
JUNCKER BACKS SPITZENKANDIDAT PROCESS

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"I am in favour of the head of party list (lead candidate) system for the 2019 (parliamentary) election," Juncker told reporters during a press conference on Wednesday (February 14). "I am in favor of lively debates among all the candidates of all the EU countries".

Juncker said parties should nominate their candidates as soon as possible so they can start the campaign and introduce themselves to voters across the Union.

After years of complaints that the European Union's top jobs were handed out based on backroom deals between national leaders, the Spitzenkandidat process was informally adopted in 2014. As the lead candidate for the European People's Party (EPP), Juncker was appointed to the Commission presidency.

Proponents of the Spitzenkandidat system says it is more democratic and gives the president greater electoral legitimacy.

But critics, including French President Emmanuel Macron and other national leaders, say the process is driven by party insiders. Another concern is that smaller parties are shut out, leaving the field to the largest political parties, such as the EPP and the Socialists and Democrats.

Double-hatted presidency

Juncker also reiterated an earlier proposal to combine two of the European Union's most powerful jobs, a move he says would make the bloc's structure more efficient.

"To merge the positions of the president of the EU Council and the president of the EU Commission," he said. "I do think it would be useful to do that, but it cannot be done before the

2019 election".

Budget

Asked about budget negotiations, Juncker acknowledged that a post-Brexit shortfall and more defense spending will force some changes.

"We do have to operate cuts in the field of (Common Agriculture Policy) and the field of cohesion policy, if we want to meet all the new priorities we have to meet, but I'm not in favour of brutal cuts".

Kaynak/Source: