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Plenary session of the European Parliament

Strassburg (France), 13-16.02.2017



Bert Van Caelenberg, Secretary General of Eurofedop, attended the Parliament Session.

Guy Verhofstadt (MEP, ALDE) presented a report on possible evolutions of and adjustments to the current institutional set-up of the European Union. He made an appeal for reforming the Union. Brexit, Trump, Putin, the Union is in crisis. The European people want results, a Europe that delivers.

Elmar Brok (MEP, EPP) presented a report on improving the functioning of the European Union building on the potential of the Lisbon Treaty. He emphasised that the citizens expect solutions to problems for which the Union is more suited than the individual member states. The goal should be transparent, efficient and citizen-oriented legislation.

Alexander Van der Bellen, President of Austria, held a speech before Parliament in which he stated that the European Union idea is great and unique. It is worth all the effort. It has made it possible to accomplish peace in Europe and thus create prosperity and growth which the individual countries acting on their own are not capable of.

The MEPs also made a call for EU-wide protection for whistle-blowers. As European public service trade union, Eurofedop points to the importance of document A8-0004/2017 ("On the role of whistle-blowers in the protection of EU's financial interests") as a model for the role to be played by whistle-blowers in national Ministries of Finances.

One of the main items during this Parliamentary Session was the debate and approval in Parliament of the CETA agreement, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with Canada. CETA cannot be implemented without the agreement of the European Parliament. The Parliament approved the agreement with 408 votes in favour, 254 votes against and 33 abstentions. Artis Pabriks (MEP, EPP), rapporteur, stated that Canada is an ally that we share values with and that we can rely on. Together we can build bridges, instead of a wall, for the prosperity of our citizens.

Now the agreement still has to be approved by the national and regional parliaments, although it can already – provisionally – come into use as of 1st April 2017.