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e-fa News Round-Up May 2010

News bulletin from the European Free Alliance Group

The European Free Alliance (EFA) draws together political parties fighting for democracy and self-determination for the stateless nations and regions of Europe. European Free Alliance MEPs sit in a joint European parliamentary group with the Greens, making up the fourth largest group in parliament.

EFA MEPs are:

Jill Evans MEP - Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales (EFA Group President)

Ian Hudghton MEP - Scottish National Party (Vice-President)

Frieda Brepoels MEP - Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (Vice-President)

François Alfonsi - U Partitu di a Nazione Corsa

Oriol Junqueras MEP - Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya

Alyn Smith MEP - Scottish National Party

Tatjana Zdanoka MEP - For Human Rights in a United Latvia

This week in Strasbourg: 17 - 20 May:

- * ***Organ Donations***
- * ***Schengen Information System***
- * ***EU 2020 Strategy***
- * ***Safeguarding Biodiversity***
- * ***Comments from new Fisheries Commissioner***

EFA MEPs have been in Strasbourg this week for a plenary session of the European Parliament. Subjects on the agenda included a new law to help cut waiting times for organ donations and the EU 2020 strategy for growth and jobs.

Organ Donations

EFA MEPs supported proposals for common EU rules on organ donations which should make it quicker, easier and safer to deal with organ donation and transplantation in Europe. MEPs backed proposals for a draft EU law that sets out safety and quality standards for organ transplants and Europe, which it is hoped will help lead to shorter waiting times for patients.

The move was welcomed by N-VA MEP **Frieda Brepoels** (Flanders). Brepoels commented: *"Organ transplants save lives every day in Europe and the shortage of donors means that many people stay on waiting lists. These proposals call for the appointment of a transplant co-ordinator in each appropriate hospital who would help identify potential donors and offer assistance to relatives. We also need to make it easier for potential donors to register, for example via an online registration process."*

Plaid Cymru MEP **Jill Evans** (Wales) also supported the moves which she said would benefit people in Wales and across Europe. In an interview with ITV Jill said: *"There are around five hundred people waiting for a donor organ in Wales. Having a common, approved set of standards across the EU would make it easier to arrange organ donation to and from other European countries, and this should help cut waiting times in Wales and elsewhere."*

Schengen Information System

The long running saga of a revised and updated Schengen Information System returned to the parliament this week. The Schengen Information System is a shared database that allows law enforcement authorities across the EU's Schengen Area to share information on individuals, vehicles and documents. MEPs have repeatedly expressed concerns that the database was moving from being a technical tool to a 'general system of control and surveillance'.

Civil Liberties Committee Member and EFA MEP **Tatjana Zdanoka** (Latvia) has been a critic of the proposals. Speaking during the debate in Parliament this week Tatjana explained her concerns about cost over-runs and delays in implementation.

Tatjana said: *"From the very beginning we have been quite cautious to accept this second generation Schengen Information System. This has been due to many implications concerning data protection. It seems that this long saga is far from being over. We see time delays and cost over-runs, and a lack of positive results. We have to be honest and admit that the current project might fail – and we have to discuss the alternatives. We should also investigate carefully the reasons behind this failure. If we are going to be asked to provide an additional thirty million euros in funding, then the European Parliament should have all the information necessary in order to give its informed consent."*

Watch online at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/wps-europarl-internet/frd/vod/player?language=en&menusearchfrom=bymep&pageby=unit&idmep=28619&discussionId=0&page=0&category=0&format=wmv?date=&askedDiscussionNumber=0>

EU 2020 Strategy

Corsican MEP François Alfonsi took the floor on Wednesday in a wide ranging debate on the EU's 2020 strategy for growth and employment. François was critical of the strategy which he said lacked political vision and warned against reusing the same failed approach of the Lisbon Strategy.

Speaking in the debate François Alfonsi said: *"Europe faces a crisis that requires much more visionary and much more political thinking, including new ideas that are so lacking in this 2020 strategy.*

"I want to emphasise one of them. Should we not set as a goal the promotion of cultural diversity in Europe? This is a fundamental value of the EU, and could offer a great deal to European economic development in terms of "raw material" unmatched anywhere else in the world. We also need a far less centralised strategic approach. This strategic vision is almost entirely focussed on the member states who because of their borders, their history, and their centralised administration, continue to keep Europe stuck in the past. We need a more regional dimension in the future strategy of the European Union."

Watch online at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/wps-europarl-internet/frd/vod/player?language=en&menusearchfrom=bymep&pageby=unit&idmep=96750&discussionId=0&page=0&category=0&format=wmv?date=&askedDiscussionNumber=0>

Safeguarding Biodiversity

EFA MEPs took part in an event on Wednesday to highlight International Biodiversity Day which takes place on Saturday 22 May. The theme of this year's activities is 'Biodiversity for Development' emphasising the need to preserve the rich diversity of the world's ecosystems as part of global development.

The MEPs signed a specially prepared mural put together by local artists to represent the importance of biodiversity. The MEPs are keen to promote the significance of preserving biodiversity as being key to human wellbeing.

More information at www.biodiversity-day.info

Welcome comments from Fisheries Commissioner

The SNP's Ian Hudgton called on the new UK coalition administration to clarify what their stance will be during the ongoing EU fisheries review - and, more specifically, whether they will defend the historical rights of fishing nations. The call came after the new Fisheries Commissioner, Maria Damanaki, confirmed to the European Parliament that she supports the retention of national historical rights and is opposed to quotas being traded on an EU-wide basis.

The Commissioner's position - which backs that of the Scottish Government - is in contrast to that of the previous UK government, who were actively campaigning within the EU for the scrapping of historical fishing rights.

Ian commented: *"The current review of European fisheries policy offers us a vital opportunity to reverse the damage of the CFP and safeguard the future for Scotland's coastal communities. It is shameful that the issue doesn't even get a mention in the UK government's coalition agreement.*

"Scotland's fishermen have been sold out for the last 40 years by successive Tory, Labour and Liberal fisheries ministers. The absence of fisheries in the coalition agreement suggests that this pattern is not about to change. The EU's fisheries commissioner has confirmed that she is against the international trading of

fishing rights. She also notes, however, that the UK is in favour - and is therefore willing to sell Scotland's historical rights."

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Responsible MEPs



Jill Evans

Member



Ian Hudghton

Member



Heather Anderson

Member

Contact person



Steven Cornelius

EFA Press, Communications & Campaigns Officer

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