



SERVICE FOR THE RELATIONS WITH NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

MEETING IN PORTO 29-30 October 2009

YOUNG MEMBERS NETWORK NEWSLETTER

At the **4th EPP Young Members Network** meeting, young politicians (24 national parliamentarians, 8 Members of the European Parliament and the YEPP President) met in Porto on 29-30 October 2009. Under the leadership of the Vice-Chairman of the EPP Group in the European Parliament, **Paulo Rangel** MEP, and the Coordinator of the Young Members Network, **Andreas Schwab** MEP, two working days were organised around two main topics: '**Parliamentarism in Europe: new ways of working together after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty**', and '**The future of public finances**'.



Paulo Rangel MEP, Vice-Chairman of the EPP Group and **Andreas Schwab** MEP, Coordinator of the Young Members Network at Palacio da Bolsa

'Parliamentarism in Europe: new ways of working together after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty'.

Paulo Rangel is the Vice-Chairman of the EPP Group in the European Parliament responsible for Relations with the National Parliaments. He was Chairman of the PSD Group in the Assembleia da República (Portugal) until June 2009.

He made a clear starting point: with the Lisbon Treaty, national parliaments will have a greater say in European affairs. He informed participants that in order to make use of the existing political, administrative and institutional potential at the level of the national legislative bodies and of the EP, the EPP Group has created different networks designed to enrich inter-parliamentary cooperation and to foster dialogue among peers: the Network of European Affairs Committee and the Network of Young Members of Parliament. These are two reliable platforms for debating European politics and defining common action strategies. He stressed that the Summit of Chairmen of Parliamentary Groups is the third network and it is the institutional platform to develop, deepen and improve partisan relations between national and European levels.

"National parliaments are, for the first time, being given a defined role in EU matters which is distinct from that of their national governments."

Paulo Rangel MEP



Vice-Chairman **Paulo Rangel** at Palacio da Bolsa

Paulo Rangel explained that the contribution made by the Lisbon Treaty to develop relations with national parliaments is mainly based on obligations and rights which enhance their role in the political procedures of the EU. These rights can be divided into three categories: informative rights, active participation rights and objection or veto powers. He pointed out that we have to be convinced that scrutiny is necessary and that subsidiarity must now be checked by national parliaments. The EP can offer national parliaments support on this scrutiny of draft legislation prior to its consideration by European Union legislative bodies, as well as in the effective scrutiny of their governments when they are acting in the Council.

Furthermore, he recalled that we shall not forget innovations at the level of national parliaments, such as giving Members of the EP the right to be invited once a year to speak in plenary sittings of national parliaments, to participate in meetings of European affairs committees in an advisory capacity. The challenge is to create an annual debate, under the national law in the national parliament of each country, which gathers together Members of the EP and of the national parliaments. Vice-Chairman Rangel believes that it is possible to work on a proposal which the EPP parties present almost simultaneously in the 27 Member States - an ambitious goal called AGENDA 27.

'The future of public finances'

High-level keynote speakers took the floor on the financial discussion and an interesting debate took place. **Janusz Lewandowski** MEP, Member of the Committee on Budgets and the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (and former President of the EP Budgets Committee) was an Economics Advisor to the Solidarity Movement in the 1980s and served as Poland's Minister for Privatisation on two occasions (1990-1991 and 1992-1993) and is one of the founding fathers of the Warsaw Stock Exchange.

Lewandowski gave an overview on the economic situation in Europe, underlining that the present crisis and our response to it, is testing the credibility of the EU Institutions. He explained that while the Member States played a major role in re-stating financial stability and stimulating the real economy, the co-ordinated EU reaction came rather late - exposing the weakness of the community anti-crisis tools. On the other hand, he pointed out that the EU was active and influential in shaping the G20 agenda on how to improve the global regulatory architecture, therefore preventing any future disasters. He underlined that Europe is now entering the post-crisis era and some measure of co-ordination appears necessary in elaborating the so-called 'exit strategies' as well as reducing the fiscal and moral costs of the extraordinary state intervention in the economy.

At the closing session, the key speaker was the **Prime Minister of Latvia, Valdis Dombrovskis**. PM Dombrovskis is a former Member of the European Parliament, of the EPP Group, and of the Young Members Network. He assumed office on 12 March 2009, in a very dramatic moment in Latvia's economy. He made a briefing to the young Members on the main decisions taken by the last European Council in Brussels on the same day, stressing the important step forward taken on the future of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. PM Dombrovskis explained that thanks to the agreement on the Czech Republic's request for an

'opt-out' on the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the Lisbon Treaty, Czech President Vaclav Klaus undertook to sign the act of ratification once the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic had given its ruling and confirmed compatibility between the Lisbon Treaty and the Czech constitution.

Furthermore, PM Dombrovskis gave a full report on economic recovery in Europe. He explained the dramatic economic situation that Latvia is going through together with other Balkan countries. Since the year 2000, Latvia has had one of the highest (GDP) growth rates in Europe.

However, the chiefly consumption-driven growth in Latvia resulted in the collapse of the GDP in late 2008 and early 2009. The Latvian economy fell 18% in the first three months of 2009, the biggest fall in the European Union. Latvia's PM made an optimistic note, as he believes that some indicators are on the road to recovery. His aim is clear: to keep Latvia on the road to economic recovery next year, and never lose sight of the best exit strategy - a sustainable and competitive economy which allows Latvia to meet the Maastricht criteria in 2012 and then to adopt the Euro in 2014.

He concluded that in Europe one year ago, financial markets were close to collapse and there were signs of a long recession. Today, he believes that economic contraction appears to have ended and is expected to give way to a moderate recovery in 2010 and more solid growth returning afterwards. Finally, he pointed out that restoring strong sustainable growth remains the most critical challenge in Latvia as well as in Europe.

Porto: an example of cultural and economic development

Fruitful discussions took place with high-level local interlocutors like the **Mayor of Porto, Rui Rio**, who explained the recent economic and social developments of a city like Porto.

Porto is a city of wine, a city of culture, but also an international place with a strong European spirit. Porto has always rivalled Lisbon in terms of economic power. As the most important city in the heavily-industrialised Northwest, many of the largest Portuguese corporations are based in the Greater Metropolitan Area of Porto, most notably, in the core municipalities of Maia, Matosinhos, Porto, and Vila Nova de Gaia.



Young Members at Serralves Museum with **Antonio Gomes de Pinho**, President of the Serralves Foundation

Furthermore, the **President of the Serralves Foundation, Antonio Gomes de Pinho**, explained the role of the culture industries in solving the current crisis. He underlined that the crisis opens new opportunities to promote interfaces between both sides exploring this tremendous potential. He stressed that a new development concept that links economy and culture is emerging embracing economic, cultural, social and technological aspects at both macro and micro levels. Central to this concept is the fact that creativity, knowledge and access to information are considered as driving forces for economic growth and social development. He concluded that as Europe has been able to adopt a green revolution with ambitious policies and standards, the creative haven would be a major change in our development model.

The young members had the opportunity to visit outstanding examples of this cultural and economic development: Palácio da Bolsa, Serralve's Museum, Casa da Música and a famous Porto Wine Lodge.



l-r: **Paulo Rangel**, Vice-chairman of the EPP Group, **Valdis Dombrovskis**, Prime Minister of Latvia, **Andreas Schwab**, Coordinator of the EPP Group Young Members Network, **Charles Symington**, member of the Symington family winemakers, and **João Tamagnini Belo**, organizer

Meeting with the young PSD section in Porto

An informal meeting took place with Members of Parliament who are also members of the Juventude Social Demócrata (JSD). **Pedro Rodrigues**, **President of the JSP**, welcomed the young members together with his Secretary-General, António Leitão Amaro, and Francisca Almeida, Member of Parliament.

Presentation of the YMN PORTO FINAL STATEMENT

Andreas Schwab MEP, **Co-ordinator of the Young Members Network**, made the presentation of the final statement. He underlined that it is extremely important that the EU governments do not withdraw the extraordinary budgetary measures until recovery is secured. But at the same time, he advocated for a coordinated exit strategy to ensure a sustainable future for the public finances of the EU Member States. He also concluded that Europe needs to start mapping consolidation strategies and we need to assess how the crisis has affected public sustainability conditions.

Young Parliamentarians ask the EU governments not to withdraw the extraordinary budgetary measures until recovery is secured. At the same time, they advocate a coordinated exit strategy to ensure a sustainable future for the public finances of the EU member states.

At the 4th Conference, held in Porto from 29-30 October 2009, the young politicians of the Young Members Network addressed new ways of working together after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. Young members also encouraged EU Governments and the European Parliament to find a comprehensive agreement based on the Commission's proposal for a new architecture for EU Financial Markets supervision.

We need to start mapping our consolidation strategies and we need to assess how the crisis has affected public sustainability conditions.

We, young parliamentarians from all 27 member states and the European Parliament, believe that the sustainability of public finances is a pre-condition and priority not only for stability and growth and the formulation of each Member State's macro-economic employment, social and environmental policies, but also for the future of the economy and the European social model, intrinsic to the development of the EU.

Therefore, we firmly believe that the fiscal exit strategy should be coordinated across all EU countries within the framework of a consistent implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact. Young members believe it is extremely important that the EU plays a leading role in the G-20 process on reforming financial institutions governing the international economy (International Monetary Fund and World Bank).

Here together in Porto today, we also want to recall that a greater role for national parliaments and for the European Parliament is one of the reasons why we need the Treaty of Lisbon. Therefore, we congratulate the European Council on the important decisions taken yesterday in Brussels in order to be able to ratify the Treaty of Lisbon as soon as possible. The Lisbon Treaty was moved yet another step closer to its entry into force.

The EPP Group wants to be a pioneer in establishing genuine cooperation between all EU parliamentarians with one main goal: to build a European agenda that deals with our citizen's problems (unemployment and immigration for instance). EPP Young Members Network wishes to play a full part in achieving this objective.



Family photo at Palacio da Bolsa



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