

A Personal Report to Parliamentary colleagues by Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, in the fields of Constitutional Affairs, Legal Affairs and Petitions

Dear colleagues,

As my term in office comes to an end, I would like to offer you a personal account of what I have done over these last 30 months and the goals that I have pursued, and hopefully, achieved. I would also like to thank you for all the support you have given me during this time. It has been a pleasure and an honour to serve as your President.

My report starts with some general remarks and then focuses on the specific work that we have been able to undertake together in the policy fields of your committee. I am delighted that we have achieved so much.

INTRODUCTION

We have worked together to implement the **Lisbon Treaty**, which came into effect in December 2009, five months into my term, and which has defined the new position of the Parliament and helped us to use our strength as an institution to positive effect. The treaty widened the use of the 'Community method' as guarantor of the rights of all member states.

Not only have we increased the power of the EP in the service of democratic Europe, but we also enhanced the transparency of our work of parliamentarians. The new **Code of Conduct**, for example, is something of which we can all be proud.

A **transformed and strengthened Parliament** has become not only a key forum for political dialogue, reflection and dispute, but an important and real centre of decision-making, one shaping the future of Europe and its citizens.

It is thanks to you and your work that that the Parliament is now much more of an **equal partner** with the Council and Commission, as well as with various institutions outside the European Union. Our effective protection of citizens' right to privacy in the negotiations on **SWIFT**, for example, or our success in the negotiations on the rules on establishing the **European External Action Service** are good examples of our using our stronger role

to good effect. We have secured the right to co-decide on EU Budgets, which will help us to support competitiveness, sustainable growth and job creation in the Union. We have made a decisive impact on the design of future rules for **fiscal discipline** within the eurozone.

With a major economic crisis raging, the last 30 months have been a difficult term, but also something of a 'break-through' term. We had to learn to act not only within a new institutional framework, but also in a rapidly-changing global order. We have all witnessed and participated, in different ways, in a social media revolution, which went beyond the worldwide web to the streets of cities at home and abroad, especially in North Africa and the Middle East.

When I took office of as President, I had a clear strategy which set the priorities for my activities. I defined them in my inaugural policy speech in September, 2009. **What were those priorities?** Let me remind you briefly:

1) Increasing the power, position and effectiveness of the European Parliament. We all know how important the Parliament is not only politically, but also symbolically. It is the essence of a European democratic system. Before everything else, I have always focussed on strengthening the Parliament (not only thanks to the implementation of the new Treaty), making its operations efficient as well as ensuring that it has a good image and is genuinely creative in responding to the challenges we face. (Please see below).

2) Tackling the economic and financial crisis. We have sought not only to overcome the immediate effects of the crisis or to offer long-term support for countries in crisis, but - above all - to launch of the idea of a new European economic order. We have aimed to maintain and reform the best of the European 'social model' whilst underpinning it with greater competitiveness and innovation. Decisions on the Budget, the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy or of the single market have been an important part of anti-crisis measures. We have used the Parliament's powers to secure better outcomes on European economic governance and supervision of the financial markets.

3) Promoting the idea of the European Energy Community. Energy policy in Europe must give a sense of security, be environmentally friendly and help to achieve economic growth, all at the same time. To achieve this,

energy policy must be more coherent and Community-based. Promoting a more coherent approach to energy policy has been central to my term of office.

4) Developing stronger linkages with the outside world. The advent of the EEAS has created new opportunities in this area. I have focussed on strengthening the Union's role in global governance, in cooperation with global players, and developing closer ties to neighborhood, including by promoting EU enlargement and supporting democratic movements and freer markets close to our borders. I have also sought to increase the efficiency of EU development policy.

5) Promoting human rights, solidarity and the idea of dignity for all people - regardless of differing beliefs, backgrounds and religions, for all men and women, rich and poor. Human rights are a major 'export product' of Europe and an issue on which there is a strong consensus in the European Parliament.

6) Building and promoting the idea of a European Civic Space. We know a lot about the 'Europe of States' and the 'Europe of Institutions', but we do too little to bring Europe closer to citizens, to **make Europe more 'civic'**. I have tried to do this wherever possible, using all my meetings, visits and interactions with the media.

These were not just my priorities. They were, I think, the priorities of many, if not all of us as colleagues - resulting from, and in, our collective hard work. I am convinced that we have succeeded to an important degree. Thank you very much.

For us, as parliamentarians, the biggest strength is our readiness and ability to engage in debate. Do not let anyone tell you that debate is unproductive. The Greeks, who invented democracy, treated it as a **community of conversation, dialogue and debate**. What destroyed it was violence. Today's Europe is a community of debate and not of violence. And we can be proud of that.

SIX PERSONAL REPORTS TO COLLEAGUES

The letter you are reading forms one of six variants of my personal report to colleagues. The six variants cover:

= ECON, EMPL and IMCO Committees;
= ENVI and ITRE Committees;
= BUDG, CONT, TRAN, REGI, AGRI and PECH Committees;
= JURI, AFCE and PETI Committees;
= DROI, CULT, LIBE and FEMM Committees,
= AFET, SEDE, DEVE and INTA Committees.

If you would like to read any of the other reports, they can be accessed via my website

www.europarl.europa.eu/president/en/press/buzek_newsletter.html until 17 January and thereafter www.europarl.europa.eu/former_ep_presidents/president-buzek/.

WORK IN YOUR COMMITTEES

Your central role as members of the **Constitutional Affairs Committee**, **Legal Affairs Committee** and **Petitions' Committee** has been even more important with the introduction of the Lisbon Treaty and the growing power of the Parliament. I am hugely grateful for the contribution that you have all made to our joint work over the last 30 months that I have been President of the Parliament. In this spirit, I would like to **set out some of the main activities and achievements** that have marked my term of office in these fields - things we have worked on and accomplished together.

'The Treaty of Lisbon will improve the Union's ability to resolve existing problems and will bring the European institutions closer to our citizens. I am committed to preparing Parliament to function in accordance with the new provisions as soon as the Treaty comes into force. These concern the extension of the co-decision procedure, the new comitology system, democratic control over the new External Action Service and the question of how to deal with the 'dual Council Presidency' during plenary sittings'.

Inaugural speech to the European Parliament, September 2009.

During the last two and a half years, in my meetings and actions in the areas of greatest interest to your committees, I have focussed on **four main areas**:

= **Building a strong European Parliament: Maximising its potential power and impact;**
= **Continuing to Reform the European Parliament;**

= Improving relations between the EU Institutions;
= Building a European Civic Space.

Let me deal with each of these, if I may, briefly.

A STRONGER EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1) Building a strong European Parliament: Maximising its potential power and impact

Central to my strategy has been to ensure that the institutional position of the European Parliament has been safeguarded and advanced, both as a result of the **Lisbon Treaty** and more generally. In this, we have broadly succeeded, in that today the Parliament is a co-legislature in most policy areas, including the annual Budget, and must give its agreement to most international agreements.

I worked very hard to try to secure the successful ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in all member states, including visits to **Ireland** before the second referendum and to the **Czech Republic** to discuss the situation in detail with President Vaclav Klaus. I scarcely need to explain that I also made every effort to ensure that my own country, Poland, attached its signature to the treaty too.

With your help, once the Lisbon Treaty came into effect in December 2009, we have managed a successful transition from the old cooperation procedure to the **co-decision procedure** in several major policy fields - notably the Common Agricultural Policy, Common Fisheries Policy, Justice and Home Affairs, and external trade - and overseen the introduction of the **consent procedure** in new fields, notably most **international agreements**. We struck the right balance between security and data protection in our approach to the EU-US **SWIFT Agreement**, where I intervened directly with the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, on the subject.

We contributed constructively to creation of **European External Action Service** (EEAS), using EP leverage over changes to the financial and staff regulations (requiring co-decision) and need for special budget to secure important concessions to 'communitise' EEAS structures and increase political accountability of the service and High Representative. I brought all our rapporteurs together on a regular basis to ensure we exercised maximum leverage over the outcome. At a more technical level, we negotiated practical

arrangements for EP involvement in the new **comitology** régime, with a new EP veto over delegated acts.

We defined and put in place arrangements for the new 'hybrid' Council presidency, based on following principles: the **President of the European Council** reports back on the meetings with heads of government after each European Council, whilst the **prime minister** of the member state exercising the rotating Presidency of the Council of Ministers presents and reports on its six-month programme at the beginning and end of each term.

Under my Presidency, the Parliament secured an arrangement whereby the **President of the European Council** gives a 'quick-fire' report-back to the EP Conference of Presidents - as well as reporting formally to plenary - and we have invited him to participate on an ad hoc basis in major debates, notably on the economic and financial crisis. Recently, we have received a commitment that, in his new role as **President of the Euro Summit**, he will also report formally to the EP plenary, as he already does after European Council meetings.

The Lisbon Treaty is a 'treaty of parliaments', so it is quite natural that we have also consolidated our links with **national parliaments** over these last 30 months. I have met with nearly all Speakers or Presidents of the 40 chambers in our 27 national parliaments - including attending all three EU Speakers' Conferences -, and chaired four **Joint Parliamentary Meetings** with our national colleagues. They dealt with overarching topics like "Towards a European Energy Community for the 21st Century?", "Beyond the crisis: How should Europe respond to the challenges ahead?", "Western Balkans - towards a more integrated Europe" and "Social Cohesion and Demographic Development in a Sustainable Europe". Contrary to that the 27 interparliamentary committee meetings during my term of office dealt with precise and tangible questions very often relating to specific legislative dossiers. We also hosted a **special conference** with national parliaments on the post-2013 **Multiannual Financial Framework** and - for the first time ever - hosted an interparliamentary committee meeting with the participation of ministers and representatives of Member States' governments on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy in autumn 2011.

2) Continuing to reform the European Parliament

I have continued the **important process of internal reform** which marked the second half of the last European Parliament.

Under my Presidency, we have put in place, for the first time, a **credible and comprehensive system of financial disclosure for Members of the European Parliament**, to increase reporting requirements and offer a coherent approach to the handling of conflicts of interest, based on the highest ethical standards and maximum transparency.

For this purpose, at my suggestion, we established a Bureau **Working Group on Codes of Conduct** for Members of the European Parliament, which I had the honour to chair. The WG's conclusions were **endorsed unanimously** by the Bureau and Conference of Presidents in June 2011 and submitted to the EP plenary in December 2011 without amendment. I think everyone can agree that we now have in place a much more credible and up-to-date set of arrangements that prove that colleagues are as honourable and professional in our daily conduct of business as we know ourselves to be.

In similar vein, under my Presidency, we secured agreement with the Commission on a new **Joint Transparency Register in the field of lobbying** - which became operational in June 2011 - building on the Joint Code of Conduct agreed in 2009. After EP encouragement, the Council of Ministers has now signalled a potential willingness to sign the agreement.

We launched **Question Hour with the Commission President** in October 2009: one hour divided in two halves, with the second entirely by 'catch-the-eye'. Question Hour with **High Representative/Vice President** and **President of Eurogroup**, together with updated Question Time with **thematic groups of Commissioners**, was introduced in autumn 2011. We instituted a new procedure to allow **Written Questions** to be asked of the President of the European Council and High Representative.

I have also sought to promote greater transparency in the operation of **first-reading agreements** between the EP and Council under the co-decision procedure, by requiring EP committees to approach them in a more professional and systematic way, with a clear mandate and regular reporting of progress in negotiations.

3) Improving relations between the EU Institutions

Under my Presidency, we negotiated a revised **EP-Commission Framework Agreement** (2009-14), deepening the 'special partnership' between the two institutions, with Commission accepting the principle of **equal treatment** of the Parliament and the Council in legislative and budgetary matters for the first time.

I helped to ensure that as **nominee for Commission President**, José Manuel Barroso presented a **five-year programme** ('political guidelines') to the Parliament, followed by personal presentations to each of the **political groups**.

I attached particular importance to establishing a regular **dialogue between the EP and the Council of Ministers on legislative planning**. Meetings are now scheduled at three levels: President of Parliament with prime minister of Presidency member state; Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs with the EU affairs minister of Presidency; and EP Secretary General with the Council secretariat and Presidency permanent representative.

I also instituted **monthly meetings between myself as EP President and both the President of the Commission and President of the European Council** to discuss current issues and smooth inter-institutional relations. We organised **regular exchanges of views** within the CoP with the President of the Commission, the President of the Eurogroup, the High Representative.

We established an **EP negotiating team with the Council** to discuss inter-institutional issues, starting with access to classified Council documents, participation in international conferences, and the routine inclusion of 'correlation tables' in EU directives.

The place of the European Parliament in the emerging European political system was seen in the key role we played in the recent '**Six Pack**' of legislation to improve **economic governance** within the eurozone. This achievement built on our earlier impact in helping shape the contours of EU-level supervision of the **financial services** and improving the accountability and geographical balance of the new **European External Action Service**. In each case, the EP's amendments significantly reshaped arrangements and qualitatively improved the texts.

4) Building a European Civic Space

The strength and vitality of today's Parliament is not only to be measured by its exercise of power. Our institution has an **important symbolic and cultural role** to play, underpinning the continuity, protection and promotion of **European values**. More power must be accompanied by greater accountability and transparency. This was the philosophy behind my advocacy of a proper Code of Conduct, which we jointly developed and approved by an overwhelming majority last year.

On taking the Presidency, I knew that a very important task was not only to strengthen the position of the Parliament, but also to make it more open to the citizen. We have a 'Europe of States' and a 'Europe of Institutions', but we still need to truly build a 'Europe of citizens'.

With this approach in mind, we have agreed practical arrangements for the introduction of the **European Citizens' Initiative** (starting in April 2012), with presentation on EP premises of petitions that secure more than one million signatures across the Union. We made those arrangements simpler, less bureaucratic and more user-friendly. Under our existing petitions' arrangements, we have received over **4,000 petitions** from citizens across the European Union.

I personally tried to **build bridges of mutual interest and empathy between the European institutions and our citizens**. I had dozens of meetings and discussions with students and academics, business people and trade unionists, local government representatives, members of NGOs, and people from the worlds of culture and the arts. I also participated in the debates of the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions here in Brussels.

As President of the European Parliament, for the first time, I used a large scale social media and social networking sites to engage in a direct discussion with the public. I did this for two reasons: first, to increase the scope and speed of contact with citizens, and second to contact young people who are the main users of these networks - there too they should find and found a 'European community'! The reaction of internet users, especially in the defence of human rights, was energetic and immediate.

We have also increased funding for the development of **European political parties and foundations**, in advance of the 2014 European elections, in the hope of promoting a more genuine pan-European debate of policy issues.

KEY PERSONAL ACTIVITIES 2009-12

Among the more important activities I have undertaken during my 30 months as President of the European Parliament are the following:

= In addition to my regular work of chairing some sessions of the EP plenary and all meetings of the Conference of Presidents and Bureau, I have attended 12 European Councils or other EU summits, representing the Parliament's positions on a wide range of issues. I met on a monthly basis with José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Parliament, and Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, as well as holding regular meetings with other senior members of the EU institutions.

= I have welcomed to Brussels or Strasbourg 93 EU and non-EU heads of state and government, 30 foreign ministers and 61 (or 88 if including speakers met in national capitals too) Speakers or Presidents of national parliaments. We have discussed all the many domestic and international issues of concern to the Parliament.

= I have worked to promote the standing of the Parliament on a total of 49 official visits, including in 24 countries outside of the EU which are key to promoting peace, security and human rights in the world. I held over 250 meetings with representatives of foreign institutions and non-governmental organizations, political leaders and human rights defenders to carry forward the Parliament's agenda. I have issued nearly 400 communiqués and press releases on the most pressing international issues. Of greatest political significance were visits to the United States, Russia (the first visit of the President of the European Parliament for 12 years), China, Turkey, South America and the Union's Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods.

= My visit to the United States in April 2010, reciprocated by Vice President Joe Biden's visit to Parliament soon after, raised the level of our contacts with the US Congress and Administration, as did the opening of an EP office in Washington.

THANK YOU

In addition to all the above-mentioned actions which relate to your daily work, I also engaged in similar initiatives for other committees. They have all received a similarly detailed report.

In my daily work - whether through speeches, meetings, visits, lectures, statements and the other tools I had at my disposal as President of the European Parliament - I have always tried consistently to build up the 'Community' dimension of our European Union. In these past 30 months, I have been particularly committed to strengthening the work and the quality of the contribution of the European Parliament, which is the most democratic of the European institutions.

I believe that our Parliament is the heart of the European Union, where common policies are debated, discussed, and decided upon. It is also a forum where citizens, organisations, and political parties meet.

As parliamentarians, our duty is to include all Europeans in common actions and to be their link with Europe's policies. Let us continue to work towards making the EU as close to the citizens as we can.

I would like to **thank you** most sincerely for your help and cooperation these past two and a half years.

Yours sincerely,

Jerzy Buzek

Annexe

Among the more important meetings I have held or attended on institutional and other matters as President are the following:

European Council meetings

29.10.2009	16.09.2010	24.03.2011
10.12.2009	28.10.2010	23.06.2011
25.03.2010	16.12.2010	23.10.2011
17.06.2010	04.02.2011	09.12.2011

Meetings with heads of European Union institutions

Monthly meetings with Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission

09.09.2009 - 07.02.2011

Meetings with Jean-Claude Trichet, President of the European Central Bank

22.09.2009 - Meeting with Luc Van den Brande, President of the Committee of the Regions

25.01.2010 - Meeting with Philippe Maystadt, President of the European Investment Bank

21.04.2010 - Meeting with Nikiforos Diamandouros, European Ombudsman

13.10.2009 - 10.11.2009 - 08.11.2010 - 25.05.2010 - 09.11.2011

Meetings with Victor Caldeira, President of the Court of Auditors

19.07.2010 - Meeting with Mercedes Bresso, President of the Committee of the Regions

02.02.2011 - Meeting with Staffan Nilsson, President of the European Economic and Social Committee

01.12.2011 - Meeting with Mario Draghi, President of the European Central Bank

Meetings with Heads of state or government and Ministers of Foreign Affairs

10.09.2009 - 03.03.2010 - Meetings with Boyko Borisov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria

21.09.2009 - Meeting with Herman Van Rompuy, Prime Minister of Belgium

18.09.2009 - 16.05.2011 - 06.07.2011 - 30.08.2011 - 14.12.2011

Meetings with Donald Tusk, Prime Minister of Poland

01.10.2009 - Meeting with Valdis Dombrovskis, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia

02.10.2009 - Meeting with Andrius Kuilius, Prime Minister of Lithuania

07.10.2009 - Meeting with Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of Sweden

09.10.2009 - Meeting with Jan Fisher, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

16.10.2009 - 08.07.2011 - Meetings with Werner Faymann, Chancellor of Austria

08.11.2009 - Meeting with Gordon Brown, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

27.11.2009 - Meeting with Gordon Bajnai, Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary

01.12.2009 - 17.02.2011
Meetings with José Socrates, Prime Minister of Portugal

08.01.2010 - 04.05.2010 - 06.07.2010
Meetings with Jose Luis Zapatero, Prime Minister of Spain

02.02.2010 - 06.07.2010
Meetings with François Fillon, Prime Minister of the French Republic

18.03.2010 - 02.06.2010
Meetings with Georgios Papandreou, Prime of the Hellenic Republic

22.03.2010 - 03.10.2010 - 05.10.2011
Meetings with Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany

25.03.2010 - 10.06.2010 - 09.11.2010 - 25.11.2010
Meetings with Jean-Claude Juncker, Prime Minister of Luxembourg

12.05.2010 - Meeting with Markos Kyprianou, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus

09.06.2010 - Teodor Baconschi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania

03.06.2010 - 17.09.2010 - 02.12.2010 - 16.12.2010 - 19.01.2011 - 23.03.14.04.2011 - 16.05.2011 - 23.06.2011 - 05.07.2011
Meetings with Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary

09.06.2010 - Meeting with Emil Boc, Prime Minister of Romania

02.07.2010 - 07.07.2010 - 27.10.2010 - 10.11.2010 - 16.12.2010
Meetings with Yves Leterme, Prime Minister of Belgium

30.11.2010 - 29.03.2011 - 23.06.2011
Meetings with Mark Rutte, Prime Minister of the Netherlands

08.12.2010 - Meeting with Peter Robinson, First Minister of Northern Ireland

17.12.2010 - 16.05.2011 - 20.06.2011 - 18.10.2011
Meetings with Petr Nečas, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

24.01.2011 - Meeting with Laurence Gonzi, Prime Minister of Malta

07.07.2011 - Meeting with Michael Spindelegger, Vice-Chancellor of Austria

12.07.2011 - Meeting with Enda Kenny, Taoiseach, Ireland

13.10.2011 - 01.12.2011 - 11.01.2012

Meetings with Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark

16.09.2011 - Meeting with Radoslaw Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland

21.11.2011 - Meeting with Andrus Anspin, Prime Minister of the Republic of Estonia