

THE EUROPEAN

Issue 11-July 2010

The European Movement in London Newsletter

EMiL news

Happy Birthday!!!

This month we are celebrating **The European's** first birthday! Our newsletter has been around since July last year and during this time we have tried to keep our members informed about EU policy developments in Brussels. We had the pleasure to publish articles from MEPs, academic experts, representatives from non-UK EM branches and of course many articles from EMiL members and supporters. They all deserve special thanks for contributing very interesting articles that enriched the content and reach of our newsletter. We look forward to discussing more interesting subjects in the year ahead.

The Committee

From the Euromove Blog
<http://euromove.blogactiv.eu/>

The unbearable lightness of being... a British tabloid paper.

It is of course no secret that the tabloid press in the UK applies a very relaxed definition of the word truth. But that fact is taken to another level when it comes to their reporting of the EU and one of the free London morning papers offered me a stark reminder the other day. That particular publication, which focuses on financial services and is usually distributed to City and Canary Wharf workers on their way to the office, dedicated its front page on 7

July to a story on a European Parliament vote on proposals for the setting up of the new European Supervisory Authorities. I'll spare you the details on the draft legislation and what it means for the supervision of financial markets in the EU. Instead I'll focus on the fact that the 'paper' made it sound like the EP had sneaked in at the last minute amendments to the document, amendments that suggest that all 3 new entities will have to be based in Frankfurt (currently one is based in London, one in Paris and one in Frankfurt). I do not expect objective reporting from that paper so their omission of the arguments behind the EP's proposal is no surprise. But to call the EP's position a surprise move is pure fiction since the EP proposals have been public for a while.

It is very possible that its reporters do not know the facts, very likely actually since this newspaper is, by its own admission, not worth the paper it is printed on (which is why it is given for free). But I fear that the reason behind this misreporting (and the whole article for that matter) is to portray this particular EU institution as a backstabbing and power-grabbing monster. That is consistent with attitudes vis-à-vis the EU across the yellow press (and in some cases even beyond). There is a persistent campaign of misinformation, most of these papers have taken it upon themselves to misreport pretty much everything that comes out of Brussels. They are responsible for most of the euomyths that for years now have been distorting the facts on what the EU does. I am

fully aware that the process of European integration is not everybody's cup of tea, I accept well argued and substantiated points of view and I am happy to debate with anyone that disagrees with me. But I take issue with this well co-ordinated campaign aimed at lying to the British people, taking their right to know the facts away from them in the most cowardice way.

The situation is of course made worse by the fact that the rest of the UK press (with some rare exceptions) mostly ignores the EU; their excuse is that it just does not sell newspapers, it is too far away and too complicated. So in most cases they tend to stay clear, leaving plenty of free space for the tabloid press to spread their lies. This inability (or unwillingness) to provide the public with objective information on the EU constitutes a market failure, in the sense that the market is failing in comprehensively providing an essential service to its customers, a service that in this case is of paramount significance because the EU is hugely important for the UK's economic prosperity and success in the international scene. So, like in the case of other market failures, especially when it comes to the provision of a public good (which objective information obviously is), the state needs to step in and provide the British people with the necessary education that will shift the debate not in favour of a particular point of view but towards a more balanced understanding of what the EU is, how it benefits the UK and how it can help us deal with challenges like climate change, economic development, research, energy security, international crime and terrorism, to name just a few.

The European Movement has for years been in the forefront of objectively informing the debate on European integration. We invite the government to join us in inaugurating a new era of understanding and debate on the EU. An era free of the Dark Ages type of ignorance and misunderstanding that the tabloid press mythology has imposed on the British people.

Petros Fassoulas

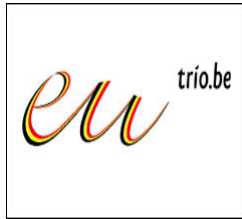
[Belgium takes over EU Council Presidency.](#)

On 1 July Belgium took over from Spain the 6 months rotating Presidency of the EU Council. Belgium intends to focus its Presidency on 5 priorities:

- Ending the financial crisis and increasing sustainable and long-term growth.
- Promoting the social cohesion
- Encouraging the transition to a low carbon Europe.
- Setting up a European policy on justice, internal affairs, asylum and migration.
- Increasing the role of the EU as a promoter of peace and international security on the international stage.

Economic issues will dominate the agenda with first of all the need to broker a deal between Member States and the European Parliament on the establishment of 3 new European Supervisory Agencies to oversee the financial services sector in the EU. The two institutions fundamentally disagree on the extent of the ESAs powers. Legislation on hedge funds is also near its adoption phase and the Belgians will have to steer the dossier

through disagreements between Member States.



Source: European Commission

The Belgian Presidency will have to find a way to combine the findings of the final report of Van Rompuy's Taskforce on economic governance, due to be published in October, with Commission proposals (expected this September) on how to toughen Member States' budgetary rules to avoid a repetition of the recent sovereign debt crisis.

Enlargement will be another issue that will keep the Belgians occupied with Iceland and Croatia queuing up for EU membership and Turkey waiting for an acceleration in its accession negotiations.

The Stockholm programme, the EU's plan on security, asylum and immigration will feature a lot during the next 6 months, with Belgium keen to make this loosely agreed programme more concrete.

Last but not least, facilitating the implementation of the Lisbon treaty is also high on Belgium's agenda, with the founding EU member state keen to assist the European Council President and the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy to perform their tasks.

Petros Fassoulas

Compromise reached on European External Action Service.

The establishment of the European External Action Service moved a step closer in June after the Council and the European Parliament reached an agreement after long and detailed negotiations.

The service will have an ultimate size of around 8,000 people, of which only 40 percent will be allowed to be temporary diplomats from member states. The remainder must be permanent staff. Such a move will safeguard the service's operational independence from Member States patronage. It was also decided that there will be no quotas for member states, something newer member states had lobbied hard for because they feared that senior positions will be reserved for nationals of Member States with bigger international clout. .

Even though the Service will have responsibility for strategic country planning, the ultimate programming decisions for external assistance will rest with the Commission. But to avoid duplication geographical desks in the Service will not be mirrored in the Commission.

Reflecting the increasing importance of the EP under the Lisbon Treaty and in response to calls for greater democratic accountability for the EEAS, the Service's budget will be subject to scrutiny by the European Parliament. Also MEPs will be consulted before EU missions abroad are authorised and they will also have a much stronger budgetary oversight over such actions.

Ms Ashton is hoping to get the service established by 1 December, with 1,100

diplomats in place and a budget line of €9.5 million for this year.

The establishment of the Service constitutes a major step towards rationalising and mainstreaming EU foreign policy. The proof of the pudding is in the eating of course and it still remains to be seen whether the Council will be able to impose a more intergovernmental nature to the Service or the Commission's supranational modus operandi will be imprinted in the new institution. Despite those questions the Service should allow the EU to promote more effectively its foreign policy priorities and represent more efficiently the collective interest of its Member States.

Petros Fassoulas

EU efforts to cut emissions and combat climate change intensify.

Member States have reached an agreement on Commission proposals to set up a single European auctioning system to sell pollution permits in the future. The new platform will maximise auctioning efficiency and keep carbon prices sufficiently high to bring down emissions. Despite giving their agreement to the single, Member States are worried it could potentially have a negative impact on national trading systems. To address those concerns Member States agreed to the right to opt out from the EU-wide scheme at a later date. Poland, the UK, Germany and Spain were some of the Member States that pursued the opt-out arrangement.

Furthermore Member States unanimously backed Commission proposals that will see carbon-emitting industries buy about half of their

emission allowances from 2013 onwards. Companies receive their emissions allowances for free under the current phase of the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). This, together with allocating too many emission allowances, led to a reduction of the price of allowances to emit CO₂.

In a separate development, environment ministers from the UK, France and Germany have jointly proposed that the EU should raise its emission reduction target to 30% by 2020. Currently the EU has committed to cutting emissions by 20%. In the run up to the Copenhagen Conference in December last year the EU offered to raise its target to 30% but only if other developed nations commit to similarly ambitious cuts. The proposal to unilaterally raise the EU's emission reduction target is an important move in the effort to renew impetus towards achieving a global agreement on ways to fight climate change. It is also an important achievement for the UK who had previously argued in favour of such a move but had met opposition from France, Germany and other Member States. With the 3 most influential Member States on the same page it is hoped that the EU will soon agree on the higher target.



Source: windturbinestar.com

A Commission communication in May calculated that due to the recession, a 30% reduction would now cost only €11 billion more than what

national capitals signed up to two years ago when they set the 20% target.

Europe's big business is passionately opposed to increasing climate targets, arguing that doing so would put EU industry at a competitive disadvantage.

In a clear demonstration that EU efforts to support the use of renewable sources of energy are bearing fruit the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (a body backed by the International Energy Agency and the UN), said in a report on 15 July that more than half of all new electricity capacity added in the United States and Europe last year was from renewable power such as wind and solar. Despite the impact of the financial crisis and lower oil prices, renewable capacity grew at rates close to those in previous years, including solar photovoltaic (PV) power at 53% and wind power at 32%, the report said. Grid-connected solar PV power had grown by an average of 60% every year for the past decade, increasing 100-fold since 2000. That boom has been largely on the back of support in European countries.

Petros Fassoulas

Dates for the Diary.

- **12 July, EMiL Committee meeting.** For the Agenda and Minutes please visit <http://www.euromove.org.uk/index.php?id=6606>