

**Prof. Danuta Hübner,**

**“The need to speed up work on the European Parliament electoral law”**

**AFCO Committee meeting, “Modification of the Act concerning the election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage pursuant to Article 223(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union”**

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After 40 years of direct elections to the European Parliament, it is high time to improve the conditions for European citizens to participate in these elections. We have already achieved a good agreement with the Council acting by unanimity, in the previous mandate that, if ratified by national parliaments of the remaining three member states, Cyprus, Germany and Spain, would improve the conditions for millions of people by introducing a postal vote, by introducing the right to vote in a third country on election days as well as many more provisions for more transparency and more democracy.

This proposal requires a special legislative procedure: we need unanimity in the Council, and we all know what an endeavour this is, ratification by national parliaments and an absolute majority in this House at the end of the process.

In addition, there are MS that require that the ratification of the European electoral law takes place one year before the European elections. This means that we are already late and that we should work fast and hard on the position of the European Parliament.

We all should also engage with the national parliaments early in the process to avoid the scenario where once an agreement is reached with the Council, the European electoral law fails to be ratified by the MS.

We should reach out to political groups in the House very early and test their position on contentious issues. The list of those is rather long, including: transnational lists, zipped lists, voting age, threshold etc. We cannot afford to have proposals that will later be rejected by the House; in order to engage in negotiations with the Council we need a strong mandate and the support and engagement of the majority of the political groups.

In the previous mandate, I worked very hard with the co-rapporteur, Jo Leinen to get the 28 MS to reach consensus on the reform package: three years, six presidencies of meetings with the Ambassadors and tough negotiations. We should build up on these achievements in order to modernise, and make the system of the European elections more inclusive and fairer for European elections.

The reform of the European electoral law is a necessary and much awaited step forward for European citizens and it touches upon topics that will be discussed in the Conference on the future of Europe.

In particular, citizens have the right to be informed of the link between national parties and candidates running in the elections and their affiliation with a European political party. Member States should have the possibility to display European political parties' names or logos on the ballot papers. This is an important provision that would reinforce the awareness of the European nature of the election.