

Kicking off the new mandate

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Interviews

Our MEP Awards 2020 host Eva Maydell tells us why it's important to highlight the work of MEPs and what she expects from the next five years.



Eva Maydell | Photo credit: The Parliament Magazine

You have won two MEP awards before and are set to host our next edition in 2020. What do the MEP awards mean to you and why did you accept the invitation to host?

The 2015 award for Best Newcomer was an important professional stepping stone for me and it helped my team and I kick off the new mandate in the right direction. I believe the MEP Awards are important for all MEPs, but for me it was even more important as a newcomer to be recognised by my peers. It gives you confidence and the sense that you are doing well. The 2017 award for New Technologies was also very valuable as it highlighted my work and the work of my team on digital and tech issues. So, when I was invited to host, I was happy to accept.

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Why is it important to highlight the work of MEPs? And should more be done to inform EU citizens about the work that MEPs do?

Jean-Claude Juncker once said that the EU should be small on the small things and big on the big things. We are getting a bit lost in between the big and small things and this makes us an easy target for populist rhetoric. Our citizens need to know that the European parliament is a place where serious things are being done. We all should participate in the process of informing and engaging with our citizens in the work we do.

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MEP assistants play a crucial and often unrecognised role in delivering EU policy. As a former MEP assistant, what are your thoughts on the introduction this year of an exclusive MEP award for assistants?

I think all MEPs know that without our teams we cannot succeed. There is no doubt in my mind that my two MEP awards are not only for me but for my assistants too. So, I welcome the introduction of an MEP award for assistants. They need their work acknowledged not only by us, but also by an external audience.

As a woman in tech, a sector often seen as dominated by men, do you think there has been an improvement in the gender balance? If not, how you think this can be addressed?

There has definitely been a positive shift towards more equal gender employment within workplaces, including the tech sector. However, there is still significant room for improvement. There is still a gender bias when it comes to STEM and tech, that these are male territories - but this needs to change. This can be done by encouraging girls and women to participate in activities and classes that build up their skills and knowledge in these areas. Young women all over the EU must be assured that their place is not just in professions considered as feminine, but also in science, sports and any area they dream of.

What technological trends do you think will define the next five years in the European Parliament?

We will all be living in an era dominated by AI quite soon and I believe that this will be our biggest challenge - both in our private lives and in our work as MEPs. The fast-paced development of AI will

set out new political and ethical dilemmas for us. The same goes for autonomous cars, Big Data, 5G networks and blockchain technology. The future looks interesting, doesn't it?

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What do you expect from the new commission when it comes to digital policy? Especially given its new transversal status across the commission and connection to competition.

I definitely expect that the momentum for legislating digital policy will remain. The files in the pipeline such as ePrivacy, eEvidence, Cybersecurity, as well as the expected ones like AI, Cloud, reviews of GDPR and the E-commerce directive and liability for platforms, must also be concluded. They would help improve the functioning of the internal market, enable businesses to grow and show that the EU can address the challenges of digitalisation. When legislating I stand by the principle "Regulation4Innovation", which is, by the way, the name of my flagship high-level conference that I organise in Brussels. We should not undermine innovation by overregulating areas still in their nascence. On competition, an area which has to be further clarified is data-sharing. At the moment, the data owner has a competitive advantage. Therefore, the new Commission should take further steps to unlock the potential of data that sits still in Europe.

Generally, what are your hopes and expectations for the coming legislature and for the new European commission when it's installed at the end of the year?

First, I hope that this will be a functional European Commission. I already met the new President, I know some of the new Commissioners and that they are smart and ambitious politicians. We need to find the best way for European Commission and the Parliament to communicate and work together on the challenges we face. Second, I believe that we all have a common challenge - that the EU reaches each and every citizen, region, city, town and village. The real divide in Europe is based more and more on economic terms. Strong cohesion measures and convergence are now needed in Europe and I hope to see this issue become a real priority in the new mandate.

About the author

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