emphasising the need for a future-oriented, flexible, and sufficiently ambitious budget.
- (4) emphasise that strong Member States will continue to play an essential role in shaping the future of the EU, in building a strong, sovereign and resilient Europe, and that parliamentary diplomacy adds significant value in this respect.

- (5) are firmly committed to the values on which the EU is founded, as set out in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union. The protection and reinforcement of these values is a shared responsibility of parliaments, Member State governments and the EU institutions.
- (6) highlight the importance of consistently respecting the principles of conferral, subsidiarity and proportionality, as set out in Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union, as well as the specific constitutional arrangements of the Member States. They also stress the need to ensure transparency in the functioning of EU institutions as a cornerstone of democratic legitimacy and to strengthen cooperation with national parliaments, within the framework of the Treaties.
- (7) agree that parliaments should further strengthen their constructive role in shaping the content of EU policies and influencing EU legislation, making full use of the possibilities offered by the Treaties. The Speakers/Presidents underline that parliaments are indispensable actors in the debate on the future of Europe and in the creation of the future European Union. They call for these issues to continue to be actively discussed at EU interparliamentary events, in particular at COSAC meetings.
- (8) believe that further developing relations between the EU institutions and national parliaments would contribute to addressing the democratic deficit in the European Union and would bring the European Union closer to its citizens. This is also essential to ensure greater transparency and dialogue. They express regret that the new European Commission has not prioritised cooperation with national parliaments and hope that this important aspect will receive greater attention in the future.
- (9) encourage the development of dialogue and exchange of views between the European Commission and national parliaments and invite the European Commission to ensure the regular participation of the relevant Commissioners at the permanent interparliamentary events organised in the framework of the parliamentary dimension of the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. Furthermore, they call for regular visits by Commissioners to the national parliaments of Member States, ensuring that these visits take into account geographical balance, to ensure fair representation across all EU Member States.
- (10) agree that the future European Union is also fundamentally determined by enlargement, which they see as a geostrategic investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity. They encourage both the Union and the accession countries to make the best use of the potential of enlargement, in line with the merit-based approach. This should be equally applied to all the accession countries. They agree with the European Council, as stated in its Conclusions of December 2023, that both the European Union and the future Member States need to be ready at the time of accession. The Speakers/Presidents attach particular importance to participation in EU capacity-building programmes to prepare candidate countries and potential candidates for EU accession.

- (11) agree that a more competitive Union can better protect its citizens, values, and interests while maintaining its prosperity and the European social model. They urge to make the Union more competitive, productive, innovative and sustainable, building on economic, social and territorial cohesion, and ensuring convergence and a level playing field both within the Union and globally, in line with the Budapest Declaration. The Speakers/Presidents also highlight the importance of investing in green technologies, digital infrastructure, and a just energy transition.
- (12) recognize the need for a stronger and more capable European Union in the field of security and defence, which would contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO, respecting the competences defined in the Treaties. The Speakers/Presidents reiterate continued and unwavering support to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, and reaffirms the need to provide continued military, political, financial, economic, humanitarian, and diplomatic support to Ukraine respecting the national competences of each EU Member States. This is essential for the establishment and maintenance of a just and lasting peace taking into account the principles of the UN Charter and international law on the continent, based on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. Recall the conclusions from the EU Speakers Conference in Palma in 2024 and reiterate their condemnation of Russia's illegal aggression of Ukraine. Speakers/Presidents express their hope that negotiations aimed at achieving ceasefire and peace will lead to success and underline the principle that no initiative regarding Ukraine be taken without Ukraine.
- (13) draw attention that in light of the challenges caused by the invasion, efforts to lower energy prices for households and businesses across the Union need to be accelerated and intensified taking into account the different energy mixes of EU Member States and national circumstances based on Article 194 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.
- (14) recognise the importance of transatlantic cooperation in addressing global challenges, fostering economic growth, and ensuring peace and security.
- (15) welcome the fact that Romania and Bulgaria have become full members of the Schengen area and underline the need for the proper functioning of the Schengen area and the effective protection of the EU's external borders as an essential prerequisite and contribution to Europe's security. The Speakers/Presidents agree that enhancing common action to address illegal migration remains among the top priorities.
- (16) believe that demographic challenges must be addressed as part of the efforts to build a stronger, more dynamic and more cohesive Europe, with a particular focus on supporting existing internal human resources.

## **II. Regionalism in Europe and safeguarding Europe's cultural identity**

### The Speakers/Presidents

- (17) reaffirm that preserving and strengthening a linguistically and culturally diverse Europe requires particular attention to national, regional and local specificities and values. In this regard, they recall that the Conclusions of the Conference of Speakers held under the parliamentary dimension of the Spanish Presidency emphasised the need to protect and promote the cultural and linguistic diversity of the European Union, including in the parliamentary sphere.
- (18) stress that a strong Europe can only be built by increasing the confidence of European citizens in the Union. Through the effective use of cohesion policy instruments such as the European Regional Development Fund, the EU can deliver tangible results for citizens while respecting the principle of subsidiarity, thus increasing trust and commitment to the EU.
- (19) emphasise that the EU's cohesion policy must contribute to strengthening the Union's economic, social, and territorial cohesion by reducing disparities between regions, promoting convergence, economic growth, cooperation and innovations, and supporting the implementation of environmental considerations through development based on local specificities. The active involvement of regional actors and authorities helps ensure that EU funds can be used in line with local needs. Stress the need to consider the specific characteristics of the outermost regions and use the powers of adaptation permitted by Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.
- (20) support aligning efforts to enhance competitiveness and convergence of EU regions and strengthen social cohesion with the principles of sustainable development, ensuring that economic growth is inclusive, environmentally responsible, and benefits all regions equitably. The Speakers/Presidents encourage consideration of the diversity of economic ecosystems at the national, regional and local levels.
- (21) agree that considering the specificities and needs of regional and local communities can contribute to maintaining the unity of the EU by enabling all citizens to feel part of a larger European community with their own culture and traditions. They are aware that embracing our common cultural heritage not only serves to preserve local identities, but also embodies a common European idea – also reflecting the EU's fundamental values – rooted in the preservation of national values and traditions. The rich repository of European cultural heritage – composed of the unique cultures of our nations and regions – is a legacy that every European citizen can consider their own.
- (22) point out that the destruction of cultural assets, especially built heritage, in conflict zones is an irreparable loss for all of us. This is why they consider it

important to raise awareness of and protect cultural heritage at all stages of crises, in order to promote reconciliation, as well as intercultural and inter-faith dialogue, in line with the Conclusions of the Council of the European Union of 21 June 2021. They also point out that preserving and developing cultural heritage not only maintains social cohesion in Europe but can also bring economic benefits. In this respect, the Speakers/Presidents emphasise the importance of the Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property (Nicosia Convention).

- (23) draw attention to the importance of cultural activities based on the needs and interests of regional and local communities, and in this context, welcome the Conclusions of the Council of the European Union of 26 November 2024 on improving and fostering access to culture.
- (24) underline that persons belonging to national or linguistic\* minorities, who make up almost 10% of Europe's population, contribute significantly to the richness of cultural heritage. The Speakers/Presidents recall that the protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities is a fundamental value enshrined in the EU's founding treaties, and that respect for this principle — in light of the obligation to meet the Copenhagen criteria — is in all cases a prerequisite for the accession of candidate countries.
- (25) agree that the cause of the common cultural heritage is advanced when the cultural, linguistic, religious rights of EU citizens belonging to national or linguistic\* minorities, and the values of their often vulnerable local communities, receive adequate protection also within the Member States of the European Union, while respecting each Member State's own constitutional framework. In this regard, they call for closer institutional cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Union.
- (26) consider forward-looking and worthy of discussion all those initiatives that aim to promote the preservation of our cultural and linguistic heritage, and thus the familiarity provided by the immediate and wider homeland. In this regard, it is suggested that the right to national identity be part of universal human rights.

## **IPEX - Interparliamentary EU Information Exchange**

### The Speakers/Presidents

- (27) welcome the Conclusions on IPEX, adopted at the Meeting of the Secretaries General of European Union Parliaments organised in Budapest on 10 February 2025.
- (28) express their appreciation to the Spanish Cortes Generales for their work during their Chairmanship of the IPEX Board, for their contribution to begin the work

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\* For the Bulgarian Delegation the acceptable phrase is „persons belonging to minorities”.

on the Rolling Work Programme of IPEX for the period of 2024–2026, and for hosting the Correspondents' Meeting in Madrid on 7-8 November 2024.

- (29) thank also the Belgian Senate for its continued availability for the employment of the IPEX Information Officer, the European Parliament for providing the financial and human resources necessary for the development of the new IPEX website, and the Italian Parliament for organising the fourth IPEX Users Conference in Rome on 28 March 2025.
- (30) encourage the parliaments of the candidate countries to make use of and be an active part of IPEX, which can be an important tool for them in the integration process.
- (31) recall that IPEX is meant to be a one-stop shop for interparliamentary cooperation and information exchange within the EU. In this spirit, the Speakers/Presidents encourage both expert networks and staff seminars involving national parliaments to be present on IPEX. They argue that IPEX should also serve as a platform for the exchange of best practices between national parliaments and the European Parliament on activities of mutual interest, such as education and information programmes on democracy. They encourage the Hungarian National Assembly, which takes over the Chairmanship of the IPEX Board today, to continue the work related to these tasks.

Budapest, 12 May 2025