



Mid-Term Review

*of Hans-Gert Pöttering
as President of the
European Parliament*

January 2007 - April 2008

Mid-Term Review

Values
“Defending Europe’s values -
for a citizens’ Europe”

Reform
“Implementing reforms -
for democracy and a European parliamentary system”

Dialogue
“Encouraging the dialogue of cultures -
for partnership and tolerance”

Future
“Winning the peace with our environment -
for justice towards future generations”

Quotes from the Inaugural speech,
Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament

Strasbourg, 13 February 2007

“ Welcome Looking at the progress achieved ...

After 15 months of intensive work, April 2008 marks the mid-term in office of the President of the European Parliament, Dr. Hans-Gert Pöttering. This appears to be a good point in time to review the achievements of the President in the first half of his mandate and see how far he has come in fulfilling the objectives he set himself.

Following his election as President in Strasbourg on 16 January 2007 on the first round of voting with an absolute majority of 450 votes, Hans-Gert Pöttering delivered his inaugural speech in plenary on 13 February, in the presence of all former Presidents of Parliament, as well as the Presidents of the European Council and the European Commission.

During an Away-Day which the Bureau of the Parliament held in March 2007, the President also proposed a detailed programme of administrative change within

the Parliament, now known as the ‘La Hulpe Agenda’.

Failure to act, indifference, would be the greatest wrong we could commit

President Pöttering,
Inaugural speech, 13 February 2007

This was complemented soon after by a detailed mandate for the reform of the Parliament’s internal procedures and working practices, at both plenary and

committee level, which was suggested to and adopted by the Conference of Presidents. Ever since, we have tried to focus on those objectives.

This ‘Mid-Term Review’ looks at the progress achieved by the President and his team to date in implementing this programme and in defining further steps to move ahead in pursuit of these major objectives.

These are:

- Securing agreement on a new treaty
- Fighting climate change
- Promoting intercultural dialogue
- Defining a European component for the Middle-East peace process
- Reforming the internal work of the European Parliament
- Advancing the ‘La Hulpe Agenda’ for a better use of Parliament’s resources
- Encouraging Better Law-Making.

I hope that readers find this Mid-Term Review a valuable check-list of important work in progress.

Klaus Welle



Commission President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso congratulates President Pöttering, Strasbourg, 16 January 2007



President Pöttering delivering his Inaugural speech, Strasbourg, 13 February 2007



President Pöttering with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Commission President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso at the presentation of the German EU Presidency programme, Strasbourg, 17 January 2007.

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I. Towards a New Treaty: Preparing the European Union for the 21st Century

*To “ensure that the substance of the Constitutional Treaty, including the chapter on values, becomes a legal and political reality ... by the next elections to the European Parliament”
(Hans-Gert Pöttering, Inaugural speech)*

The President made it clear from the start that his ‘priority of priorities’ was to contribute to resolving the deadlock generated by the rejection of the draft Constitutional Treaty in the two referenda in France and in the Netherlands in 2005, and to push for agreement on a new text, which would include the necessary reforms to make the enlarged European Union fit for the 21st century.

The European Parliament, in its resolutions on the institutional reform, consistently reiterated the house’s strong support for maintaining the substance of the proposed Constitutional Treaty, notably the improvements in the decision-making process and the expression of values enshrined in the document.

Represented by its President, the European Parliament played a constructive role throughout the entire process which followed the end of the reflection period, from the negotiations on the Berlin Declaration concluding the 50th anniversary of the Rome Treaties, through the efforts to find common ground for an agreement, right up to the final stages of the Intergovernmental Conference in autumn 2007.

The strength and coherence of the European Parliament’s position was made possible through intensive and trustful cooperation between all key actors within the Parliament. The President engaged in regular coordination with the Chair and the Coordinators of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, as well as their key rapporteurs. The political group leaders inspired the process and provided the necessary support in the Conference of Presidents. I myself, as Head of the President’s cabinet, together with José Pacheco of the Constitutional Affairs Committee secretariat, took part, as Parliament’s ‘sherpas’, in the preparation of a new constitutional agreement.



President Pöttering, Chancellor Merkel, President Barroso and German Finance Minister Steinbrück at the 50th anniversary of the Rome Treaties Berlin, 25 March 2007

President Pöttering, Commission President Barroso and the presidents of parliaments of the Member States in the ‘Sala degli Orizi e Curiazi’ in Rome, where the Treaties of Rome were signed on 25 of March 1957 Rome, 23 March 2007



The Berlin Declaration

The ceremony for the signature of the Berlin Declaration on 25 March 2007 was the high-point in the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. On behalf of the European Parliament, President Pöttering participated actively in negotiating the Declaration, which was an important milestone on the way towards a successful outcome on the negotiation of the Reform Treaty, now known as the Lisbon Treaty.

Whereas in 1957 the Treaties of Rome were signed at a meeting of governments and diplomats, ... today, I am grateful to be able to represent the citizens of the European Union here in Berlin as President of the directly-elected European Parliament

President Pöttering
Ceremony for the signature of the
Berlin Declaration
25 March 2007

President Pöttering was one of the three heads of EU institutions who signed this declaration, his participation being a clear signal of a new perception of the European Parliament as an equal player in the European political system.

Pushing for agreement on a 'new basis' for the European Union

The President, during his official visits to the member states, and the key members of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, used every opportunity to

reiterate the European Parliament's stance on treaty reform, explaining the urgency of providing the European Union with updated instruments to tackle the new and pressing challenges facing our continent and advocating the need for a new basis for our work at European level to become reality before the next European elections in 2009.

Addressing a joint meeting of the European committees of the Dutch Parliament, a member state which was critical in the search for a renewed consensus after the failed referenda, the President underlined that European solutions were crucial to deal with

The European Union constitutes our answer to the challenges of globalisation; it is a means of developing solutions for the future

President Pöttering
Dutch Parliament
12 April 2007

a wide range of pressing issues that go beyond the confines of individual countries - such as ensuring energy security, fighting climate change, terrorism and illegal immigration, promoting the competitiveness of Europe's economy, and improving the life of European citizens.

Together with the Speakers of the parliaments of the countries holding the

rotating Presidency of the Council of Ministers, President Pöttering convened two Joint Parliamentary Meetings, bringing together Members of both the European Par-



Signing ceremony of the Berlin Declaration by the Presidents of the EU institutions
Berlin, 25 March 2007



President Pöttering meeting Dutch Prime Minister Peter Balkenende
The Hague, 12 April 2007



President Pöttering, Portuguese Prime Minister and President-in-Office José Socrates, Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Amado and the European Parliament's representatives at the IGC, Enrique Baron Crespo, Elmar Brok and Andrew Duff, at the Informal EU Summit Lisbon, 8 October 2007



Portuguese Prime Minister and EU Council President José Socrates welcomes President Pöttering at the informal EU Summit Lisbon, 8 October 2007



President Pöttering at the Treaty signing ceremony in Lisbon Lisbon, 13 December 2007

liament and of the national parliaments of the 27 member states (plus the candidate countries), in order to maintain a strong momentum for the reform of the Treaties throughout the Union. The first meeting took place ahead of the June 2007 European Council and the second shortly before the signature of the Lisbon Treaty, thereby emphasising the importance of the parliamentary dimension of this process.

A crucial step on the way to reaching an agreement was the meeting held in May 2007 in Sintra (Portugal) between European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, EP President Pöttering, the Portuguese Prime Minister José Socrates and the current and future Presidents-in-Office of the European Council, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša. Both in Sintra and subsequently at the meeting of the European Council in June 2007, Hans-Gert Pöttering strongly defended the need to preserve the substance of the Constitutional Treaty text, and in particular the Charter of Fundamental Rights, notwithstanding the possibility of it taking a different form.

Full participation in the Intergovernmental Conference

In Sintra, the President also succeeded in ensuring a full involvement of the European Parliament in the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), with three full representatives, instead of only two observers, as previously foreseen.

The European Parliament's representatives in the IGC made a very positive contribution to securing the final result, and also managed to convince member states to adopt the proposals made by the Parliament on the future distribution of seats within the European Parliament (with only one small change that added an extra seat for Italy).

Following the successful work of the IGC, the 27 EU Heads of State and Government agreed the final version of the new Reform Treaty at the European Council held by the Portuguese Presidency in Lisbon in October 2007. The President of the European Parliament was invited to participate in the entire proceedings of the Summit, which was a clear recognition of the positive contribution of the Parliament throughout the process and one which signals a further strengthening of Parliament's role in the European inter-institutional framework.

Success in maintaining the substance of the Constitutional Treaty

This outcome was altogether a remarkable achievement for the European Union as such, and more specifically for the European Parliament, which had succeeded in its central aim of maintaining the substance of the Constitutional Treaty. The new Treaty, which was signed in Lisbon on 13 December 2007, maintains the basic reforms and values embodied in the original draft Constitution. It puts the European Union on a new course, guaranteeing a much greater degree of democracy at all levels of decision-making.

The European Parliament, together with the citizens, emerges as the major beneficiary of the strengthened European democratic accountability, which is the hallmark of the new Treaty. Co-decision will become the standard procedure for making European laws and cover nearly all policy areas, including the Common Agricultural Policy, fisheries policy and external trade. In the budgetary field, the European Parliament finally receives full parity with the Council on all EU spending.

Furthermore, a revised and updated version of the Charter of Fundamental Rights originally adopted in 2000 and identifying the common values on which the European

Union is founded, will become legally binding. As President Pöttering underlined at the June European European Council, the Charter was for the European Parliament a core element to any agreement on the reform of the European Treaties.

In this too, the European Parliament got its way. The Presidents of the three main European institutions - Commission, Council and Parliament - solemnly proclaimed the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the Chamber of the European Parliament in

Strasbourg on 12 December 2007. This ceremony, proposed by the representatives of the European Parliament in the IGC and endorsed by the political group leaders, was aimed at raising the profile of the document among the general public and expressing the strong attachment of European law-makers to the basic rights of the citizen.

Last but not least, the new Treaty means that the outcome of the European elections will now form the basis for the proposal made by the European Council to the European Parliament as to who should be elected President of the Euro-

pean Commission. The right of the European Parliament to elect - and not only to confirm - the President of the Commission has been enshrined.

The European Union is a community of values, not some purposeless club. Our values have found expression in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. ... The legally binding recognition of the values on which the European Union is based ... is a matter of Europe's self-esteem

President Pöttering
Speech at the European Council
21 June 2007



President Pöttering addresses the Chamber during the proclamation ceremony of the Charter of Fundamental Rights Brussels, 12 December 2007



Signing ceremony of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, with President Hans-Gert Pöttering, European Commission President José Manuel Durao Barroso and the President in Office of the Council, Portuguese Prime Minister José Socrates, Inigo Mendez de Vigo MEP, Elmar Brok MEP and Jo Leinen MEP Brussels, 12 December 2007



President Pöttering meets with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk Brussels, 4 December 2007



French President Nicolas Sarkozy with the Presidents of the three EU Institutions and the High Representative Javier Solana on the French National Day Paris, 14 July 2007



President Pöttering meets Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. during his visit to the United Kingdom (Photo: PA Photos) London, 27 February 2008



President Pöttering and Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Møller during the President's visit to Denmark Copenhagen, 2 April 2008

Promoting a swift ratification and entry into force of the new Lisbon Treaty

For that reason and many others, it is essential to ensure a swift ratification of the Lisbon Treaty across the 27 member states of the European Union by 1 January 2009. The President expressed his strong view that securing the entry into force of the new Treaty in time for the European elections in 2009 remained the 'priority of priorities'.

On behalf of the European Parliament, the President has used every available occasion to explain to European citizens the advantages of the reforms enshrined in the

new Lisbon Treaty, how they will enable the European Union to achieve concrete results in many policy spheres, and why it is important to secure an early ratification in the member states. He has met the new Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, and the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, to discuss ratification in their respective countries. He has paid very successful official visits to the United Kingdom, Denmark



We have no more time to lose if we are to deal with the immense challenges ahead of us. We have to ensure that the people can regain confidence in Europe

President Pöttering
Programme Speech
13 February 2007



and Ireland this spring, meeting both government and opposition leaders, where he has made the case for swift parliamentary ratification.

Ensuring effective implementation of the new Treaty

In parallel with the ratification process, the President has also put strong emphasis on a range of issues relating to the practical implementation of the new Treaty, as a number of reforms require further action to be applicable in practice when the new Treaty enters into force. The President has highlighted to the President of the European Council several urgent questions which need to be dealt with. These include the change-over from the consultation to co-decision procedure in on-going dossiers, the procedure for the appointment of the new double-hatted High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, the establishment of the new European External Action Service, the continuing alignment process in the area of comitology, the handling of delegated acts, the possibility of more effective legislative planning between the European institutions, the role of the future President of the European Council vis-à-vis the European Parliament, relations between the European Council (as a new EU institution) and the European Parliament, as well as the new consultation process for identifying the candidate for President of the Commission.

Considering the importance of these various issues, the President was mandated by the Conference of Presidents to conduct talks with the other institutions on inter-institutional questions related to Lisbon implementation. He is supported in this task by the three representatives of the European Parliament at the IGC - Enrique Baron Crespo, Elmar Brok and Andrew Duff - as well as the Chair of the Working Group on Reform, Dagmar Roth-Behrendt.

Klaus Welle

II. Fighting Climate Change: A Challenge to Make Peace with Our Planet

“We must ... not just talk about the dramatic change in climate, but also take the necessary measures - together with our partners in the world - and enforcing them with determination before it is too late” (President Pöttering, Inaugural speech, 13 February 2007)

From the very start of his mandate in January 2007, President Pöttering has been at the cutting-edge of the European Parliament’s commitment to address climate change and energy issues - both within the European Union and globally.

He has consistently stressed the urgent imperative of common action to address what he considers to be perhaps the biggest long-term environmental, social, health, economic and even security challenge facing mankind.



On the European continent, we have managed to create lasting peace between our countries. Now we have to tackle the huge task of creating peace with the planet we live on. ... Global warming is taking on alarming dimensions: it is man-made and accelerating

President Pöttering
Keio University, Japan
13 February 2007



issues to a roundtable in the European Parliament. He also met with international experts, such as Sir Nicholas Stern, author of the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change, in order to gain a maximum of expertise and knowledge on the issue.

President Pöttering also held intensive discussions with Dr Rajendra Pachauri, the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 with former US Vice-President Al Gore for their efforts to raise awareness of global warming. The discussion focussed on the extremely narrow time-frame available for taking global action to reverse the worst consequences of climate change.

Pushing for urgent action at European Union level

Stressing the moral obligation of the current generation towards its successors to offer the world a sustainable future, the President has played an active role in driving forward action to combat climate change at European Union level.

Ahead of the March 2007 European Council, the President invited all the Commissioners dealing with climate and energy



Round Table meeting on energy and climate change in the European Parliament
Brussels, 1 March 2007



President Pöttering welcomes Sir Nicholas Stern to the European Parliament
Brussels, 6 March 2007



President Pöttering meets Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chair of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
Brussels, 26 March 2008

In his speech to the Spring European Council in March 2007, the President put a strong emphasis on climate change. He called for a binding 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and for a binding target of 25% share of energy production from renewable sources by the same date. He thereby stressed his clear belief that it was not morally acceptable for our societies to benefit from short-term economic gain by simply forwarding on the enormous long-term economic, health and environmental price involved to future generations.

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Fighting climate change is not only a political challenge for our leaders, it is a moral imperative. Failing to act now would create a problem for which future generations would have to pay an enormous price

President Pöttering
Speech to the Spring European Council
8 March 2007

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Spring Council Summit
Brussels, 8 March 2007

Fast-track adoption of the EU 'Energy package'

The package of legislative measures proposed by the European Commission on 23 January 2008 in the energy and environment fields is the detailed policy response to the political agreement reached at the March 2007 Summit. This 'energy package' includes measures on emission cuts, renewable energy, carbon capture and revision of the emissions trading scheme.

In its role as co-legislator, the European Parliament has now started to look at the individual legislative proposals in this package. The position of the Parliament, with its committees on environment and industry to the fore, is potentially crucial in working out

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Adopting the 'Energy package' as soon as possible is a matter of credibility, as the European Union's role as leader in the fight against climate change is not just about setting targets

President Pöttering
University of Copenhagen
1 April 2008

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the key political compromises on some of the difficult choices that have to be made. The time pressure is greater than usual - because it is both crucial for the European Parliament to express its view before the end of this five-year term in June 2009 and for the European Union to achieve a tangible result before the United Nations Climate Change conference to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009.

Thus, on the proposal of President Pöttering, the political group chairmen committed the committees to complete their deliberations by December 2008, in order to allow for sufficient time to negotiate between political groups and with Council in order to finalise the package in due time before the European elections.

Building momentum in the fight against climate change

The President has contributed strongly to keeping attention focussed on Climate Change and increasing the visibility and awareness of this critical challenge, through a series of events, forums and other activities within the European Parliament.



The cost of failing to act ... outweighs by far that of the measures now required. Fighting global warming is also an imperative of economic rationality. Putting the European Union on the path to a low-carbon future ... provides real opportunities for growth and increased competitiveness

President Pöttering
Opening of the Energy Globe Award Gala
11 April 2007



On 11 April 2007, the Parliament hosted the internationally televised 'Energy Globe Award Gala', which show-cased innovative projects in the use of sustainable resources and alternative energy sources. It was a highly visible event, and one which will be repeated in May 2008.

Following the setting up of a Temporary Committee on Climate Change (CLIM) in the European Parliament in April 2007, President Pöttering immediately held an extensive exchange of views with its members, notably in order to identify the main steps forward ahead

of the December 2007 UN Conference in Bali. Last October, he chaired a Joint Parliamentary Meeting (between Members of the European Parliament and of the 27 national parliaments) on climate change, aimed at broadening understanding of the issue and developing a common and coherent approach throughout the Union. He has also systematically raised the issue in the framework of his official visits to the member states. He will soon visit Greenland to maintain the focus on the accelerating melting of ice in that area.

At the same time, the President has also wanted to set a positive example on how to curb emissions in our own back-yard and called for a comprehensive review of the environmental impact of the European Parliament's buildings and activities ('carbon footprint'). This has already led the President and Secretary General to sign up to an official environmental policy of the European Parliament: the EP has committed itself to reach the voluntary targets of the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and has also introduced 100% renewable-source electricity in the Parliament's buildings.



President Pöttering hosts the Energy Globe Awards in the European Parliament Brussels, 11 April 2007



Melting ice in the Arctic
(Photo: Shawn Marshall, www.nsf.org)



'Greening' the European Parliament



Press conference after the G8 Speakers' meeting in Berlin
Berlin, 8 September 2007
(Photo: Deutscher Bundestag
by Hermann J. Müller)



President Pöttering meets Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda
Tokyo, 6 February 2008

President Pöttering addresses the UN panel discussion 'Rising to the Challenge: Partnerships on Climate Change'
New York, 11 February 2008
(Photo: UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz)



From this month, the President will test a hydrogen car to demonstrate the opportunities provided by clean technologies and their key importance on the path to a low-carbon economy. As he underlined in his speech to the Spring European Council in March 2007, serious European efforts in fostering eco-innovation and developing new, clean energy technologies could bring real opportunities for growth and increased competitiveness.

Putting the case around the world

The issue of global warming features centrally in the discussions the President of the European Parliament has on international visits and in his pronouncements before international fora.

Invited to participate for the first time in the annual meeting of the Speakers of the G-8 Parliaments in Berlin in September 2007, the President underlined the urgency of global cooperation in fighting climate change. He highlighted the positive role played by the European Parliament on the matter and its contribution in securing an agreement on binding targets at the March 2007 European Council. He will participate in the next G-8 Speakers' meeting in Japan in 2008, which will discuss this issue once again ahead of the UN Conference in Copenhagen.

In Tokyo this February, in talks with Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, the President focussed on efforts to build a joint approach by the world's biggest economies. In New York the following week, he spoke

at a special debate organised by the UN General Assembly on the theme of "Addressing Climate Change: The United Nations and the World at Work".

On these occasions, President Pöttering has been struck by how far the United Nations and its member states look to the European Union in general, and the European Parliament in particular, to give a global lead in securing a binding and comprehensive Post-Kyoto framework in the run-up to the Copenhagen Conference - one which would include notably China, India, Russia and the United States.

As the President indicated in his speech to the 2008 Spring European Council, in order to live up to such expectations, it is vital for the European Union to demonstrate its determination and com-

The European Union has promised to lead the world towards a global post-Kyoto agreement with binding targets. The eyes of the world will be on us in the run-up to the Copenhagen Conference

President Pöttering
University of Copenhagen
1 April 2008

mitment, by delivering on the goals for curbing emissions and promoting renewable energy which it has set itself.

In a lecture this March at the University of Copenhagen - the city which will be host of the crucial 2009 United Nations Conference for a new climate regime - President Pöttering reminded his audience of the tight time-frame available for taking

global action. Action, he stressed, must be taken now, as we only have a maximum of seven to eight years before it is too late to ward off the direst consequences of global warming.

Karen Fredsgaard

If we want to be able to convince our partners worldwide to participate in a global and binding framework, we will have to deliver

President Pöttering
University of Copenhagen
1 April 2008

Can we build it? Bob the Builder and President Pöttering say: 'Of course we can!'
Brussels, 13 June 2007



III. Intercultural Dialogue: Promoting successful Co-existence among Cultures

“Europe’s future is dependent to a great extent on a successful coexistence among cultures and religions within the European Union and between the European Union and our neighbours, first and foremost in the Arab and Islamic world. ... We must do our part ... in making the dialogue among cultures and religions the hallmark of Europe” (President Pöttering, Inaugural speech, 13 February 2007)

2008 has been designated as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue with the aim of promoting deeper mutual understanding between today’s diversity of cultures, both within the European Union and beyond its borders.

A series of events and conferences is scheduled throughout the year at European level and in the 27 member states in a common effort to enable closer contact and exchange between cultures and religions, and thereby to build an intellectual and cultural bridge across the Mediterranean, between Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

President Hans-Gert Pöttering has made intercultural dialogue one of the key priorities of his term in office. The Conference of Presidents has supported the President in his initiative to ‘mainstream’ intercultural dialogue into a wide range of parliamentary activities during the European Year.

Yet, intercultural dialogue is designed, not as a one-off and limited initiative, but should be understood as a continuous endeavour that will need to be pursued at all levels - regional, national, European, and indeed global - in the future. Such an on-going ‘dialogue of cultures’ is essential in encouraging peaceful co-existence and mutual understanding, both within the European Union and beyond. By holding a constant and regular dialogue of this kind, we can get to know each other better, respect each other’s diversity, and hopefully work together as strong and trustworthy partners.

“The idea of a confrontation between Islam and Christianity is simplistic and misleading. There need be no ‘clash of civilisations’.
Certainly we often witness a clash of understandings, but dialogue and discussion can do a great deal to overcome these misunderstandings
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President Pöttering
Euromed Parliamentary Assembly
Tunis, 17 March 2007



Bureau meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly
Tunis, 17 March 2007

2007: Preparation for the Year of Intercultural Dialogue

During the first half of his term in office, intercultural dialogue has featured prominently in the President's activities, both in the European Parliament and during his visits abroad. Each official visit has included one or several meetings with representatives of minority communities in the given country.

In Italy, for instance, the President met young immigrants at the Community of Sant'Egidio. In the Netherlands, he talked with the National Council for Minorities, which represents seven ethnic groups, and serves as an advisory body to the government. In Bulgaria, he had discussions with representatives of the Roma, whilst in Poland he had an exchange of views with members of the Jewish community.

The President of the Parliament, together with the Presidents of the Council and Commission, led the dialogue with the leaders of the faith communities (Catholic,

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Through dialogue we can try to highlight ... the common ground between us and emphasise the substance of our shared values - above all, human dignity and human rights

President Pöttering
Meeting of European Religious Leaders
Brussels, 5 May 2007

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of last year, he also paid a visit to Sibiu/Hermannstadt, which was the “2007 European Capital of Culture”, and met with political leaders to discuss with them inter-community relations. A similar visit is foreseen for later this year to Liverpool, which is the 2008 European Capital of Culture.

In line with the objectives he had defined at the beginning of his term, the President has given priority to Arab and Muslim neighbour countries as destinations for his official trips outside the European Union. To date he has already paid visits to Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and the Palestinian Territories. The President has also visited Israel, where he addressed the Knesset. Each stay was rich in intercultural-related activities, for instance in Algeria, where he met with the Catholic Archbishop and the Chairman of the High Islamic Council.

The President has also seized every possible opportunity to meet civil society organisations involved in intercultural dialogue and cross-community cooperation in Brussels and elsewhere in the EU member states. For instance, last November, he met in the European Parliament with Islamic NGOs from Afghanistan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Philippines, which are supporting grass-roots projects of intercommunity relations and combatting radical Islam.

Likewise, the President has supported a number of inter-religious initiatives across the European Union. Last December, he received the ‘Flame of Peace’ from the



President Pöttering meets young immigrants at the Community of Sant'Egidio Rome, 20 March 2007



President Pöttering meets representatives of the Netherlands National Council for Minorities Den Haag, 12 April 2007



Dialogue with the leaders of the faith communities Brussels, 5 May 2007



Official visit to Egypt, press conference with Dr. Ahmed Fathy Sorour, Speaker of the People's Assembly of Egypt Cairo, 24 February 2008



President Pöttering receives the Flame of Peace
Strasbourg, 10 December 2007



President Pöttering and the President in Office of the Council, Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa, launch the Year of Intercultural Dialogue
Ljubljana, 8 January 2008



President Pöttering welcomes the Grand Mufti of Syria, Sheikh Ahmad Badr Al-Din Hassoun, in the European Parliament
Strasbourg, 15 January 2008



Official Opening of the European Film Festival on Intercultural Dialogue
Brussels, 13 February 2008

hands of young Scouts of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim faiths, who had carried it from Bethlehem to the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The ceremony, during which songs from each tradition were sung, was a symbolic demonstration of the meaning and aim of intercultural dialogue, only a few days ahead of the official launch of the European Year.

2008: European Year of Intercultural Dialogue - Activities in the EP

On 8 January 2008, the President co-launched the Year of Intercultural Dialogue with the European Commission and the new Slovenian Presidency of the Council of Ministers in Ljubljana (Slovenia). In his address on that occasion, the President underlined the great significance that the European Parliament attaches to this European year of dialogue between cultures, which should be understood as an ever stronger and wider political commitment to making intercultural issues an integral part of all European Union policies.

President Pöttering has brought forward to the Parliament's Conference of Presidents and Bureau a set of 'strategic initiatives' to promote an active parliamentary component to the European Year.

The Conference of Presidents agreed that several distinguished personalities should address the plenary in the framework of the European Year. In January, the Grand Mufti of Syria, Sheikh Ahmad Badr Al-Din Hassoun, addressed the Parliament in Strasbourg. The President of Israel, Shimon Peres, and the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, both hope to visit the Parliament this summer. The Dalai Lama will speak before the plenary towards the end of the year.

On 13 February, the President opened a year-long Intercultural Dialogue Film Festival, which is taking place in the Parliament and presenting a series of films from across the European Union dealing with subjects such as cultural and individual identity, integration, immigration and peaceful coexistence. They have been selected by the network of European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC).

Special African and Arab weeks will be held in the European Parliament later this year with the aim of promoting a closer acquaintance and better understanding of both Arab and sub-Saharan African countries in their richness and diversity. In addition to traditional political and economic themes, they will present the culture and achievements of both regions from a variety of angles - including art, music, literature, cinema, food and sport.

In parallel with efforts at European Parliament level, the President puts high em-

This dialogue must be grounded in tolerance and truth. Tolerance does not mean accepting anything and everything. Tolerance means respecting the convictions and views of the other

President Pöttering
Opening of the Year of Intercultural Dialogue
Ljubljana, 8 January 2008

phasis on the promotion of initiatives at the grass-roots level. For that purpose, he has suggested to the Conference of Presidents, which supported the proposal, the establishment of an annual 'Intercultural Dialogue Prize', which will be awarded for the first time at the end of the official European Year, in order to encourage the involvement of the civil society in new projects fostering intercultural dialogue.

One further project of high importance for President Pöttering is the special youth "EuroMedScola" meeting to be hosted by the European Parliament later this year.



Together, we must ... build an intellectual and cultural bridge founded on mutual understanding and shared values

President Pöttering
Opening of the Year of Intercultural Dialogue
Ljubljana, 8 January 2008



well as to help multiply the dialogue taking place in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly.

For the first time, the established EuroScola, which brings together pupils from European countries, has been extended to include pupils from ten Euromed countries.

The purpose of the initiative, which will now assemble altogether around 100 young Christians, Jews and Muslims, is to build bridges of understanding and friendship among future citizens, as

well as to help multiply the dialogue taking place in the framework of the Euro-



President Pöttering visits the Kiyomizu-dera temple in Kyoto
Kyoto, 7 February 2008



It's the future we have to take care of:
EuroMedScola will bring 100 young
Christians, Jews and Muslims together
in the European Parliament
Strasbourg, 12 March 2008

The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly

The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly is the parliamentary dimension of the Barcelona process, in which elected members of the parliaments of the European Union, the European Parliament, the Muslim countries and Israel meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of mutual interest and concern. It is the only parliamentary body in which both Palestinians and Israelis sit together, and forms a unique platform for pursuing the aims of fostering links between cultures and religions.

The President of the European Parliament is Vice-President of the Assembly in his own right and made a commitment at the start of his term to put cooperation within EMPA at the core of his activity. On 28 March 2008, he was elected President of the Assembly for the coming year. His election is a powerful testimony to the potential of EMPA as a framework for cooperation between the European Union and its Mediterranean neighbours.

Last year already, President Pöttering had pleaded for intercultural dialogue to be a mainstream topic of the Assembly's work. The EMPA forum was already due to gain a new perspective throughout the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Now, the Assembly's role in this field will receive greater visibility and potentially gain all the more impact.

The President also called for the Assembly to go beyond 'declamatory policy' and to work on practical projects such as the foundation of a university institute of the Mediterranean, promotion of common academic research and organising fora to facilitate exchanges and contacts between people from civil society of different cultural backgrounds.

In his acceptance speech following his election on 28 March, President Pöttering highlighted the political priorities for his year in office as President of EMPA, putting strong emphasis both on intercultural dialogue and on

The word dialogue refers to a 'flow of meaning', an ... act of mutual communication between partners. This intensive ... exchange of ideas must be the aim in our dialogue in the EMPA. Each of our ... meetings makes a contribution to that dialogue: Let us build up a tradition of dialogue through active debate

President Pöttering
Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly
Meeting, Tunis, 17 March 2007



Dimitrios Sioufas, President of the Hellenic Parliament and President of EMPA, welcomes President Pöttering Athens, 28 February 2008

All of us Parliamentarians gathered here, must together ... foster dialogue between cultures, mutual respect and unconditional protection of human rights

President Pöttering
Acceptance speech as EMPA President
Athens, 28 March 2008

the peace process in the Middle East. He proposed to schedule a special meeting of EMPA in the Middle East in the autumn, which would enable the Parliamentary Assembly to submit its recommendations in time for the planned Euro-Mediterranean summit later in the year.

[One cannot] disregard the importance of democracy and parliamentarianism for the development of the region. Efficiency, the rule of law and sustainable development cannot be achieved without democracy, without parliamentarians

President Pöttering
Spring European Council
Brussels, 13 March 2008

The President expressed his intention to work towards a closer involvement of EMPA, with a reinforced legal base, in the new 'Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean', and greater recognition of it as the legitimate parliamentary dimension thereof.

As the still-young Parliamentary Assembly is now entering a phase of consolidation, the President suggested that the impact of EMPA's recommendations could be increased if they were

adopted more systematically ahead of Ministerial meetings in the Barcelona Process and equally that its organisational resources should be enhanced. These aims received strong support among participants in the EMPA meeting in Athens.

Ciril Štokelj

IV. Middle East Initiative: Drawing on Europe's Own Experience



Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority, and President Pöttering
Gaza, 29 May 2007



President Pöttering speaking in the Knesset
Jerusalem, 30 May 2007



President Pöttering meets Israeli Prime
Minister Ehud Olmert
Jerusalem, 30 May 2007
(Photo: Moshe Milner/Israel Govt. Press Office)

“It is my intention to visit the European Union’s neighbouring Arab states ... and promote the dialogue with the Middle East, and (between) Israel and the Arab world. ... We are convinced that the people of Israel and Palestine are linked by their common human dignity ... and have an equal right to live in a State of their own” (President Pöttering, Inaugural speech, 13 February 2007)

As part of an active parliamentary diplomacy and a constructive intercultural dialogue, the President has committed himself firmly to making a positive contribution to the Middle East peace process, and to enhancing the role of the European Parliament as a mediator between the parties involved.

President Pöttering wanted his very first official visit outside the EU to take place in the Middle East, as this region dramatically embodies some of the key priorities of his mandate. These include fostering peace and stability in the European neighbourhood, promoting our common values, enhancing respect for human dignity and human rights, as well as the key need to improve dialogue and mutual understanding.

Official visit to the Middle East in May 2007

During his visit to the Middle East, President Pöttering met with the leaders both of the Palestinian Authority, including President Abbas in Gaza just a few days before the Hamas take-over, and of the Israeli government, including Prime Minister Olmert.

Addressing the Knesset, the President welcomed the new trust and the increased bilateral cooperation that now existed between the European Union and Israel. He also expressed his understanding for the need for security at the country’s borders, but reminded Israel that international law was binding upon all and highlighted the oppressive effects of the new security precautions on the lives of people on the other side of the border.

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International law is binding on us all. There can be no peace without justice

President Pöttering
Speech to the Knesset
Jerusalem, 30 May 2007

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Looking forward to future dialogue, the President made reference to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA). He made it clear that this was not some kind of ‘Euro-Arab club’ and called on Israel to fulfil its role and responsibility as a full member of this parliamentary institution. The final part of the visit to the Middle East was dedicated to Jordan, where the President met with King Abdullah, who plays

a key role in the peace process, as an accepted mediator between the Arab nations and Israel. Overall, the President's visit left him with a strong conviction that a serious opportunity - and indeed responsibility - existed for the European Parliament to contribute to the peace and development processes in the Middle East. There was a growing openness to the idea of the European institutions playing a bigger part in the search for a solution, and the parliamentary component could be especially important in this, filling a gap left open by traditional diplomacy between governments.



President Pöttering visits a school in the Qalandia refugee camp West Bank, 28 May 2007

The President's visit to the region was part of an on-going process that he has developed at every level over the last fifteen months. These have included a wide range of bilateral meetings with key interlocutors, not only from Israel and the Palestinian Authority, but with the Arab League, the United Nations, the Quartet and others. They also dovetail with his work in the Euro-Med Parliamentary Assembly, of which he was elected President in March 2008.

Drawing on Europe's own experience of reconciliation and cooperation

The President is convinced that, as Europeans, we can draw on our own European experience of reconciliation after the Second World War. The success of the European unification project, through which former enemies have reached out to one another, learnt to live and work together by creating closer economic ties and fostering joint development, is certainly relevant to the region. A crucial way of promoting



President Pöttering walks along the wall in the Qalandia refugee camp West Bank, 28 May 2007



The signing of the Treaties of Rome started Europe off towards a peaceful and prosperous future Rome, 25 March 1957



After centuries marked by war, ... former enemies chose the path of right over might, not might over right - a path towards reconciliation, mutual respect and cooperation. Fundamentally, 50 years of European integration have enabled us to redefine the concept of security - ... as security not against one another, but ... with one another

President Pöttering
Speech to the Knesset
Jerusalem, 30 May 2007



peace would be to help parties on the ground to develop a higher degree of inter-dependence and build a destiny in common.

Following his visit, the President submitted to the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents a set of 'strategic initiatives on the Middle East' for a greater involvement of the European Parliament in the peace and development processes.

The Parliament could indeed offer a new forum for discussion involving as many parties as possible and contribute to a new policy thinking on strategies for reconciliation, economic develop-

President Pöttering at the Yad Vashem Memorial Jerusalem, 29 May 2007





President Pöttering, Javier Solana and PES Group Chairman Martin Schulz at the extraordinary meeting of the Conference of Presidents on the Middle East, Brussels, 20 November 2007

ment and democracy promotion. This approach was approved in October 2007. As part of this pro-active strategy, President Pöttering convened a special meeting of the Conference of Presidents in November 2007 to discuss a European contribution to the Middle East peace process. This was designed to take stock of the situation ahead of the international conference in Annapolis and help evolve a common approach by the EU institutions.

The President welcomed the High Representative for CFSP, Javier Solana, and the Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, to this joint discussion with the political group leaders. For the first time, the European institutions were in effect making a serious effort to prepare jointly for a major foreign-policy conference.

Creating a Working Group on the Middle East, chaired by the President

On the proposal of the President, a new European Parliament Working Group on the Middle East, reporting both to the Conference of Presidents and the Foreign Affairs Committee and bringing together the key office holders within parliament on that issue, was created to carry forward the new, more comprehensive approach to the region. Chaired by the President, the 24-strong Working Group started work in February 2008.



Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Store, President Pöttering, French State Secretary for European Affairs Jean-Pierre Jouyet, and the Special Representative of the Quartet, Tony Blair, together with representatives of the French and Norwegian governments and the European Commission, engaged in an in-depth discussion on how to ensure that European aid gets through to the people in need on the ground, as well as a number of wider issues about prospects in the region. Brussels, 25 March 2008

On 25 March 2008, the new Middle East Working Group met with the follow-up group to the Paris International Donors' Conference for the Palestinian State. The Special Representative of the Quartet, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, together with representatives of the French and Norwegian governments and the European Commission, engaged in an in-depth discussion on how to ensure that European aid gets through to the people in need on the ground, as well as a number of wider issues about prospects in the region.

As he stressed in parallel at the 2008 Spring European Council, President Pöttering highlighted the substantial financial and wider involvement of the European Union in the Middle East. He underlined the need for the European Parliament as one



The 'Annapolis Process' must not simply provide cover for a continuation of the settlement policy. ... Without freedom of movement in Gaza and the West Bank, ... the establishment of a stable Palestinian state is unthinkable. Security does not consist in a military dimension alone; security will only be possible when there is mutual respect between the people in Israel and Palestine. Security begins with reconciliation

President Pöttering
Statement in EP plenary on the situation
in the Middle East
Strasbourg, 10 March 2008





As one arm of the budgetary authority, the European Parliament will take steps to ensure that the money we have committed to the region does not simply go to waste. All the parties must understand that the European Union will not stand idly by and watch the results of its financial solidarity destroyed by military action

President Pöttering
Spring European Council
Brussels, 13 March 2008



improve the situation in the region, and in particular the everyday life of people in Palestine.

Distinguished visitors from the Middle East to the European Parliament

The contribution of the Working Group is being complemented by invitations to distinguished personalities from the Middle East to address formal plenary sittings of the Parliament. Following the visit by the King of Jordan in December 2007,



If we commit ourselves actively and constantly plead for dialogue, a formal peace process will be able to follow

President Pöttering
Special meeting of Conference of Presidents
on the Middle East
Brussels, 20 November 2007



These various initiatives form part of a new approach by the European Parliament to the Middle East. They will not necessarily generate immediate results. They are rather components in a longer-term strategy based on the distinctive contribution that a European and parliamentary perspective can offer. They will require a lot of patience and persistence, but may help contribute to peace in the years to come.

Alexandre Stutzmann

arm of the EU budgetary authority to make a stronger, long-term political commitment to the region and to take steps ensuring that its financial generosity had both a clearly defined purpose and an effective impact on the ground.

As a follow-up to this meeting, the President also announced that the European Parliament would host an international conference on cross-border cooperation in the Middle East region in the autumn of 2008. The initiative is due to constitute one of a series of small but tangible steps aimed at carrying out specific projects to



President Pöttering and the Special Representative of the Quartet, Tony Blair, chairing the meeting of the Working Group on the Middle East Brussels, 25 March 2008



Visit by the King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the European Parliament Strasbourg, 12 December 2007

V. Reform of the European Parliament: Better Coordination, Improved Working Methods

“We, as European Parliament, must also be prepared to reform our house. ... A lot remains to be done. Therefore, I will be submitting a proposal for a comprehensive reform of the working methods of the European Parliament to the group chairs” (President Pöttering, Inaugural speech, 13 February 2007)

The progressive increase in the power of the European Parliament since 1979 - from a largely advisory body to a fully-fledged legislative institution - has significant implications for both the Parliament's internal organisation and how it conducts its business. Currently the Parliament shares decision-making powers with the Council of Ministers in more than three-quarters of the policy areas of the European Union. In effect, this will rise to around 95 per cent with the new Lisbon Treaty. It will

also acquire effective co-equal status with the Council in all areas of EU spending and finally have a right of veto, in one form or another, over nearly all international agreements concluded by the EU with third countries.

Creating a Working Party on Parliamentary Reform

The new President of the European Parliament identified at the very start of his mandate that, to

live up to its growing responsibilities as co-legislator and joint budgetary authority, an up-dating of the way parliamentary business is conducted would be both desirable and necessary. Accordingly, he put the internal reform of the European Parliament high on the agenda for his period in office.

In February 2007, President Pöttering, after intensive discussion with the political groups, proposed a detailed mandate for reform, with the overall aim of increasing the coherence, efficiency and visibility of the Parliament's activities in coming years. On the basis of this proposal, the Conference of Presidents established a Working Party on Parliamentary Reform. Comprising a personal representative for every political group leader and chaired by Dagmar Roth-Behrendt MEP, this body meets at least once a month to consider concrete proposals to improve the working practices of the Parliament, at both plenary and committee levels.

The Working Party on Parliamentary Reform has developed an agenda for reform which is being considered in three phases. Broadly speaking, these are aimed at: i) securing better structured and more lively plenary sessions; ii) increasing the efficiency of committee work, making progress in better law-making and improving inter-institutional relations; and iii) addressing a wide range of 'post 2009' issues - for

The main building of the European Parliament in Strasbourg



Dagmar Roth-Behrendt MEP and President Pöttering at a press conference Strasbourg, 16 January 2008



instance the number of committees, the length of Members' mandates in various structures, and the future role of the Conference of Presidents and the Bureau.

Updating the Parliamentary Calendar

The President's parliamentary reform initiative has already led to some important changes in the way that parliamentary business is conducted. Some major reforms have already been implemented.

An early but important step in this process was the adoption of a new structure for the Parliament's annual calendar by the political group leaders in the Conference of Presidents last summer. This aims at optimising the use of available time and to better coordinate plenary, committee and political group work.

The new calendar has been in operation since the beginning of 2008. It enables additional committee meetings to be convened at the beginning and end of political group meeting weeks and the number of weeks set aside for constituency work has been increased from four to seven. The new 'turquoise' weeks give Members more time for direct contacts with citizens in their home region and/or for work-related travel.

Improving the structure of Plenary sessions

The Working Party then moved on to the key issue of the reform of the Parliament's plenary sessions, identifying improvements designed to, in the words of the mandate, 'promote livelier and more interesting debates ... (and) ... increase media interest in and the impact of Parliament's debates and decisions'.

On 25 October 2007, the leaders of the political groups unanimously adopted a

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With these key changes, the first stage in the parliamentary reform process has been successfully concluded. Parliament's plenary sessions should be better structured - and our debates more lively and interesting. Both parliamentarians and citizens will soon be able to benefit from these important changes to the way we conduct our business

President Pöttering
European Parliament
Brussels, 25 October 2007

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comprehensive set of proposals put forward by the Working Party for the reorganisation of the Parliament's monthly part-sessions. These took effect at the beginning of 2008.

Since January, the Parliament's part-sessions in Strasbourg are now divided into several clearly-defined slots for 'priority debates'. Discussion of major legislation now normally takes place on Tuesday mornings and afternoons, whilst major political debates are held on Wednesday mornings, with discussion of current issues on Wednesday afternoons. Votes on major pieces of legislation or other decisions requiring an absolute majority

Tony Blair visits President Pöttering in his constituency
Osnabrück, 25 March 2007
(Photo: Uwe Lewandowski)



Getting the job done:
Parliament is restructuring its
plenary sessions





José Manuel Durao Barroso presenting the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy to the European Parliament

now take place on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 12 noon. To improve the link between debates and votes - to make EP proceedings more media-friendly - debates on important issues are now so far as possible scheduled in the time-slots immediately prior to the relevant voting session. A good example was the debate and vote on the Lisbon Treaty on the same morning.

An important innovation has been the establishment of a rolling three-month programme of subjects for priority debates in the plenary. This is up-dated on a monthly basis by the Conference of Presidents.

There is now also a 'cooling-off' period of at least one month between the vote on any co-decision report in committee (on first reading) and the vote on it in plenary. This gives the political groups more time to review the outcome of committee work and properly prepare consideration of the report in plenary.

More speaking time is being set aside for rapporteurs, so that they can react to points made or wind up the debate. There is also a much greater opportunity for Members to 'catch the eye' of the President in debates.

A new approach is being promoted for Question Time, in order to make the exercise crisper and more effective, so enhancing the accountability of both the Council and Commission to the Parliament. Discussions are being undertaken with the Council on instituting themes for these monthly exchanges. The Commission has itself, in response, to the Parliament's reform strategy, already adopted revised internal guidelines to encourage more succinct replies at Question Time and briefer statements in plenary. Guidelines are currently being drawn up by the Constitutional Affairs Committee for written questions to the Commission and Council.

Promoting Parliament's policy priorities

To enhance the coherence and visibility of the Parliament's policy priorities - and to improve legislative planning between the EU institutions - more time is to be devoted in plenary to the Commission's annual policy programming cycle. Two new major debates are being held each year: the first is in spring, on the European Commission's Annual Policy Strategy (APS), and the second is in early autumn, before the publication of the Commission's Annual Legislative and Work Programme (LWP). These debates in March and September take place in addition to the existing annual post-hoc debate in December on the LWP, following its publication by the Commission.

Improving Committee work and Inter-Institutional Relations

After securing these important changes, the Working Party on Parliamentary Reform has moved on to its next phase of work - looking at improvements in the way the Parliament's committees work, how the Parliament performs as co-legislator with the Council, and how to take forward a whole range of Better Law-Making issues.

The growth in the power of the European Parliament makes it important that the institution concentrates its efforts on its role as joint legislature with the Council. It follows that work on own-initiative reports needs to be better focussed to ensure maximum effect. The Working Party therefore proposed a set of more clearly defined categories of own-initiative and non-legislative reports. Its detailed proposals were approved by the Conference of Presidents on 12 December 2007.

A Parliamentary Committee at work





A common goal:
Increasing the efficiency of our
parliamentary work

Henceforth there are five categories of such reports, each with distinct criteria for authorisation. These are: i) legislative initiative reports; ii) strategic reports; iii) non-legislative initiative reports; iv) annual activity and monitoring reports; and v) implementation reports. The quota rules for such reports have been revised as necessary. The last three types of report would be subject to a simplified process for consideration in plenary, and they would be amended by either political groups or 40 Members putting down alternative resolutions. The appropriate rule changes are being drafted by the Constitutional Affairs Committee.

The Working Party is now reviewing the Parliament's role as co-legislator, which is given even greater importance by prospective entry into force of the the Lisbon Treaty. Among the questions being addressed is the need for clearer guidance for committees on how they may conduct negotiations with the Council before first reading. The huge increase in so-called 'first-reading agreements' - which are now the most frequent method by which legislation is agreed between the Council and Parliament - makes this very timely.

The Working Party is also looking at Better Law-Making issues too (see Part VII below). Their concern is to ensure that real progress is made on inter-institutional issues - such as simplification, comitology, impact assessments and soft law - in an era where the Parliament can and should be involved in every stage of law-making from inception to implementation.

Overall, the reforms already adopted in the way plenary sessions are structured, together with the initial changes made to committee work, represent important progress in carrying forward the President's reform agenda. The focus will shortly move on when the next report from the Working Party is published.

Anthony Teasdale

VI. The ‘La Hulpe’ Agenda and Beyond: New Tools for New Challenges

“We need a new pact between the citizens of Europe and their political institutions in the European Union. A ‘Citizens’ Europe’ and the credibility of the European institutions are conditional upon each other” (President Pöttering, Inaugural speech, 13 February 2007)

Since it was first directly elected in 1979, the European Parliament has seen its influence steadily grow. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the political and legislative influence of the European Parliament will increase still further. This will close a major democratic gap in the European Union, but it also bestows a huge responsibility upon the institution and its Members.

To live up to this increased responsibility, it is essential that the European Parliament streamlines its activity and defines ways of responding cost-effectively to the practical and organisational requirements both of today and of tomorrow. With a budget of almost € 1.5 billion and over 5000 staff, the Parliament needs to function as a modern, professional organisation, attaining the highest standards of public administration. The purpose of the so-called ‘La Hulpe Agenda’ is to identify how organisational capabilities can best be matched to the expectations of both Members and citizens and to maximise our impact on policy and law-making.

President Pöttering attaches great importance to this agenda of ensuring that the staff and financial resources of the Parliament are used to best effect. He convened a ‘brain-storming’ session of the Parliament’s Bureau - of Vice Presidents and Quaestors - in La Hulpe in March 2007 to discuss the policy lines which could best fulfil these objectives. Three major directions were identified as the focus for future improvements, and in all three areas major progress has been achieved in the first half of the term in office of the President.

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Modernising the allocation of staff and financial resources in Parliament, so that we become a world-class administration serving both Members and citizens

President Pöttering
Inaugural Speech
Strasbourg, 13 February 2007

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further the Parliament’s capacity to shape legislation and enhance its performance

Modernising the Legislative Work of the European Parliament

The European Parliament is already today a central political player in shaping European legislation. Increasingly, the European Parliament is becoming the place where the decisive political compromise is struck on matters subject to co-decision. To enhance



The ‘brain-storming’ session of the Parliament’s Bureau in La Hulpe La Hulpe, March 2007



The European Parliament needs to function as a modern and professional organisation by streamlining its activities



More interpretation, more information for the Members of the European Parliament

in, the law-making process, it was decided to strengthen the support services available to Members of the European Parliament for this purpose.

Good law-making depends in part upon the provision to, and access by, Members to high-quality policy analysis, to assist them in performing their legislative responsibilities and daily parliamentary business. In spring last year, the Bureau approved the principle of developing the potential of Parliament's Library and enhancing its analytical and research capabilities on policy issues, by setting up a new analytical service. The necessary financial resources for this initiative have since been provided for in this year's budget and implementation of the project starts in April 2008.

The Parliament's Bureau has also decided to provide additional interpretation facilities to Members for ad hoc meetings in the legislative and budgetary processes, so that they better communicate outside formal committee meetings. Funds have been set aside and a pilot project will be launched in May 2008.

In parallel to the efforts aimed at improving law-making within the Parliament, President Pöttering has put high emphasis on strengthening relations with the national parliaments of both the 27 EU member states and neighbouring countries. Increased cooperation is valuable to discuss policy challenges together, exchange best practice, and help ensure coherent implementation of European legislation at national level.

Nearly all national parliaments now have a representative office within the European Parliament building, to help promote swift two-way flow of information. The President has attached high importance to developing Joint Parliamentary Meetings on key issues, and the committees are taking forward intensified dialogue in a variety of formats. Cooperation is underpinned by additional budgetary resources approved in October last year.

Communicating the European Parliament to the Citizen

Effective communication of the Parliament to the citizen, especially in the run-up to the 2009 European elections, is of particular importance. In this regard there is need for efficient use of Parliament's tools and the development of new ones. The Bureau has been looking at strengthening the role of the External Information Offices in the member states and bringing on stream new communication tools.

The mission statements of the Information Offices were revised in the first half of 2007, with the aim of putting the citizens at the heart of their activities. The purpose was to increase visibility of the European Parliament's activity and to improve the accessibility of these offices, with a better choice of buildings, more citizen-friendly opening hours and also a distinct European Parliament identity vis-à-vis the European Commission when sharing common buildings. Moreover, the MEPs from each country would be more involved in the offices' activities as 'multipliers', notably in relation with the strategy for the election campaign.

Some major communication projects are under way, such as Web-TV, new audiovisual facilities, and the new Brussels Visitors' Centre. The latter's Academic Committee met for the first time in January 2008, ensuring highest academic and scientific standards as regards the exhibition programme in the Visitors' Centre. These new tools should be operational in time for the next European elections in June 2009.

Among these tools, the Web-TV project is of critical importance, as it will offer the rapidly growing group of internet TV viewers access to a vast array of information about the European Parliament, its Members and activities. It will offer a combina-



Putting the citizens at the heart of our activities: A modern mission statement for Parliament's External Information Offices

tion of live-streaming and mini-documentaries. Following a prototype presentation last year, the project was approved in February 2008 and the necessary funds have been made available. Now in an experimental phase, the project should be fully functional by summer 2008.

In order to encourage initiatives promoting European values and integration, the Bureau has also agreed to create a series of new awards to reward outstanding activities - by citizens in general and young people in particular - with a strong European and cross-border cooperation content.

A European Journalists' Prize will highlight extraordinary contributions to a better understanding of European issues and institutions, whilst the European Citizen's Prize will mark out contributions from civil society.

The European engagement of young people is all the more important as they represent the future of our continent. The President proposed to the Foundation of the International Charlemagne Prize in Aachen that it create a joint 'European Charlemagne Youth Prize' to be awarded to an outstanding youth initiative. The proposal was accepted and the first competition was launched in January 2008. National juries in all member states designate a national laureate, and then the European Jury decides upon the European winner. He or she will be awarded the first Charlemagne Youth Prize at a ceremony that will take place in Aachen on 29 April.

Another innovative project aiming at communicating the European Parliament and both our European roots and values to the wider public is the 'The House of European History', proposed by President Pöttering in his inaugural speech in February 2007.



It should act as a locus for our memory of European history and a place for the future, where our European identity can continue to grow

President Pöttering
Inaugural Speech
Strasbourg, 13 February 2007



and documentation centre - modern, interactive and multi-lingual. For the President, one crucial point is to ensure its clear political independence, which is a prerequisite both for the academic credibility of the House of European History and for its acceptance by the public.

In early March this year, an independent Committee of Experts met in Brussels to discuss and start preparing a detailed concept for this project. A final decision is foreseen in early 2009, with the aim of the House being operational before the European elections in 2014.



President Pöttering with participants in the Model European Parliament in Bulgaria Sofia, 20 April 2007



Constitutional meeting of the independent Committee of Experts for the House of European History Brussels, 3 March 2008

Projecting the European Parliament in the Wider World

In parallel with its increasing legislative power, the role and profile of the European Parliament in the field of external relations has grown significantly. Today the Parliament plays a central part in standing up for the values of human rights and democracy worldwide and is increasingly considered as an important and valuable partner around the globe.

Following the conclusions of the 'La Hulpe' Away-Day, President Pöttering has put high emphasis on promoting a stronger parliamentary dimension in international relations and on fostering closer cooperation between the Parliament and democratic representatives in partner countries throughout the world.

Crucial steps in this direction are the introduction of 'parliamentary pre-summits' ahead of the normal executive-level EU summits with partners worldwide and the participation of President Pöttering in the meetings of the Speakers of the parliaments of the G-8 countries.

*Every step towards stronger supra-regional cooperation will only be possible on the basis of parliamentary democratic decisions. ...
A living democracy cannot ignore checks and balances*

President Pöttering
EU-Africa Summit
8 December 2007

Towards 'Parliamentary pre-summits'

The initiative of President Pöttering to move in the direction of organising so-called 'parliamentary pre-summits' constitutes a central component of the President's overall priority of promoting the parliamentary dimension as an integral part of the foreign relations of the European Union. The aim of the 'pre-summits' is to provide a parliamentary position and effective contribution in the run-up to the summits of the heads of state and government of the European Union with their counterparts in other countries and regions.

The President strongly believes the development of parliamentary cooperation with elected representatives in third countries to be essential in our efforts of fostering better understanding between nations and promoting the values of democracy and human rights. In this sense a parliamentary dimension complements the activities on the executive and governmental level.

Efficiency, the rule of law and sustainable development cannot be achieved without democracy, without parliamentarians

President Pöttering
Spring European Council
13 March 2008

This concept was first put into practice ahead of the European Union-Africa Summit in Lisbon in December last year. President Pöttering and the President of the Pan-African Parliament, Gertrude Mongella, chaired the first parliamentary pre-summit on 7 December, the day before the executive-level summit, in the same city. In his opening speech, the President underlined the need for a common strategy between the peoples of Europe and Africa to be based on strong democratic and parliamentary structures.

Let us plant the tree of democracy today, and in doing so, give our peoples a strong voice in intergovernmental cooperation as well

President Pöttering
EU-Africa Pre-Summit
7 December 2007



President Pöttering and the President of the Pan-African Parliament, Gertrude Mongella, at the parliamentary pre-summit Lisbon, 7 December 2007

He therefore called for the full institutional involvement of the Pan-African Parliament, the European Parliament and the national and regional parliaments in a close partnership. The pre-summit was concluded with a Common Declaration, presented by both Presidents to the EU-Africa Summit the following day, and highlighting policy directions for jointly meeting the challenges ahead.

Invited also to address the executive-level EU-Africa Summit, President Pöttering insisted on the urgency of providing national parliaments in Africa, as well as the Pan-African Parliament, with the necessary financial and logistical underpinnings to be fully able to perform their role in a democratic system. This first experience of organising pre-summits proved to be successful and it will now be pursued increasingly ahead of EU summits with third countries or regional blocs in the future.

With the same purpose of developing the parliamentary dimension of the European Union's external relations, President Pöttering has taken the initiative of hosting a Joint Parliamentary Meeting on the Western Balkans. The meeting, which scheduled for 26-27 May 2008, will bring together Members from the 27 European national and of all the countries of the Western Balkans. The Presidents of both the European Council and European Commission should take part as well.



Family photo at the EU-Africa Summit Lisbon, 8 December 2007

Participating in the G-8 Speakers' process

Cooperation between you, your parliaments and the European Parliament is absolutely vital and in our shared interest. It is more than just a matter of protocol

President Pöttering
G-8 Speakers' Summit
8 September 2007

For the first time in September 2007, the President of the European Parliament was invited to participate in the annual meeting of the Speakers of the parliaments of the G-8 countries, the world's richest industrialised nations. On that occasion, the decision was taken to admit the European Parliament as a permanent guest for all future meetings and activities.



G-8 Speaker's Summit Berlin, September 2007 (Photo: Deutscher Bundestag by Hermann J. Müller)

Whilst the international role of the European Union had been recognised back in 1981 with the involvement of the Presidents of the European Commission and the European Council, in the then G-7 summits at executive level, the European Parliament had not featured. The President argued successfully that since the 1970s, the Parliament had become a directly-elected institution and gradually acquired significant legislative power. Many of the global issues now addressed in the G-8 process were policy areas in which it was now as important as national parliaments.

Securing the involvement of the European Parliament in the G-8 process was a major achievement by the President for the visibility of the Parliament and its role on the international stage. The President looks forward to taking part in this year's meeting, to be held in Japan in September.

Thomas Subelack

VII. Better Law-Making Agenda: Enhancing Europe's Credibility

*“The ‘Better Law-Making’ agenda can make a contribution to achieving (credibility) by (ensuring) more democratic oversight, transparency, reliable transposition into national law, ... impact assessments and simplification of legal texts”
(President Pöttering, Inaugural speech, 13 February 2007)*

From the start, the President of the European Parliament has been committed to carrying forward an agenda for Better Law-Making in the European Union. He considers improvements in the Better Law-Making agenda as of central importance in bringing Europe closer to the citizen and in achieving the commitments made in the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and jobs.

Under his guidance, the European Parliament is now rightly devoting greater attention to looking at the whole legislative process, from way ‘upstream’ to far ‘down-stream’. This means focussing more on issues like better legislative planning, proper advance consultation, the more systematic use of impact assessments, higher priority for simplification, improved democratic

scrutiny of the comitology process, and the speedier and more consistent transposition, implementation and enforcement of European legislation. The President has invited the Working Party on Parliamentary Reform to look at innovative ways of carrying the Better Law-Making agenda forward.

Better Law-Making is crucial to bringing Europe closer to the citizen and delivering on the Lisbon Strategy

President Pöttering
Spring European Council
8 March 2007



Speedy and efficient law-making: Signing of the roaming regulation by President Pöttering and German Chancellor and President-in-Office Angela Merkel, in the presence of rapporteur Paul Rübig MEP, Commissioner Viviane Reding, Commission President José Manuel Durao Barroso, and the Chairwoman of the Industry Committee, Angela Niebler MEP
Brussels, 27 June 2007

President Pöttering has successfully encouraged the Parliament's Bureau to devote more financial and personnel resources to these issues - for instance, by increasing staff and boosting expertise budgets for impact assessments, to enable parliamentary committees to look at the implications of key amendments to draft laws.

On simplification, the President has pushed hard to secure agreement from the European Commission that ‘recasting’ should be the norm whenever it proposes new legislation. This means grouping together any new proposal with the existing body of legislation in the same field, for sake of clarity. If that cannot always be achieved, then six months later, the existing body of law should be ‘codified’ (that is, brought together in one text). The Commission is finally making efforts to signal early on, in its Annual Policy Strategy (APS) each February, what its forward simplification plans are.

On comitology, the President has helped secure agreement from the Commission, and now the Council, to amend all existing acts adopted under co-decision, in a complex ‘alignment’ exercise. The purpose of this is to ensure that the new scrutiny rights of the Parliament in the comitology sphere will be applied not only to new legislation, but also to around 250 legislative acts already in place.

On the transposition, implementation and enforcement of European legislation, the President is strongly pushing member states - as he did at the March 2007 Spring European Council - to publish ‘correlation tables’ setting out the various obligations

contained in directives and the national measures being taken to give them effect.

The Better Law-Making agenda implies a major change in the way the European Union operates and it is one that is best achieved in incremental steps, ideally involving all the European institutions working to-

gether. The next big opportunity comes with the increased importance that legislative planning is likely to assume once the new Lisbon Treaty comes into effect. In the President’s view, we can and should build a new relationship of trust between the Parliament and Council, to put into practice the idea of coordinated legislative planning, to which the Council committed itself in the Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making five years ago.

Antonio Preto

*Better Law-Making requires
a new way of thinking about
EU policy-making*

President Pöttering
Spring European Council
8 March 2007

VIII. Conclusion: Valuable Progress Made, but Still a Way to Go



Celebrating the 50th anniversary
of the European Parliament
Strasbourg, 12 March 2008

The celebration of the 50th anniversary of the European Parliament in March 2008 was the occasion to take stock of the European Parliament's achievement in developing European democracy over the fifty years since the first sitting of the then Parliamentary Assembly in the Maison de l'Europe in Strasbourg in March 1958. The European Parliament has gained increasing influence over the years and is now at the heart of a real European parliamentary democracy, something unimaginable even in 1979, when it first became directly elected. This anniversary was an important symbolic event in highlighting the Parliament's role as the voice of Europe's citizens.

The programme of action presented by Hans-Gert Pöttering at the beginning of his term of office as President of the European Parliament was designed to help bring citizens and their elected representatives closer together, at the heart of European policy-making, and to give democratic procedures and scrutiny their proper place in the EU institutional framework. At mid-term, it is clear that President Pöttering has made significant progress in promoting the various priorities he set himself. The European Parliament has been able to strengthen its role as the democratic component of the European Union institutional framework, and to push forward major items on the policy agenda, not least on climate change and intercultural dialogue. Although there is still a long way to go to meeting the President's aims, the work of the last 15 months constitutes a solid basis for taking further steps in the months to come.

This Mid-Term Review offers an appropriate moment to look forward to the challenges ahead. Just before the end of President Pöttering's two and a half years in office, European citizens will elect a new European Parliament. These European elections in 2009 will put the work of the Parliament to the ultimate democratic test. The objective must be to ensure that the advances and progress registered in the last fifteen months - and the commitment and energy still to be devoted to the second half of his term - bring dividends in terms of higher voter turn-out and a greater appreciation of the role and power of the only directly-elected component of the EU's emerging political system.



Building a better life for future generations
Strasbourg, 12 March 2008

The European Union faces many challenges, some of which are very urgent: climate change, energy security, terrorism and extremism, global poverty, economic reform. The case for European-level action on these and other issues has never been stronger. For its part, the European Parliament is given an increased capacity to contribute towards finding solutions through the new Lisbon Treaty. The Parliament must show that it can rise to the opportunity and the challenge. The task is to show that the European Union is capable of concrete action providing visible added-value to the everyday lives of real people. We must demonstrate that Parliament's work can and does improve the quality of life of citizens and contribute to building a better life for future generations. If we can do this in the months ahead, there is an excellent chance that the 2009 European elections will mark an important turning-point, with higher participation and greater centrality for the European Parliament in the political choices and debates that take place across the European Union.

Astrid Worum

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