

Parliament's priorities

The European parliament's group
leaders outline their hopes and
expectations for the next six months



Haiti one year on
Catherine Ashton,
Kristalina Georgieva, and
Andris Piebalgs give their
assessment of the Haitian
situation

Plus: Cervical cancer
prevention week, EU worst
lobbyist awards



**2011 European year of
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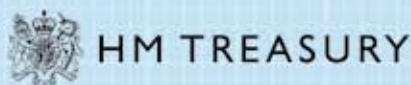
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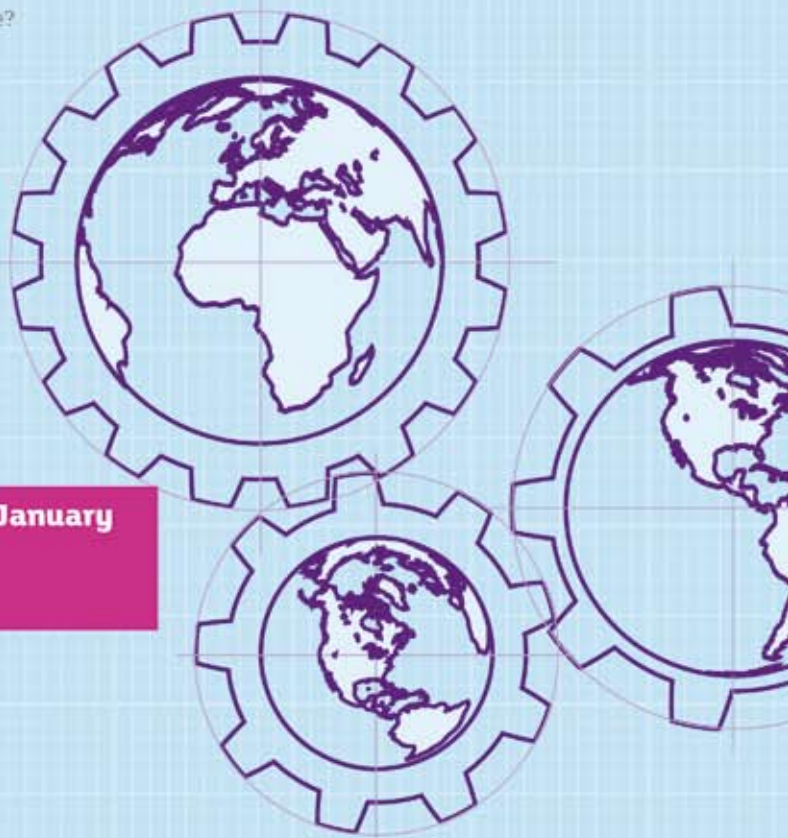
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NEWSANALYSIS

6 Waste not, want not

The EU should exploit the opportunities presented by electronic waste, says Janez Potočnik

8 Inside job

Pro-European nationalist movements may lead to future EU expansion coming from within, writes Frieda Brepoels

12 Battling on

Screening programmes must be population-based if they are to achieve the maximum reductions in cervical cancer rates, write Marian Harkin, Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Edite Estrela and Françoise Grossetête

14 Raising awareness

One priority in the battle against cervical cancer is to make sure the general public and the politicians of Europe fully understand the benefits of cervical cancer prevention, writes Ian Gibson

16 Get it together

The need to boost EU coordination and improve psychosocial care for patients were among the issues in focus at the Parliament Magazine's concluding event on cancer control. Martha Moss reports

22 Wish EU were here

A more integrated EU approach to supporting Europe's tourism industry was the rallying call at a recent conference in Brussels organised by the Parliament Magazine

23 Open Europe

Europe is finally waking up and exploring the opportunities an organised, EU-level tourism policy can provide, as participants at the event heard

24 Sun, sea, sustainability

One session looked at the need for sustainable tourism to take holidaymakers, the environment, residents and the provide into consideration

26 Counting the cost

One year on from the devastating earthquake, Catherine Ashton, Kristalina Georgieva and Andris Piebalgs are urging the Haitian authorities to waste no time in getting a new government up and running

28 A matter of urgency

Haiti highlighted the need for the EU to boost its disaster response capacity through a European civil protection force, argues Michèle Striffler

30 Moving on?

A year after the earthquake in Haiti, leading NGOs look at the progress made and the objectives yet to be completed in the disaster relief campaign

32 Vision for the future

Early diagnosis and treatment could prevent all cases of blindness caused by diabetes and should be the norm, writes Simon Busuttil

33 Fair's fair

Bill Newton Dunn is calling for EU-wide legislation on fairground safety

34 Clear as mud

While the EU is making improvements there needs to be a full-blooded commitment to transparency in Europe, argues Paul de Clerck

36 Root causes

Despite being the largest overseas aid donor, the EU must work harder if it is to meet its development targets, writes Edit Bauer

37 A viable alternative?

Shale gas provides an opportunity for energy diversification and security, writes Bogdan Marcinkiewicz

38 Parliament news

Hungarian media law, cross-border healthcare, and human rights in Belarus, commissioners' code of ethics, mackerel wars and football excess

COVERSTORY

PARLIAMENT PRIORITIES

42 A stronger Europe

The Hungarian presidency comes at a critical time for the European project, writes Joseph Daul

43 Action not words

Hungary must take action on its controversial media law or face damaging its presidency, argues Martin Schulz

44 A steady hand

The EU must not let the financial crisis and nationalistic agendas hinder progress, argues Guy Verhofstadt

45 Europe expects

Daniel Cohn-Bendit hopes that the Hungarian presidency will display a firm commitment to European values and solidarity

46 Looking forward

Europe should not be distracted by pointless federalism, but focus on the single market and policies that provide genuine value, writes Michał Kamiński

47 Follow the leader

The EU needs its leaders to be firm and provide policy that is of true benefit to European citizens, writes Lothar Bisky

48 Democracy or bust

Citizens' rights and national democracy should take precedence over the formation of a centralised European state, writes Francesco Speroni

INSIDEEU

2011 YEAR OF VOLUNTEERING

50 Making a contribution

With 100 million volunteers working in the EU, Viviane Reding says that Europe would be unrecognisable without the effort and devotion of these individuals

54 Step up

Gabriella Civico and Markus Held ask why the role of volunteering isn't a topic of major EU debate

European civil society and the EU must actively engage with each other if the 2011 year of volunteering is to succeed, writes Arjun Singh-Muchelle



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Turn the page

As we start 2011, we all want to stick firmly to our new year's resolutions. Many will be determined to throw themselves into their parliamentary work with great gusto. Others will want to dedicate more time to their family. It's sometimes tricky to strike the right balance. We hear from the leaders of each of the groups in parliament to find out what their plans and priorities are for the year ahead. I wish everyone a happy new year and the best of luck for the coming months.

In this, the first issue of 2011, we have a focus on cervical cancer. A range of MEPs have contributed, with the politicians against cervical cancer prevention providing healthy support. In Strasbourg last week, I signed a written declaration, which could make a great difference to our approach to, and progress on, cancer in the institutions. The Parliament Magazine recently hosted a roundtable event that tackled the major issues facing parliamentarians in battling cancer, full coverage of which is provided on pages 16-20.

This month in parliament, we host our biannual reception to welcome the incoming presidency. The Hungarians are the third in the trio of presidencies who linked up to create greater continuity and focus.

January also marks a year since the devastating earthquake in Haiti. Following major disasters, the media attention tends to disappear whilst the victims are left behind. This issue also looks at the ongoing colossal aid project, with many organisations facing their biggest challenge in linking up their aid efforts.

This year marks the European year of volunteering. Throwing the spotlight on the voluntary sector could make a huge difference as many charities report falling revenues. International aid, and on a personal level, contributions to charities are the easiest budgets to cut when austerity measures are made. The only way in which organisations can be effective is by having long term plans with projected revenues. As more people than ever need help, it's crucial that charities can plan their budgets with confidence.

Enjoy this issue of the magazine, and consider your new year's resolutions as you come across topics which could benefit from your support. ★

Catherine Stihler

Catherine Stihler is the Parliament Magazine's MEP editor

ON THE COVER | Parliament's priorities

In our first issue of 2011, parliament's group leaders welcome Hungary as the new holder of the EU council presidency, and outline their hopes for the next six months. Parliament's EPP group leader Joseph Daul writes that Europe needs "even stronger and broader cooperation than ever before." "The challenges could hardly be tougher," for the coming year says Guy Verhofstadt, chair of parliament's ALDE group. The Liberal leader also called for caution as "Hungary has serious domestic issues of its own".

Michał Kamiński, chair of parliament's ECR group, also feels that this year is going to be one of "tough decisions for national leaders as well as the EU" and that a distinction must be made "between the Hungarian government and the Hungarian presidency of the EU".

Group leaders, pages 42-48



Waste not, want not

The EU should exploit the opportunities presented by electronic waste, says **Janez Potočnik**

When did you last buy a new mobile phone? The speed of technological progress and the fierce competition in the smartphone market means that we are constantly tempted to upgrade. Many of us are replacing our phones every year or two.

But when we buy a new phone, what do we do with the old one? Perhaps you give it on to your kids (if they don't already have a better one than you). You might sell it or recycle, but many of us simply put it in a drawer and forget about it, or worse, just throw it out with the rest of the household waste.

This would not be an issue if we were talking about a few old phones here and there, but there are five billion mobile phone users on the planet. The scale of the issue demands that we take a closer look and quickly.

Our fast growing consumption of electronic and electrical equipment – not only mobile phones, but everything from desktop computers to solar panels, light bulbs to fridges – means that we have to deal with the problem of how to deal with them when they become waste. We also find some of the resources needed to produce them are increasingly scarce. But in these two problems we have the beginning of a solution. Used electronic equipment can be a mine of valuable resources such as precious metals and plastics: we should not be just throwing it away, we have to recycle.

Fortunately our electronic waste is not only a problem, it is also an opportunity. For example it is estimated that a ton of e-waste can contain about 250 grams of gold alone: a more productive haul than in a traditional gold mine. If we recycle these valuable resources we save energy, reduce environmental impacts, increase the security of our raw material supply,



“This would not be an issue if we were talking about a few old phones here and there, but there are five billion mobile phone users on the planet”

reduce our import dependency and create economic opportunity and employment in our recycling industries. A recent paper from Friends of the Earth in the UK estimates that if a target of 70 per cent for key material recycling was met, more than 320,000 jobs could be created in the European Union.

There is clearly a lot at stake here, so what are we doing about this in Europe? Some things are being done, but not enough, would be the easiest way of describing the situation.

The European directive on waste from electronic and electrical equipment (WEEE) has been rather successful since 2003. It has started to change our perception of e-waste from something we bury in holes in the ground or burn, to something that can be economically and environmentally useful. But we need to be far more ambitious, especially if we are serious about our commitment in the Europe 2020 strategy to go for resource efficient growth.

The existing WEEE directive has been successful in reducing harmful emissions and in developing systems for separate collection and documented treatment. However, the scale of the challenge is really becoming clear now. About three million tonnes of e-waste is under documented control today, yet another estimated six million tonnes remain unaccounted for. Not only do we risk missing out on this valuable resource and seeing it 'leak' outside the EU where we cannot benefit from it; we also lose control over how it is handled and treated. We must insist on proper treatment for health reasons too: gases from old fridges, mercury, cadmium and many other hazardous substances pose risks to our environment and to our health.

The initial WEEE target, to collect at least four kilograms of e-waste per capita annually in all member states, needs to be revisited. Assessments of the amount of e-waste generated show a range from about eight kilograms per person in Bulgaria to over 30 kilograms in Luxembourg. There isn't one solution to fit everyone, and we need to adapt targets to the amount of equipment actually used in each member state.

That is why the commission has put proposals to the European parliament and council for a second-generation WEEE directive with ambitious but realistic percentage-based targets for e-waste collection and treatment. We used the opportunity to learn from our experience with the current directive so as to increase environmental and health protection, to improve access to valuable secondary resources, and to reduce unnecessary administrative burdens for the producers who are responsible for the management of this waste.

We propose to strengthen the level of responsibility of producers, with member states ensuring that producers live up to their responsibilities and register all equipment sold on their territory. We propose to harmonise requirements, and strengthen cooperation and enforcement between the member states.



To get real results this regulatory approach will need to be complemented by a series of other measures. The commission will be developing further clear criteria for the quality of recycled materials, building awareness of the need to sort and recycle, and developing markets for secondary raw materials. Through the raw materials initiative and an innovation partnership we intend to break down some of the bottlenecks to the development and application of the necessary technologies and business models, and to encourage product design that enables better end-of-life treatment. There will also be strong need to support member states in developing and financing waste infrastructures.

We need to exploit the rich seams of our "urban mines" – the dormant resources in the mobile phone in your drawer. If we are able to make it both possible and desirable to re-use secondary resources we will bring a whole new approach to what our parents used to say "waste not, want not". ★

Janez Potočnik
is European
environment
commissioner



“As part of its ongoing evolution, the European Union should prepare for its eventual enlargement from within”

An SNP activist waits for first minister Alex Salmond on the election campaign trail in Edinburgh, Scotland

Inside job

Pro-European nationalist movements may lead to future EU expansion coming from within, writes **Frieda Brepoels**

The second decade of the 21st century will see the European Union expand even further. Which new members can we expect to welcome during this time? Croatia, certainly. Serbia, maybe. Iceland, perhaps. But what about Scotland, Catalonia or Flanders? The ongoing constitutional evolution of several current member states makes it timely to consider the prospect of internal enlargement. This refers to the process by which a nation or territory that’s currently part of an existing EU member state becomes an independent EU member in its own right.

No one is arguing that this is imminent, but it would be foolish for EU institutions and governments to fail to prepare for such an eventuality. This is an evolutionary process, and one that began some time ago. These issues were addressed at a recent European parliament conference hosted by my parliamentary group, the European Free Alliance.

Klaus Desmet is an academic who has looked at the economics of independence in great detail. Author of “The Stability and Breakup of Nations”, he has studied in great depth the socio-economic factors influencing the emergence of new independent states. He argued that economics is the dominant factor in encouraging nations to seek independence, with ethno-linguistic factors rarely playing a decisive role. It is the unfulfilled economic potential of the status quo which increasingly opens people’s minds to the greater economic potential of independence, with the EU’s internal market making this even more attractive.

We also heard from Adam Price, a former Plaid Cymru MP who is now a Fulbright Scholar at Harvard. Interestingly, Price rejects the notion that current economic difficulties have undermined the case for small independent nations, arguing that the European Union has undoubtedly provided important economic shelter for its smaller states without which, the impact of the crisis would have been much graver. But it should be remembered where the global crisis began. The world economic crisis was not the result of mistakes made by Iceland, Ireland or Greece; it was the result of the risks created by large-country policies.



A Catalan nationalist demonstrator holds a sign reading 'We are a nation' during a march in Barcelona, Spain

Looking at all of the evidence available over the longer term, rather than currently prevailing prejudices, we were told that being of small to medium size has brought real and distinct economic advantage to independent nations over the past 30 years, and will continue to do so. Price went on to describe what he called the *flotilla effect*, where in turbulent times, small countries can be said to behave more like the woodchip – tossed about on the waves but difficult to sink. When good times return, Europe's flotilla of small boats may once again prove quicker and more adept at charting a new economic course than the super tankers that are all too often "too big to sail".

We heard from other speakers from Catalonia, Flanders, Wales, Scotland, the Basque Country and elsewhere. All of them are from pro-European, inclusive, nationalist parties who see their nations' futures firmly within the EU family. This unequivocal commitment to an independent future within the European Union gives lie to Herman Van Rompuy's recent bizarre claims that he knows of "no pro-European nationalist party in Europe".

This rather odd assertion came as something of a surprise to those of us who have dedicated our political lives to winning freedom for our nations as independent states within the European Union. With representatives of at least a dozen pro-European nationalist parties present in the room, speaker after speaker highlighted the European Union's role as the thread

binding together European democracy. How sad then that people like Van Rompuy choose to take refuge in outdated stereotypes, rather than positively respond to the emergence of new member states from within the EU as well as from without.

My Catalan colleague Oriol Junqueras of *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* took particular exception to Van Rompuy's comments, stating, "My own party has been fighting for freedom and democracy for Catalonia since its foundation nearly 80 years ago.

"This has continued since the restoration of democracy in the Spanish state in 1977. Many people in Catalonia will be shocked by Van Rompuy's comments given the pro-European nature of the Catalan nationalist movement, and our nation's attachment to the European Union."

European Union internal enlargement is very much an evolutionary process rather than an event in itself. What is going on in countries like Scotland and Catalonia certainly challenges the conventional view that future EU members will be drawn from outside the bloc's existing frontiers.

It is not for the EU or its institutions to stand in the way of democratic progress and the freely expressed will of its citizens. As part of its ongoing evolution, the European Union should prepare for its eventual enlargement from within. I have no doubt that inclusive, democratic nationalism will play a determining role in the EU's further development. ★

Frieda Brepoels is a member of parliament's foreign affairs committee

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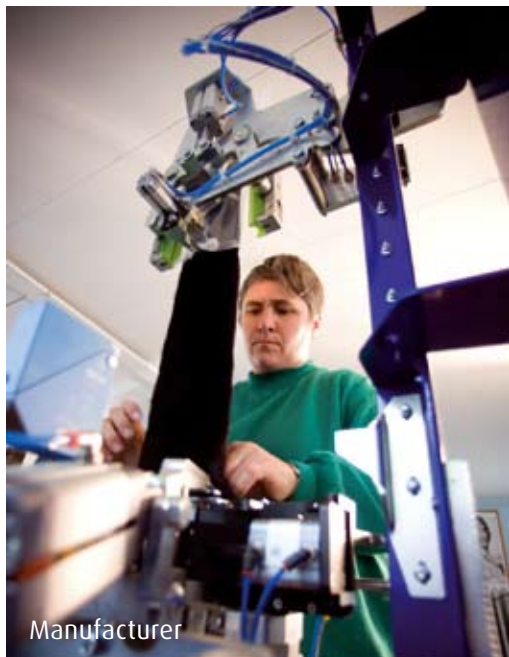
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L-r: ALDE deputies Marian Harkin and Silvana Koch-Mehrin, S&D deputy Edite Estrela and EPP deputy Françoise Grossetête



Battling on

Screening programmes must be population-based if they are to achieve the maximum reductions in cervical cancer rates, write **Marian Harkin, Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Edite Estrela and Françoise Grossetête**

Cervical cancer remains a serious public health problem in Europe with some 60,000 new cases and 30,000 deaths every year. While this is clearly not the most common cancer among European women, the big difference with cervical cancer is that we already know exactly what needs to be done to prevent almost every single case. It has been proven that effective screening programmes prevent 80 per cent of cervical cancers. Further, vaccines against the sexually transmitted human papillomavirus (HPV) have been proven to be highly effectively when given to pre-sexually active adolescents to prevent infection by the HPV types that are responsible for the majority of cervical cancers. Therefore, comprehensive cervical cancer prevention programmes which combine screening with vaccination could prevent almost all of the suffering and loss of life that currently results from this disease. Given this amazing potential, the main question that remains is why haven't these programmes been rolled-out in every country?

To answer this question, we need to recognise that screening programmes must be population-based and nationally or regionally organised if they are to achieve the maximum reductions in cervical cancer. This fact was already acknowledged in the European council recommendation of December 2003 which specifically states that all member states should implement population-based, organised screening programmes for cervical, breast and colorectal cancers, and by the European guidelines which state that cervical cancer screening should be delivered only through population-based, organised programmes, while the opportunistic screening that still prevails in Europe should be discouraged. The same principle applies to HPV vaccination programmes in that the maximum reductions in cervical cancer will only be achieved with high coverage of the target population, and high coverage is best accomplished with population-based delivery programmes.

This is a barrier to the implementation of screening and vaccination programmes because they are complex undertakings that require major investments of time and money to implement. Therefore, they also require substantial political support to be allocated to the required resources. With so many competing priorities, political support will not be forthcoming unless politicians understand the benefits of these programmes. However, this understanding is unfortunately rare among the politicians of Europe. As a result, while we have the techniques

"All member states should implement population-based, organised screening programmes for cervical, breast and colorectal cancers"



to prevent almost every case of cervical cancer, we still lack the political will needed to fight for the resources that are required for their implementation.

A related issue is the widespread lack of understanding of the differences between population-based and opportunistic screening. Compared to population-based screening, opportunistic screening is less effective and will not achieve the 80 per cent reduction noted above. In addition, opportunistic screening over-screens the wealthy and well educated while under-screening lower socioeconomic groups and minorities, and therefore wastes healthcare resources while promoting health inequalities. Unfortunately, a lack of understanding of these problems has allowed politicians in countries with opportunistic screening to deprioritise the implementation of population-based programmes, based on an erroneous belief that adequate measures are already in place.

Finally, the cost of implementing these programmes will obviously be a major problem, particularly in the current economic conditions when many countries are facing substantial budgetary reductions in all areas, including health. In these countries, investments in cervical cancer prevention programmes that will yield disease reductions in the future simply cannot be justified if the money will be taken from other areas, such as acute care services that are hard-pressed to meet current demand. This is an area where the commission could help, as many of the countries with the highest rates of cervical cancer are also in the structural funds (SF) convergence regions which currently receive 85 per cent of the funding. However, a major problem with this is that the SF procedure requires countries to designate their funding priorities during the negotiation phase and, as we have discussed above, few politicians understand the benefits of population-based cervical cancer prevention so it is unsurprising that cervical cancer prevention does not feature in the current

About the Politicians for Cervical Cancer Prevention (PCCP):

- The PCCP was established in 2006 specifically to raise awareness of cervical prevention within the parliaments of Europe.
- The PCCP started with 40 Members of the European Parliament but quickly expanded to include more than 250 politicians from 36 different European countries.
- The PCCP works to educate politicians and public health officials about cervical cancer so they can make evidence-based decisions about the implementation of cost-effective prevention programmes. In keeping with this objective, the PCCP has successfully organised many educational events across Europe, including the highly acclaimed European cervical cancer summit meetings that have been held in Brussels for the past 3 years. The third European cervical cancer summit meeting was held in the European parliament and it attracted 150 politicians from across Europe
- Cervical Cancer in Europe:
60,000 - new cases per year
30,000 - deaths per year
90% - disease reductions that could be achieved through comprehensive cervical cancer prevention programmes that combine screening of adults with HPV vaccination of adolescents.



SF programme. A further problem is that while health is included in the current programme, it receives only three per cent of the budget, approximately €11bn. Here, the commission could provide enormous assistance to countries in the convergence regions in their efforts to comply with the recommendations of the council by increasing the absolute amount of money that will be available for health in the 2014-2020 SF programme and by actively encouraging countries to include the infrastructure for population-based prevention programmes in their applications.

We now have the tools at our disposal to prevent the vast majority of cervical cancers in Europe. However, we will not see the full potential of these technologies if they are not deployed within effective population-based programmes that will allow all the women of Europe to take advantage of them. The politicians for cervical cancer prevention (PCCP) will continue to work to create the political will that is needed to see that population-based, organised screening and vaccination programmes are implemented across Europe without further delay. ★

Marian Harkin, Silvana Koch-Mehrin, Edite Estrela and Françoise Grossetête are co-chairs of Politicians for Cervical Cancer Prevention

Raising awareness

One priority in the battle against cervical cancer is to make sure the general public and the politicians of Europe fully understand the benefits of cervical cancer prevention, writes **Ian Gibson**

Cervical cancer is unique in that we already know exactly what we have to do to prevent almost every case of this disease. Population-based cervical cancer screening programmes can prevent up to 80 per cent of cervical cancers, and vaccines against the human papillomavirus (HPV) have been shown to be highly effective against the HPV types that cause the majority of cervical cancers. Therefore, bringing these together in comprehensive cervical cancer prevention programmes gives us the opportunity to prevent almost every case of this disease. There is no other cancer, or any other serious human disease, for which we could have such a dramatic impact.

So why do we still have 60,000 new cases and 30,000 deaths from cervical cancer, every year across Europe? One reason is that many women are not aware of what they need to do to prevent cervical cancer so they do not take advantage of these programmes where they are available. A second reason is that many politicians are not aware of the health and economic benefits that these programmes would bring to their countries so they do not prioritise their implementation. Clearly, one of the priorities in the battle against cervical cancer must now be to make sure the general public and the politicians of Europe fully understand the benefits of cervical cancer prevention.

Cervical cancer prevention week (CCPW) was launched by the European Cervical Cancer Association (ECCA) specifically to raise awareness of cervical cancer and the means by which it can be prevented. The CCPW has been held every year since 2007 and it has continued to grow in size, with 450 events being held in 30 European countries in January 2010.

Following the successes of the past four years, the ECCA, European cancer organisation, European association of cancer

leagues, international union against cancer and politicians for cervical cancer prevention have again combined forces with all of the ECCA's members across Europe to hold the fifth CCPW from 23 to 29 January 2011. The main events that have been organised include the promotion of the pearl of wisdom as a symbol for the cervical cancer prevention campaign, that people can easily identify and learn to trust.

The online stop cervical cancer petition calling on the European institutions to do more to support the implementation of cervical cancer prevention programmes across Europe. The stop cervical cancer petition now has over 773,270 signatures and the goal of one million signatures appears to be within reach.

In addition to these European events, the members of the ECCA across Europe are planning numerous activities to raise awareness of cervical cancer prevention in their countries. These include television and radio advertisements, informational displays with the distribution of the ECCA's educational materials in shopping malls, train stations and other high-traffic areas, as well as lectures for healthcare professionals, to ensure they have up to date information on cervical cancer prevention and can effectively answer questions coming from their patients.

Also, lectures for university students will be held to ensure this generation has the information they will need to protect themselves against this disease, briefing sessions in their parliaments to ensure that politicians are fully aware of the benefits of cervical cancer prevention programmes. And there will be workshops with national politicians, cervical cancer prevention experts, NGOs, patient groups and other stakeholders to plan actions to improve cervical cancer prevention in their countries and free cervical cancer screening clinics. ★

Ian Gibson is the director of the European Cervical Cancer Association (ECCA)



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About Lymphoma

Lymphoma is a cancer of the lymphatic system (your immune system). Lymphocytes multiply in an uncontrolled way, increasing the numbers of abnormal lymphocytes, which accumulate and form tumours in lymph nodes and other parts of the body. Lymphoma cells replace normal lymphocytes, weakening the immune system's ability to fight infection.

With a 54% mortality rate, it kills nearly 1400 people everyday. Lymphoma is one of the fastest growing cancers worldwide and has increased in incidence by 80 per cent since the early 1970's. (World Health Report 2000)

Lymphomas are comprised of over 45 subtypes of lymphoid cancers, making diagnosis difficult.

In a 2010 Nodes No Borders patient survey, we uncovered that of the 1700 respondents worldwide, 55% were misdiagnosed and 34% were treated for their misdiagnosis.

Improve Patient Care & Survival

We are asking you to help us improve patient outcome in three ways:

1. improve diagnosis timelines - mandate education and awareness for every government health official, general practitioner and general oncologist
2. support and promote investment in lymphoma research
3. guarantee best access to care and innovative treatment no matter where the patient lives

For more information on subtypes, signs and symptoms, or for membership inquiries, please visit our website.

What We Do

- Reach out to communities that do not have patient support
- Raise awareness of lymphomas
- Ensure best practice management of lymphomas
- Work to improve understanding of lymphomas
- Support 48 patient organizations from 34 countries



Dr. Laurie Sehn, Chair
Medical Advisory Board

"The Coalition represents an international effort with the capacity to increase awareness and advocate for the needs of lymphoma patients on a global scale."



Dr. Anna Williamson
Chair, Board of Directors

"There is much to do to address the issues facing lymphoma and we are well organised to do that."



Karen VanRassel
Executive Director

"Lymphomas are underserved, misunderstood cancers that require immediate attention to stop the steady growth of incidence."

Lymphoma Coalition
karen@lymphomacoalition.org
www.lymphomacoalition.org



**LYMPHOMA
COALITION**
Worldwide network
of lymphoma groups



Get it together

The need to boost EU coordination and improve psychosocial care for patients were among the issues in focus at the Parliament Magazine’s concluding event on cancer control. **Martha Moss** reports

The EU “cannot afford to remain passive” on tackling the cancer epidemic, participants in the Parliament Magazine’s concluding event on fighting cancer in Europe heard. Slovakian EPP deputy Miroslav Mikolášik – who has been involved in the Parliament Magazine’s roundtable discussions on cancer – told the concluding event that national and European action was urgently needed to promote preventative measures and improve outcomes. “Member states and

the EU cannot afford to remain impassive vis-à-vis the cancer epidemic,” he said.

Mikolášik, who is also trained as a medical doctor, added, “Coordinated action is needed more than ever. There is local action, but European and international action as well.” The event, held in the European parliament in Brussels, brought together MEPs, medical experts and industry representatives to discuss how best to coordinate action on tackling cancer. It also aimed to feed in the conclusions of the three



L-r: Christiaan Decoster, Nataša Hace, Miroslav Mikolášik, Liz Lynne, Sofie Eelen


discussions – held in London, Bratislava and Paris – on how national examples could inform action at EU level, and vice-versa.

Discussing the London event, British ALDE deputy Liz Lynne spoke of the need to share scientific research. Brussels has made a financial commitment to the issue, devoting €750m to cancer research during the sixth framework programme (FP6) and the start of FP7, she said. “The problem at the moment is that people tend to work in isolation,” Lynne said. “I know why they work in isolation – because quite often they jealously guard research.” Lynne, who is also a vice-chair of parliament’s employment and social affairs committee, also called for EU action to tackle the “stark inequalities” on cancer rates. To this end, the EU partnership on action against cancer aims to reduce disparities by 70 per cent by the end of the decade, she said. And she added that the EU commission “will need to step up coordination” if it is to meet the target of reducing cancer by 15 per cent by 2020. Events such as this could



“Member states and the EU cannot afford to remain impassive vis-à-vis the cancer epidemic”

EPP deputy Miroslav Mikolášik

A close-up portrait of Michelle Crook, a Black woman with short, dark hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a dark purple, textured cardigan over a grey top and a gold necklace with a small pendant. The background is a soft, dark brown.

It will never leave my life.

Michelle Crook fought cancer the best way she knew how – with earrings and mascara. “I know it sounds crazy, but the better I looked, the better I felt.” Since finishing treatment, Michelle has been dedicated to fighting the disease by sharing what she learned with women in her community. “Cancer left my body. It will never leave my life.”

At Bristol-Myers Squibb we believe that the will of the patient, matched by our desire to find breakthrough medicines, can make all the difference.



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Together we can prevail.®

Cancer is a growing concern in public health. One in three people living in Europe will develop cancer in their lifetime, it is the second leading cause of death in Europe and 3.2 million people are diagnosed every year. Europe's ageing population will cause these numbers to increase further. Cancer is not equally distributed in Europe and survival rates differ greatly between and within countries.

With 58,000 diagnoses made in Belgium every year, the fight against cancer has been a priority for the Belgian health minister since 2008, and was one of the top priorities for the 2010 Belgian EU council presidency. A key point of the council conclusions of September 2010 was to make sure that all member states have a cancer plan by 2013.

The Belgian cancer plan was adopted in 2008 as an initiative of the health minister, following an extended consultation of all stakeholders. Some 32 actions were defined in three areas: prevention and screening, treatment and care, and innovation and research. Some highlights of the first plan include payment of consultations for cessation of tobacco use, funding for oncological nurses, psychologists and social workers in hospitals and improved access to psychosocial support. The health ministry and the national insurance for health and disability are responsible for implementing the plan, in collaboration with the federated entities.

A multiannual budget of €380m was allocated for its implementation in 2008-2010, and the majority of actions were accomplished. In 2011 we will focus on continuing the first plan and the next plan will be prepared. One of the actions provided for the establishment of a Belgian cancer centre as a platform for information exchange, to coordinate and unite stakeholders and to prepare the following cancer plans.

A driving force on a political level is of vital importance for development and implementation and to put the cancer issue on the political agenda. Involving all stakeholders from the development stage is also key, and we must identify gaps in cancer care. Discussions with patient organisations led to the identification of several actions in the Belgian cancer plan, such as the need to put patients first, and to improve quality of life for patients and their families. The European partnership for action against cancer, launched by the European commission in September 2009, will be a unique opportunity for the exchange of best practices, sharing information and learning from the national strategies in other member states.

Christiaan Decoster is director general of healthcare facilities at Belgium's federal public service health, food chain safety and environment

help member states “learn from each other and disseminate best practice”, she said, adding, “This has been an excellent initiative, having these discussions. But we can't leave it there – we have to take it further.”

Clair Watts, the director of the European Oncology Nursing Society, said her organisation aimed to promote a healthier future for people affected by cancer. Watts is working to improve conditions for Europe's cancer nurses, their patients and the patients' families as health systems struggle to cope with an ageing population, demographic change and an uncertain economic climate. Because of these challenges, Watts says there has been a move from hospital care to a family-based community environment. With almost 80 per cent of care in the UK provided in the community, she says professionals should brace themselves for “a change in role of healthcare providers, particularly in the role of the nurse”. “If you have a difficult financial environment and money is scarce, you need to have a flexible and highly trained team,” she added.

“The problem at the moment is that people tend to work in isolation”

ALDE deputy Liz Lynne



“We have to help the cancer patients cope with the disease and cope with the treatments”

Clinical psychologist Sofie Eelen

Nataša Hace, an expert consultant for the Slovenian Institute of Public health, set out how the European partnership for action against cancer will be coordinated on a practical level. The partnership, launched in 2009, aims to reduce cancer rates in the EU through health promotion and preventative measures, screening and early diagnosis, among others. She told participants that much was being done to tackle cancer via the partnership, which works via national cancer plans, a steering committee, virtual partnerships and yearly open forums, chaired by Slovenia. “The European partnership for action against cancer brings together a wide





Wendy Tse Yared, director of the Association of European Cancer Leagues and secretariat for MEPs against cancer

range of stakeholders in a common initiative to fight cancer,” she said. “This approach should help avoid scattered actions and duplication, and ensure a better use of resources.”

Clinical psychologist Sofie Eelen used her address to discuss the issue of psychosocial care, which she said could “really improve quality of life for cancer patients”. Eelen, of the Flemish psychosocial oncology institute, at the Cedric Hèle institute in Belgium, highlighted figures showing that more than 30 per cent of cancer sufferers experience high levels of depression.

Patients were confronted with a range of psychological problems after their diagnosis, she said, including coping

The Association of European Cancer Leagues (ECL), the pan-European umbrella organisation connecting national and regional cancer societies around Europe, is a key stakeholder in the European commission’s European partnership for action against cancer. ECL was involved in early discussions and brainstorming which eventually led to the development of the cancer partnership.

As prevention is the key area for all cancer leagues, it was natural that ECL should take upon the coordinating role of the prevention package on health promotion and cancer prevention. ECL’s work on prevention (which runs from 2011 to 2013) aims to raise awareness on cancer prevention, especially among target groups through effective communication and by engaging policymakers at European, national, and subnational level.

Actions will engage ECL cancer leagues and other dedicated partners in the joint effort to raise cancer prevention awareness and to reduce exposure to cancer risk factors, recognising that “prevention offers the most cost-effective long-term strategy for the control of cancer”, and that at least 33 per cent and as much as 40 per cent of all cancers are preventable.

A main component of the prevention work package is to engage ECL and its partners to communicate the European code against cancer messages using as wide a network as possible, and to re-launch the successful European week against cancer which is to take place the last seven days of May each year and will include world no tobacco day on 31 May.

ECL will work with the MEPs against cancer group to forward efforts in cancer prevention and, in line with the overall aims of the EU cancer partnership, to connect politicians at all levels in Europe.

Wendy Tse Yared is director of the Association of European Cancer Leagues

with the physical impact of surgery - such as mastectomies for breast cancer patients. “We have to help the cancer patients cope with the disease and cope with the treatments,” she added. “After-treatment care is also important.” Other psychological difficulties may relate to the effect on partners, family or work, or involve patients questioning their belief system following a diagnosis, said Eelen. It is exactly this fear and uncertainty that necessitates coordinated action and the strongest of political wills at every level of government. As Mikolášik said, “There is a political will among MEPs, but this is not sufficient. We need to have the same level of political will from the European commission.”. ★

The Parliament Magazine’s previous discussions on cancer prevention took place in London, Bratislava and Paris



EU AGENCIES

The way ahead

From Helsinki to Crete and from Lisbon to Vilnius, specialised agencies have been established to provide services, information and know-how to the European Union, its Member States and citizens. At an upcoming exhibition at the European Parliament, the EU agencies will be explaining what they do, why they exist and how they impact on the lives of Europe's 500 million citizens.

European agencies have been set up in successive waves since the mid-1970s and today form an important part of the EU's institutional landscape. 'Today the European agencies play a key role in supporting and implementing EU policies and in responding to needs identified by the EU and its Member States,' says Jukka Takala, Director of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, who currently chairs the network of heads of agencies. 'Agencies are making a strong contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy by performing a variety of legal, technical and scientific tasks across a broad range of policy areas,' he adds.

The purpose of the exhibition at the European Parliament is to raise awareness among MEPs on the role of the agencies within the EU institutional framework and on how agencies are working closely with EP committees. The stand will serve as a focal point for a rich programme of activities grouped under four themes.

Exhibition themes

Health, safety and the environment
Freedom, justice and security
Education, business and innovation for growth and jobs
Transport and satellite infrastructure

Under these themes, the agencies will demonstrate how they: help make Europe a safe, healthy and sustainable place to live and work; work for a free, fair and safe Europe; support the European vision for more jobs, improved lives and a better society; and keep Europe moving around the clock.

Entrusting the agencies with specific tasks has become an established part of the way in which the EU conducts business today. As the European Parliament, Council and Commission work towards a common approach on agencies¹, this exhibition takes stock of how far the agencies have come and how they see the way ahead.

¹ 'European agencies – The way forward', COM (2008) 135 final.



Supported by MEPs Alain Lamassoure (Chair) and Jutta Haug (Vice-Chair) of the Budget Committee and by the Secretary-General of the European Parliament, Klaus Welle. The event is coordinated by the Lisbon-based European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), which currently presides over the agencies' Heads of Communication and Information Network (HCIN).

EXHIBITION

EU AGENCIES The way ahead

European Parliament,
Brussels
ASP building,
3rd floor
31.01.2011–
03.02.2011



Wish EU were here

A more integrated EU approach to supporting Europe's tourism industry was the rallying call at a recent conference in Brussels organised by the **Parliament Magazine**



"The essence of providing high quality, sustainable tourism lies in the cooperation between local and regional authorities and the tourism industry itself"

Mercedes Bresso

Mercedes Bresso, the president of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), who provided the keynote speech at the Parliament Magazine's event on tourism development in south east Europe, backed calls for a more integrated EU approach. She told delegates that a "strong and viable tourism sector" was of "great importance to Europe's regions".

Bresso said that since the entry into force of the Lisbon treaty, tourism had now become an EU policy for the first time. "Tourism is a very important economic sector and the Lisbon treaty has created a new competency to support it," she said. "That support should include a more integrated approach to tourism." The CoR chief said she welcomed the recent European commission communication on tourism, which called for an integrated approach that would see tourism policy mainstreamed into other EU policy areas that had a direct impact on it. However, she also called for more to be done to help the industry innovate and diversify its products and services.

Bresso said, "The CoR is keen to encourage more cooperation and to help develop the exchange of best practices, many of which have been devised at the sub-national level. Local and regional authorities were among the first to realise that, in order to ensure the continuous economic success of tourism, it must be sustainable." Sustainability however could not be achieved without effective cooperation between all of the sector's stakeholders, she added. "The essence of providing high quality, sustainable tourism lies in the cooperation between local and regional authorities and the tourism industry itself." Bresso argued that trans-border cooperation projects such as the network of European regions for a sustainable and competitive European tourism, and the European grouping of territorial cooperation had already proven their worth in helping regions work together on a wide range of projects. "An integrated approach is at the core of the new Europe 2020 strategy, and we know that providing high quality and sustainable tourism requires broad cooperation," she said.

Citing the Camino de Santiago, the collection of ancient pilgrimage routes that crosses a number of Europe's countries and regions, and finishes in northern Spain, Bresso said regional

cooperation had “benefited many more regions than just Galicia”. “This experience in interregional and public-private cooperation is directly applicable to the countries of south eastern Europe,” she added. “This sort of collaboration can only serve to diversify the tourism product and increase quality.”

Bresso’s comments were echoed by several other speakers at the opening session of the conference. Willebrord Sluijters, an advisor to the European commission’s deputy director general for regional policy, said tourism was a, “key driver for local economies”, but that more innovation was needed. Sluijters told participants that tourism was an important and growing sector, particularly for certain regional players. Tourism in Croatia, he said, accounted for 20 per cent of GDP, while Greece relied on the industry for 15 per cent of its GDP. “At European level, tourism is an important sector for south east Europe, and in many ways the region is one of tourism’s heavyweights”. Sluijters agreed that within the Europe 2020 strategy, the potential for growth was strong, saying, “We have to tap into this potential, but we also have to innovate. Innovation is essential. “EU funding for tourism has to be fully integrated into national and regional strategies for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as part of the Europe 2020 strategy. ★



Download a digital copy of the Parliament Magazine’s Tourism in South East Europe special supplement here: <http://www.theparliament.com/magazines/parliament-magazine/>

Open Europe

Europe is finally waking up and exploring the opportunities an organised, EU-level tourism policy can provide, as participants at the event heard

Brian Simpson, the chair of the European parliament’s transport and tourism committee, spoke about the benefits of cross-border cooperation. He said that since the last south east Europe tourism conference in December 2009, it has become clearer how the new EU competences are “taking shape and boosting the profile of tourism policy at European level”.

The European parliament wants to see better use of the structural funds in promoting “sustainable economic development, and natural and cultural heritage protection”, according to veteran MEP Brian Simpson. Simpson, told participants at the Parliament Magazine’s recent event on tourism in south east Europe that MEPs also wanted to see a “dedicated budget line” created to this end. It has become clearer how the new EU competences are “taking shape and boosting the profile of tourism policy at European level” since the last event of this kind, he told attendees, adding that the “tourism statistics regulation”, on which he is rapporteur, would allow the EU to base its strategy on “relevant and comparable data”. →



“At European level, tourism is an important sector for south east Europe, and in many ways the region is one of tourism’s heavyweights”

Willebrord Sluijters

“The economic benefits of tourism are a strong driving force in pushing forward the EU agenda on developing a strong and integrated EU tourism policy”
Brian Simpson



The Socialist deputy added that the big challenge identified in the commission's recent tourism communication was how to “maintain and enhance the attractiveness of Europe as a destination” for EU and third country travellers. “Europe is currently the world's number one tourist destination,” he said. Simpson stressed that while many countries in south east Europe are not EU member states, their proximity to the EU and the many benefits they can gain from the attractiveness of Europe as a tourist destination “make the EU's new tourism strategy just as relevant for them”. He said, “With tourism activity mainly concentrated in the traditional destinations in the western and southern Mediterranean, it is clearly in Europe's interest to explore and promote as widely as possible, new destinations that can offer tourists something different and keep them visiting the continent.”

And highlighting the undiscovered nature of many south east European destinations, he spoke of great potential for the region to promote its “beauty, history and culture”. Simpson added, “The economic benefits of tourism are a strong driving force in pushing forward the EU agenda on developing a strong and integrated EU tourism policy.” He also argued that developing tourism could help to reduce inequalities between the regions of south east Europe, and warned against concen-

trating the strategy around capital cities. The “emphasis has to be on diversity”, said the MEP.

He also used the discussion to voice his support for the promotion of Europe's “industrial and transport heritage”, calling for this sector to be fully exploited, and said that the TEN-T policy and creation of sustainable transport links are “crucial to attracting visitors to certain regions”. He then warned that 58 border crossings in south east Europe “continue to fragment travel”, and that this, along with visa requirements, “is one of the prime obstacles to tourism in the region”. ★

Sun, sea, sustainability

One session looked at the need for sustainable tourism to take holidaymakers, the environment, residents and the provide into consideration

Opening one of the sessions on sustainable tourism, at the Parliament Magazine's tourism in south east Europe conference, European commission regional policy officer Alan Vella, said, “Before the Lisbon treaty there was no direct competence on tourism.” He added, “Tourism is not just a catchphrase, it goes beyond modern development.” Promoting tourism, he said, “is key for sustainability, and we can do that through the encouragement of a favourable environment and promoting cooperation between member states”. Generating more than five per cent of European GDP, tourism is a key sector in the European economy said Vella, who insisted that “we must work together for the future of European tourism”.

Looking at the challenges facing sustainable tourism, Vella highlighted integrated tourism planning, combating the density of tourists, addressing the impact of tourism transport and combating climate change as key areas. He said he believed that action needed to be taken to strengthen cooperation between the main emerging and Mediterranean countries to promote tourism and “consolidation of the EU brand”. This would increase funding opportunities and increase the potential for funding, along with stimulating competition, promoting the development of sustainable, responsible and high quality tourism, and consolidating the image and profile of Europe.

For another key speaker, Malcolm Bell, sustainable tourism could be described as “managing tourism with no limits placed upon us”. As head of tourism for VisitCornwall, Bell highlighted the principles of sustainable tourism as “visitors, environment, residents and businesses,” asking, “If you don't measure it, how do you manage it? The steam train and railway brought tourism to Cornwall,” and since then it has accounted

The event was closed by Italian MEP Carlo Fidanza who believes tourism can help kick-start the EU's ailing economy. The EPP deputy pointed out that, currently, two million businesses and 9.7 million jobs depend on the tourism industry in Europe. Fidanza, who is parliament's rapporteur for tourism strategy, told participants, "A new strategy on tourism must consider tourism as a policy area on its own." He says that major international events in the next two years, including the 2012 London Olympics and Universal exposition in Milan in 2015, can help boost Europe's tourism potential.

Fidanza, a keynote speaker at the conference, said, "I strongly believe it is crucial to set priorities and expectations in this field, especially through the exchange of best practice." He says the parliamentary report on tourism he is drafting will "bring added value" to the debate and will propose "concrete and precise" projects and measures to develop tourism. "This is only the start of a long path towards a new political strategy for tourism," he said.



for 25 per cent of jobs in the region. "Everybody has an opinion on tourism, usually not based on that many facts," Bell said. "It is about optimum, not maximum, better, not bigger, long term, not short term...If you manage it you end up with a tourism you want," Bell concluded.

President of the camping association of Serbia, Vladimir Djumic, outlined the importance of camping in European

tourism, "Camping is more than travelling, it is the future." He went to explain that the camping sector accounts for 25 per cent of all European tourism and brings in €3bn a year. Camping opens up a "hidden and untouched treasure" and Djumic hopes to extend the market to South East Europe, particularly Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia Herzegovina), Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro. ★



"Before the Lisbon treaty there was no direct competence on tourism"

Alan Vella



"Everybody has an opinion on tourism, usually not based on that many facts"

Malcolm Bell



"Camping is more than travelling, it is the future"

Vladimir Djumic

Counting the cost

One year on from the devastating earthquake, **Catherine Ashton, Kristalina Georgieva** and **Andris Piebalgs** are urging the Haitian authorities to waste no time in getting a new government up and running

Of all disasters that pummeled the world in 2010, the Haiti earthquake created the wound that remains hardest to heal. Today, a year after the second most destructive earthquake in recorded history, the scars are still fresh. Just a few months after the earthquake, other disasters followed: hurricane Tomas, the cholera epidemic and, most recently, political volatility.

These tragedies struck a country which was already one of the poorest in the western hemisphere. A country where most people

relied on foreign aid for their daily staple; the health system was underdeveloped, the road system inadequate and the country marked by years of weak governance. Thus, a humanitarian situation that was already difficult before the earthquake, became immensely more complicated afterwards.

Because of those factors, the international assistance to Haiti had to be delivered in a context of many logistical, infrastructural, social and political challenges. But compared to other disasters that have to contend with similar challenges, Haiti was unique in terms of the complexity of the post-earthquake constraints. The capital was destroyed, the infrastructure was devastated, and the government and humanitarian agencies on the ground lost a lot of staff, resources and facilities.

Today, we are very concerned by the political and civil unrest which could worsen the situation, preventing EU and other aid from reaching people in need and making the reconstruction process slower and more complex. We urge Haitian authorities to restore calm and quickly set up a recognised and better functioning government. The new government should work in an effective and legitimate manner, taking its place at the wheel of recovery and offering a robust set of plans and solutions to the many problems which made Haiti's population so vulnerable in the first place.

The EU had been helping Haitians for years before the earthquake of January 12 2010. When the disaster struck, we took action by providing immediate humanitarian assistance, working together as the EU to forge a long-term strategic approach in close cooperation with other donors.

MEPs are urging the EU to step up its disaster response capacity as events take place to mark the one year anniversary of the devastating Haiti earthquake. Speaking during a debate on Haiti in the Strasbourg plenary last week, European humanitarian aid commissioner Kristalina Georgieva said that the EU would provide an additional €33m to support reconstruction efforts in the country. She told MEPs that the EU had pledged more than €320m last year, €130m of which had come from the European commission. "These funds allowed us to touch the lives of more than four million Haitians through food assistance, sanitation and shelter," she said. She added, "We stand ready to provide more, if more help is necessary. For 2011 our priorities will be housing, sanitation and healthcare."

British ECR deputy and vice-chair of the development committee Nirj Deva highlighted figures showing that there are almost one million homeless in people Haiti. He added that 230,000 people have died and 300,000 injured, but only five per cent of the rubble has been cleared. Referring to the political instability in the country, he said, "If the government of Haiti doesn't care about their own people then we have to use the concept of responsibility to protect [the people]. "Until and unless we do that it is quite absurd for us to ask our commissioners to tell us what they can and cannot do when the local capacity to do anything is so fraught and fragile."

The debate came as parliament approved a resolution calling for a European civil protection force to be set up and funding increased for humanitarian aid in disaster-hit countries. The resolution, drafted by French EPP deputy Michèle Striffler and debated during the Strasbourg plenary, also criticises the "politicisation of humanitarian aid", with national interests determining where assistance is provided. MEPs argue that natural disasters such as the Haiti earthquake highlight the need for greater EU humanitarian aid capability.



Ever since, we have kept our original promise. During the international donors' conference last March, the European commission and member states jointly committed €1.2bn over the next three years to support coordinated relief and recovery actions. Out of this pledge, around €780m has already been converted into action on the ground and improved conditions for Haitians by providing food, shelter, medical help, road reconstruction, schools reopening, and maintaining the capacity of the Haitian state to deliver basic social services. We helped to prevent a total collapse of the state.

Our response has been shaped by several ambitions, on which we plan to build. In the emergency phase, we have ensured coordinated efforts in healthcare and the provision of shelter, water and food – both within the EU, and with other international partners. We have been working constructively with the local population, governments, the military, aid agencies and NGOs, to make sure that the overall response is as good as possible in these difficult circumstances. Meanwhile, we have strived to combine relief with recovery – for instance by using cash as a major form of assistance, which has allowed for the local population to be active in the response, and ensures a long-term perspective on restoring livelihoods. This has also limited the usual side effects of disasters: disease and malnutrition.

Clean water remains a top priority as the cholera epidemic underlines. That is why, so far, the commission has mobilised an additional €22m to support aid workers on the ground and provide access to clean water to more than 500 thousand people, safe latrines for five million people and promoting better hygiene

practices to a million Haitians. As a result, the number of new cholera cases and deaths has started to decrease two months after the epidemic started, until the riots of mid-December.

But surviving the earthquake and cholera is only the beginning. However generous and sustained our aid has been, it cannot deliver miracles. A huge amount remains to be done. Too many people still live in camps. This does not mean that our efforts have been feeble, or that the money of our taxpayers and the work of our experts have been wasted. On the contrary, our action as the EU has prevented the total collapse of the country by keeping schools and hospitals open, maintaining agricultural production and economic activities, and enabling people to move across the country.

The tasks we have had in the past year are as daunting as the task ahead of us – to enable Haiti to embark on a long-term path to sustainable development. Our vision has been to help Haitian authorities to rebuild a country almost “from scratch”. The respect of a fair, calm and transparent electoral process and the creation of a well-functioning and legitimate government are crucial. The international community has stood firm in its solidarity with Haitians; we in the EU are convinced that those who helped in the past year will help again. The alternative – that Haiti enters another protracted cycle of despair, misery and instability – is simply unacceptable. ★

“Our action as the EU has prevented the total collapse of the country”

Catherine Ashton is a European commission vice-president and high representative of the union for foreign affairs and security policy

Andris Piebalgs is European commissioner for development

Kristalina Georgieva is European commissioner for international cooperation, humanitarian aid and crisis response



Catherine Ashton, Kristalina Georgieva and Andris Piebalgs are committed to ensuring that Haiti doesn't enter yet another cycle of despair, misery and instability

A matter of urgency

Haiti highlighted the need for the EU to boost its disaster response capacity through a European civil protection force, argues **Michèle Striffler**

One year on from the earthquake that ravaged Haiti on 12 January 2010, the situation remains chaotic, with the country still in a state of emergency and most reconstruction work barely begun.

As first vice-chair of the European parliament's development committee and permanent rapporteur for humanitarian aid, I recently visited Haiti, and condemn the paralysis that has overcome the reconstruction process, caused by the structural deficiencies of Haiti's government, the absence of political will and the decisions made by the Haitian authorities, combined with the lack of support from the international community.

However, there should be praise for the efforts made and work carried out by humanitarian organisations, such as the Red Cross, NGOs, United Nations, and member states. There should also be particular emphasis on the need for communication about the non-visible effects of humanitarian intervention and the fact that the situation could have been managed by looking after the injured, providing drinking water and food and temporary shelter.

The cholera epidemic once again highlighted the almost complete failure of the Haitian government when faced with a condition that is easy to prevent and treat, and the limitations of the international aid system in a country benefiting from a massive humanitarian operation of around 12,000 NGOs.

Humanitarian intervention cannot continue to compensate for the weaknesses in the Haitian government, and long-term development measures are now a matter of urgency.

Furthermore, it is regrettable that the interim Haiti reconstruction committee began work late and is worried about how effective it will be while faced with such an enormous task. Virtually no funds have been released to clear up the rubble. At the current rate, it would take six years to remove 20 million cubic metres of rubble, a vital step towards the reconstruction. The EU must do everything in its power to provide robust support for a legitimate, transparent electoral process to guarantee the political stability and will that reconstruction demands.

The international community and the EU must support future Haitian governments in the organisation of their institutions to achieve a new equilibrium at all levels, to achieve a fully operational democracy that will endure through the reconstruction process. The recent tragedies in Haiti and Pakistan have demonstrated the need to reinforce the tools at the EU's disposal to deal with catastrophes – humanitarian aid and community civil protection mechanisms – in terms of effectiveness, speed, coordination and visibility. These disasters have once again highlighted the importance of creating sufficient European rapid reaction resources.

In my report on the implementation of the European consensus on humanitarian aid, which was adopted during the Strasbourg plenary session last week, I asked the commission to put forward ambitious legislative proposals to establish a European civil protection force based on optimising the community's current civil protection mechanism and the pooling of existing national resources. This would then avoid significant additional costs and take inspiration from the methods that have been tried and tested as part of preparatory measures.

The European civil protection force could involve a commitment from some member states to offer the essential elements of civil protection, determined in advance and ready to be mobilised immediately for the Union's activities coordinated by the monitoring and information centre. Most of these elements, already available nationally, will remain under their control, and their deployment as a stand-by measure would form the core of the Union's civil protection strategy to react to disasters beyond and within its borders. ★

Michèle Striffler is a vice-chair of parliament's development committee



Michèle Striffler surveys the humanitarian aid operation at first hand during a recent visit to Haiti

A source of reliable information

www.dodspeople.eu



Name: Cecilia Malmström
Role: Commissioner for Home Affairs

Biography: [Swedish Minister for EU Affairs 2006-10,](#)
[MEP 1999-2006](#)

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Moving on?

A year after the earthquake in Haiti, leading NGOs look at the progress made and the objectives yet to be completed in the disaster relief campaign

Caroline Kroeker-Falconi, Senior policy advisor of World Vision EU liaison office

Haiti is seen as the ultimate test of post-Lisbon EU effectiveness in foreign relations and development. However, the real test will be the ownership of Haitians over their future. We welcome the commitment by all institutional leaders to address this complex disaster, and furthermore to Haiti's long term reconstruction. Echo distributed food, water, and other essentials. Budget support enabled the functioning of Haitian institutions, critical for basic services, such as health and justice. Coordination with the Haitian government built on the partnership emerging in the past four years on roads and food security, among others. Collaboration among EU member states shows promise.

But development is meant to be for and by citizens. They should hold the donors and government accountable. In Haiti, they ask for concrete participation in decision making, beyond mere elections, to influence broad strategies and the management of local services. Haiti has vibrant civil society organisation (CSO) with renowned resilience. The Haitians' view of the international community is quite negative.

"Haiti can overcome its vicious cycle of misery, natural, political and humanitarian disasters. But this is only possible if national actors gather the populations' aspirations, before reaching consensus on priorities with foreign partners. It is imperative to strengthen civil society and the effectiveness and accountability of central and local governance," said Haitian community leader John Charles.

The EU has a commitment to CSO participation and aid effectiveness. This is essential for sustainable change. But the implementation still needs dramatic improvement, concerted attention, better timing and communication, broader representation and inclusion, incentives and also funding. The commission will hold a consultation with Haitian civil society in the coming weeks. It is crucial that this consultation be representative, and genuinely influence strategies, funding and governance mechanisms. More steps of participation must follow. Let us enable Haitians to take the reins of their future.



Inge Brees, Advocacy and communication officer for Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (Voice)

When the quake hit, the EU had just embarked on the new institutional arrangements of the Lisbon treaty, which left the EU in a state of improvisation concerning its overall response. However, the commission's humanitarian aid directorate (DG Echo) quickly responded by making funds available. Moreover, since Haiti, civil protection has been integrated into DG Echo, leading to better coordination between member states and to better complementarity with humanitarian aid, as we have already seen in Pakistan. The Haiti experience also showed that more measures are needed to ensure good humanitarian coordination and leadership by the UN in disasters of this scale, including in the cluster system.

The low impact of hurricane Tomas demonstrated that disaster risk reduction was integrated relatively well into the earthquake response. However, more can be done to ensure mainstreaming of earthquake risk mitigation measures into humanitarian and recovery efforts, despite the fact this remains the key risk in the region. The cholera outbreak remains challenging but every effort should be made to ensure it does not detract from the move towards reconstruction. It remains



A man walks past the rubble of buildings destroyed by the earthquake in Port-au-Prince

agency to lead the process.

In its recent communication “Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance”, the commission proposes better, faster, and more efficient EU response to disasters. The IFRC and EU National Red Cross Societies welcome all initiatives that aim to improve the effectiveness and coherence of humanitarian response and coordination. However, care needs to be taken to avoid duplication of activities. Large scale infrastructural projects are one area where the EU could provide valuable support to humanitarian agencies. In Haiti rubble removal is a major obstacle to reconstruction and perhaps an area where the EU can make a major contribution.

Additionally, reducing the level of risk that communities are exposed to is paramount in a country as vulnerable to natural disasters as Haiti. In major emergencies local communities are the ones who are best placed to provide immediate response. The IFRC and EU National Red Cross Societies strongly advocate for EU policies which invest in building local capacities to mitigate the impact of disasters and reduce vulnerabilities.

Natalia Alonso, Head of the Plan EU liaison office in Brussels

When a humanitarian disaster strikes, the EU’s response must be swift and sufficient to be effective. And, crucially, it must benefit those that need it most. In any disaster, children are among those most affected, and taking into account their needs is central to a country’s long-term recovery. Just over a year ago, the Haitian earthquake brought the country to its knees. Children were some of the hardest hit: many were orphaned or separated from their parents, schools were destroyed, clean water and sanitation was lacking and camp violence was rife.

The financial commitments made by the European commission and EU member states in the wake of the disaster were significant, but this was only the start of a very long and difficult process – a process which children must be part of. When decisions were being taken about Haiti’s future, children were not given a chance to be heard. To be effective, the EU should develop a humanitarian response strategy which puts children’s needs at its core. In partnership with Unicef, Plan carried out a post-disaster needs assessment with over 1000 youngsters in Haiti and, drawing on almost 40 years of in-country experience, we have been working closely with the country’s youth, rebuilding schools, creating child-friendly spaces and providing psycho-social support.

One year after the earthquake, progress is slow, but sure. It’s important to remember that spending funds wisely is preferable to spending funds in haste – recovering from major disasters is complex and requires time and patience. Haiti is a nation which finds itself at a crossroads. But as it struggles to pick a path out of the rubble, all those involved in its reconstruction must remember that children are the heart of Haiti’s future. ★

important that context-appropriate funding is maintained after Haiti slips from the headlines – this includes the EU funding continuing humanitarian needs as well as development and reconstruction efforts.

One year later, European humanitarian NGOs still play a fundamental role in meeting basic needs in Haiti. However, NGOs cannot be expected to plug the massive gap in national capacity when faced with such a mega disaster. Strengthening the governmental institutions is now essential to move things forward.

Goli Ameri, Undersecretary general for humanitarian diplomacy at the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

A year after the devastating earthquake in Haiti the world mourns the many victims while the recovery effort continues to address the tremendous needs of the survivors. Much has been achieved but complex challenges remain, key among these being shelter. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and EU National Red Cross Societies call for the next Haitian government to appoint a single minister responsible for rehousing and designate a single



Vision for the future

Early diagnosis and treatment could prevent all cases of blindness caused by diabetes and should be the norm, writes **Simon Busuttil**

Who in their mid-20s can imagine having to suddenly depend on parents again, asking them to read out personal mobile phone messages and letters, because they are unable to decipher them otherwise? And this at a time when friends are finishing their university education and embarking on a career. Sounds like a nightmare?

This nightmare sadly became true a few years ago for Kate Hirst from Edinburgh, a person living with type one diabetes since the age of five. With even mundane tasks becoming a challenge, she became introverted, tearful and depressed. Although Kate was lucky, as surgery in time helped her to regain at least some of the vision she lost, such nightmares could possibly be prevented altogether, if diagnosed and treated early.

Kate spoke about her personal experience at a debate on diabetes and blindness that I hosted in my capacity as co-chair of the EU working group on diabetes together with the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) Europe. In line with EU health commissioner John Dalli's plea for greater European investment in prevention, our debate sought to assess the changes needed to save people like Kate from such experiences.

Diabetes currently affects 55 million citizens in the EU between the age of 20 and 79, and will rise to 66 million by 2030. An additional 66 million adults in the EU suffer from pre-diabetes. Incredibly, half of these people are undiagnosed. This puts them at great risk of developing eye complications, such as diabetic retinopathy and diabetic macular edema (DME), the latter being the main cause of visual impairment in diabetes patients. The global prevalence of DME in diabetes patients is estimated to lie between one and three per cent.

Besides the tremendous impact on patients, vision loss among diabetes patients also causes considerable costs to society. The

direct annual cost per patient with diabetes and DME is approximately twice as high – €31,000 versus €15,000 – as those associated with diabetes alone, which is mainly attributable to outpatient visits, inpatient care, nursing care and pharmacological therapy. In addition, there are considerable direct non-medical costs related to home adaptation or the requirement of assistance with daily tasks – 11,500 per patient per annum.

Such testimonials from people living with diabetes, as well as the economic costs, become all the more impressive when one realises that the risk of visual impairment or loss due to diabetes can be halved provided the disease is diagnosed early and treated in time. This is what associate professor ophthalmologist and IDF Europe board member Şehnaz Karadeniz told us in her presentation during the debate. For Karadeniz, it is imperative that people living with diabetes undergo periodic eye examinations to enable a timely diagnosis and treatment of diabetic retinopathy. Good practice examples exist. Thanks to successful national diabetic eye screening in Iceland, visual deterioration was limited, and zero diabetic patients became legally blind.

Sadly, such good screening and treatment practice is rare, as IDF Europe board member and UK GP Niti Pall, pointed out. Information on the necessity of regular eye tests among diabetes patients needs to be provided not only to the patients and their families, but also to medical professionals across all disciplines who need to receive proper training on this subject.

The commission, with its strong mandate on prevention, has a key role to play in this process by facilitating good practice on eye screening among people living with diabetes. It will surely find the EU working group on diabetes an active partner in this process. ★

“Diabetes currently affects 55 million citizens in the EU between the age of 20 and 79, and will rise to 66 million by 2030”

Simon Busuttil is co-chair of parliament's EU diabetes working group

Fair's fair

Bill Newton Dunn is calling for EU-wide legislation on fairground safety

In the seven years to 2008, the UK's health and safety commission recorded 11 deaths and more than 1300 non-fatal injuries involving members of the public visiting fairgrounds and fairground workers. These accidents happened despite an industry-regulated scheme known as the amusement device inspection procedures scheme, introduced after the deaths of two adults and three children in fairground accidents in 2000.

Assuming all member states have at least as good a safety record as the UK – and we know that many are worse – then we are looking at around 150 deaths and 17,000 injuries over a 10-year period, across the EU as a whole. Fatalities and injuries at this level would be completely unacceptable in most industrial sectors, but here the problems are hidden by the fragmentary and itinerant nature of the industry. The notion that fairgrounds are best left to member state supervision is undermined by the high-levels of both cross-border consumption – with holidaymakers seeing a visit to a fair or amusement park an integral part of many family vacations – the number of foreign workers involved in the industry, and the fact that the fairground rides travel across the borders of member states in many cases. Hence EU-wide legislation is the only viable option. However, the commission has refused so far to include fairground equipment within the scope of the machinery directive.

Fairground safety comprises two elements: the first is the design of the equipment, the second its installation, maintenance, inspection and operation. In 1991, the European commission did propose a specific directive related to the design of fairground equipment, but this was rejected by the European council in December 1992 in the belief that the matter was best left to individual member states. After this regulatory failure, the commission issued a request to the European standardisation organisations, asking them to develop a common basis for the safe design and assessment of fairground equipment. In response, the European committee for standardisation developed and published two European standards. Although the installation, maintenance, inspection and operation of fairground equipment could be said to fall under the 2009 directive on the use of equipment by workers, it sets only minimum health and safety requirements and does

not aim at the full harmonisation of health and safety requirements across member states.

The commission excluded fairground machinery when it revised the machinery directive in 2006. Despite strong lobbying from organisations such as consumer group Anec, fairground machinery was excluded due to the claim that the directive was not intended to cover entertainment-related machinery, which would be dealt with separately and later. But the commission guide of June 2010 confirms that some entertainment-related machinery – such as off-road quad bikes and go karts – does indeed fall under the revised directive. Surely, if the commission intends to uphold its commitment, it should look to include all entertainment-related machinery, including fairground machinery, within the scope of the directive, rather than leaving it neglected and unregulated.

To continue to omit fairground and amusement parks from EU-wide legislation leaves the public and fairground workforce facing risks that would be considered unacceptable in

most consumer sectors and too high to be tolerated in terms of health and safety in any other workplace. Anec is right in its claim that the commission is failing the community. ★

Bill Newton Dunn is a member of parliament's environment, public health and food safety committee

"We are looking at around 150 deaths and 17,000 [fairground-related] injuries over a 10-year period"



Clear as mud

While the EU is making improvements there needs to be a full-blooded commitment to transparency in Europe, argues **Paul de Clerck**

In early December, during a snowy outdoor ceremony in Brussels, RWE (npower), Goldman Sachs, and the International Swaps and Derivatives Association (ISDA) were given the dubious honour of being named the worst EU lobbyists of 2010 – the results of the climate and finance categories of the Worst EU Lobbying Awards 2010.

Citizens across Europe participated in an online public vote for the most deserving of the climate and finance nominees. They also sent a clear message to EU interinstitutional relations and administration commissioner Maroš Šefčovič, that a major clean-up of the Brussels lobbying scene is urgently needed, and that the European commission must put public interest above the commercial interests of large companies.

At the time, the ISDA offices, and the director of RWE's Brussels office – who accepted the award – were given a good scrubbing. But, lobbying in Brussels is far from clean. German

energy giant RWE soon demonstrated their eligibility for the award during Cancún. RWE's chief economist and energy policy vice-director commented that "Climate protection at any cost does not make sense: it has to be efficient," promoting the clean development mechanism (CDM) as an effective way for European companies to deal with the challenge of CO2 emissions cuts. In reality, the CDM allows European companies and business to continue polluting by buying international offsetting credits.

Big business lobbyists have been successful in promoting false solutions, such as the expansion of carbon markets and offsetting, among EU decision makers thereby delaying the necessary domestic emissions cuts of at least 40 per cent that the EU must make to avoid climate chaos. The weak climate agreement that followed in Cancún – though hailed as a step forward by many – is symptomatic of the disproportionate influence industry groups have in the EU, and why lobby cleaner, the 2010 awards' mascot, was so busy cleaning deceptive lobbying at the end of last year.

Investment bank Goldman Sachs and ISDA, the winners of the finance category of the Worst EU Lobbying Awards 2010, soon followed suit. Both organisations were nominated for their aggressive lobbying to defend their financial weapons of mass destruction, namely derivatives. They contributed massively to the damage done to the real economy and have steered a clear path away from much needed regulation. Recently asked about transparency, ISDA's chief executive officer Conrad Voldstad and executive vice chairman Robert Pickel declared, "We need to keep in mind that there is a clear trade-off between transparency and liquidity." There should never be any compromise when it comes to transparency.

Climate and finance are two of the many test cases for the EU's consistency in its transparency standards. Europe's leaders must stop listening just to big business, and prevent businesses from imposing their for-profit agendas. More balanced policy making at the service of public interests and the environment can start in 2011 with the introduction of a mandatory lobbying register in the EU, including tight transparency requirements. In June, the European commission and parliament are expected to unveil their new joint register of lobbyists. Although a step in the right direction, the register will remain non-legally binding, only making registration conditional to get access passes to the parliament.

The EU can provide its citizens with the leadership needed in key policy areas such as climate and finance – but full transparency is essential. It will take more than a one off clean-up for lobbying in Brussels, but the lobby cleaner is determined to keep up the good work. The Worst EU Lobbying Awards 2010 were organised by Friends of the Earth Europe, Corporate Europe Observatory, LobbyControl, and Spinwatch. ★

Paul de Clerck is coordinator of Friends of the Earth Europe's economic justice programme



"A major clean-up of the Brussels lobbying scene is urgently needed"

For more information visit: <http://www.worstlobby.eu>



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AIMS OF THE PROJECT:

- To enhance quality and relevance of higher education in engineering area in partner countries
- To reach the integration of partner country universities into the European university system by international accreditation of engineering studies.

ACTIVITIES:

- Three Consortium meetings with seminars:
- 2009, April 2-5, Belgrade, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering
- 2010, April 26-30, Munich TUM and Karlsruhe KIT
- 2010, June 15-17, Cairo GUC
- Seminar of German Rectors' Conference, HRK. International Quality Assurance Networks in Higher Education 29-30 October 2009 in Belgrade, Serbia, hosted by the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance Republic of Serbia.
- Two certificates of international accreditation already approved:
 - University of Belgrade, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering for the study program in Naval Architecture Engineering (MSc level), by The Royal Institution of Naval Architects, London, UK
 - German University in Cairo for the study program Engineering and Materials Science (BSc and MSc levels), by ACQUIN, Germany
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Root causes

Despite being the largest overseas aid donor, the EU must work harder if it is to meet its development targets, writes **Edit Bauer**

New year, new start? For some, yes. Others will not be so lucky – something I was reminded of on a recent field visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo. During the last joint parliamentary assembly between the European parliament and African, Caribbean and Pacific parliaments and on the occasion of world aids day, a small group of MEPs and their assistants visited a centre providing basic care to improve the health of girls and young women living on the streets of Kinshasa. According to surveys there are some 20,000 children living on the streets of the capital. In reality, this number is most probably much higher. In a country where only 12 per cent of those living with HIV receive the anti-retroviral therapy they desperately need, the centre also works to prevent the spread of the virus through education and contraception. Visiting the centre we really saw the desperation local communities face, but seeing the motivation of the people to change their situation, we left the centre with a feeling of hope.

The visit, organised by Action for Global Health, was a reminder of just how important the EU's role is in improving the health of millions of people throughout the world. The EU currently stands as the single largest donor of overseas development aid, of which we can be proud. But we are still lagging behind

our targets and, with budgets facing sweeping cuts and overseas development aid being scaled back in many member states, it can have painful consequences for people in need. During the visit, we had a feeling that we should rethink how to make aid more effective, so that it benefits those that need it most. The temptation to copy the way of European development is probably not the most successful one. To boost the consumption without proper production could lead to hell.

The European commission is currently undergoing a review of its development policies, with communications on budget support, inclusive growth and sustainable development, and funding for the EU's external action post-2013, expected this spring. The strong focus on economic growth could conclude in undervaluing the support of social sectors, including that of health. This is risky. After all, economic growth will not be created by unhealthy populations. Following the Lisbon treaty, poverty eradication is the main objective of the EU's development cooperation and policies, and the bloc's policies in areas such as trade, agriculture and foreign policy must be consistent with its development objectives. Let's not give with one hand and take with the other.

Lack of access to adequate and affordable healthcare is one of the key symptoms of poverty, and the commission should invest in health as a priority. My experience from the DRC shows just how weak healthcare systems can be in developing countries. In the DRC, which is one of the wealthiest countries according to the richness of natural resources, for example, there is only one doctor per 17,746 citizens and government spending on healthcare is minimal – in 2008 the government spent only €1.10 per year on the health of each citizen. Strong, well funded healthcare systems which are accessible by all and free at the point of use are fundamental to sustainable development. High maternal mortality is not acceptable in the 21st century. As many as one in 30 girls aged 15 years old are likely to die due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Under these hard conditions some NGOs and foundations perform valuable work, but they are not able to fulfil the tasks of an organised healthcare system.

If the EU's development policies are to prove successful in the long-term, they must address the causes of poverty, not just alleviate the symptoms. This means tackling inequality and discrimination, empowering and enabling local communities to realise their rights. This also means strengthening the synergy between EU policy and domestic policy, as well as better and wider education, so marginalised or vulnerable groups do not face stigmatisation. Our common and shared responsibility to achieve this is without question. ★

Action for Global Health is calling on Europe to fulfil its commitments towards the millennium development goals and ensure the right to health becomes a reality for all. The network's "Health Heroes" campaign, launched at the MDG review summit in September, profiles the stories of the people who are dedicated to improving the health and lives of their local communities, from 13 year old Samnang in Cambodia to 88 year old Dr María Isabel Rodríguez, El Salvador's minister of public health. Find out more about the campaign and nominate a health hero at www.healthheroes.eu

Edit Bauer is a member of parliament's delegation to the ACP-EU joint parliamentary assembly



"We should rethink how to make aid more effective, so that it benefits those that need it most"

A viable alternative?

Shale gas provides an opportunity for energy diversification and security, writes **Bogdan Marcinkiewicz**

Not so long ago in history, natural gas was one of the world's basic sources of energy. However, in the 1980s its deposits started to run low, the world turned its attention to so-called unconventional, alternative sources of this raw material. One such source is shale gas. First prospection and exploration of the possibility of shale gas production began in the 1990s in the United States. Today, we can say that there is real growth for unconventional gas in the world.

It is estimated that alternative gas resources in the world exceed conventional ones by as much as 10 times. In truth, it is hard to determine precisely how much gas can be extracted from shale rock. Research and production is conducted on an industrial scale only in the United States. Experts forecast that soon 60 per cent of US domestic gas production will come from unconventional sources. In the rest of the world this activity is still in its infancy. In Europe, first drilling was conducted in 2009 even though initial exploration works showed the great potential of such sources.

Exploratory work in Europe has been conducted by American companies in cooperation with European partners. This is perfectly understandable due to the former's lengthy experience and proven application of technology. Initial results show that Germany, Poland, Romania and Turkey are countries with the greatest shale gas deposits. That said, we will need to wait a few years for more detailed and precise results. Nonetheless, estimates of the resources in Poland indicate an amount between 1400 and 3000 billion cubic metres of gas. If it is indeed this great, this would cover Polish energy demand for many decades.

What do these estimates mean for gas supply security and diversification in the European Union? As noted above, the greatest deposits are within the territory of EU member states, except for Turkey, which cooperates closely with the EU and

has declared a readiness to join the Union. Industrial use of shale gas resources may have a positive influence on the security of gas supplies to the EU. Moreover it would stimulate the development of infrastructure within all member states, while at the same time facilitating access to that energy source while also contributing to development of the gas network and reverse flow junctions. It would bring real independence from the third country supplies for the EU. One of the most important consequences would be to lower the price of gas. Here again the US can serve as an example. Since shale gas production started, US natural gas prices have dropped by 25 per cent. Currently, American companies are preparing to export liquefied natural gas (LNG) produced using shale gas. Certainly, investment in shale gas exploration – very deep drilling, hydraulic fracturing – requires a lot of capital, but the example of the US shows that the game is at least worth trying. And if the costs turn out to be too high, then maybe a good solution will prove to be supplies of cheap LNG produced in the US from their shale gas.

Is shale gas an opportunity for Europe? I am totally convinced of that, yes. Taking into consideration the decreasing energy resources in the EU, and also the effect of the last energy crisis on the European economy, we can undoubtedly state that at the present time this is potentially the most promising solution for the whole Union. ★

"It is estimated that alternative gas resources in the world exceed conventional ones by as much as 10 times"

Bogdan Marcinkiewicz is a member of parliament's industry, research and energy committee

Orbán backs down over controversial Hungarian media law

Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán told MEPs last week that he is “happy” to amend the country’s controversial media law. Addressing parliament during a stormy plenary session in Strasbourg, the under-fire PM attempted to face off severe criticism of the new legislation. The law greatly expands the state’s power to monitor and penalise private news outlets but there are concerns it will be used against media critical of the Hungarian government. Orbán, who was officially in parliament to outline Hungary’s EU council presidency programme, spent much of his time defending his country. He described the criticism as a “slap in the face” for Hungary. He said, “I realise this law has been subject to criticism but I do not see this as a matter of prestige or arm wrestling.” He said that he would amend the law if it could be proved that it is incompatible with EU standards. At the start of his speech, Orbán was confronted by a demonstration by some MEPs wearing tape across their mouths and brandishing “censored” banners in protest at the media law. Amid angry scenes, he launched into a blistering attack on Hungary’s critics, telling them, “I would remind you that we lived under dictatorship for 40 years and I will not stand for you contending the democratic aspirations of my people.” Pointing

to S&D leader Martin Schulz, one of his fiercest critics and mentioning the German deputy by name, he said, “You cannot go on wounding and insulting my people in this way. It is very offensive. You accuse us of taking a step towards dictatorship but I will always defend my country and my people.”



MEPs give unanimous backing to EU-wide cross-border healthcare

Parliament has paved the way for landmark new EU-wide legislation allowing people to receive medical treatment in other member states. Rules adopted last week will enable people to have their treatment paid for, or claim back the money if their home country is unable to provide essential medical care. MEPs in Strasbourg unanimously voted in favour of the EU cross-border health directive in a plenary vote. The draft legislation, which has taken several years to come to fruition, creates a legal basis for health cooperation between member states and is expected to come into force within 18 months. However, critics point out that details of how treatment will be authorised and how payments will be made are still to be specified by national governments. One of the areas not laid down in the EU legislation is the way in which payment for treatment abroad would be paid for. Even so, the outcome of the vote was generally welcomed by several MEPs, with parliament’s president Jerzy Buzek leading the way, saying, “Today is a great day for all citizens in Europe who aspire for the best and fastest health care available. “After long and hard negotiations with member states, parliament finally achieved what we were looking for: a solid legal basis for dealing with cross-border healthcare in the EU that was hitherto in a legal grey zone.”



Europe will emerge from economic crisis, says EU president

Herman Van Rompuy told MEPs he is “confident” the EU will eventually emerge from its current economic downturn. The EU council president and former Belgian PM told parliament he believes a “common will” exists to steer the eurozone out of its malaise. Addressing the plenary in Strasbourg, Van Rompuy also defended the latest efforts by the European commission to bolster the struggling single currency and boost growth in the EU economy. He told members that there were signs of economic recovery in some countries, such as France, adding, “I am convinced we are moving in the right direction and that the common will exists for us to succeed. We will come out of the crisis but, to do so, we need to introduce ‘economic governance’ as soon as possible.”



Europe's airports told to introduce bad weather contingencies

European transport commissioner Siim Kallas has ordered Europe's airports to introduce contingency plans to avoid a repeat of the chaos that crippled European air travel transport in December. After a Brussels meeting with 12 airport chiefs, Kallas also warned that EU legislation on the issue was imminent. He said, “We know that winter arrives every year and we should be ready for it. We need to introduce minimum service and quality requirements at European airports for our passengers. Those requirements will form part of the legislative proposals in the airport package due later this year.” A total of 35,000 flights were cancelled in December alone because of freezing temperatures and heavy snow. Kallas said a meeting with representatives from the entire aviation industry, from airports to airlines and ground handling services, would be held in March to discuss how to share risks and responsibilities. The Association of European Airlines said the snow chaos, coupled with strikes and the volcano ash crisis, had stalled the industry's recovery last year.



European parliament voices support for Belarusian opposition

Parliament president Jerzy Buzek has joined other MEPs in expressing “real” concern about the events that took place in Belarus during the country's presidential elections in December 2010. In a statement, the Polish deputy said the arrest and detention of peaceful protesters and alternative presidential candidates should “prompt a rethinking of EU relations with Belarusian authorities.” Buzek voiced particular concern at the detention of journalists, opposition candidates and civil society representatives and urged their immediate release and “full observance of human rights and due process”. He added, “I would like to express our utmost solidarity to the Belarusian people.” Further condemnation came from parliament's S&D group, which said such actions represented a “severe violation of basic democratic principles, such as freedom of assembly, freedom of expression and human rights”. Romanian MEP Adrian Severin, a parliamentary vice-president and S&D foreign affairs spokesman, said, “We urge the Belarusian authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all those detained during election day and in its aftermath.”



New code of ethics for commissioners branded a 'half measure'

A draft ethics code for former EU commissioners has been branded a “half measure” which will not end the “revolving door scandals”. The commission’s new draft code of conduct is designed to address cases where former commissioners



exploit their inside knowledge and contacts by taking up lobbying jobs for industry. But the campaign group, Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation in the EU (Alter-EU), said the draft in its current form would not prevent commissioners from “going through the revolving door” in future. A number of previous commissioners have been criticised following lucrative moves to lobbying jobs and an investigation is still ongoing into the case of former commission vice president Günter Verheugen who now runs his own lobbying consultancy. ALTER-EU’s Paul de Clerck said, “This code will not stop the type of scandals that we saw last autumn, where Verheugen and Charlie McCreevy, another ex-commissioner, took up lobby jobs with companies including RyanAir and the Royal Bank of Scotland.” He called on the European parliament to improve the code in order to “close the loopholes and make sure that all lobby jobs are banned for a period of three years”. As the commission’s new rules “lack any form of safeguard against industry dominance of expert groups, with merely a vague statement mentioning that “commission services shall, as far as possible, ensure a balanced representation”.

Commission to make financial excess in football a ‘top priority’

The European commission has signalled its support for efforts to crack down on financial excess in football. EU commissioner Androulla Vassiliou said action was needed against football clubs that “live beyond their means”. Vassiliou, who is responsible for education and sport, pointed out that, on average, wages for top-flight footballers increased by 10 per cent each year. “Too many clubs are living beyond their means and spending more than they earn,” she said. “This is unsustainable and it is also an important issue for the EU. Under our new powers I see it as a top priority.” Vassiliou was addressing a news conference in Strasbourg to outline the commission’s new competence on a range of sports issues under the Lisbon treaty. Her comments come in the wake of a new report showing more than half of Europe’s top-flight clubs reported a loss in 2009. While total revenue of the 655 top-division teams in Europe climbed to a record €11.7bn, officials from Uefa, European football’s governing body, said that net losses almost doubled to €1.2bn, adding that there was “massive” spending on player wages. Uefa says that loss-making clubs would be excluded from the Champions League, the sport’s most lucrative competition, if they do not abide by its new ‘financial fair play’ rules.



EU to impose ban on Icelandic mackerel landings

A war of words has broken out in the wake of the EU's decision to block landings of mackerel from Icelandic boats. In the latest twist in the so-called "mackerel wars", the commission announced that it will ban landings of Icelandic mackerel at EU ports. EU fisheries commissioner, Maria



Damanaki said this was in response to Iceland unilaterally increasing its quotas following a surge in the level of mackerel in its territory. In December, Iceland announced it was setting a 2011 quota of 146,818 tonnes, up from 130,000 in 2010. The dispute has caused anger among Scottish fishermen and, Scottish Conservative MEP Struan Stevenson, a deputy chair of parliament's fisheries committee, welcomed the EU move, saying he hopes it will put an end to the "smash and grab tactics of these Viking raiders". "If Iceland thought the EU was bluffing when we warned of retaliation, they have just discovered to their cost that we were not," he said. However, Tomas Heidar, Iceland's chief negotiator on mackerel fisheries, hit back by defending his country's recent record on mackerel hauls by Icelandic vessels. He said, "In recent years, they have almost exclusively taken place within the 200-mile exclusive economic zone of Iceland, and all catches have been landed in Icelandic ports and processed in Iceland." He added, "It is important that we do not get distracted from the main task ahead of us. It is imperative that we reach agreement on a comprehensive management of the mackerel stock."

European Court of Auditors accused of 'Kremlin-like' conduct

Reports from the European Court of Auditors (ECA) have been sabotaged systematically for years, according to former ECA member Maarten Engwirda. Criticisms of fiddling with European money have been swept under the carpet regularly, claimed Engwirda, a former Dutch MEP who was a court member for 15 years and stepped down recently. He claims that several of his colleagues, among them members from France and Italy, were guilty of sabotage and intimidation, often in order to protect national interests. The European commission itself, he said, would "not be interested in a good budgetary control". He said, "All of these malpractices never came out because of the Kremlin-like information we published. But it has not been beneficial to our reputation." Reaction to his damning allegations was swift with a commission spokesman saying it had not tried to influence the European Court of Auditors. The spokesperson for EU commissioner Algirdas Šemeta, who is responsible for anti-fraud policy, underlined that the European Court of Auditors is completely independent. "There is indeed a dialogue between the court of auditors and the commission, but that is normal and also necessary for things to function well. We have no reason to question the expertise of the court," the spokesperson said.



A stronger Europe

The Hungarian presidency comes at a critical time for the European project, writes **Joseph Daul**

Hungary took over the presidency of the EU council in a critical period. The challenges Europe is facing are numerous and call for even stronger and broader cooperation than ever before. A transformation of incredible speed and depth is happening, and Europe must be able to hold its own.

Economic recovery is still not established, and further efforts should be made to boost growth and employment. Due to high public deficits, the eurozone is still under pressure, for which stricter financial coordination is necessary. Society is ageing in all member states, thus common policies are vital to encourage families to have more babies and to ensure the sustainability of social welfare systems. Fighting against poverty, climate change, making the world and Europe more secure is also one of our principal missions. And while we tackle the numerous challenges, we should not forget the protection of our common European values.

The future of the EU depends on whether we can defend the euro. In strengthening economic coordination, the Hungarian presidency should hammer out an agreement on enhanced economic governance. The first European semester will be launched and, to create a permanent crisis mechanism, the treaty should be amended. Besides strengthening financial stability, we should lay special emphasis on stimulating growth and boosting employment in accordance with the EU 2020 strategy.

The negotiations on the future of the common agricultural policy and cohesion policy, probably the two most important common European policies, will start in the coming months, giving the presidency the responsibility to influence further developments. The security of food supply is only ensured by an environmentally-sustainable and competitive agricultural production. The differences in development between member states should be reduced in the future, and Hungary should work on further negotiations for a strengthened cohesion policy.

The Hungarian presidency will also lay special emphasis on enhancing the eastern partnership programme and enlargement. The integration of the western Balkans is in our common interest. For its geographical position and historical reasons, Hungary is probably the most appropriate member state to promote this process. For similar reasons, Hungary will be an ideal advocate of a common energy policy, including energy infrastructure projects, diversifying energy supply routes and sources, and advanced energy efficiency.

Joseph Daul
is chair of
parliament's EPP
group

"We should lay special emphasis on stimulating growth and boosting employment in accordance with the EU 2020 strategy"



The Danube strategy and a European strategy on Roma are also among the Hungarian priorities. Strengthening regional cooperation manifests the European spirit which provides substantial benefits in both economic and environmental terms. The integration of the millions of Roma in Europe is an urgent matter and provides not only responsibility, but great opportunity as well. It gives a special boost to the negotiations, that the rapporteur is Hungarian EPP member, Lívia Járóka, the only MEP of Roma origin.

Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán has prepared well by visiting all the member states and holding talks with all EU bodies and political groups. Also the presidency's minister for EU affairs is former EPP member, Enikő Győri, who was an active MEP and has maintained excellent relations with her former colleagues.

I also have to point out that this is the first time that two central European countries have followed each other in the rotating presidency, which provides a unique opportunity for central Europe to prove its leadership skills. Orbán is a very experienced politician, not only in domestic politics but at EU level as well. As vice-chair of the EPP for more than eight years, he has a deep knowledge of EU matters which has helped him acquire all the essential skills for leading the European fleet.

In our common effort to build a strong Europe, I will do my best inside and outside the European parliament to support his endeavours in dealing with all ongoing and new challenges facing the EU in the upcoming months. ★

Action not words

Hungary must take action on its controversial media law or face damaging its presidency, argues **Martin Schulz**

Over the following six months we will need strong and courageous action on finding solutions to many urgent problems, both within the European Union and at a global level. Firstly, we have to deal with the crisis in the financial markets and combat the menace of currency speculation. Secondly, budget problems at national and European level need successful cooperation. Thirdly, ensuring high levels of employment across EU member states is a

pivotal common task, guaranteeing the social basis for all citizens in our common union. Fifthly, protecting the environment is our obligation. Finally, the EU urgently needs to establish a system of food stocks to tackle price volatility in agriculture and to ban financial speculation on food commodities. We cannot accept a perverse system in which the hunger of some people yields profits for others. These are among the most urgent tasks, but there are many more challenges, like the Roma integration issue.

To tackle these challenges Europe needs a strong Hungarian EU council presidency, one that is not burdened by the controversies surrounding it now. The new media law adopted by the Hungarian parliament is causing international controversy and is threatening to damage the presidency. Therefore, my group in the European parliament has called on prime minister Viktor Orbán to withdraw the media laws and to take more time to reflect on whether the law is in line with European rules and common values and to come back with a better one. In a democracy, it is the media that scrutinises power. What the Orbán government is doing is scrutinising the media and that is not right. Withdrawing the law means taking a step to pave the way towards the success of the Hungarian presidency and the EU. It would also avoid the issue dominating the debate in the months ahead.

We urge the European commission to proceed immediately with a legal examination of the content and spirit of this law and, if necessary, to take action in relation to Hungary to ensure that this law is amended and brought into line with the fundamental values on which the European Union is based. The commission must act by playing its role under the Lisbon treaty to the full.

We, the Socialists and Democrats have differences of opinion with the Hungarian government. But we still want to interact with them not on the level of ideological confrontation, but on the level of institutional cooperation. In the interests of Europe as a whole and in taking seriously our institutional responsibilities, we are willing to cooperate, as we have been with past presidencies, and to contribute to their success. We can agree with many of the points on the Hungarian presidency's programme and we hope that they can deliver on these. We will judge the Hungarian presidency by their actions. ★

"We can agree with many of the points on the Hungarian presidency's programme and we hope that they can deliver on these. We will judge the Hungarian presidency by their actions"



Martin Schulz is chair of parliament's S&D group

A steady hand

The EU must not let the financial crisis and nationalistic agendas hinder progress, argues **Guy Verhofstadt**

Hungary and Poland take up the helm in 2011 – the first back to back presidency of the new member states that joined the EU in 2004. The challenges could hardly be tougher, with member states reverting to increasingly nationalist agendas and posturing at summits, a financial crisis threatening to bring down the euro unless decisive measures can be agreed to stop the rot, and sluggish economic forecasts, and thus job prospects, for the immediate future. To cap it all, Hungary has serious domestic issues of its own to deal with which could distract from the leadership that Europe so desperately needs.

The economy must be priority number one. Unless that can be addressed comprehensively, Europe cannot hope to achieve very much else, not least because it will lack the financial resources and political credibility for the wider policy agenda. Yet EU institutions have given themselves a target of June 2011 to agree a new package of economic governance, strengthening the stability and growth pact and its sanctions mechanism, improving budgetary surveillance and more closely aligning fiscal policy. The December 2010 summit did not produce the unity of purpose and sense of urgency that is required. We must hope that we are not punished by the markets in the first half of 2011.

The debate on the future budgetary priorities of the Union began in the backrooms of the European council, and will no doubt come out into the open in the course of 2011 ahead of the commission's proposals in June – both on long-term expenditure commitments and on how the EU is financed. This is a sensitive, but highly political and symbolic issue that will determine our future solidarity and unity in the years ahead. ALDE strongly believes the Union must revert to a system based primarily on genuine own resources rather than national transfers as a percentage of GDP. Eurobonds also need to be exploited more as a means of financing infrastructure and maximising the leverage of EU funding.

Guy Verhofstadt
is chair of
parliament's ALDE
group



Croatia too has high hopes of concluding negotiations by mid 2011, but progress on closing the remaining chapters will depend as much on its own ability to resolve outstanding issues linked to subsidies for its ship-building industry and persistent corruption and shortcomings in the judicial system than the chairmanship of the negotiations from the EU side.

The area of civil liberties will be closely watched by the ALDE group, not just because of our determined commitment, but because of the inauspicious start of the new government in Budapest and recent high profile issues, especially that of press freedom, following publication of a draconian new law which threatens the independence of the media.

Hungary is well placed to play a key role in designing a future energy policy in Europe, as it is located on the main axis for gas pipelines from the east. As Europe's energy needs grow ever more acute, more focus will be needed on how to make the best use of existing energy over producing or importing more. Energy policy should be pursued in the light of the global climate change discussions and not seen in isolation or short-termism.

Europe is in the throes of introducing a more efficient and intelligent migration policy than member states are able to achieve on their own, often being hijacked by populist instinct or knee-jerk policy responses. The Hungarians, and Poles after them, must keep a steady hand on the tiller and not allow domestic pressures to alter the course.

Since the 2011 budget was finally agreed, the European external action service will now be able to get under way. Although under its own high representative, it is important that member states do not stifle it at birth, but give the service the space needed to extend Europe's foreign policy priorities around the globe more effectively than in the past. ★

Europe expects

Daniel Cohn-Bendit hopes that the Hungarian presidency will display a firm commitment to European values and solidarity

In 2011, the Hungarian presidency will continue working on the restructuring of our financial and economic system. It will also urgently need to address the declining protection of human and civil rights throughout Europe. Prime minister Viktor Orbán boasted of the severity of his cutbacks on the social system. Considering both the injustice – in Hungary, pensioners are particularly hard hit – and the inefficiency of the measures, we urgently need a reality check on the austerity measures that so many European countries have adopted short-sightedly.

This crisis shows the need for greater economic governance, fiscal justice and European solidarity. With the risk of a domino effect on the solvency of eurozone members now clear and present, we urgently need emergency measures. In addition, a permanent and legally watertight crisis system must be put into place. Debt must be restructured in a way that includes bondholder liability, with a robust system of eurobonds to prevent further contagion. We must end tax avoidance by clamping down on tax havens and tax competition. Furthermore, we expect the Hungarian presidency to finally bring suggestions for a financial transaction tax (FTT) to council.

The Union will only be as strong as its budget permits. Own resources, such as a European FTT or a European energy tax, are overdue. European funds should be spent to tackle the economic and ecological crisis by creating jobs in traditional and green industries. We want the presidency to commit to the post-Cancún climate goals and boost reduction of our CO₂ emissions to 30 per cent. We further expect the presidency to launch an ambitious European energy policy on renewable and efficient energy use at the upcoming energy summit.

At this very moment, I doubt that Hungary can represent Europe credibly. A country where the leading party has direct control over the content of media output cannot stand for

the democratic values and civil liberties that we defend. If this presidency wants to be a model for others, we expect it to review its legislation on the media. We also want it to develop a sound strategy for Roma integration. In several EU countries including France and Italy, Roma suffer from xenophobia, exclusion and poverty. We await the adoption of a strong European Roma strategy, with effective measures to guarantee equal access to education, social services, and the labour market. This strategy should at best provide a blueprint for greater social justice by integrating marginalised minorities and fighting poverty in European societies.

Finally, I trust that Hungary will share the lesson learned from the red sludge disaster in 2010. Existing directives and legislation had been disregarded. We ask Hungary to support the commission on directives regarding environmental liability. Overall, we insist that the presidency respects and promotes the principles of better governance, including gender equality, sustainability, impact assessment – and, critically, follow-up on implementation. Hungary can demonstrate its commitment during the conciliation on novel foods, the approval of the Danube strategy and the Roma strategy, or on the preparation of the biodiversity strategy.

With one eye on the increasingly nationalistic reflexes of member states, and with the other eye on recent developments in Hungary, we have one hope for 2011: that Hungary proves its strong and credible commitment to European values and the integration project that Europe needs from its presidency. ★

“We urgently need a reality check on the austerity measures that so many European countries have adopted”

Daniel Cohn-Bendit is co-chair of the Greens/EFA group



Looking forward

Europe should not be distracted by pointless federalism, but focus on the single market and policies that provide genuine value, writes **Michał Kamiński**

Last year was a rollercoaster for the European Union, and 2011 shows no sign that events are going to slow.

The immediate concern has to be the eurozone crisis. We all hope that the Irish bailout has stemmed the contagion and that other eurozone members can avoid such measures. This year is going to be one of tough decisions for national leaders as well as the EU, as the current high levels of debt must come down, and more sustainable spending plans implemented. There must come a point in this debate when we stop relying on Germany and Holland to come to the rescue of the rest of Europe and start to look at how national governments themselves can take action to steady the markets. This is the short-term dilemma, but we will also look at longer-term proposals that are intended to help prevent future crises.

We already know how budgetary surveillance and the stability and growth pact will be strengthened but we will also see much talk about common eurozone debt instruments – nicknamed eurobonds. I have some reservations about this initiative, as I worry that such bonds could further discourage domestic reform in those countries that have relied on excessive borrowing in the past. They should be encouraged to pay down their debts, not run up more. Also, it could lead to further fiscal coordination, and a significant deepening of the EU project towards a more federal Union.

The multi-annual financial framework (MAFF) will be a major priority for our group and will undoubtedly become a significant fault line between the parliament and the council. In the spring we will see options for EU own resources, otherwise known as EU taxes. I have concerns about giving the EU such powers as the MAFF is the ultimate means for national governments to hold the EU to account. Whoever holds the



“Whoever holds the purse strings has ultimate control over the institutions and that power must remain with national capitals”

purse strings has ultimate control over the institutions and that power must remain with national capitals. National governments raise taxes, not supranational structures.

I also want to see 2011 as the year of the single market’s revival. Europe’s market is its greatest asset but it has been allowed to stagnate and I hope that, through the EU 2020 strategy and the single market act, we can begin to see real progress made so that small businesses feel no reticence in taking advantage of their rights to trade goods and services to 500 million consumers.

The priorities of the Hungarian presidency are generally pertinent. In particular, I welcome the focus on enlargement of the EU, a subject very close to my heart. So far, it is fair to say that the presidency has been overshadowed by domestic events and I hope that we can make the distinction between the Hungarian government and its domestic actions, and the Hungarian presidency of the EU.

Naturally, I also look forward to Poland holding the presidency at the second half of the year. Poland has become a proud member of the EU and we have grown in confidence around the European table. Holding the presidency and setting the agenda for the EU will be a great honour for my country. ★

Michał Kamiński
is chair of
parliament’s ECR
group

Follow the leader

The EU needs its leaders to be firm and provide policy that is of true benefit to European citizens, writes **Lothar Bisky**

With the EU under the stewardship of one of Europe's most right-wing governments, the left's expectations for the Hungarian presidency were always going to veer towards caution rather than optimism. Beyond the fundamental questions raised by Hungary's new media law, the wider problem facing the EU in 2011 will remain the ongoing economic and social crisis.

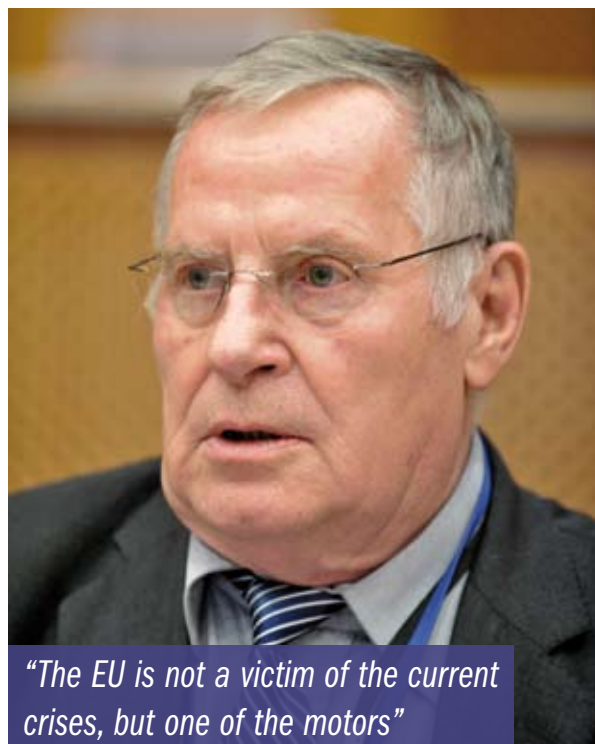
The EU's lack of will to get to grips with the root causes of the crisis, not to mention bad management of its symptoms, has let banks off scot-free while the cost of their speculation is paid by citizens via unemployment and savage austerity.

In 2011, our parliamentary group will continue working for measures to break the power of the financial markets and for more economic democracy. We will insist on the introduction of a social progress clause into EU primary law. This clause should stipulate that fundamental rights have primacy over the fundamental freedoms of the internal market that have brought our economies and societies to the brink.

With this in mind, the GUE/NGL is seriously concerned at the commission's intention to propose a revision of the working time directive 'to adapt it to new realities' and will be calling on the commission to propose a revision of the directive in line with the goal of reconciling employment and non-work life. This could be a major struggle this year.

This, of course, is of direct relevance to a wider discourse on equality, particularly gender equality. As a feminist group, we will be pushing this year for an EU gender equality strategy with political commitments based on the Beijing platform for action. The human rights of women and girls form an inalienable, indivisible and integral part of universal human rights and, as ever, 2011 will be a year of continuing global struggle for such basic human rights.

One of the places at the centre of the fight for those rights is the Middle East. The role of the EU in seeking solutions to the Palestine-Israel conflict must focus on putting an end to violations of international law. Europe's leaders are clearly responsible for the complete absence of the EU from the Middle East peace process and the past decade reads like a long list of lost opportunities for Europe to play an important role in any potential solution. This can, and must change over



"The EU is not a victim of the current crises, but one of the motors"

the next 10 years. As European history has shown, peace is the only option.

Finally, at the end of 2011, the next climate change conference will be organised by the UN in South Africa. Cancún was a step forward after the failure of Copenhagen, but much work needs to be done before we see the necessary ambition and commitments. On this issue, Europe has a chance to lead and prove its potential.

The EU is not a victim of the current crises, but one of the motors. GUE/NGL MEPs, and the wider left, have a central role to play in providing alternatives and prospects for genuine progress. At the current crossroads presented by the crisis, the EU has some basic policy choices to make: injustice or equality, instability or peace, censorship and repression, or transparency, rights and democracy?

The alternatives are there, the choices clear – now where are the leaders? ★

Lothar Bisky is chair of the GUE/NGL group

Democracy or bust

Citizens' rights and national democracy should take precedence over the formation of a centralised European state, writes **Francesco Speroni**

My best wish for the Europe of Freedom and Democracy group (EFD), for 2011, is that it can reach its main priorities: the defence of the rights of the national governments and a fight against the power of a centralised European superstate. As a matter of fact, our objective is to fight for strengthening the national democracies and the rights of citizens. We reject the bureaucratisation of Europe because we think that the legitimacy of any power comes from the will of its people and that their right is to be free and democratically ruled.

Our group will continue to fight for the defence of national industries against the unfair competition of the multinational companies, as we did last year following in the European parliament dossier on the origins of products. In this time of financial crisis it is important to give more guarantees to the small and medium enterprises which represent the motive force of the European economy, against the power of the Asian countries where the rights of workers are not safeguarded at all.

Another important purpose of our group is to guarantee the consumer's rights in both the textile and food producing industries. In the European parliament we have already reached some good results on this, so we will continue to ask for more transparency about the traceability of the products that are imported in the EU from third countries. This is one of the first steps to help the economy of the European Union to make some progress, otherwise we run the risk of third countries taking advantage of our national economies in the frame of the European context.

With the new year we enter into the Hungarian presidency. Honestly I have to say that I do not think that a different presidency of the European council can really contribute towards changing anything within the EU. Meaning that even if the EU council has its own powers, the real executive power ultimately lies with the European commission. Therefore, I do not believe that

"The legitimacy of any power comes from the will of its peoples"



the nationality of the EU council presidency would be so influential in changing the politics of the EU.

I hope the expectations of the EFD group can be reached in the new year and that member states can reinforce their power in the face of a Europe, which today, is too centralised and too bureaucratic. ★

Francesco Speroni is co-chair of parliament's EFD group



Local energy companies play an essential role in the European energy and climate policy

CEDEC, the European Federation of local energy companies, represents the interests of electricity and gas companies at European level :

- 2000 companies, with local mainly public shareholders,
- 100 billion euros total turnover,
- 75 million customers and connexions.

Essential players in competitive energy markets :

Local energy players are the only competitors already well established in the national markets. There can be no competition without competitors : large and small, private and public.

Active in every part of the value chain, striving for citizen's value :

Local generation (including renewables, cogeneration & district heating), distribution system operation, metering system and data management, supply and energy efficiency services.

Close to their local and regional shareholders:

Local energy companies are mainly small and medium sized : close to their local and regional shareholders, they are key actors in the regional economic development and contribute to the creation of local investments and jobs.

Partners in the realization of environmental objectives :

Local energy companies constitute an important partner for the realization of European environmental objectives, through investments in local sustainable electricity production, efficient and smart grids, and energy efficiency services.

CEDEC Congress
12 and 13 April 2011
Hotel Renaissance
in Brussels

Prospects of action
for local and regional
energy companies in
the framework of the EU
energy strategy



Priority themes

- **Environmental ambitions:** CEDEC companies support European objectives on climate protection and will translate their experience in concrete measures to help realize the 20/20/20 objectives, through sustainable local generation and a wide variety of energy efficiency services, with the possibility for all actors (DSOs, suppliers and ESCOs) to play their role.
- **Smart grids:** Distribution systems constitute 90% of all network infrastructure. The necessary investments in networks and metering systems will allow a better integration of sustainable local production and more energy efficient energy use by network operators and consumers.
- **E-mobility:** Within the framework of each national market model, the DSO will play a role in the development of charging infrastructure, the storage possibilities and the supply of electricity, gas and services.
- **Research initiatives:** the public financial means that will be attributed to smart grid related projects, along with the resulting expertise and know-how, must be available to all interested players. Formal involvement in SET-Plan's European Electricity Grid Initiative (EEGI) is indicated.
- **Consumer rights:** CEDEC strives for optimal and cost effective customer services and more transparency on their consumption and billing, giving special attention to vulnerable consumer groups.
- **EU Consultation procedures:** CEDEC insists that all stakeholders, in particular local energy companies with their specific local community perspective, should be involved in future consultations organized by European institutions and the European energy regulator.

Making a contribution

With 100 million volunteers working in the EU, **Viviane Reding** says that Europe would be unrecognisable without the effort and devotion of these individuals

The coming year is the European year of volunteering (EYV). This means that volunteering, and the work of volunteers, is being propelled into the European limelight. Why devote an entire European year to volunteering?

One fifth of the EU population; contributing up to five per cent of GDP: that's 100 million European volunteers. Volunteering brings huge benefits to our economy, society and to the individual volunteers themselves. For them, volunteering can be a rich learning experience, and in the case of young people, it can help them prepare for their professional lives. In these times of economic difficulty, these are clearly important considerations.

In the big picture, it is clear that volunteers' work is invaluable. Their help with the socially disadvantaged, the homeless, the mentally ill, disaster victims or refugees – to name just a few examples – contributes enormously

to social inclusion, solidarity, and the harmonious development of our societies. Volunteering is rooted in Europe's shared values of democracy, solidarity and participation, and the commitment of volunteers translates these fundamental values into day-to-day action.

This is particularly clear from the area of town twinning, which is a well-established, tangible example of an EU-wide activity that helps develop a sense of shared EU identity and promotes further European integration. Town twinning relies on many volunteers for its success. The prize-winning networking project, European charter of rural communities, for example, led by the municipality of Haaren in the Netherlands and funded by the EU's Europe for citizens programme, has brought together 27 rural communities from all 27 EU member states since 1989. The project has helped them focus on creating liveable European communities, and volunteers from many different walks of life and from across the age groups play a crucial role. Together they examine aspects of education, employment, the integration of people with disabilities, and involving young people in community life. The project gives them an opportunity to learn about Europe and their fellow Europeans under the motto of 'meet Europe for free'.

We estimate that 100 million people, or 23 per cent of Europeans aged 15 and older engage in some form of voluntary activity – if they were a country, they would be the biggest member state of the EU. Their motto is surely: You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give. Volunteering can take many forms. A high school student reads to sick children at a hospital, a former national football player coaches at a neighbourhood club, a retired art teacher gives lectures on European masterpieces to foreign visitors at a museum. There are thousands of ways people make a difference. The European year will be a celebration of the millions who make such a difference.

“Volunteering brings huge benefits to our economy, society and to the individual volunteers themselves”



Volunteering: a presidency priority

The existence of volunteering in a country is one indicator of democracy, as democracy can only exist if a community is composed of people who are free, creative, and willing to act in the interests of each other and the wider community. Hungary sees this as particularly important given that the European year of volunteering is being held during its presidency of the EU council, and during the Polish presidency which follows it. Both countries have in the past made extraordinary sacrifices in order that their citizens could enjoy freedom and democracy, the binding forces of any community. These, together with individual safety and stability, are indispensable for the emergence of the desire to help others, and vice versa. If our desire to help others builds a strong community, our own quality of life is also enhanced. The floods and then the red-sludge tragedy in Hungary last year have shown us as clearly as could be imagined that the will to help others is alive, that there is a democratic community open to this impulse, and that volunteering is increasingly common and at times on a nationwide scale. Volunteering is also capable of integrating into an active and creative European network that is making the entire community of Europe a better and more stable one.

Tibor Navracsis is Hungary's minister for public administration and justice



The European parliament is a crucial partner and has strongly supported the year from its inception. Civil society organisations came together to form the EYV 2011 alliance, and also played a crucial role in establishing the year. It is the solidarity and the rich fabric of civil society that makes Europe a unique place.

The European year of volunteering will also be an occasion to begin addressing the challenges that face volunteering in Europe. The economic context has created additional needs and opportunities for volunteering. However, funding cutbacks are making it more difficult for volunteering organisations to meet these new demands. There has been a big increase in volunteering organisations in recent years, and there is more competition among them for support from the shrinking public purse.

There are other challenges in volunteering too. For example, there is a lack of internationally-comparable data on voluntary activities in the EU member states. Only rarely do countries come up with a national volunteering strategy, and there are few official targets in this area. One in five of the member states do not have clear rules governing the rights and obligations of volunteers to cover such things as the social insurance of volunteers, their training, and entitlement to holidays, accommodation or pocket money.

There is also the problem that skills and competences gained through volunteering activities are often not recognised. As a result, younger volunteers are less willing to commit for longer term volunteering periods, even though this is increasingly requested by certain volunteering organisations.

Viviane Reding at the launch of the 2011 European year of volunteering in Budapest



2011 YEAR OF VOLUNTEERING

Commissioner Reding talks to volunteers at the launch of EYV in Budapest



Viviane Reding is European commission vice-president for justice, fundamental rights and citizenship

Volunteering across the EU

The importance of volunteering for the EU's economy, society and individuals has long been acknowledged by EU policy makers. However, the European volunteering landscape is extremely varied because of different historical, political and cultural attitudes towards volunteering in every EU country.



- Total number of EU volunteers: 92 to 94 million adults are involved in volunteering in the EU (23 per cent of all Europeans over 15 years of age).
- The level of volunteering varies through out the EU, with the United Kingdom, Austria, Netherlands and Slovenia having the highest number of people doing volunteering, and Bulgaria, Italy, Greece and Latvia having the lowest percentage of population doing volunteer work. The commission stresses this comparison can be misleading as there are differences between member states in the way volunteering is defined and measured. According to the commission it is clear that there has been a general trend in the increase in the number of active volunteers and voluntary organisations in the EU over the past 10 years.
- Across the EU there also differences in the ages groups that carry out voluntary work. In Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain most volunteers are between the age of 15 and 30. While in Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Portugal and Sweden people between the ages of 30 and 50 dominate the voluntary sector.
- Overall, in the EU there are more men volunteering than women, a fact that may be explained by the dominance of sport in the voluntary sector. However, in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Malta, Slovakia and the UK, more women volunteer than men.
- In the majority of EU countries, employed individuals are the most active volunteers. There is also a link between the level of education and the propensity to volunteer, with higher-educated people the most likely.
- The main voluntary sectors in the EU, according to the 2010 Eurobarometer survey
 - 1) Sport club / outdoor activities club (34 per cent)
 - 2) Education, arts, music or cultural associations (22 per cent)
 - 3) Religious or church association (16 per cent)
 - 4) Charity organisations / social aid organisations (17 per cent)
 - 5) Trade unions (13 per cent)

Volunteering is estimated to contribute from 0.5 to three per cent of GDP in some EU member states.

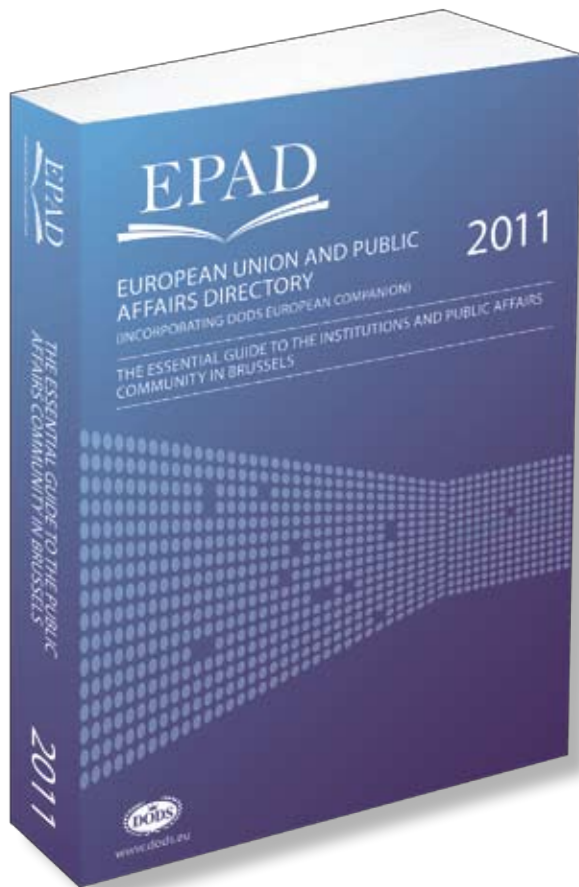
To respond to these challenges, the European year of Volunteering has been envisaged as an awareness-raising exercise with four main objectives. First, to create an enabling environment throughout Europe for voluntary work – we need a single market for volunteering. Second, we will seek to empower those who want to contribute to building a better society and galvanise a new generation of volunteers. We need to inspire across borders. Third, we will push for the recognition and reward of these real heroes of our time. We need to give credit where credit is due. And fourth, we will underscore the human and financial contribution of volunteering. We need to value volunteering.

This is a tall order, but 2011 is the year when the European commission, together with the other European institutions, partners in the national governments, civil society and business, can help the volunteering organisations and the volunteers. The European year will provide the necessary impulse to set in motion the necessary changes that will make it easier for volunteering organisations and volunteers to do their work.

The challenge is huge, but so are the rewards. We cannot imagine what Europe would look like without its heroes: the volunteers, whose efforts in countless ways help make Europe a better place to live. We will work to ensure that the passion, commitment and goodwill of ordinary people are fully recognised and built upon, to help realise our goal of a better, fairer and more sustainable future. This is because Europe is not only made for citizens; it is also made by them. ★

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Step up

Gabriella Civico and Markus Held ask why the role of volunteering isn't a topic of major EU debate

Taken together, the 100 million Europeans volunteering are the EU's biggest member state and deserve recognition of their daily contribution, to our society. This is one of the reasons why back in 2007, a group of European networks active in volunteering came together to campaign successfully for the year.

This group is the EYV 2011 alliance and is an informal, open group of 35 networks committed to jointly making the year a success. To develop and formulate policy recommendations towards the European policy agenda on volunteering, six working groups have been established on quality, legal framework and value of volunteering, infrastructure, recognition and employee volunteering. Other stakeholders and policymakers are invited to join this civil society initiative to work towards the vision of an enabling volunteering environment across the EU. It will be the first comprehensive policy agenda on volunteering for Europe.

Gabriella Civico is the EYV 2011 alliance project manager and Markus Held is director of the European volunteer centre

The EYV 2011 alliance project secretariat is hosted by the European volunteer centre (CEV), following its role as a critical contact point of the joint lobby effort. CEV would like to use this unique momentum to strive for more policymaker attention on the necessity of a sound volunteering infrastructure at all levels. Society cannot run without the necessary transport, economic and legal infrastructure in place. The same is true for volunteering. It is freely given, but not cost free, and many more citizens are likely to get involved if they have the right organisations and structures at hand.

We also call for an ongoing debate, at all levels, on what works, and what doesn't, in the promotion of volunteering. We discuss agriculture, the future of the euro and common foreign policy in Brussels – why is the active engagement of citizens for our common European values of solidarity and social cohesion never a topic of major EU debates? Let's not forget that two out of three Europeans do not yet volunteer. This year should be a step to pave the way to empower more people to make a difference. ★

European civil society and the EU must actively engage with each other if the 2011 year of volunteering is to succeed, writes Arjun Singh-Muchelle

The British coalition government has put civil society at the forefront of its pledge to create, what they term - the big society. The premise behind the big society is an agenda that seeks to shift power from politicians to people. It formed a key element of the Conservative party's 2010 election campaign and was the subject of the first major policy announcement of the new coalition government on 18 May 2010.

The main themes of the big society are devolving power to communities and local government, a greater role in public service delivery for civil society and increasing support for civil society. The big society agenda fits well within the context of the European year of volunteering.

Declaring 2011 as the European year of volunteering, however, is not enough. EU civil society organisations require

a commitment from the EU institutions to give them the same voice and support as when collaborating with the private-sector. As part of this commitment, the national council for voluntary organisations has called for the establishment of a European concordat that will set out legally binding responsibilities overseeing the relationship between the EU institutions and civil society.

One of these responsibilities will be for the EU institutions to work with civil society, from the earliest possible stage, to design regulations and directives. In return, civil society organisations will consult with all stakeholders and be clear on who they are representing, in what capacity, and on what basis. It is this sort of commitment that will create an enabling and facilitating environment for civil society organisations in the EU. ★

Arjun Singh-Muchelle is European and international campaigns manager for the national council for voluntary organisations

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END TO FERTILIZER PRODUCTION IN EUROPE?

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Under ETS III, and restrictions on capacity increase, thousands of jobs will be lost new investments will be cancelled and Europe's **food security** will be jeopardized.

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Carbon Leakage will become a reality.



Jobs and tax revenues will be lost.



Who takes the responsibility?

Trade Unions

FECCIA - European Federation of Managerial staff in the Chemical and Allied Industries - Lithuanian Federation of Chemical Industrial Workers - European Works Council of Yara labour unions - CFDT from YARA - CFE-CGC from GPN - CFE-CGC PEC-Rhin - CFE-CGC from YARA - FO from GPN - CFTC from GPN - CFDT from GPN - CFDT PEC-Rhin - CGT PEC-Rhin

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