

## MEP Awards 2019: Heartfelt reactions from our winners

Written by Lorna Hutchinson on 21 March 2019 in Event Coverage  
Event Coverage

Last night “Europe’s Oscars” took place at the Concert Noble in Brussels, to celebrate the hard work and dedication of Parliament’s members across a multitude of policy fields.



MEP Awards 2019 winners | *Photo credit: Lorna Hutchinson*

Hosting the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Parliament Magazine’s MEP Awards ceremony UK S&D deputy Seb Dance entertained the audience with wry quips and made sure that the winners enjoyed their well-deserved share of whoops and cheers from the crowd.

Opening the ceremony, Dance said, “Brussels is a city that is much derided for the fact that some people view it as remote, some people view it as the home of institutions they don’t have much connection with.”

“But we know the truth about this place. And we know that this is where the best - la crème de la

crème - of 28 countries come. This is where people with the best politics, the best policies, and the best language skills, if nothing else, come and coalesce to forge a European future, to make Europe a better place. And we will be celebrating the ones who have done the most this evening.”

Huge congratulations to all of our winners and many thanks to our sponsors and judges. Here are a few words from the MEPs who took home a coveted MEP Award last night.

### **Agriculture, Rural Development & Fisheries Award**

#### **Marijana Petir, EPP, Croatia**

“It is with great honour and gratitude that I receive this award that represents the crowning of my work in the AGRI Committee in the past five years. I would like to dedicate this award to the Croatian farmers, the young ones who represent a real inspiration for me with the creativity and innovation they bring to agriculture.”

### **Development Award**

#### **Maurice Ponga, EPP, France**

"Coming from New Caledonia, a French island in the Pacific Ocean, it is an honour for me to be a Member of the European Parliament. I would like to warmly thank you for the recognition of the work I have done over the last ten years in the Development Committee.”

### **Digital Single Market Award**

#### **Axel Voss, EPP, Germany**

“Thanks a lot for your choice. It’s a big honour for me to get this award tonight, after these two years of exhausting work and being in the middle of the hurricane [on the copyright directive].”

### **Economic & Monetary Affairs, Taxation & Budgets Award**

#### **Isabelle Thomas, S&D, France**

“Emotion! First of all, I sincerely thank all of you for this award. I am very proud and very honoured. I suspect you chose me as I am the rapporteur on the MFF. I would like to dedicate this award to the Parliament, which voted largely in favour of a strong, ambitious and European, Multiannual Financial Framework.

### **Education, Culture and Media Award**

#### **Krystyna Łybacka, S&D, Poland**

Award received on Krystyna Łybacka’s behalf by her Polish colleague Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz: “Education is a powerful tool for change. We would like to express our solidarity today with Polish teachers, who are preparing to strike. Thank you very much on behalf of Krystyna Łybacka”

### **Employment, Social Affairs and Regions Award**

#### **Marek Plura, EPP, Poland**

“I’m all emotional - this is a surprise for me. I’m deeply moved by this distinction and it’s a great honour to be chosen. I want to thank those organisations representing people with disabilities that

nominated me. Thanks also to my family, I could not be where I am today without their support. Dear friends, let's combine our forces to create a Europe without barriers."

### **Energy Award**

#### **Vladimir Urutchev, EPP, Bulgaria**

"As a nuclear engineer, I am used to preparing for something that would never happen. I entered politics with the ambition to improve nuclear safety. I am extremely honoured to receive this award and I have the greatest respect for my co-nominees. I accept this wonderful award as recognition of the work of the whole ITRE Committee.

### **Environment Award**

#### **Benedek Jávor, Greens, Hungary**

"Thank you so much, ladies and gentlemen, the jury, for this award. The two MEPs who were shortlisted for this award with me deserve it at least as much as myself. So I would like to congratulate them. Let me dedicate this award to Greta Thunberg and all those activists and citizens who are in the streets to fight for the climate. Go, Greta, go!"

### **Health Award**

#### **Lieve Wierinck, ALDE, Belgium**

"It's an honour for me to receive this award. During my 30-year career as a pharmacist, I have been at the service of my patients. Eight years ago I myself became a patient when I was diagnosed with colorectal cancer. Five years later I became an MEP and at that very moment I made the decision to not just represent European citizens; I decided to strengthen the voice of our patients, and that is what my work and this award represents.

### **Industry, Research and Innovation Award**

#### **Maria Spyraiki, EPP, Greece**

"I feel very honoured and I feel very happy as well. I want to thank my team and my assistants in Greece. This award belongs to the Greek people acting and working outside of the box, in order to overcome the crisis. It is important for all of us to make a fresh start for our common European future."

### **Internal market & Consumer Protection Award**

#### **Maria Grapini, S&D, Romania**

"Thank you very much to the organisers, thank you to my team and my colleagues at the IMCO Committee. I receive this for my country. Good luck to the MEPs for the next mandate!"

### **International Trade Award**

#### **Sajjad Karim, ECR, United Kingdom**

"Who ever said that Brits never win in Europe?" I'm a British Conservative, but I come in peace. I hope Theresa May is watching as I have the letters 'PM' after my name now! Thanks to my tremendous team who have been behind me for the last 15 years, to make this happen. To receive this award at

this time is really particularly sweet.”

### **Justice & Gender Equality Award**

#### **Pina Picierno, S&D, Italy**

“I am deeply honoured to receive this award as a young female politician. On this occasion we should never forget the hundreds of women killed every day around the world. It is for all of them that we need to keep fighting, to never leave any woman in the world alone. Thank you very much.”

### **Security & Defence Award**

#### **Urmas Paet, ALDE, Estonia**

“Thank you very much for this honour and happiness created for me. I’d like to thank all the professionals from the committees on defence and security. These are quite turbulent times; there are new risks related to cyber security. It is very important that finally we start our home-run EU defence policy hand in hand with NATO. No country in Europe will ever be alone again.”

### **Transport and Tourism Award**

#### **Merja Kyllönen, GUE/NGL, Finland**

Merja Kyllönen was, unfortunately, not able to attend the ceremony. The presenter of the category, Madia Sharma, and host Seb Dance accepted the award on her behalf.

### **Outstanding Achievement Award**

#### **Guy Verhofstadt, ALDE, Belgium**

“First of all, thank you very much. I think these awards are very important as they are proof of the existence of something that populists and nationalists always deny - the existence of a real, true, trans-national, pan-European democracy. Thank you very much”

### **About the author**

Lorna Hutchinson is a reporter and sub-editor at The Parliament Magazine

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