

MEP awards 2017: A few words from the winners

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News

Maltese deputy Roberta Metsola hosted the Parliament Magazine's annual MEP awards ceremony recognising MEPs for their outstanding work over the last year.



This year's MEP awards winners | *Photo credit: Jean-Yves Limet*

Metsola took to the stage on Wednesday for the 13th MEP awards in the glamorous Concert Noble in Brussels' EU district, where 18 members of the European Parliament were rewarded for their work.

Opening the ceremony, Metsola called on those attending to take a moment to remember the Brussels terrorist attacks, saying, "A year ago today, Brussels suffered a terrorist attack that killed many, injured more and has left a mark on all of us. Anyone who, like many of us here, thinks of Brussels as a home away from home, will never forget the moments of panic, helplessness, anger and grief for the victims of these attacks.

"We have a duty to remember and a responsibility as legislators to act and make Europe safer and freer. We will never forget that day or the people who lost their lives a year ago."

With details of the attacks in Central London emerging late yesterday afternoon, Metsola also called on the audience to mark both tragic events with a "moment of silence to honour those we have lost."

A recipient of the justice and home affairs award in both 2015 and 2016, the EPP group deputy said the Parliament Magazine's annual awards were "a confirmation that there is appreciation for a person's work in the European Parliament."

Commenting ahead of the awards, Metsola said, "You can get elected as an MEP and basically do nothing for five years, or you can try and leave a mark. The MEP awards are a stamp of approval that what you have done is good, and that you can go forward."

She added, "It also means that anyone coming from any country - look at me, coming from the smallest country - can win and get support from across the political divide."

The first award of the night went to British MEP **Julie Girling** (ECR, UK) for **agriculture and rural development**, who said, "I may be one of those MEPs who knows exactly when their term will end but I am delighted to receive this award which I believe is largely for the work I have done on animal welfare."

The **culture, education and sport** award went to **Olga Sehnalová** (S&D Czech Republic), who said, "This award belong to my colleagues on the committee. I believe all MEPs should strive to be ambassadors to promote better understanding.""

Elly Schlein (S&D Italy) won in the **development** category, and told the audience, "We are facing unprecedented challenges, which is one reason why we have to do more to in the ongoing fight to eradicate poverty."

Carlos Zorrinho (S&D, Portugal), was rewarded for his work on the **digital single market**, saying, "The digital agenda is a cornerstone in re-connecting citizens to the EU project."

The next category on the night was **employment and social affairs**; the award went to **Emilian Pavel** (S&D Romania), who said, "We have made progress in this field and it's our responsibility to keep this up in the coming years."

Accepting the award for **energy** on behalf of **Theresa Griffin** (S&D, UK), her Socialist group colleague Seb Dance said, "Theresa did not think she would win but she takes great pride in what she does and this is in recognition of her brilliant hard work."

Giovanni La Via (EPP, Italy) won the award for **environment** and said, "This is a big honour for me. We have, in the past year, achieved some beautiful things with the Paris agreement, but we still need a big effort going forward to secure even better results for the environment."

The **regional development** award went to **Iskra Mihaylova** (ALDE, Bulgaria). The award was accepted on her behalf by Snezhina Petrova, Mihaylova's policy advisor, who said, "Iskra regards this as a great honour but it is recognition of not just her efforts but all members of her committee."

The next award of the night was for **foreign affairs** and went to **Hilde Vautmans** (ALDE, Belgium) for her work on highlighting the plight of missing child refugees, who said, "My nomination was for the work I have done regarding the estimated 10,000 missing children in Europe. I can tell you that if one of these were my child I would want more done to help locate them."

Róza Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein (EPP, Poland) won the **internal market** award, telling the audience, "I realise that my country does not enjoy the best of images at present but I want to tell you that we in Poland want us to stay together and that we respect and share EU values. I have heard it said that the EU has drifted from the ideals of its founding fathers but I disagree."

Jude Kirton-Darling (S&D, UK) won the **international trade** award and, via a video message, said, "I have tried to push a trade policy that is based on fairness and where trade benefits are more evenly distributed. I see this award as recognition of the work we have done in upholding the principles of free trade and that trade works for all, not just for some. This award is recognition of all the hard work by my staff."

Gérard Deprez (ALDE, Belgium) won the **justice and civil liberties** award, but was unable to attend.

Accepting the award for her work on driving **new technologies**, **Eva Maydell** (EPP, Bulgaria) said via a video message, "This is in recognition of the success we have achieved in this field so far. But there is more to do and I want to establish Europe as a place where innovation is the new norm."

Miriam Dalli (S&D, Malta) won the **public health** category. Again, the award was accepted by her group colleague, Seb Dance who said, "She has fought really hard for environmental improvements and feels very honoured to receive this award."

Marian-Jean Marinescu (EPP, Romania) won the award for **research and innovation**. The award was accepted for him by Razvan Hoinaru, of the EPP delegation, who said, "This award is recognition for his work in promoting innovation which he regards as vital for Europe's future."

István Ujhelyi (S&D, Hungary) took the stage to accept the **transport and tourism** award, thanking his fellow nominees for, "this big honour. After 12 years in the Hungarian Parliament this is my first term as an MEP and one of my aims has been to garner more support for promoting tourism. This is not as strong, at the EU level, as it should be. More than 20 million jobs in Europe are tourism related and there needs to be more representation of the industry here in Brussels."

Sven Giegold (Greens/EFA, Germany) took home the trophy for **economic and monetary affairs**, and jokingly said, "I did not expect that some of the work I have done as an MEP would have made me so popular but I am, nonetheless, very happy to receive this award."

The final award of the night went to **Barbara Matera** (EPP, Italy) in the **women's rights and gender equality** category. The trophy was accepted for her by her assistant Raffaele Padovano, who said "She has fought hard for many years on the issue of gender equality. This work is very important for her, in particular in combatting domestic violence."

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