

EPP Congress: Donald Tusk elected as new EPP President

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News

Former Council President viewed as the 'right man' to lead centre-right political party.



Photo credit: EPP

This year's European People's Party (EPP) Congress, which kicked off in Zagreb, Croatia, on Tuesday, saw the coming together of more than 2,000 centre-right Christian Democrats from across the EU, Norway and Ukraine.

A key item on the Congress's agenda was the election of the party's new President, with former EU Council President Donald Tusk elected to replace outgoing President, former French MEP, Joseph Daul.

Following Tusk's election, Croatian MEP Željana Zovko said she believed Tusk's appointment was recognition of the growing importance of Central European countries in the EU.

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“Considering Poland only joined in 2004, the country had to overcome much to join to the EU. Tusk was one of the key players who explained the added value that newer members can bring to old Europe.” Zovko said.

Zovko’s MEP colleague Tomislav Sokol, also firmly supported Tusk as the new EPP President, saying, “I think he is the right man, he knows how to balance the interests of different national and political groups.”

He added, “It’s also very good that the new EPP President is from Central Europe. This sends a message to voters in newer Member States such as Poland, Czech Republic, Croatia and others, that you too are full members of Europe, not on the outside, but with a full say in EU issues.”

Zovko also said the timing of this year’s EPP get-together was significant, providing an opportunity to set the agenda for Croatia’s upcoming EU Council presidency beginning on 1 January 2020.

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She said Croatia’s hosting of the EPP Congress “sends a huge message to the people of Croatia, where we are preparing for the upcoming EU presidency and also to the people of the Western Balkans as a whole.”

Sokol agreed on the importance of hosting the EPP congress in Zagreb, saying, “it is a huge honour and big commitment for Croatia.”

Both MEPs agreed that this year’s European election results highlighted the fact that the EPP isn’t the dominate force it used to be and that populist parties were potentially drawing away support.

“We need to recognise there are groups of people who have lost out in our push towards globalisation, and that populists are providing voters with simple solutions,” said Sokol.

He continued, “We need to tackle this not by patronising people by saying they are not smart enough to understand the main economic challenges. But by understanding their problems and concerns.”

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Zovko warned, “When you don’t have a strong centre-right, you see the rise of two extremes and this pushes us to conflict.”

However, she added that the Congress was an opportunity “to send a message that highlights our unity and strength” and to set out the EPP’s vision for the EU for the next five years

“I want to see a new vision that will be adapted to the needs of ordinary people. What we struggle with, in the EU, is to make our vision understood better by citizens. With a new Commission will come new ideas.”

About the author

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