

Professor Danuta Hübner

“My views on the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency”

AFCO Committee meeting

**“Presentation of the Council Presidency’s programme by Mr Anže Logar,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia”**

European Parliament, Brussels (online), 14 July 2021

Dear Minister Logar,

This is the second time in the history of European integration that Slovenia is holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

I would like to remind us all that Slovenia was the first member state from among those who joined the Union in 2004 to hold the presidency. The year when Slovenia held its first Presidency, 2008, was marked by the financial crisis that had shaken the European economy.

This time, the EU faces again important challenges, from recovery from and after the Corona induced crisis to the green and digital transformation of the economy, building its resilience, preserving the European social model and upholding the rule of law.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to exchange with us today on issues that are important to our committee.

I would like to thank you for words of appreciation and commitment for the inter institutional agreement on the transparency register.

One subject that is very close to our hearts, here in AFCO, is the Conference on the Future of Europe. Major part of the discussions in the framework of the Conference will take place during the Slovenian Presidency. I would like to stress again the importance of this taboo free debate with the citizens on our common future where their voice will be heard, and translated into solutions making the European Union fit for the future! This unique democratic project, unprecedented public dialogue needs to keep up to its promise and deliver on citizens’ expectations.

Secondly, let me say few words on our work here in AFCO on the European political parties. Since their establishment they have largely enhanced their role within the polity of the European Union, and within the context of multiple challenges to democracy worldwide.

Today and in view of the 2024 European elections, European political parties are increasingly called upon to ensure an effective connectivity with people. From this perspective, their cooperation with national parties should be encouraged, in order to support them in bringing the Union closer to the citizens. This is why the revision of the Regulation governing the European political parties and the European political foundations is needed and should be in force before the 2024 European elections. The initial impulse for this change might come still under your Presidency. And we count on your engagement.

Thirdly, let me refer to the words coming from the Declaration by the Parliaments of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Portuguese Republic and the Republic of Slovenia related to the parliamentary dimension of the Trio Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The Declaration says:

“As the beating heart of our democracy, our parliaments, both national and European, have a special responsibility to collectively safeguard and strengthen democracy.”

We could not have said it better than the Declaration. In this context let me say that our expectation is that the Slovenian Presidency will actively engage with this House on the issue of the European Parliament's right of inquiry. On this long-standing open issue, we need openness on the Council side to listen to the European Parliament's arguments.

The Commission has recently reiterated its 'commitment for constructive engagement in trilateral discussions in order to clarify all remaining points of concern'. So, indeed, we are now waiting for the Slovenian Presidency to signal your readiness to engage in trilateral meetings to explore ways forward, toward an agreement on this crucial element of parliamentary democracy.

On my list of 'things to do' together with your Presidency is also the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights. It would further reinforce the EU's engagement in the protection of fundamental rights. We expect to see during the Slovenian Presidency progress on the negotiations with the aim of concluding them as soon as possible.

And last but not least, the rule of law. This is one of the priorities of your Presidency. This is good news.

As mentioned in your programme, the Slovenian Presidency aims to raise awareness of the European way of life, based on respect for personal dignity, freedom and fundamental rights, as well as respect for rules and the fulfilment of obligations.

Respecting the rule of law is vital for the trust of the citizens in the institutions. It also matters strongly for the functioning of the internal market. For the implementation of the New Generation EU. For our global credibility.

We hope that your Presidency will continue with the hearings on Article 7 and that concrete action will be taken where there is a clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law and European values.

We are here to support you in your efforts.

And we count on you.