

Wake-up call

“THE EU NEEDS TO ARRIVE AT A POINT WHERE IT CANNOT BE HELD TO RANSOM BY RUSSIA, OR ANY OTHER THIRD COUNTRY, ON THE BASIS OF OUR ENERGY NEEDS”

Hans-Gert Pöttering on energy security, EU solidarity and ratifying the Lisbon Treaty



Social Europe

Vladimír Špidla on social responsibility and fighting discrimination



Strasbourg, solidarity and sailing:

Andrzej Wielowieyski profile interview

Job share

Karin Riis-Jørgensen on plans for a female shortlist for the EU's top jobs



On the campaign trail

Arlene McCarthy and Struan Stevenson report back from the US presidential conventions



Open Letter to the German Chancellor

No Climate Sellout: Germany's Credibility at Stake

Dear Ms Chancellor,

Your leadership at the EU Spring Summit in March 2007 made the EU a pioneer in introducing ambitious climate policies. You championed the EU's commitment to reduce its emissions by 30% by 2020, once an international agreement was passed. Now Europe has to demonstrate this is a serious commitment! Climate policies up until 2020 will be determined in the next months.

Our alliance of 100 organisations is deeply concerned about Germany's obstructive role in developing EU climate policies. It is deeply worrying that sections of your government together with industry lobbyists and German MEPs are now trying to sabotage the European climate package.

The next EU Summit will be on October 15 and 16. The climate package is on the agenda. We therefore urgently call on you:

Keep your word on the 30% reduction target!

The worst consequences of climate change can only be prevented if greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced by at least 30% in Europe between now and 2020.

The EU must keep its commitment to this target if it wants to prevent dangerous climate change.

Make the Emissions Trading System the key climate policy instrument!

The Emissions Trading System is the most effective instrument for reducing CO₂ emissions in Europe, but ONLY if emission permits are auctioned in the future. Large emitters must pay for their emissions. The free allocation of emission permits will give Germany's power companies 46 billion euros extra profits until 2012 by including the market value of these permits in the price of electricity. Corporations and industry lobbyists try to weaken the Emissions Trading System so that they can continue polluting for nothing!

The German Parliament voted in May to instruct the Federal Government to promote full auctioning of emission permits in the electricity sector. Despite this binding vote, the German Economics Ministry tries behind the scenes to undermine full auctioning of permits, ensuring that the power companies keep their enormous extra profits – at the expense of the climate and consumers.

Germany's government demands far-reaching exceptions for energy-intensive industries, but most of these industries will face no competitive disadvantages by auctioning the permits.

The Emissions Trading System can only be effective if all permits are auctioned. There can only be exceptions for those that can prove – and not only claim – that they will face serious disadvantages.

Accept ONLY real emissions reduction credits!

Climate projects, which reduce CO₂ in developing countries in exchange for emission credits in Europe, are popular practice. This practice will delay taking necessary steps in Europe, if applied on a large scale. This will prevent innovation and the creation of sustainable jobs. Many of these certificates are derived from questionable projects.

Now the German Government is pushing to accept emission certificates from abroad on an exorbitant scale.

Consequently, European corporations can continue to operate dirty coal-fired power plants and even build new ones. They will run for several decades and block ambitious climate protection policies.

Ms Chancellor, we call on you:

Climate protection is an investment in the future. Do not allow members of your government to make the EU climate package a paper tiger, hand in hand with industry lobbyists and German MEPs!

Continue your pioneering climate policies and bring Germany back on course!

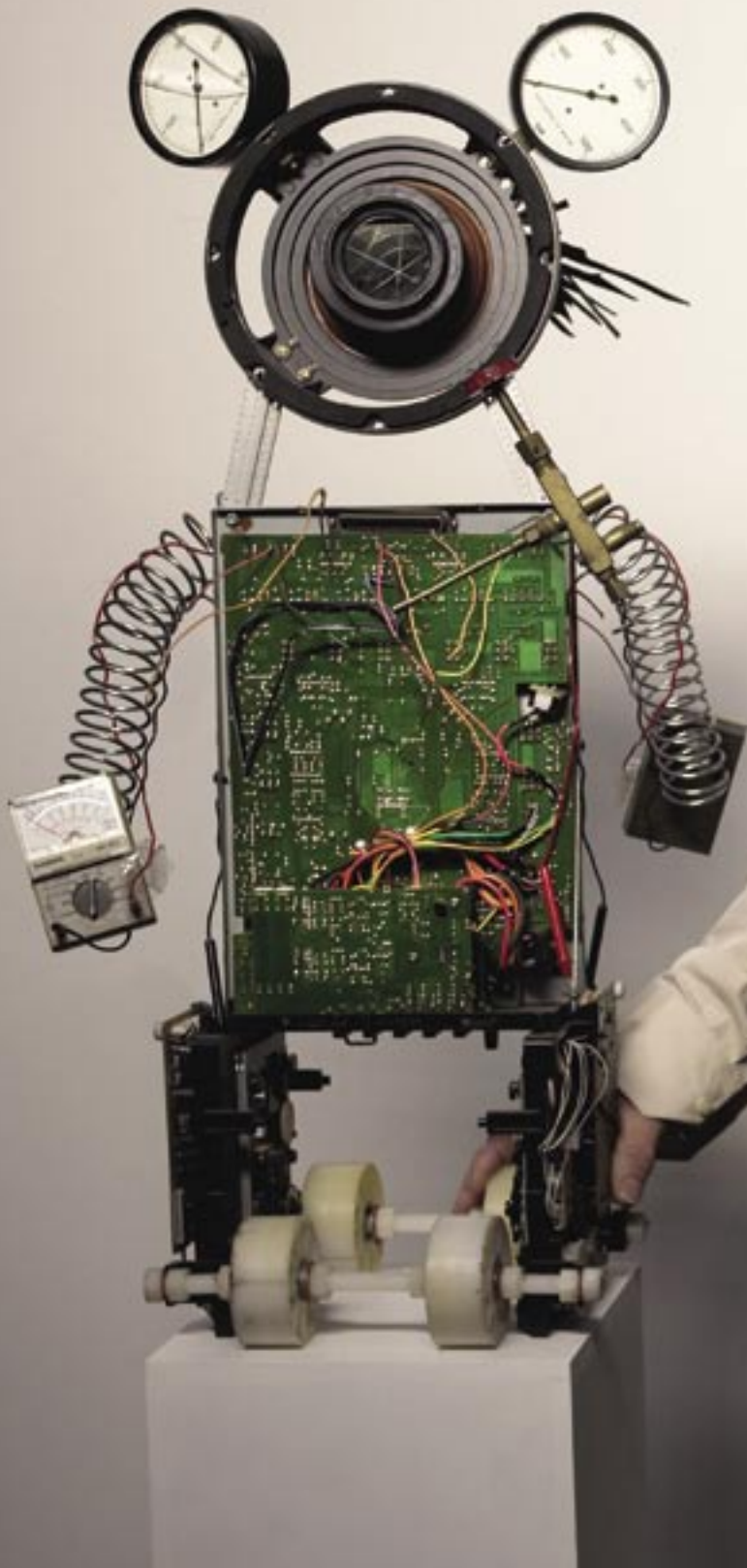
die klima-allianz

www.die-klima-allianz.de

Klima-Allianz is an alliance of 100 organisations calling for ambitious policies for drastic reductions of greenhouse gas emissions in Germany. Members of the alliance are environmental organisations, churches and church-affiliated institutions, consumers organisations, business associations, a trade union, development organisations, youth organisations and many more.



For some reason, there is e-scrap that never reaches us



So what we do get, we recycle to the maximum

Umicore is the world's largest recycler of precious metals and one of the world's largest companies in electronic scrap recycling. It specialises in "above ground mining", recovering some 17 precious and other non-ferrous metals from a wide range of complex industrial intermediate materials and from precious metals-bearing scrap from electronic and catalytic applications. Umicore's feed comes almost completely from industrial by-products and end-of-life materials. Recycling involves significantly less energy use (and greenhouse gas emissions) than primary production. We understand our real job: recycling all your electronic scrap, components, printed circuit boards, mobile phones, etc ...to the maximum and putting the precious metals back in the cycle for a better life. A better life for you and for nature.

And recycling is only one part of Umicore's offering of 'clean' and energy-efficient technologies: we are one of the world's biggest suppliers of automotive catalysts and key materials for rechargeable batteries as well as the world's leading producer of germanium substrates, a key material for high-efficiency solar cells. Some 80% of our R&D goes into this area of clean technology.

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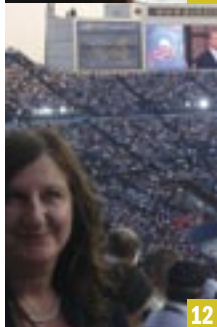
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Lord Russell-Johnston, July 28 1932 - July 27 2008

**EDITORIAL TEAM****Managing editor**

Brian Johnson
Martin Banks
Sarah Collins
Chris Jones
Matt Williams

International Press Centre
Boulevard Charlemagne 1
Box 2 Brussels 1041
Tel +32 (0) 2 285 0828
newsdesk@theparliament.com
www.theparliament.com

EDITORIAL BOARD**Editor**

Catherine Stihler MEP

Editorial board

Johannes Blokland
Jorgo Chatzimarkakis
Eija-Riitta Korhola
Manuel Medina Ortega
Jan Olbrycht
Gérard Onesta
Alojz Peterle
Karin Resetaritis
Struan Stevenson
Inese Vaidere

PRODUCTION

Jearelle Wolhuter
David Nobakht

Advertising production

John Levers
Tel +44 (0) 20 7091 7524

COMMERCIAL AND SALES

Anka Prpa
Emma Miceli
Obe Seddiq
Sandra Fernandez
Alexandra Stanislavjevic
Tel +44 (0) 20 7091 7660

Subscriptions

Nicholas Toghill
Tel +44 (0) 20 7091 7564
www.theparliament.com

Annual subscription price: €120

PUBLISHER &**MANAGING DIRECTOR**

Martin Beck
Dod's Parliamentary
Communications

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**DIRECTOR**

Philip Beausire
Tel +44 (0) 20 7091 7661

PRINTER

Corelio Printing Vorst, Brussels
Tel +32 (0) 2 210 0100

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Location, location

For a long time there have been complaints about the European parliament building in Strasbourg, and no wonder. A building that is used only 48 days a year is bound to have difficulty adjusting to the occasional intensive level of occupancy expected of it. Although there have been many jokes about certain MEPs hacking away at the roof of the hemicycle, the seriousness the roof collapse during the summer recess cannot be ignored. If MEPs had been sitting in the vicinity of the collapse there could well have been fatalities.

When a beam broke loose in the Scottish parliament's debating chamber, the parliament had to be relocated for three months until it was made safe. MEPs have only just received confirmation that the second September plenary session will be held in Brussels because the safety of the Strasbourg building is still in question. Now there are fears that the bridge between the old and new buildings in Strasbourg is unsafe and that other parts of the building require inspection. The parliament authorities must be able to reassure MEPs and staff about the safety of the building. Do you really believe it will be ready in a few weeks?

Parliamentary authorities are understandably reluctant to take steps such as announcing that the sessions will take place in Brussels for several months. After all, we might like it and get used to it. I wondered why I felt better, less tired, and much happier during the first week of September. Of course I did not have an eight-hour journey to Strasbourg and another eight hour journey back. I did not have to work in a building that I and many fellow MEPs believe to be a 'sick building'. I had all the resources of my Brussels office to hand. Not going to Strasbourg underlines how much more effective it would be to have the parliament based solely in Brussels. It is time that the parliament's location was not determined by the narrow national interests of member states.

The campaign for parliamentary reform welcomed MEPs to Brussels with hard hats - an important safety precaution should we have to return to Strasbourg. I urge MEPs to sign the forthcoming written declaration sponsored by Alexander Alvaro, Piia-Noora Kauppi, Frédérique Ries, Helga Trüpel and myself to hold all European parliament plenary sessions in Brussels. Now there is a message to send to electors, council and the commission for the 2009 elections. ★

Catherine Stihler

Catherine Stihler is the Parliament Magazine's MEP editor

ON THE COVER | Hans-Gert Pöttering

The EU is "waking up to the threat to our security posed by Russia's use of its energy resources", writes Parliament president Hans-Gert Pöttering in this issue. The recent decision taken by Russia to recognise the independence of the Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia means that "it is vital that member states stick together in the face of a newly-belligerent Russia." A central question that must be addressed, he says, is "what steps can the EU take that would make Russia sit up and pay heed, would force her to respect her obligations under international law?" **Wake-up call, p7**



AN INNOVATIVE CONTINUOUS TRAINING DEVICE FOR YOUR ASSISTANTS

This device, which has been developed in the context of a European Leonardo Da Vinci project, addresses the current issue of «**the prevention and risks of multiple and self-medication in the elderly**». Training is provided remotely **in situ and during working hours** (no absence of staff in training and the course is planned on a consultative basis and optimises «dispensary slack times»).

The employee is **supported on site by a trained tutor** (a dispensary pharmacist) who in turn is supported in this role by the Training Tutor of the training agency.

The tutorship responsibilities assumed by the in-dispensary tutor are recognised by a certificate of qualification (at EQF level).

The training course is tailor-made to suit the pre-requisites of the trainee employee and each module is assessed on line (in terms of knowledge) and in a report sheet (as regards the level of skills). The trainee employee **progresses sequentially at a rate pre-set** with the individual concerned. Media are made available to the trainee employee (record sheets intended for the patient, designed to keep up the momentum and similar sheets intended for the trainee, summarising the knowledge covered in the module as well as a space for dialogue).

A **certificate of training** (at EQF level) jointly signed (by the 2 tutors) is issued to the employee at the end of the course.

AN ADAPTABLE, TRANSFERABLE REMOTE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING DEVICE

The partnership has set itself the task of creating a tool which is both adaptable and transferable to other sectors and topics. To this end the project partners have developed a number of **media and tools** which will allow other organisations to **appropriate** the device thereby **supporting its implementation**: implementation guides and procedures, the FOAD manager's training module, the training tutors' training module and the in-house tutors' training module.

All these documents are **available on the project website, «transfer and adaptation» tab**: <http://ace-pasteur.openportal.fr>

Country agency and contact:
Centre de Formation Pasteur
13 rue des Docks
51450 Bétheny, France:
Tel: 03 26 87 88 38
Valérie Prillieux:
v.prillieux@cepsup.fr



Wake-up call

The soaring price of oil and gas has made Russia's political use of its energy resources a more dangerous threat to the EU than ever before, warns **Hans-Gert Pöttering**

Notwithstanding the serious error of President Saakashvili in ordering a military assault on Tskhinvali, the Russian invasion of Georgia in August has provoked a political and security crisis on the European continent that sends shivers down the spines of those who so vividly recall Soviet behaviour during the Cold War. And as Europe faces into a cold winter, many will recall the events of three years ago when the Russian state-owned Gazprom introduced politically motivated four-fold price increases of gas being exported to Ukraine and subsequently cut off gas supplies in the depth of the Ukrainian winter.

Many in Europe are now waking up to the threat to our security posed by Russia's use of its energy resources to achieve its strategic political goals. But the signs have been there for some time that Vladimir Putin's Russia intended to claim a sphere of influence over the independent sovereign states that once fell under the Soviet yoke. What has changed is that the soaring price of oil and gas has made this weapon even more dangerous.

Now that the EU is faced with a newly belligerent Russia, it is vital that the member states stick together and remain faithful to the founding principle of solidarity. When I addressed the specially convened European council meeting on 1 September dealing with the crisis, I commended President

"Now that the EU is faced with a newly belligerent Russia, it is vital that the member states stick together and remain faithful to the founding principle of solidarity"

Nicolas Sarkozy for the swiftness and determination with which he has taken up the challenge.

That meeting charged President Sarkozy with conducting a mission to Tbilisi and Moscow a week later to establish what could be achieved by peaceful negotiation, following which he reported back to the conference of presidents of the European parliament. This is not an easy problem to resolve. Russia's decision on 26 August to recognise as independent the Georgian provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia - in defi-



Photo: Matt Williams

ance of international law - certainly makes a peaceful solution to the conflict more difficult to achieve.

In the run-up to the European council meeting, a number of voices were raised calling for EU sanctions to be imposed on Russia until such time as it withdraws its army from the illegally occupied territories. The question needs to be asked, what would constitute an effective sanction? What steps can the EU take that would make Russia sit up and pay heed, would force it to respect its obligations under international law? →



Photo: European Parliament

In the end, it was decided to suspend negotiations with Russia on a partnership and cooperation agreement. Such an agreement is in the interest of both sides. I am convinced that Russia's future is as part of an open world economy and a community of states based on the rule of law. Cooperation with its partners is infinitely better than a return to self-imposed isolation, since the people of Russia themselves would be the first to suffer the effects of such a policy. At the same time, the EU should reduce its dependence on third countries for energy supplies. It is vital that we diversify our energy supply, increase energy efficiency, develop our own renewable energy resources and promote a balanced energy mix. Many of the measures in the so-called energy package currently working its way through the European parliament should contribute to these aims. The EU needs to arrive at a point where it cannot be held to ransom by Russia, or any other third country, on the basis of our energy needs. The fact that Russia tried to

justify its invasion of Georgia by arguing that it was seeking to "protect Russian citizens" in South Ossetia and Abkhazia sets a dangerous precedent. This clearly gives cause for concern to other former Soviet republics, such as Ukraine and Moldova, which have sizeable Russian minorities, and of course to some of our own EU member states. I made an official visit to Latvia in August and the people there, like those in Estonia and Lithuania, remember only too well the tragic periods in their history that were marked by foreign rule, violence and terrorism. The EU is a community based on solidarity: this means that any attempt by a third country to exert pressure on one member state affect the union as a whole. Should one EU member state be faced with a threat to cut off its energy supplies, all other member states would have a duty to support it. Solidarity between member states in the energy sphere is laid down in the Lisbon treaty - yet another reason why the treaty should be ratified as quickly as possible. ★

Hans-Gert Pöttering is president of the European parliament

NucSys Project



Fig:1

NucSys is a FP6-funded Marie Curie Research Training Network that started in 2006. The 16 partners focus on how the nuclear receptor network generates the responses to nutritional signals that are so important in human health and disease.

Nuclear receptors constitute a large diet-sensing network in many human cells. This systemic sensor of energetic status detects lipids, carbohydrates and cholesterol compounds and, in response, governs a multitude of network responses, including cell growth, metabolic rate and homeostasis. It is a characteristic of Life that these responses are subtle and integrated to deliver what is best for human function. The optimal relationships between sensor network and response network are disrupted in many diseases. Novel insights and understanding have significant potential to promote human health.

The unique approach of the NucSys consortium stems from its intersectorial structure, which unites basic and clinical scientists, working in both academic and commercial settings. This is coupled with an interdisciplinary approach to biomedical research by combining molecular, cellular and developmental biologists, pharmacologists, physiologists, mathematicians and bioinformaticians. The galvanisation of this powerful consortium allows the utilization of excellence in diverse areas of research to deliver excellence in training. In this first stage of consortium development, 18 early stage researchers (Fig. 1) have been successfully appointed, each for 36 months, who receive research and course training in mathematical and biological theory and in experimental approaches.

NucSys is a network of young researchers projecting onto the molecular network that they study, as shown in the picture. Signals entering or produced in the cell, bind to carrier proteins that may move to the nucleus and its DNA (Fig. 2). There the signals activate proteins that bind to the DNA and activate gene expression. The various signaling routes engage in thorough conversations. Thus the response to a change in one of the cell's conditions results in a signal output that depends on all other conditions and on the state of the cell. Quite similarly, the various young researchers are positioned strategically in the molecular network, in the sense of the particular subnetworks and molecules that they study. They also engage in thorough conversations, at meetings and by modeling their own part of the network, and then connecting their model to the models of the other researchers. In this way they are generating the beginning of a comprehensive understanding of the entire nuclear receptor network (Fig. 3). This dual networking is without precedent in the history of biology, and perhaps only rivalled by the collaborations that nuclear particle physicists engage in.

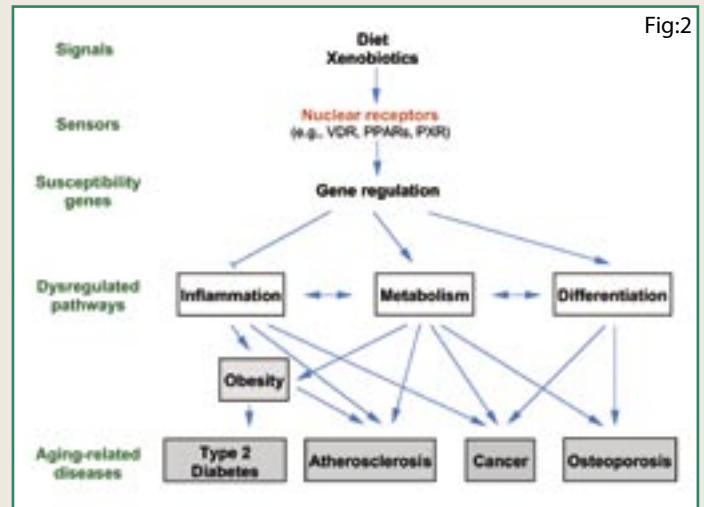


Fig:2

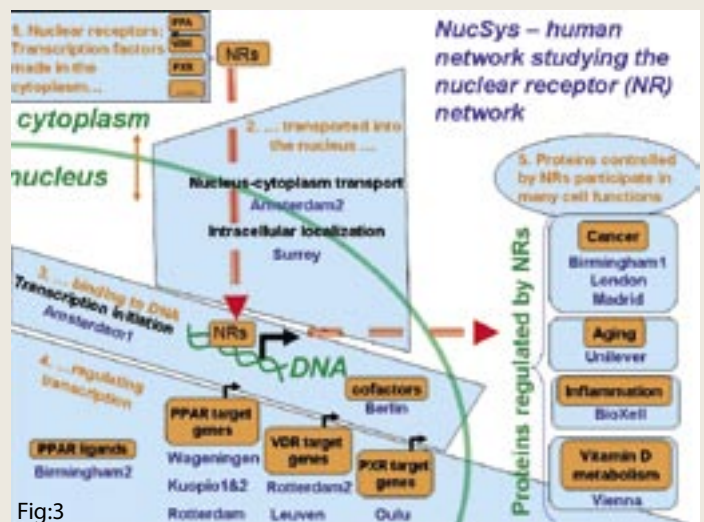


Fig:3

Ultimately this network aims to generate a personalized, predictive and preventative paradigm for the effect of diet upon key aspects of health. It will catalyze commercial realization from this understanding. This synergistic group of research and training

activities enables NucSys to nurture and develop a unique cadre of researchers, who will become the next generation of leading scientists and, through their training, experience and knowledge, will act as levers to bring about the realization of the European Research Area.

Merkel touted for top EU job in new campaign

German chancellor Angela Merkel and former Irish president Mary Robinson are among 25 women being put forward for the EU's top jobs in a new gender equality campaign.

The initiative, www.send2women.eu, aims to raise a petition to make sure women occupy at least one of the EU's top jobs, such as the presidency of the commission or parliament or the post of EU high representative, by 2009.

One of the MEPs behind the drive is Danish ALDE deputy Karin Riis-Jørgensen, who said, "The EU was built on diversity. One considers representing small and large coun-

tries, old and new member states and the different political parties. But what about the representation of men and women? Half of the European population is, after all, female. But nowhere in the discussion of next year's top posts are they mentioned."



MEPs back €1bn aid plan for food crisis

EU plans to commit €1bn from its agricultural budget to help combat the impact of the global food crisis have been greeted as a "bold and poetic" by Irish MEP Gay Mitchell. The source of the cash earmarked to help impoverished small farmers in countries like Liberia, Ethiopia and Somalia is what is known as the 'agricultural price support fund', which forms part of the overall EU budget. The fund, says Mitchell, currently has a €2bn surplus.

Speaking at a news conference, he said the cash was needed



to meet a "serious and widespread" problem. "Some member states feel that this surplus cash should be returned to them, while some members of the budget committee believe that committing such a large amount to the developing world would set a dangerous precedent. But there is support from both the commission, parliament and the French presidency of the EU for this surplus to be used to help tackle the global food crisis," said Mitchell, who was appointed parliament's rapporteur on the issue in July.

Parliament rule changes bring MEP no joy

UK Tory MEP Timothy Kirkhope last week attacked changes to parliament's rules of procedure, including the playing of Beethoven's Ode to Joy at the start of formal sittings, calling them "pointless and sycophantic".

The changes, which also include reproducing the motto 'United in diversity' on all parliament's official documents, displaying the EU flag in all meeting rooms and official events, as well as formally recognising the celebration of Europe day on 9 May, were agreed by the parliament's constitutional affairs committee.



Kirkhope, vice chair of the committee and one of only four MEPs who voted against the changes said, "This rule change is utterly pointless and sycophantic. MEPs do not understand that these displays of EU nationhood underline the real ambitions of some MEPs to create a European superstate."

The inclusion of the symbols in the rules of procedure was originally part of the now defunct EU constitution, but was controversially omitted from the Lisbon treaty text.

Betancourt and Tsvangirai among nominees for EU human rights prize

Former hostage Ingrid Betancourt and Zimbabwean opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai are among eight candidates in the running to win the EU's top human rights prize.

Nominations for the EU's Sakharov prize for freedom of thought were formally announced last week. Other nominees include the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) for campaigning against racism; Hu Jia, the Chinese campaigner for civil rights, environmental protection and AIDS advocacy; Alexander Kozulin, a former Belarusian presidential candidate; Abbot Apollinaire Malu Malu of the Independent

electoral commission of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mikhail Ivanovich Trepashkin, a Russian lawyer and democracy campaigner.

Candidate for the prize must be supported by a political group or at least 40 individual MEPs.



Second plenary confirmed for Brussels

Parliament's bosses have announced that this month's second plenary will take place in Brussels. They say the move is necessary because ongoing works to repair the Strasbourg building, part of which collapsed during the summer, have not been completed in time.

Following the collapse of part of the suspended ceiling of the chamber on 7 August, parliament undertook work to repair it and ensure the whole ceiling was safe. It also organised an inspection of all the suspended ceilings in meeting rooms, corridors, canteens and entrance halls in all the buildings.

Inquiries, though, have revealed two major issues of "non-compliance" in the area of the walkways running either side



of the central garden corridor of the Louise Weiss building. A parliament spokesman confirmed, "It has not been possible, despite the efforts of parliament's services and the assistance of the French authorities, to remedy in time the situation of force-majeure which prevents the institution from meeting all the conditions for safe use of the Strasbourg site. On the basis of a recommendation from parliament's bureau and from the institution's secretary general, parliament's president, Hans-Gert Pöttering, considers it necessary to move its activities during the second September session from 22 to 25 September to Brussels for reasons of safety."

Guarded welcome for key vote on renewables

Members of parliament's industry, research and energy committee have voted by 50 votes to two in favour of a package of proposals that includes setting binding renewables targets for each member state.

Environmentalists have given a guarded welcome to the package, which includes a review clause on further increases to the target of using biofuels as 10 per cent of transport fuel by 2020.

Luxembourg Green MEP Claude Turmes, parliament's rapporteur on the issue, told a news conference on Thursday the decision means that renewables will become the main source of Europe's energy supply, "in front of oil, gas and nuclear", by

the end of the next decade.

However, he said that although the proportion of fuel coming from food or feed crops will be restricted, the decision to retain binding targets for biofuels was a "bitter pill" to swallow.

Turmes added, "The committee has, at least, strengthened the safeguards against the damaging impacts of agro-fuels in this directive."





Arlene McCarthy jumped at the chance of witnessing at first hand the Democratic national convention's nomination of the country's first African-American presidential candidate

A ringside seat

Back in January I was one of the lucky few to receive an invitation to the Democrats' Convention to nominate their presidential candidate. I jumped at the chance of getting a ringside seat at what promised to be one of the most exciting conventions in the history of the Democrat Party and witness the party nominate the first African-American candidate for President.

In Denver, "Obamania" was in full swing with vendors doing brisk sales of Obama T-Shirts, badges and baseball caps. In the Convention hall highlights included Ted Kennedy, who had discharged himself

from hospital where he was undergoing treatment for a brain tumour to give one of the most passionate speeches of the convention. He declared "there is a new wave of change all around us, and if we set our compass true, we will reach our destination - not merely victory for our Party, but renewal for our nation."

"I left feeling I may have just witnessed history in the making and felt like an evangelical follower of Billy Graham at a born again event, I was a believer"

On the 88th anniversary of women getting the vote Hillary Clinton addressed the Convention, as only the fourth woman to have her name on a presidential ballot, in recognition of her historic campaign. She was the first woman to have won more than One primary, winning a total of 23 and gaining over 18 million votes. In

pledging her support for Barack Obama, she said that the US was able to put women into space but not ready to launch a woman into the White House but that her campaign had made “18 million cracks in the glass ceiling”.

Bill Clinton followed stating that America is in trouble on two fronts: “the American dream is under siege at home, and America’s leadership in the world has been weakened”. He said this weakness was due to too much unilateralism and too little cooperation, a refusal to lead on global warming a backsliding on global non proliferation and arms control agreements and a failure to use the power of diplomacy. Pointing to a different way of engaging with the rest of the world he said that “people the world over have always been more impressed by the power of our example than by the example of our power”.

The event of the Convention was when the Democrats packed up and moved to the 75,000-seater Invesco Field stadium - home of the Denver Broncos for Senator Obama’s acceptance speech. Obama was again following in the footsteps of John F Kennedy who gave his 1960 acceptance at the LA Dodgers stadium - and who went on to win, but by just 100,000 votes, 49.7 to 49.6 per cent.

Obama promised a new politics, to cut taxes for 95 per cent of all working families, end dependence on oil from the Middle East, give every child a world class education and deliver affordable, accessible health care for every single American. He promised equal pay for equal work because he said his daughters should have the same opportunities as other people’s sons. Obama ended pledging to fix the economy, rebuild cities and protect families and on a stage set of the White House blasted out the theme tune to “the West Wing” TV series. I left feeling I may have just witnessed history in the making and felt like an evangelical follower of Billy Graham at a born again event, I was a believer.

Obama in the White House would be better for Europe and the world. For the first time in years Americans are engaged about politics and I believe this election will have a high turnout. I made a new friend in Lorrie Knight-Major, an Obama supporter and mother of a young US soldier who lost both his legs in Iraq. She is campaigning for the returning veterans who now make up 25 per cent of the homeless in the US. Listening to her experience as a single mother with three children it was clear America may well be poised to make that change and vote Obama for President. ★



Arlene McCarthy is chair of parliament’s internal market and consumer protection committee

Minnesota diary

Struan Stevenson reports from the Republican national convention, where he was impressed by both McCain and Palin

1 September: Day one of the Republican national convention was thrown into disarray after John McCain tore up the script, ordering the cancellation of all but essential opening-day activities as Hurricane Gustav churned toward New Orleans. The hurricane revived bad memories of the way President George W. Bush had failed to save New Orleans when hurricane Katrina struck three years ago. Some delegates heaved a sigh of relief that this latest storm had at least knocked President Bush off the convention programme. “Every cloud has a silver lining,” one woman told me.

Despite the fact that Bush and Cheney were no longer due in Minneapolis, lines of riot police and heavily armoured SWAT teams fought running battles with bands of anarchists who smashed store windows and clambered onto the roofs of police

cars. We had to dodge around mounted police and protesters screaming “No war but class war” as we made our way home from political fringe meetings in the city centre. The acrid smell of tear gas hung heavily in the night air.

2 September: The shops fronts were all boarded up this morning and teams of street sweepers were clearing up the broken glass. Apparently 286 anarchists were arrested last night, 38 of whom gave their names to the police as either John or Jane Doe. But today the talk of the town was all about McCain’s vice presidential running mate Sarah Palin and her pregnant, un-married 17-year-old daughter. At one of the sessions I attended, Charlie Cook, the famous Washington political pundit and CNN commentator, said that when he heard Governor Palin of Alaska had been chosen as McCain’s





running mate he said “Wow. With her gun-totin’, huntin’, shootin’, working mom background, she sounds like a cross between Annie Oakley and Abe Lincoln!”

3 September: Despite warning notices outside the convention centre that placards are not allowed, (not to mention stun guns, pepper sprays and umbrellas), every delegate appeared to have one. Slogans ranged from plain old ‘McCain/Palin,’ to ‘Service’, ‘We Love Mac’ or ‘Country First’. Today was Sarah Palin’s big moment and she didn’t disappoint. Introduced by former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, the elegant and feisty governor of Alaska brought the house down with an electrifying speech delivered flawlessly. A new forest of placards bearing slogans such as ‘Big game hunters for Palin’ and ‘Palin Power’ blossomed across the giant auditorium as she spoke, at one point departing from her script to gesture to a group of women waving a banner which said ‘Hockey Moms for Sarah’. The Alaskan governor gave them the thumbs up and wisecracked that “the only difference between a hockey mom and a pit bull is the lipstick!” To wild applause she added: “Some of the media have criticised me for my lack of experience in Washington. Well I’m not going to Washington to seek their good opinion, I’m going to Washington to serve the people

of the USA.” McCain himself stepped out onto the stage to congratulate her.

4 September: I attended a morning session featuring Congressman Adam Putnam who represents Florida’s 12th District and at 34 is one of the youngest politicians in the House. He was downbeat about the Republican Party’s chances as far as the elections to Congress and the Senate are concerned, although he thinks McCain can win the presidency.

Unlike Barack Obama, John McCain is not renowned for his speaking ability, but he’d clearly spent many days practising. At 72, he has survived four bouts of skin cancer and this week published over 1200 pages of medical records to prove he’s still healthy and up to the job. McCain gave an energetic performance. His speech was moving, emotional, at times funny and endearing, but most of all powerfully focused. He dealt with all the major issues facing the United States, the energy crisis, the downturn in the economy and his particular area of expertise, foreign affairs. He left no-one in any doubt that he has vast experience of leadership and of the key issues facing America and the world. McCain and Sarah Palin have formed a formidable political partnership which has re-energised the Republican party and must have left the Democrats shaking in their shoes. ★



Struan Stevenson represented the EPP-ED group at the Republican national convention



European Week of Regions and Cities
Brussels
6 – 9 October 2008



Regions and cities in a challenging world

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG Regional Policy



ODYSSEUS: A PROJECT FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF MODERN GREEK LEARNING AND TEACHING MATERIALS

(Lifelong Learning Programme. KA 4. Dissemination and Exploitation of Results. Project number: 135779-LLP-2007-ES-KA4MP)



- Improvement of the learning resources at the institutions involved in teaching Greek.
- Achieve a higher number of trained teachers in Greek.
- Promote Greek in secondary, vocational and higher education institutions and in non-formal education.
- Promote the Greek language and culture.

Our Target Groups

- Higher education and Vocational Training Students.
- Immigrants in Greece.
- Professionals working with Greek companies or wishing to develop a professional career in Greece.
- Modern Greek language teachers.
- In more general terms, all those interested in learning the Greek language, whose history is among the longest and richest in Europe.



Odysseus? What is it about?

Since 2003 our consortium has been working in the development of modern Greek didactics. It includes institutions from Greece, Spain, Italy, Bulgaria and Romania, all specializing in teaching modern Greek as a foreign language. As a result from this collaboration, we have designed innovative didactic materials (multimedia CDs and textbooks), which have been elaborated with funding from the European Commission.

Odysseus intends to make these materials easily accessible, in order to promote the teaching of modern Greek and to spread the language and culture of present Greece within the multilingual and multicultural European environment.

Our Learning/Teaching Materials

General Greek:

- Travel to Greece III (Socrates project, level C1-C2)

Greek for Languages Specific Purposes

- Business Greek (Leonardo project, level B1- B2)
- Scientific Greek (Leonardo project, level B1- B2)

Our Aims and Objectives

- Dissemination of the Materials resulting from the previous European projects Leonardo and Lingua.



Our Activities

- Copy and free distribution of our multimedia CDs among European institutions devoted to modern Greek learning.
- Design of a *Odysseus* website offering a free access to the didactic materials and information about modern Greek studies in Europe.
- Dissemination and informative activities among the related institutions and associations.
- Modern Greek language courses (Greek FL and Greek LSP)
- Seminars and cultural Workshops related to modern Greek Language and Culture



Participating Institutions

Coordinator:

University of Murcia (Murcia, Spain)

Partners:

British- Hellenic College, School of Greek Language (Athens, Greece)

Elea Computer Systems Ltd (Athens, Greece)

European Centre of Education and Development Ltd (Plovdiv, Bulgaria)

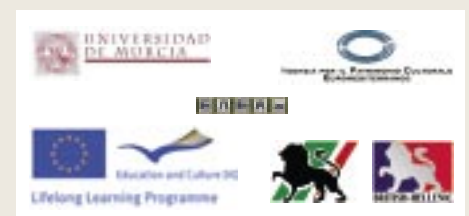
Agenzia per il Patrimonio Culturale

Euromediterraneo (Lecce, Italy)



For further information, please contact
Dra. Alicia Morales
Department of Classical Philology
Faculty of Arts
University of Murcia, 30071 Murcia, Spain
amorales@um.es

www.um.es/odysseus



Lost in translation

Julian Hale finds out that several EU countries don't speak any other language than their mother tongue

France, current holder of the EU's rotating presidency, will be playing host to a special European day of languages on 26 September. Around 1000 language experts from all over Europe will flock to Paris's Sorbonne University to try to give the EU's multilingualism policy a boost. "The idea is for all the different countries to get updated on what is being done in the other countries to teach foreign languages from as young an age as possible," said a French official. The event will include discussions on creativity and innovation in language teaching to help reach the goal set by the EU in 2002 to teach at least two foreign languages from a very early age. It will also look at how multilingualism can help make businesses more competitive.

Back in July, a special report by the business forum for multilingualism concluded that language skills are "crucial" and that "formal and informal learning of a wide range of languages should be actively promoted in the EU member states, as the business sector needs an increasingly diversified workforce".

One of the main speakers in Paris will be the commissioner for multilingualism Leonard Orban, who will be unveiling a new communication on multilingualism. Paris will also host a 'festival of languages' on the same day, with various language-related events taking place in the streets and in schools, cultural centres and institutes. The European day of languages as a whole has been organised by the Council of Europe since 2001. There are events for all age groups, including lectures, language classes, music and games, in EU countries as well as non-EU member states such as the US, Australia, Switzerland and Turkey.

British MEP Claude Moraes, who was born in India and learned Arabic during the time he lived in Yemen, is positive about the day, partly because, for the UK, the dominance of

EU languages chief Leonard Orban has told European businesses that they need to encourage multilingualism to remain competitive



English means that there is too little stress on European languages – and languages in general. His concern about British people's language abilities is borne out by a February 2006 Eurobarometer survey, which shows that the UK is one of six EU countries where the majority of citizens do not speak any language other than their mother tongue. The others are Ireland, Italy, Hungary, Portugal and Spain. →

In the UK, children currently have to learn a foreign language from the age of 11 to 14. However, the government is looking to introduce children to a foreign language at an earlier age by making languages compulsory in primary schools from September 2011. According to the UK government, 84 per cent of primary schools now teach children a second language, up from 44 per cent in 2002. In August, the government also announced a new £6m advertising

when you go abroad and can only just string a sentence together. It's no longer acceptable to be the stereotypical Brit abroad," said schools minister Jim Knight.

But Moraes, who will be on the debating panel on multilingualism in Brussels on 10 September, is concerned that the language curriculum in the UK is not really improving. "The UK might be going backwards in terms of languages such as French, German and Italian, and more worryingly, in Spanish, which is a global language now," he said. "Multilingualism is a good thing as it broadens the mind." His view is that languages such as Mandarin, Urdu or Hindi are "good to have a grasp of" given the global nature of the economy. Moraes also

"The UK might be going backwards in terms of languages such as French, German and Italian, and more worryingly, in Spanish, which is a global language now" – Claude Moraes

campaign to encourage young people to carry on studying foreign languages, including a show called 'Je suis un rock star', in which 12 youngsters will battle it out to win a work experience placement in the music industry. "Having more young people able to speak a second language is vital to the future success of the UK economy and, let's face it, holidays are a lot more enjoyable when you know how to speak a bit of the language. We've all had that embarrassing feeling

thinks that British companies are losing business because of the perceived lack of willingness of their workers to speak in another language, but points to a good example at the Olympics. "We had British reporters speaking Mandarin quite fluently at the Beijing Olympics. Ten years ago you'd have laughed at the idea of a westerner speaking Mandarin. But it shows respect and flexibility if you can and it must stop being unusual." ★

Julian Hale is a Brussels-based freelance journalist

Talking your language

Multilingualism will be the key message during this year's European day of languages, writes **Rory Watson**

In the multicultural, multilingual world of EU institutions, so the joke goes, there is a common language. It is Badly Spoken English – BSE for short, an acronym more widely associated with mad cow disease. But despite the advance of written and spoken English through the Brussels corridors of power – a trend which began with the arrival of Austria, Sweden and Finland in January 1995 and

has been given added impetus with successive enlargements – there are signs that the language of Shakespeare, as the French so quaintly put it, will not achieve total dominance.

Later this week Leonard Orban will publish a formal communication on multilingualism. The policy document is the result of a fact-finding exercise over the past 18 months into the state of play of languages in Europe. It will set out for the

first time the commission's thoughts on the importance of linguistic skills, both for personal and professional purposes, and ways in which national authorities and others may encourage their development. The message will be given added impetus a few days later with the European day of languages.

Undoubtedly the clearest demonstration of linguistic diversity could be seen at the Europe/Mediterranean summit in Paris in mid-July. The commission provided interpretation into and out of 29 languages – the largest combination ever supplied at an international meeting. In addition to 22 official EU languages (all except Irish, but including Maltese), participants could speak and listen to Arabic, Bosnian, Croat, Hebrew, Albanian, Montenegrin and Turkish. “It was the biggest anyone has ever done and worked fantastically well with lots of people speaking their own language,” says Ian Andersen in the commission's interpreting service.

Diversity in a different guise will also feature on the European scene this week when a dozen Welsh interpreters will sit tests in Brussels to determine whether they meet the exacting standards required for freelancers to work for EU institutions. The initiative is the result of an agreement shortly before the summer break between the British government and the council of ministers. This will make it possible for any of the UK's 580,000 Welsh or 60,000 Scots Gaelic speakers to write to the council in their native tongue and receive a reply in the same language. Provided certain conditions are met, it will also be possible for British representatives to speak these languages in council meetings. The cost of these services, including translation of the correspondence, will be fully met by the devolved governments in Wales and Scotland and not add a single euro to the EU budget.

Few expect major use to be made of this facility, although demand will certainly be greater in Wales, which initially launched the initiative, than in Scotland. Already the Welsh Language Board is putting the necessary procedures in place. But as the British government said at the time: “We believe this is an important part of bringing our citizens closer to the EU.” However, more opportunities could come in future since the UK government is looking to negotiate similar arrangements with other EU institutions such as the committee of the regions, the commission and the European ombudsman. In giving a European platform to regional languages, the UK is following the example of Spain, which since 2005 has



“Undoubtedly the clearest demonstration of linguistic diversity could be seen at the Europe/Mediterranean summit in Paris in mid-July. The commission provided interpretation into and out of 29 languages – the largest combination ever supplied at an international meeting”

signed a series of agreements with EU institutions providing for the use of languages such as Basque, Catalan and Galician. While some fear the trend could lead to a latter-day Tower of Babel, others consider it a right for people to be able to communicate in their own language with political bodies whose decisions increasingly affect their daily lives.

Nor is the door being opened to languages such as Breton or dialects like Alsatian. To qualify for the special status, a language must be officially recognised in a member state's constitutional system.

One institution which is not prepared to introduce interpretation from so-called minority languages is the European parliament. Even when Catalan MEP Josep Borrell was the institution's president, the bureau, which is responsible for such decisions, firmly refused any departure from the established policy of “controlled full multilingualism”. Under this dictum, the parliament provides interpretation for all 23 official languages during plenary sessions and in a more limited number of languages required for group or committee meetings.

Somewhat ironically, given the spread of English, a new trend is emerging: a potential shortage of English language interpreters. The situation is not yet dramatic, but with many interpreters soon reaching retirement age and language learning in English speaking countries on the decline, it could become so. As a result, the commission is now looking at ways to encourage English speakers to learn languages at school and university and consider a career as an interpreter. ★

Rory Watson is a Brussels-based freelance journalist

Addressing quality and fairness of language testing in Europe

This profile of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) examines the group's principle objectives and highlights some of its notable outputs.



Delegates arriving at the 3rd ALTE International Conference April 2008, Cambridge

Since the first meeting of ALTE in 1990, membership has grown from eight to 31 members and the group is now an INGO of the Council of Europe and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Initially formed following discussions between the Universities of Cambridge and Salamanca in 1989, one of its main objectives has been to address issues of quality and fairness related to the language exams provided by the members.

University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, a founder member, currently hosts the group's Secretariat. From initial design and development to the reporting of test results, ALTE helps to establish common standards for the whole process of language assessment.

The benefits of having common levels of proficiency have not been overlooked by this group of leading language testers; in

fact they have worked in collaboration to establish the levels of their examinations in order to promote transnational recognition of language certification in Europe. In the 1990s ALTE developed its own 'Can Do' statements to describe what can be typically done with language at the different levels and in varying contexts. Put simply, this helps make examination results easier to understand.

Currently, ALTE's 31 institutional members represent 26 European languages, plus there are over 40 institutional affiliates and numerous individual affiliates. Having such a wide-ranging membership provides real benefits when working on collaborative projects. For instance, to fulfil their objective of improving language testing and assessment in Europe, special interest groups meet regularly to exchange ideas and know-how and to develop models of best practice.

With two conferences held annually and a major international conference on language testing and assessment every three years, awareness of ALTE's contribution is increasing on a global scale. Other activities which ALTE carries out include language testing discussion forums and events in Europe and the provision of training in language testing and assessment.

To find out more about ALTE and University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, please visit: www.alte.org (or contact the ALTE Secretariat at alte@ucles.org.uk)

Or visit: www.cambridgeesol.org/what-we-do/europe/alte.html

Great Scot

Graham Watson leads the tributes to Scottish Liberal and stalwart European Lord Russell-Johnston, who died in July

For those who, like me, were Young Liberals in Scotland in the 1970s, Russell-Johnston was a colossus of a politician. His formidable oratory, drawing on his lyrical native Gaelic and his schoolmaster's English - combined with an incisive thinking that was often ahead of its time - roused and inspired us. As leader of the Scottish Liberal Party, he fought Scotland's corner at every turn with deep conviction, measured calculation and sharp wit.

Russell will be remembered equally, however, as a consummate Westminster politician whose battles for the interests of his Highland constituency and meticulous work on the ratification of the EU's Maastricht Treaty were testimony to his considerable parliamentary skills, and as a committed liberal internationalist and believer in the importance of supranational institutions, who served in the pre-1979 European parliament and left his mark indelibly on the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe.

Within the UK Liberal Party and later the Liberal Democrats, Russell-Johnston was a loyal supporter of Grimond, Thorpe, Steel, Ashdown, Kennedy, Campbell and Clegg. For Charles Kennedy in particular, Russell was a close confidant. While not uncritical, he made his criticisms privately. Often they were rendered more forceful by his ability to puncture pomposity with gentle, softly-spoken humour.

I was a victim and beneficiary of this trait when I adopted the title of chief whip upon being given the whip's job in parliament's Liberal group in 1994. Russell teased me gently on a party platform by saying it was akin to a German town calling its railway station the Hauptbahnhof, even though it was the only Bahnhof. When I was elected leader of parliament's Liberal group, he came to Strasbourg to congratulate me. It was a job he deserved more than I did.

In 1979 I led a group of 20 young liberals, 15 of them from the German young democrats, to campaign for Russell-Johnston's election to the European parliament. But despite our enthusiasm, it was not to be. The unfair first-past-the-post electoral system

denied the directly elected European parliament the contribution of one of Scotland's greatest Europeans. Yet from the House of Commons, and later from the House of Lords, he worked assiduously as a member of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe, leading its Liberal group (1994-99), presiding the assembly (1999-2002) and latterly leading its international institute for democracy. To those who argued for a pragmatic, realpolitik approach to governments that rode roughshod over the human rights of their citizens, Russell replied with the mantra of Moralpolitik - politics respectful of principle.

Russell-Johnston will perhaps be best remembered for his forceful and compelling speeches from the political platform (many of which are published in collections of his speeches),

for wearing his kilt across the continent and - to those to whom he paid the compliment - also for his penchant for prolific postcards. A remarkable energy

powered a political career spanning half a century, throughout which his playful sense of humour endeared him to many.

I last saw Russell on Thursday 8 May at supper at the Danish ambassador's residence in London. Despite the onset of bone cancer having limited his appetite for the distant election observation missions in which he did such sterling work, he was on fine form. He died, apparently of a heart attack, in Paris (his favourite city and home to many of the Council of Europe's meetings) on Friday 25 July.

I am proud to have known Russell-Johnston as a political mentor and a friend. ★



"The unfair first-past-the-post electoral system denied the directly elected European parliament the contribution of one of Scotland's greatest Europeans"



Graham Watson is leader of the ALDE group in parliament



A tip for the top

Why is it that women's names never make it on to shortlists for the EU's top jobs, asks **Karin Riis-Jørgensen**



Karin Riis-Jørgensen is vice chair of the ALDE group

The future top jobs in the EU will require potential candidates soon. Let at least one of them be a woman. With a click on www.send2women.eu you can be part of sending women to the top in the EU, sending a message to EU leaders and at the same time, sending a postcard to your friends.

The EU was built on diversity. The 27 member states have different histories, cultures and traditions. In choosing candidates for top EU posts, these diversities are normally considered as a part of the nominations. One considers representing small and large countries, old and new member states and the different political parties. But what about the representation of men and women? Half of the European population is, after all,

female. But nowhere in the discussion of next year's top posts are women mentioned.

Once the Lisbon treaty is ratified and enters into force, a number of key jobs will become available, including those of president of the European council, commission, and parliament, and the role of EU high representative. At least one of these top posts should be filled by a woman. In June, the Irish said no to the treaty. One thought-provoking

result was the number of females that voted no. This picture is confirmed by surveys on Euroscepticism, which show a higher percentage of scepticism among women. The fact is that more men than women vote, which is not good for the future of the EU or for democracy.

"We cannot expect young women to identify themselves with middle-aged men in grey suits"

German chancellor Angela Merkel, pictured here with US president George W Bush and Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, topped a list of women most suited to lead the EU

When EU summits end, we usually see pictures of men in suits explaining on our TV screens how they negotiated and achieved results for all Europeans. But where are the women to act as role models for female voters?

If we truly want women to be interested in European politics, politicians must reflect the different demographics in society – when it comes to gender as well. We cannot expect young women to identify themselves with middle-aged men in grey suits, or expect them to believe that they will represent women's positions in negotiating legislation for Europe.

There have already been many discussions and suggestions for candidates for the new post of president of the council, which will come into force under the Lisbon treaty. So far, all of them have been men. Britain's former prime minister Tony Blair and Luxembourg's premier Jean Claude Juncker are constantly mentioned as possible candidates. However, Europe's most powerful leader – German chancellor Angela Merkel – never gets a mention. That is worth a thought. Is it because of her gender?

It is possible to find lots of women suited for top posts. They exist. It is a matter of looking for different criteria. No one will say that, for example, the female commissioners in the EU are

doing a worse or a better job than their male colleagues. So when we have quota for everything else in the EU, why not for gender allocation for our leaders?

I am not alone in wondering this. Several women from the European parliament and the commission have joined the initiative to have at least one woman in a top job after next year's European elections. Commissioner Neelie Kroes supports the initiative, and she is not shy in saying that she is not sure she would be sitting in her seat if she wasn't a woman. But we can see that she gets the job done, and definitely no worse than if she wore a suit and tie.

Let's continue to make Europe a more democratic place. Let's represent the whole population and at the same time increase young women's political interest. Help us by supporting this initiative and making others aware of the lack of female leaders in European politics by signing our campaign and sending an e-card to your friends on www.send2women.eu. The names will be presented to the 27 EU leaders at the council summit in December: the same leaders that decide who should fill the EU's executive roles after 2009. Be a part of catching their attention by supporting the e-card campaign. This is politics – your voice matters! ★

The top 25

An all-female shortlist for the EU's lead jobs

Angela Merkel (Chancellor, DE)
 Mariann Fischer Boel (Commissioner, DK)
 Neelie Kroes (Commissioner, NL)
 Viviane Reding (Commissioner, LU)
 Margot Wallström (Commissioner, SWE)
 Danuta Hübner (Commissioner, PL)
 Dalia Grybauskaitė (Commissioner, LT)
 Benita Ferrero-Waldner (Commissioner, AUT)
 Meglena Kuneva (Commissioner, BUL)
 Ursula Plassnik (Foreign minister, AUT)
 Carme Chacón (Minister for defence, ES)
 Tarja Halonen (President, FIN)
 Bodil Nyboe Andersen (Former director of the Danish National Bank, DK)
 Maud de Boer-Buquicchio (Deputy secretary general, Council of Europe, NL)
 Mary Robinson (Former president, IRL)
 Colette Flesch (Former vice premier and minister for foreign affairs, LUX)
 Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga (Former president, LET)
 Emma Bonino (Former minister for trade and former commissioner, IT)
 Maria Teresa Fernández de la Vega (First vice president, ESP)
 Dora Bakoyannis (Minister for foreign affairs, GR)
 Margaret Beckett (Former foreign secretary, UK)
 Anne-Marie Neyts-Uyttebroeck (President of the ELDR party, BE)
 Kinga Göncz (Foreign minister, HU)
 Christine Lagarde (Minister for Economy, FR)
 Maud Elisabeth Olofsson (President of the Centerpartiet, SWE)

For more go to www.send2women.eu



Mary Robinson



Carme Chacón

Portrait of an activist

He's one of the parliament's oldest members, but new Polish ALDE deputy Andrzej Wielowieyski still has lots of enthusiasm. **Martin Banks** reports

He regularly skis and sails and, until recently, worked as a publisher and was active in the world of politics. In fact, you really have to pinch yourself to remember that Andrzej Wielowieyski, who has replaced the late Bronislaw Geremek in parliament, is 81 years of age. At a time of life when most people have long since retired and put their feet up, he has thrown himself into the rough and tumble of European politics – and is looking forward to every minute of it.

“I suppose I had thought I had left it too late to come to European politics,” he says. “But, as they say, in life you never know. I am an old chap but I still think I have lots to offer.” He was the substitute for 76-year-old Geremek, a close friend and colleague for many years, who tragically died in a car crash

in July. Wielowieyski admits that following in the footsteps of the much-admired and respected Geremek will not be an easy task, but you need only spend a short time in his presence to realise that he is already warming to the challenge.

Born in Warsaw in 1927, his father was an officer in the Polish army and his mother active in Catholic organisations. Educated at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, he served in the resistance movement in central Poland during the second world war and was then active in the country's youth peace movement before it was disbanded by the communists after the war. An economist by profession, his first job was in the Polish ministry of finance and, later, he went onto to become publisher and editor of *Więź*, a Catholic monthly magazine. During the 1980s, he was, like Geremek, active in the Polish

push for more democracy in the country, both as an adviser to striking shipyard workers at Gdańsk and as co-founder of Solidarity's economic programme and the civic committee, which represented opposing forces in the roundtable negotiations.

He was a member of the Polish senate from 1989 to 1990, the legislative lower house from 1990 to 2001, and then the senate again from 2001 to 2005. He was in the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe from 1994 to 2005, where he served various functions. Accordingly, he is well-accustomed to European politics, not least the monthly trek to

Strasbourg which, of course, is a feature of an MEP's life. "The constant travelling to and from Strasbourg is a challenge but is something I am quite used to," he says. During his time with the Council of Europe, he was rapporteur on the economic situation of Russia and Ukraine and EU-Russian relations is just one of the many foreign policy issues that fascinate him. In a reference to the fall-out from the Georgia crisis, he says, "We have to realise that although the EU relies heavily on Russia for its energy, Russia still needs the EU as well, and I hope the EU can forge better cooperation with Moscow."

Wielowieyski, who has seven children, needs little or no prompting to wax lyrically on everything from the Catholic church to reform of the EU. He is a former close friend of Pope John Paul II, having met him when he was still a young

"I really do believe there is a real crisis in the EU caused by the much-vaunted democratic deficit, and it is something each of the institutions, particularly the parliament, is going to have to tackle"

– Andrzej Wielowieyski

bishop. Years ago, the late Polish pope used to speak at philosophy at events organised by Wielowieyski, and the pair used to ski together. As such, the MEP is well-placed to comment on the current state of the Catholic church, a subject clearly close to his heart. Over the years, he says he has become more liberal in his attitude to issues like contraception and abortion, and now challenges strict church doctrine on such matters. But he becomes particularly impassioned on the equally thorny issue of EU reform. He believes the EU has been good for Poland and that his compatriots' former "pessimism, frustration and anger" has been replaced by guarded optimism for the future. "Having said that," he adds, "I really do believe there is a real crisis in the EU caused by the much-vaunted democratic deficit, and it is something each of the institutions, particularly the parliament, is going to have to tackle."

Wielowieyski, who for years has run a sailing club for young people in Poland, is a member of two committees, foreign affairs and constitutional affairs. Looking to his own future, he says he will not seek re-election next year, adding, "It would not be reasonable to carry on and prevent someone younger being given a chance." But, for the time being, he intends to make his mark in parliament, a goal which fellow Polish deputy, Janusz Lewandowski, vice chair of the budgets committee, believes he will do. Lewandowski says, "He was influential in Solidarity and has been very active in the Polish democracy movement for a long time. Replacing Geremek is not easy but he is a good choice. His age need not be an issue and his experience counts in his favour." ALDE group leader Graham Watson also commented on Wielowieyski's appointment, saying, "Andrzej Wielowieyski's 15 years as a parliamentarian, much of that time in the Council of Europe, and his strong dedication to the development of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, in particular in Russia, dovetails perfectly with the political priorities and concerns of ALDE. His concern for an individual's freedom and basic rights and his interest in drawing EU ideals closer to the aspirations of ordinary citizens suggests that he will continue very much in the same vein as his predecessor, Bronislaw Geremek, and contribute greatly to the work of the ALDE group." ★

Photo: Matt Williams



THE ERAN NETWORK AND THE OBSERVATORY OF REGIONAL AIRPORTS



In the framework of the RAIRDev project (*Regional Airports Interactions for Regional Development*) of the Community Initiative Programme INTERREG III B Cadses, Marche Region has promoted the creation of a coordinated and flexible network between regional airports and stakeholders (*ERAN - European Regional Airports and Stakeholders Network*) and the establishment of an *Observatory for European Regional Airports*.

ERAN's objective is to overcome the existing missing links between regional airports and the local economy stakeholders (territorial authority, Chambers of Commerce, Enterprises, SMEs, Tourist Operators and Associations, etc.) and to encourage, through the setting up of common actions, the growth of regional airports as catalysts of regional development.



ERAN's mission is defined in relation to the competitive strengths of the sector, that is, competitors, end clients, intermediate clients and suppliers, as follows:

1. COOPERATION AND SHARING OF OPERATIVE KNOW-HOW

The objective is the creation of synergies, especially with economies of scope, by optimising internal working processes of the network and checking external subjects, at three cooperation levels:

- Internal and transversal cooperation to the productive process with the aim of sharing common activities.
- cooperation towards the market by integrating elements of request and saturating homogeneous business lines.
- cooperation by lobbying activity towards the legislator and other institutions put in charge of issuing rules and government regulations.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF INTEGRATED TERRITORIAL MARKETING POLICIES

The aim is the achievement of new markets or new segments of demand. The requirement is to define the promotion policies integrated at a regional level, which allows the development of point-to-point charter traffic, especially with low-cost carriers and all business aviation. The activities regard the identification of best practices with respect to integrated territorial marketing by verifying the initiative promoted within the airports of the network, and externally by evaluating operative choices to other contexts and by analysing the impact on the economy and local productive environment.

3. COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF AVIATION AND NON AVIATION CLIENTS

This action is aimed at increasing networks and developing the non aviation activities on site, to reinforce and define common policies, allowing the airport network to offer more usable solutions to potential intermediate clients.

4. MAKING RELATIONS WITH SUPPLIERS EFFICIENT

This action concerns the optimisation of purchases and the efficiency of the relationships with suppliers in order to realise economy of scale.

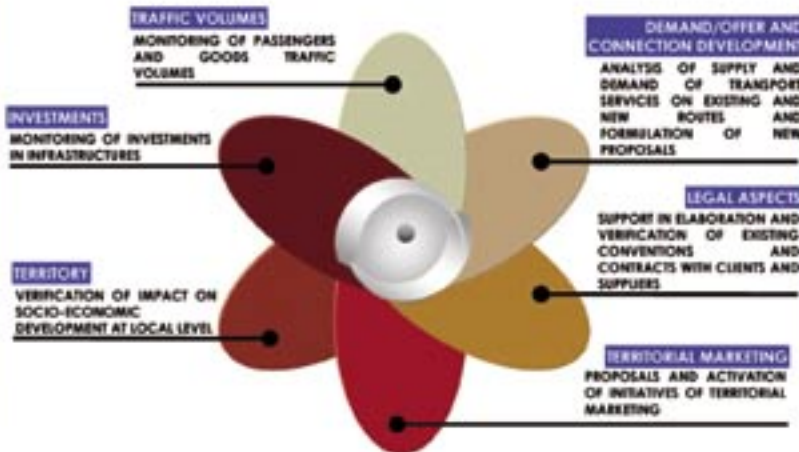
STAKEHOLDERS

The stakeholders of an airport may be classified in 4 categories.



ERAN takes four categories of stakeholders into consideration: the **direct beneficiaries** (residents of the user catchment area), the **public financers** (the institutional subjects at supranational, national, regional, provincial and/or municipal level, and the Chambers of Commerce), the **bringers of know-how** (mainly supply chain operators, category associations of carrier subjects, tour operators, travel agencies, hoteliers, industrial enterprises, high-tech service companies, airline companies and the other airport management companies), and the **business facilitators** (the logistic support operators, that is, railway and bus services, companies for road and motorway management, companies for maritime service management and car hire companies, that are capable of facilitating the airport business).

OBSERVATORY OF REGIONAL AIRPORTS IN THE CADSES AREA



The **Observatory of Regional Airports** in the Central Europe area (CENTRAL) and South East Europe (SEE) is the entity responsible for the monitoring of development in regional airports, with particular reference to:

- Infrastructural investments in every regional airport involved;
- Volumes of passenger, goods and mail traffic in every concerned regional and local airport;
- Demand and offer for transport services, with particular reference to existing and new connections, and the specification of the served routes, the transported volumes of passengers, goods and mail, the air companies involved and the applied fares;
- The agreement stipulated between local authorities and entities managing airports on one side, and the air companies and trade associations operating in the tourism and transport sector on the other;
- Territorial marketing initiatives;
- The impact of every regional airport and their development on the local socio economic growth.

Some hypotheses of impact have been formulated. As regards the impact on the single airport it is possible to recognise the improvement of the financial structure, and the redefinition of the strategy to follow in terms of market and marketing mix positioning. At network level there is the transfer of know-how, the implementation of the Observatory of the Regional Airports, the availability of benchmarking and best practice market analysis, the network reinforcement and the development of operative synergies. Within the territory, there is the economic activity and employment growth in general.

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Progress report

As the European Social Forum kicks off in Malmö, Sweden, Commissioner **Vladimír Špidla** reflects on a year of progress for employment and social policy

For European employment and social policy, 2008 is proving to be a very important year. Faced with an economic and social environment that is rapidly changing under the influence of globalisation, and where European citizens have increasingly high expectations of the European social model, the EU has chosen to be resolutely proactive over the past year, and many initiatives have been adopted. The renewed social agenda in early July paved the way for new measures designed to promote opportunities, access and solidarity for citizens in the EU. We want to ensure that nobody is left behind and that Europe's prosperity can be shared by all.

Working conditions constitute, naturally, a central concern for EU social policy, particularly as they keep evolving as a result of globalisation. And while the acceleration of trade admittedly generates new wealth, it also leads to rapid change for workers. Recent legislative developments in the fields of working time, agency workers and the functioning of European works councils are important elements in achieving the right balance between protecting workers' rights while ensuring the flexibility required by employers.

As part of the renewed social agenda, the commission has also stepped up its fight against discrimination. We proposed a directive which will ban discrimination on the grounds of age, disability,



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sexual orientation and religion or belief beyond the workplace. It would ensure equal treatment in areas such as social protection, including social security and healthcare, education and access to and supply of goods and services that are commercially available to the public, including housing. Member states should start discussing the proposal at the next employment and social affairs council meeting in October.

Meanwhile, a revised working time directive was agreed at the June council meeting. The revised directive maintains the legal upper limit of 48 working hours, and it introduces a limit of 60 hours for those employees who choose to opt out, that is, to work longer. Moreover, it also stipulates that no worker can be asked to sign an opt-out when they sign their contract. They may do so, if they wish, only after at least four weeks. This last provision is designed to protect from discrimination those workers who do not want to sign an opt-out. At the same council meeting in June, member states also reached an agreement on another long-standing commission proposal: a directive on temporary agency workers. It will ensure that agency workers enjoy the same treatment as regular workers in terms of pay, holidays and maternity leave, from day one. They will also have to be informed about job vacancies and granted equal access to collective facilities such as canteens, childcare facilities and transport services. Derogations will only be possible through collective agreements or through

“Around one in three Europeans reported witnessing discrimination or harassment in the past year, and 48 per cent thought that not enough was being done to fight this scourge”

agreements between social partners at national level.

Last, but not least, the commission has adopted a proposal to improve the role of European works councils (EWCs). There are currently over 870 EWCs representing almost 15 million workers across the EU. Recent examples like Nokia, Suez and Volkswagen have shown that there is a need to improve the way EWCs inform and consult employees when it comes to major changes. These changes are indispensable and we are convinced that this revision will help to manage change in a socially responsible way. We therefore warmly welcome the joint advice of the European social partners to revise the directive. Now it is for the European parliament and the council to come to an agreement, preferably under the French presidency.

This year also saw the launch of the ‘flexicurity mission’, an initiative that will help member states implement the so-called flexicurity approach. This principle combines sufficient flexibility in the labour market – to allow firms and employees to cope with change – with the employment security workers need.

The EU’s flexicurity mission has spoken with businesses, employee organisations, social partners and national governments during a series of visits to France, Sweden, Finland, Poland and Spain, which gave the mission the chance to raise awareness of flexicurity

issues and to see how different countries are developing relevant employment and social policies. The mission’s findings and examples of good practice will be published in a report due out in December 2008.

The need for action is hard to dispute, considering that according to an EU survey published last July, Europeans think that discrimination remains rife, particularly when it comes to sexual orientation (51 per cent), disability (45 per cent) and age and religion (42 per cent each). Around one in three Europeans reported witnessing discrimination or harassment in the past year, and 48 per cent thought that not enough was being done to fight this scourge. On a more upbeat note, a commission report on the existing EU rules on equal treatment in employment published in June has found that they have now been successfully implemented in most EU countries. ★

Vladimír Špidla is EU commissioner for employment, social affairs and equal opportunities

IRU celebrates 60 years with European Parliament



Motorised road transport is just over 100 years old. Modern international road transport, on the other hand, began only 60 years ago when the IRU (International Road Transport Union) was formed! Despite this short history, buses, coaches, taxis and trucks have become not only the main drivers of trade and tourism around the world, but they have also become the most efficient engine of economic and social progress, and the IRU is in the driving seat through its global network of 180 Members in 74 countries, promoting the interests of millions of road freight and passenger transport operators to interconnect people, businesses and markets all over the world.

MEPs Mathieu Grosch, Zita Gurmai and Ari Vatanen hosted an IRU 60th Anniversary dinner-debate, gathering over 160 guests from the EU institutions, as well as officials from national representations, journalists and IRU member associations, to discuss options and best suitable responses to the current pressing transport challenges in the EU, including growing demand for road transport, energy supply, sustainable mobility of people and goods and environmental impact.

The IRU is concerned, amongst others things, that the challenges of internalising external costs, addressing driver shortages, securing parking places and determining driving and

rest time rules are tackled in the appropriate manner, as Europe's progress depends on this! When tackling policy issues, the IRU and its members always aim to involve as many concerned stakeholders as possible. We therefore invite you to visit our website at www.iru.org or get in touch with us directly should you have any input to the above or other policy issues of relevance for the road transport sector.

Road transport is the essential production tool needed to make Europe a place where our children, also for the next 60 years, can prosper in an increasingly challenging and competitive global environment.

General Delegate Michael Nielsen
IRU Permanent Delegation to the EU
brussels@iru.org

Decent work for decent pay

There is a lack of political will in the social sphere, says **John Monks**, and it's harming European integration and citizens themselves

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) will take part in the fifth European social forum in Malmö, where it will present the main campaigns it will be carrying out after the summer recess. ETUC will be actively involved in the world day for decent work on 7 October, an initiative of the international trade union movement. The trade unions and organisations working for decent work all around the world will organise a global mobilisation involving a wide range of activities. ETUC will take advantage of this forum to reiterate its concerns about the growth of precarious work on the labour market.

The EU has created millions of new jobs, but the quality of many jobs is being eroded, leaving them increasingly precarious. Precariousness is a fact of life in Europe. The figures speak for themselves: some 32 million workers (14.5 per cent) in the EU-27 are now employed on fixed-term contracts, compared with 22 million (11.5 per cent) in 1997, while 40 million workers (18 per cent) hold part-time jobs, up from 32 million in 1997. In most cases, part-time work is not the worker's choice. Growth in the employment rate since 2000 is due in large measure to this rising number of part-time jobs. Precarious jobs are high on the agenda of many trade unions in Europe. It is, indeed, affecting an increasing number of workers. And 31 million people, or 15 per cent of all workers, earn poverty-level wages and eight per cent of workers live below the poverty threshold and are known as the working poor.

These alarming figures are European averages. Certain categories of people are more exposed to precarious work than others, among them women, young people, migrants and older workers. Atypical contracts are on the increase. The existence of

these flexible jobs (six million temporary workers in Spain, three million in false self-employment in Italy, etc.) is defended as a response to employers' one-off needs, when in fact they are used to cut costs and make it easier to lay off workers.

How and why has this situation come about? The oft-repeated argument is that to be competitive in an increasingly globalised economy, Europe needs a more flexible labour market. In other words, the labour market should provide to employers greater scope for action while restricting workers' protections. ETUC rejects this theory, which amounts to saying that limiting workers' rights will have a positive impact on job creation. Excessive flexibility does not create jobs. It makes them precarious and creates insecurity among workers. We call on European decision-makers to ensure that atypical contracts remain the exception rather than the rule. This is a prerequisite for decent work and a decent life.

Working time is another important issue on which ETUC will continue to act and which directly ties in with decent work. EU employment and social affairs ministers decided last June to allow an increase in working hours. This provision will allow employers to put more pressure on workers. In addition, irregular working hours can be used to create more flexibility in the labour market, with substantial consequences on the health and safety of workers and on work-life balance. The next battle will take place in the European parliament.

ETUC has been repeating for years that promoting quality work and combating precarious work must lie at the heart of employment policies. In a study on precarious work published in March, ETUC recommended a review of the European social acquis, in other words, the social directives and agree-

"Eight per cent of workers live below the poverty threshold and are known as the working poor"

John Monks
is general secretary
of the European
Trade Union
Confederation

ments concluded by the European social partners. The study also highlighted a number of key principles relating to precarious work, while taking into account employers' needs for adaptability. Workers need to be able to make their careers secure and avoid becoming trapped in atypical jobs. In a joint analysis with employers' representatives, the European social partners adopted common positions on flexicurity.

One of the tough challenges the EU faces is its labour market, ensuring that workers enjoy free movement and equal treatment wherever they exercise their activity. Four rulings by the European court of justice (Laval, Viking, Rüffert and Luxembourg) have given precedence to the market at the expense of fundamental rights (equal treatment). ETUC and its member organisations have actively been campaigning against its judgements that authorise social dumping and precarious work through legal channels. It is not the role of the ECJ to dictate European social law.

The lack of European political will in the social sphere is harmful to citizens and to European integration for the short and medium term. To demand a strong social Europe is not only important for EU but has also consequences at international level. International trade must also include social standards. ★



Access denied

The EU's new anti-discrimination law is the perfect opportunity to achieve equal rights for all, says **Pascale Charhon**

On 2 July the European commission issued, as part of its social agenda package, a proposal for a new directive to combat discrimination on grounds of religion or belief, age, sexual orientation and disability outside employment. This proposal aims to ensure all people in Europe are equally protected from discrimination and enjoy the same rights, regardless of age, religion or belief, sexual orientation and disability, in all areas of life.

The EU has already achieved much in the field of non-discrimination, but not all discrimination grounds are legally protected in the same way at European or national level, and significant gaps in protection remain. If you are Muslim, disabled, old, or a lesbian, you can still be discriminated against in education or refused access to healthcare or housing. For people with

multilayered identities, such as a gay Christian wanting a good education or a disabled black woman, the gaps are even wider.

The commission's proposed directive, which would ensure that discrimination is prohibited on all grounds in access to goods and services, is a vital step towards remedying such gaps in legal protection. This new directive is crucial because it provides for real protection where there is clear evidence of discrimination happening, including housing, access to goods and services and education.

From the European Network Against Racism's (ENAR) perspective, extending protection against religious discrimination is particularly important. Discrimination against religious minorities throughout the EU has been steadily increasing, including extremely worrying trends in relation to Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. These manifestations reflect an increasing





“If you are Muslim, disabled, old, or a lesbian, you can still be discriminated against in education or refused access to healthcare or housing”

A Roma boy sits in front of his home in a ghetto in downtown Sofia, Bulgaria, June 2006, after authorities cancelled plans to destroy dozens of allegedly illegally built houses in the city

overlap between racial and religious discrimination. Racism is not limited to discrimination based on the ethnic or racial origin of a person but also on the basis of all aspects of an individual's or community's culture or identity, including religion or belief. Discrimination on the grounds of convictions or belief is often inextricably linked to racism and racial prejudice; frequently it is not possible to distinguish between these forms of oppression. Thus, the lack of comprehensive protection against religious discrimination leads to a lack of protection against racial discrimination, as convictions are often used to justify racial discrimination or to obscure racist motivations.

ENAR welcomes the fact that the new proposal builds on the foundation of the existing protection against discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin. The proposed directive includes within its scope and legal concepts important protections already found in European law for other grounds of discrimination, such as the prohibition on discrimination in housing, health and education, and it is essential that the extension of this protection to all grounds is brought into law as swiftly as possible.

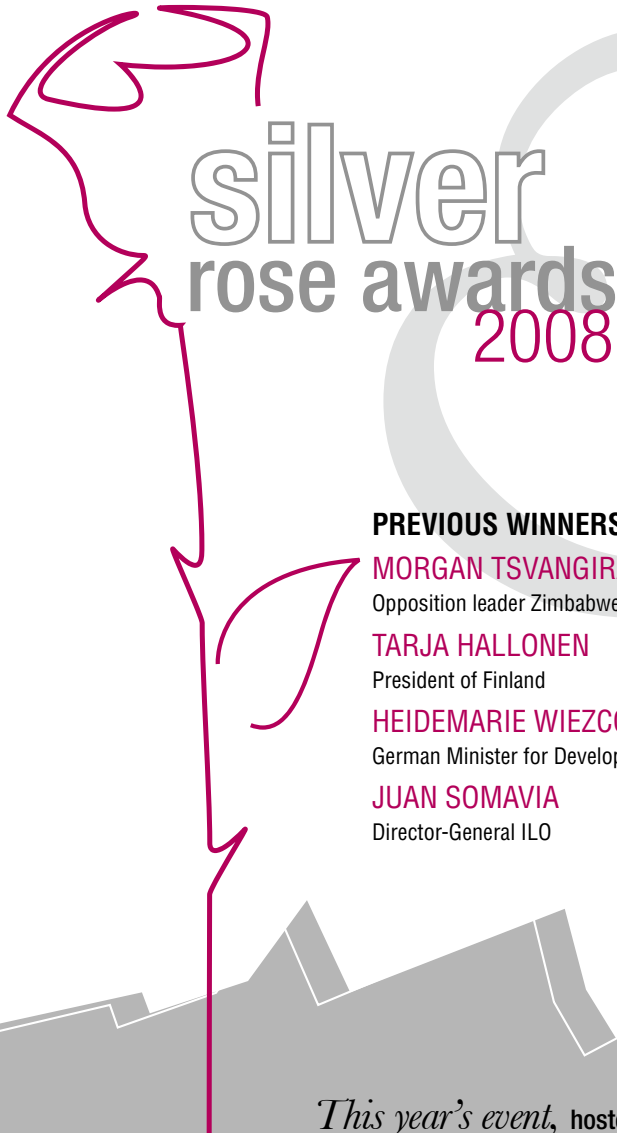
Nevertheless, some concerns remain, in particular the fact that the proposal includes blanket exceptions in key areas, notably education, marital and family status, nationality and matters related to immigration. These are sensitive but important areas, where extra care has to be taken to ensure that exceptions achieve their stated goal and do not go further than

is necessary. To take education as an example, it is clear that some restriction is legitimate. Many member states choose to organise the delivery of education through religious organisations, while others emphasise the importance of secularism in education. Additionally, schools set up by minority religions serve to safeguard and protect the heritage of the minority group. It is not the role of the EU to decide on the manner in which education is delivered – this is something that must be decided by member states in dialogue with their populations. However, the EU does have a vital role in ensuring that, whatever the system favoured in a particular member state, the right to education is enjoyed by all children in a non-discriminatory way. The way in which the proposal is currently drafted would mean that if a religious school is the only school in a particular area, and it is allowed to refuse all children of a different faith, those children would have no access to education. This is not a hypothetical possibility; it has happened in practice and will continue to happen. ENAR agrees that a restriction is legitimate. But that restriction should not be absolute, and must never lead to a child being denied an education.

As the time has come to make real the EU's fundamental values of equality and non-discrimination, the French presidency of the EU has a key opportunity to take a strong leadership role in achieving effective protection for Europe's numerous and multifaceted victims of discrimination and to make sure this legislation actually comes into existence. ★

Pascale Charhon is director of the European Network Against Racism

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For further information or to reserve your place now please contact: silverrose@solidar.org

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11th European Health Forum Gastein

Values in Health – From visions to reality



1st – 4th October 2008
Bad Hofgastein, Salzburg, Austria

The main objective of the EHFG is to facilitate the establishment of a framework for advising and developing European health policy while recognising the principle of subsidiarity.

Having celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2007, the European Health Forum Gastein now starts a new decade of creating a better future for health in Europe. Under the title “Values in health – from visions to reality” common values and their influence on health policy and health care will be discussed. Following the traditional Gastein approach, senior decision makers from policy and administration, business and industry, research and civil society will discuss the future of these values in a globalised world and how they work in daily life.

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Keeping promises

The EU must ensure that it continues to meet its commitment to make poverty a thing of the past, Linda McAvan tells **Matt Williams**

A report released by the UN earlier this month said that the EU, along with the US and Japan, is simply not doing enough to help the world's poorest countries. The report was released ahead of a high-level UN meeting, which will take place on 25 September in New York, gathering world leaders to address the issue of meeting the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which aim to substantially reduce third-world problems by 2015. The report states that a further \$18bn a year must be given in aid if developed nations stand any chance of meeting their original goals, such as halving the level of extreme poverty that exists in third-world countries.

UK deputy Linda McAvan, a member of parliament's delegation to the ACP-EU joint parliamentary assembly, says that the EU needs to do more to put pressure on member states to keep to their aid commitments.

"In the past few years, the 'Make Poverty History' campaign pushed international development issues up the international agenda. At the Gleneagles summit, EU leaders agreed to double EU aid levels by 2010 and committed themselves to reaching the UN aid target of 0.7 per cent [the proportion of developed countries' GNP that must be dedicated to development aid] by the middle of the next decade. We are, however, already seeing that some of that resolve is being lost. Progress on the MDGs is not sufficient and some governments are not fulfilling their commitments on aid," she says.

Writing in the *Parliament Magazine* in June, former UN secretary general Kofi Annan, in an article written with Citigroup executive chairman Robert Rubin, outlined the serious responsibility resting with the world's rich nations, particularly after the recent rise in food prices. "The world needs to react urgently and

decisively. The worst-affected countries must be given emergency aid to buy the food they need. NGOs working in these areas must be given extra funding. We need concerted global efforts to expand production to meet the shortfall in supply."

McAvan says that the EU has a central role to play in ensuring that it does its part in providing this necessary funding, and must not stray from its development objectives.

"One thing I want to make sure doesn't happen after the next elections is that we lose sight of our commitment to the developing world. During this parliament we've seen some very important commitments made... if we believe that making poverty history is more than just a slogan, we have to follow up our words with concrete action." ★

"One thing I want to make sure doesn't happen after the next elections is that we lose sight of our commitment to the developing world"



Shortsea Shipping: the maritime link to 40 coastal European countries



Shortsea Shipping is the transport of all sorts of cargo using the coastal waters around Europe, including North Africa and the Black Sea. Forty coastal countries are linked to Flanders via regular, reliable maritime liner services to and from the four Flemish ports Antwerp, Brugge-Zeebruges, Ghent and Ostend. Smaller vessels are also sailing on the bigger canals, upto the customer's premises.

Europa is the hinterland of Flanders by means of Shortsea Shipping

The Shortsea Promotion Center Flanders exists ten years and promotes Shortsea Shipping as a sustainable part of the intermodal transport chain. Very practical information and best practices are disseminated and bottlenecks are tackled.

In 2000 the Promotion Center was one of the founding members of the European Shortsea Network, linking various local networks and creating a huge potential of expertise for the trade (www.shortsea.info).



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Alternative routes

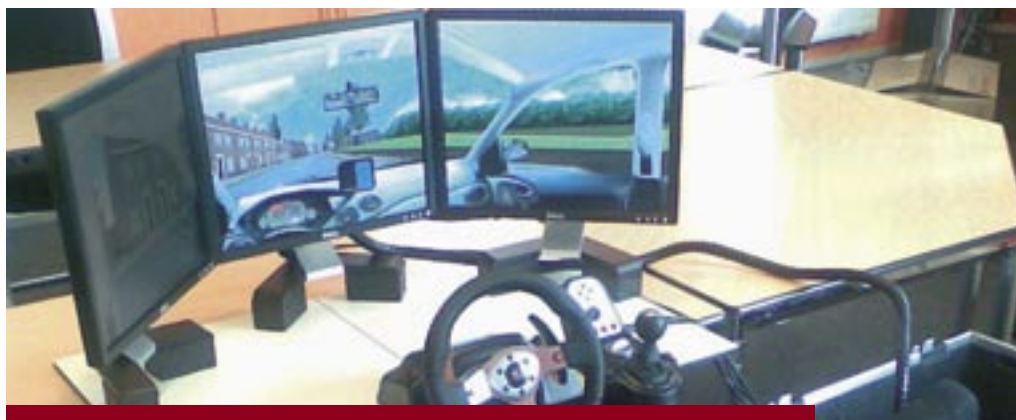
This year's European mobility week will encourage citizens to experiment with sustainable transport in a bid to promote clean air for all, writes **Peter Staelens**

From 16 to 22 September, hundreds of European cities are going to participate in the seventh European mobility week, and will invite their citizens to take part in a wide range of activities dedicated to the promotion of sustainable mobility. As road transport remains a major source of air pollution, the theme of this year's campaign focuses on 'Clean air for all'.

According to a recently published report by the European Environment Agency, road transport remains the single main source of nitrogen oxides and carbon monoxide, and the second most important source of fine particulate emissions in the EU-27. Exposure to these and other air pollutants damages health, affects natural ecosystems and corrodes buildings and materials. Reducing the negative impact of motorised traffic is therefore an important priority on the EU agenda. European mobility week, supported by DG Environment, offers an ideal opportunity for cities to take actions on unsustainable modes of transport to improve air quality at the local level. It also challenges citizens to think about changing their day-to-day mobility behaviour to cut CO₂ emissions.

Cities, towns and local communities use the momentum of the European campaign to promote existing infrastructure and initiatives, like park-and-rides, public bicycle systems, walking buses and cycling trains, mobility centres, online information services etc. Many of them introduce permanent measures, like the adoption of an urban mobility plan, the improvement of public transport services or the introduction of speed reduction programmes in zones near schools.

By closing busy streets to motorised traffic on Monday 22 September, the 'In town without my car' event, commuters all over Europe will be challenged to experiment with sustainable transport modes like cycling, walking, public transport, car sharing and car pooling.



"By closing busy streets to motorised traffic, commuters all over Europe will be challenged to experiment with sustainable transport modes like cycling, walking, public transport, car sharing and car pooling"

An eco-driving simulator to be demonstrated in Reykjavik during mobility week

For this year's European mobility week, participating cities have again developed a wide range of campaigning activities to promote sustainable urban transport. Some of them made an extra effort to focus on the theme of 'Clean air for all'.

The growing number of participating cities and the outstanding quality of the promotional activities they organise underline the potential of European mobility week. In 2007, more than 2000 cities signed the EMW charter or registered their activities on the campaigning site. This year, even more cities are expected to take part.

Also, a growing number of countries outside Europe, such as Brazil, Columbia, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan, are adopting this campaigning model. Annual surveys carried out by Eurocities, Climate Alliance and Energie-Cités, the city networks responsible for coordinating the campaigns, indicate that both awareness and appreciation of the mobility week is increasing.

With sustainable urban transport high on the EU policy agenda, it is clear that European mobility week has an important role to play in convincing people to change their mobility behaviour. ★

Peter Staelens is coordinator of European mobility week

The case of the Ruse-Giurgiu bridge

The main Danube bridge connecting Romania and Bulgaria is one example of how European mobility is being impeded, argues **Nickolay E. Mladenov**

I often ask people what Europe means for them in a single word. Some say 'the euro', others respond with 'Brussels' and quite a few are not interested. And they remain uninterested because Europe, they say, doesn't concern them, it doesn't affect their lives. How wrong that last statement is. Even if many don't realise it, the EU has a direct impact on our lives.

Europe means mobility, it means freedom to travel and do business. Never before have European citizens had such freedom to move across national borders. Never before have so many young people had the opportunity to study in other countries, learn different languages and acquaint themselves

with different cultures. Never before have workers been able to search for employment across 27 countries in Europe. The EU is the tool that makes all this possible. Member states need this integration for economic, social and political reasons; Europe needs it in order to be competitive on global markets. At the same time, our population is ageing. The European economy needs a flexible and qualified workforce to meet the challenges of globalisation. This is an important priority for our future and that is why in September and October more than 500 events across 27 member states will focus on workers' mobility.

People often cross EU borders to visit friends, drink coffee, go shopping or go on holiday. The Erasmus programme helps students gain experience in other countries. The roaming regulation helps Europeans telephone throughout the EU for almost the same price as they do at home. Europe has contributed a lot to improving the everyday life of European citizens, and the free movement of persons is one of its greatest successes. But this has not been an easy task. The history and nature of European integration is marked by negotiations between the nations and peoples of Europe. Governments have sometimes resisted integration but at the end of the day – through compromise – integration has advanced and in an overwhelming number of cases it is in the interest of citizens.

EU flags decorate the Elizabeth bridge in Budapest, Hungary



Despite being recognised as one of the greatest EU achievements, mobility is still being impeded, willingly or accidentally, by various means. Let me give you a very vivid example from Bulgaria and Romania, the two newest member states. For the past year I have been fighting against the toll taxes on the Ruse-Giurgiu bridge, the only bridge that connects both countries across the Danube. The river runs for more than 300km, yet there is only one bridge. Both governments insist on collecting toll taxes amounting to some €18 for cars and going up to as much as €100 for trucks and heavy vehicles. The tax is a direct impediment to citizens and SMEs from both countries. It's ironic that the most expensive bridge to cross in the EU traverses its two poorest member states. European law and the Eurovignette directive allow such taxes to be levied only if they are proportionate and cover infrastructural costs exclusively. This is not the case with the Ruse-Giurgiu bridge – less than 0.2 per cent of the tolls collected in 2007 were spent on maintaining the bridge itself. If the two governments want to implement EU law correctly and not breach it, they should fix the tax at €0.35, or even better, remove it! The European commission and court of justice could play a role in pressing for the removal of this obstacle. Taking the

“It's ironic that the most expensive bridge to cross in the EU traverses its two poorest member states”

case to Luxembourg is an option, but it will take a lot of time. Why should we make people suffer and restrain them from exercising the valuable EU achievement of mobility? Bulgarian and Romanian citizens understand perfectly what the cause of this hindrance is. It is the reluctance to undertake the necessary steps to fully implement European law. For so many years now other bridges have been planned, but nothing has happened. Since there is no alternative route across the river, the only possible step is to remove the tolls as soon as possible. This would benefit citizens directly and would also stimulate business, intercultural cooperation and social exchanges.

Mobility is a value. The EU is its foundation. It is the engine of European integration, and member states should promote it. National governments are responsible for implementing European best practice and citizens should hold them accountable for what has not been done in their interest. The Danube bridge at Ruse-Giurgiu is such a case and I hope Bulgarian and Romanian citizens' interests will soon be very well protected by the people whose job it is – their elected representatives. ★



Nickolay E. Mladenov is a Bulgarian MEP and a member of the internal market committee

On your bike

Cycling can reduce pollution, traffic congestion and improve public health, says **Kevin Mayne**, and should be getting more support at EU level

This year's European mobility week is a particular highlight for the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF), as we celebrate 25 years since the federation was founded by 12 national cyclists' groups in 1983. Transport commissioner Antonio Tajani will give the keynote address at a celebratory reception to be held on 18 September in Brussels, together with Pascal Smet, the Brussels capital region's minister for mobility, and Manfred Neun, ECF president. Members, parliamentarians and cycling supporters will get together and celebrate not only ECF's growth into a forceful movement, but also a new-found confidence amongst advocates that cycling is being recognised as a unique transport choice for the breadth of its contribution to policy goals.

This is a really significant shift at policy level. At ECF's foundation, cycling was seen as a minority interest, declining in many countries and bedevilled by concerns about narrow safety issues. Compared to the car, it apparently had little to offer in terms of social aspiration or economic contribution, making it a hard sell in the eyes of national and European policymakers.

Contrast that with today, when an investment in cycling means congestion reduction, social mobility, improved public health, reduced road casualties, reduced CO2 emissions and improved air quality. Not to mention the economic benefit of cycle tourism bringing new income to rural economies. And imagine the opposite – if neglect means 100 million cyclists across Europe turn to cars, our cities will come to a dead stop. →



"If neglect means 100 million cyclists across Europe turn to cars, our cities will come to a dead stop"

The EuroVelo route network

ECF's aspiration is to take the emerging commitment to cycling at country and city level and build similar recognition of the benefits of cycling in the European parliament and the commission, therefore making it a priority for investment and policy support at European level. During the consultation on the European commission's green paper on urban mobility, we demonstrated the many roles cycling can play as a third mode of transport alongside cars and public transport. In particular, our May 2007 declaration of Berne set out a 10-point plan for using cycling to reduce climate change, including dedicating 10 per cent of all transport expenditure to cycling, supporting cycle-friendly cities and enabling bikes to travel on long-distance trains.

The success of the European dimension has been proven by our major projects Velo-city and EuroVelo. Early ECF advocates looked at the Netherlands as the natural leader in cycling policy and investment, and later individual cities like Odense in Denmark and Graz in Austria. From this network of cities came the Velo-city series of cycling conferences, with the 2007 Munich event attracting over 1000 delegates.

The importance of cycling in the European conference was apparent in the quality of speakers that travelled to Munich, including the Norwegian minister for transport, the mayor of Copenhagen and senior policymakers from Hungary, Czech Republic, Brussels, London and Paris joining the sessions. Driven forward by energetic ECF secretary general Bernhard

Ensink, the next event – to be held in Brussels from 12 to 15 May next year – is now well on track to break all records and should be a key date in the calendar.

The EuroVelo route network is possibly Europe's most extensive mobility project. It is a truly extraordinary project, reaching from Norway to the tip of Spain, Malta and Cyprus, while to the east, routes are planned as far as Moscow and Kyiv. Twelve routes total over 66,000km. The development and operation of the EuroVelo routes is carried out by national, regional and local governments, commercial service providers and NGOs in all the European countries coordinated by ECF. The international status of routes selected to form part of EuroVelo helps in the preparation of funds and political support for construction. The project is sponsored by the ACCELL group and its bicycle brands Batavus, Koga Miyata, Sparta, Hercules and Winora.

Today, ECF and its supporters can be excited about our future. We have 56 members in 36 countries, often at the forefront of transport, environment and tourism policy in their home countries. The organisations have hundreds of staff, thousands of volunteers and half a million members and supporters, making us by far the biggest cycling movement in the world. The potential for cycling to be a solution to many of Europe's problems is right before us and we are looking forward to working with the European institutions to meet the challenge. ★

Kevin Mayne is vice president of the European Cyclists' Federation

Sustainable living CO₂-neutral housing of the future



Buildings are major consumers of energy, representing about 40% of total energy consumption in Europe. To reach the global objective of CO₂ reduction, a new agenda for house building must be introduced.

It is necessary to look at a building's overall qualities, properties and functionality in terms of energy efficiency, healthy indoor climate and renewable energy. Together, these three key areas constitute the core of what VELUX refers to as Sustainable Living – the ability to continue improving the quality of our homes and maintaining high living standards while reducing energy consumption.

Energy efficiency

Consider the building as a whole, not just the sum of its components. Energy efficiency needs to be incorporated into the very design of the building and natural available resources, such as the sun and wind, should be exploited to a maximum. For instance, windows should be considered as energy contributors. They should be placed at strategic locations to allow for solar heat

gain and optimum natural ventilation; and different types of window should be developed and used for north and south-facing installation. The combined effect of these two factors can be enhanced by adding roller shutters and awning blinds that provide a flexible building envelope that keep heat in on cold winter nights and out in summer. Intelligent houses of the future will be designed to control the indoor climate automatically; smart enough to know when to insulate from cold, when to protect from heat and when to provide ventilation.

Healthy indoor climate

Maximum daylight and ventilation are preconditions to ensuring optimal indoor comfort and minimal energy consumption consistent with the standards of the future. In a world with increasing health problems, the indoor climate is an essential factor to be considered when designing a house. Several studies document that daylight has a positive effect on health, productivity, children's learning abilities and general well-being. Similarly, fresh air via natural, and thereby energy-efficient, ventilation

is vital for producing a healthy indoor climate, reducing the risk of toxic emissions from sources such as electronic devices and chemicals in the home - and thereby minimising the risk of allergies.

Renewable energy

Solar energy is the key to decreased CO₂ consumption in our homes. By making renewable energy an integral part of the building, we can make the house an energy contributor instead of an energy consumer. Hot water can be produced by solar energy collected through solar panels - and new technologies are emerging that will allow solar energy to cool buildings. Solar collectors can provide up to 70 per cent of the energy needed to produce domestic hot water. The sun is the most powerful source of energy we have and we should be making maximum use of it.

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A woman with dark hair, wearing a black jacket and grey trousers, is walking on a paved path lined with trees. The trees have green and yellow leaves, suggesting autumn. A white graphic line, resembling a stylized path or a data line, starts from the bottom left, goes up, then right, then up again, ending near the top right. The text 'BIG BUSINESS' is placed on the upper right segment of this line. The text 'Microsoft' is placed on the lower left segment of the line. The main body of text is placed on the lower right segment of the line.

BIG BUSINESS

Microsoft

Pilar Manchon took part in the Microsoft Impulsa program in Spain, receiving free entrepreneurial guidance and support. She gained confidence, access to new customers and partners, and a clearer path to her potential. Through programs like this, Microsoft, working with local partners, is committed to help 20 million people across Europe gain new skills for employability and entrepreneurship by 2010. To find out more about Pilar's story and other European Microsoft programs, visit www.onmywayEU.com

BIG IDEA