

# Lib Dems win tough EU rules on bank bonuses

**Tough new rules on bankers' bonuses, introduced into legislation last year by a Lib Dem Euro MP, are now being rolled out across the EU.**

South East MEP Sharon Bowles introduced a move to stop bank pensions being paid out until at least 3 to 5 years after the employee has retired or left. This will stop abuses like that by Fred Goodwin, the former Chief Executive of RBS, where bankers walk away with

excessive bonus-style pension pots even if their bank fails.

As a direct result of Ms Bowles' amendments banks will now also have to pay between 40% - 60% of their bonuses in contingent capital (a form of debt which turns into equity if there is a crisis) or shares deferred for at least 3 to 5 years. This means that if the bank suffers heavy losses, bankers' bonuses will automatically take the first hit.

## No more Fred Goodwins

Ms Bowles also responsible for forcing banks to publish bonuses over €1 million Euros and the earnings of risk takers and senior management.

Sharon Bowles MEP said: "People can no longer accuse politicians or the Lib Dems of doing nothing on bankers' bonuses - they should look to what we achieved in Europe last year. As a result of my negotiating and the rules I introduced into legislation there will be no more "Fred

Goodwins" and failure will no longer be rewarded.

***"These rules are pan-European and where Europe leads others may soon follow. If some bankers are so selfish they want to move then let them go."***

"I do not believe the talent pool is as restricted as banks say - they are far too keen on looking at what is under their noses and poaching rather than training. I do not consider this good risk management."



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- UKIP's least favourite Belgian shows his teeth
- Bearder hails new trafficking directive that UK should sign up to
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# Solvency 'not an issue' if Governments deliver on reform

It was not surprising that **Herman Van Rompuy's** first UK speech as President of the European Council dealt primarily with the EU response to the sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone and its chances of success.

In the following Q&A, Phillip Stephens of the Financial Times sounded sceptical. He suggested that the injection of loans may well solve the liquidity problems in Ireland and Greece, but took no note of the solvency question surrounding these and some other EU member states. This issue also formed the leader in the Economist on the following day, the magazine advocating an early "restructuring" of debt with bond-holders taking a hit on the value of their holdings.

But unlike the caricature of UKIP's least favourite Belgian, President Van Rompuy responded robustly. He pointed out that the loans were conditional on both structural reform and cuts to budget deficits. He added that both Ireland and Greece, along with other countries at risk of contagion, were taking reform seriously and quickly getting on with the job. China's move into Euro bonds was a sign of market confidence that the measures would work. He was bullish about the prospects of troubled member states cutting debt as a proportion of GDP, pointing to his own record as Belgian Finance Minister.

Mr Van Rompuy had already given a clear sign of his

position on the bail-out package in his speech (see box, right), but also paid attention to further development of the Single Market and supply-side reforms to make the EU economy more competitive.

His linking of past failures in this respect to the current crisis indicated a determination to resurrect the aspirations of the Lisbon Agenda to turn the EU into the world's most competitive economy (see next page). This process was let down by a lack of enthusiasm for reform among member states rather than failings at European level.

## Opportunity

My own view is that the crisis has decisively brought home the need for reform, so Mr Van Rompuy will find it easier to make progress than Commissioners in the last decade. Also, as Council President, he will be better placed to address the main failure points; the member states. I also suspect that he has spotted this opportunity.

In a wide-ranging speech, the Council President also covered the new stress tests for banks to reduce the risks of future banking crises having such catastrophic effects. He concluded with an overview of the EU as a player on the global scene, in which he, Mr Barroso and High Representative Baroness Ashton co-operate. He mentioned in particular, relations with India and Pakistan, maintaining a

very strong neighbourhood agreement with Turkey and bringing Iran back to the negotiating table on its nuclear capability.

I talked to fellow LDEG members Jonathan Fryer, Hugh Dykes, Graham Bishop and Dinti Batstone at the end of the event and there was a consensus that this was a very strong performance.

**I agree. Mr Van Rompuy has a clear agenda, largely consistent with liberal thinking, and may well have the determination to push it through. He deserves our support.**



## VAN ROMPUY on the Bail-out

The year 2010 was dominated by the public debt crises in the Eurozone. Let me recall the series of decisions we have taken, mostly following the recommendations of the Task Force on economic governance which I chaired:

- strengthening the Stability and Growth Pact;
- establishing new forms of macro-economic surveillance;
- granting conditional emergency loans to two countries in difficulties, first, on an ad-hoc basis, to Greece, and then, on the basis of the temporary crisis mechanism set up in the meantime, to Ireland;
- agreeing to set up a permanent mechanism to deal with such crises.

**In my opinion these decisions constitute the biggest reform of the Economic and Monetary Union since the euro was created.**

In 2010, only 16 Member States shared the single currency. Since January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011 we are 17, because Estonia joined: a sign of the currency's vitality.

From all our discussions, it is crystal clear that all 27 members are fully convinced that the stability of the Eurozone is vital for the Union as a whole, and of all our citizens. This is true for those outside the euro, such as Poland or Sweden as it is for the UK. The level of interconnectedness, particularly in the financial markets, has been widely demonstrated by this crisis.

**I therefore salute the contribution of the British government to the rescue of Ireland. I also welcome the fact that the British government supports the Eurozone's effort to ensure that it does not happen again, by accepting a limited Treaty change.**

# VAN ROMPUY

## on the single market



**“Beyond the immediate issues, we also need to improve Europe's longer term fundamentals and economic structure.**

First of all it is to bring back growth and to create jobs. We also have to get ready for the great societal challenge of the decades ahead: attractive jobs, healthy ageing, a green and low-carbon economy, secure energy supply.

These are the themes I want to put on the European agenda. These are the themes I discussed this morning with David Cameron, because I want the UK to bring its sound thinking and its future-oriented pragmatism to the table. Like when 5 years ago the British government was one of the first to take up the issue of climate change and to give it a very constructive twist (in the famous Stern Report). Or when the British government, 25 years ago, actively pursued the establishment of the Single Market.

### **Interdependence**

Whether we like it or not, we are interdependent. Many problems we face can only be solved by taking action together. In Europe our geographical proximity, our economic, ecological and indeed political interdependence has been enhanced - voluntarily! - by the fact that we have together built the world's largest single market. This has been key to our prosperity over the last few decades. It is something that successive British governments have made a vital contribution to.

**“Obviously a common market needs some common rules. When we get them right, they cut red tape for businesses who can work to a single set of standards, instead of 27 divergent and contradictory ones.”**

Common environmental standards are more effective, as pollution doesn't

stop at boundaries. Our common competition policy has protected consumers from national monopolies and multinational companies alike, perhaps most visible in the airline market where cheaper flights have enabled millions to enjoy European holidays. All this may be self-evident, but sometimes it is worthwhile to say things which go without saying!

There is a perception that the Single Market is less popular than in the past and that it is seen by many Europeans with suspicion and fear. We have to reconcile both the citizens -- citizens as consumers and as employees... -- and the entrepreneurs with Europe. The ambitious Single Market Act which the Commission proposed last October is therefore more than welcome. It is a key element in the EU's strategy for competitiveness, growth and jobs.

### **Relaunching growth**

In order to reap all the benefits our large market, eliminating bottlenecks and dismantling barriers are crucial steps. But it is not enough. The internal market should be seen as an opportunity to enhance growth and job creation. Relaunching growth in the EU, notably in the peripheral countries where low growth prospects are one of the main concerns of investors, requires reforms that enhance productivity and competitiveness.

I want the European Council to underline the single market's importance and to make sure that the 50 measures which have been proposed are prioritised -- starting with those which yield the biggest results.

Already in the February European Council, we will deal with two related fields: Innovation and Energy. Innovation is the crucial factor to develop our economies, to achieve employment and growth and to improve living and working conditions.

**“That's why I want European Heads of State and Government to take more ownership of innovation and research.**

**“Research & Development spending in the EU is much too low: 1,84% of EU's GDP, compared to 2,6% in the US and 3,4 % in Japan. A European Research Area could help to attract talent and thus investment; the mobility of researchers could thus also benefit the market.”**

For industrialists, I want a concrete proposal helping to turn R&D results into innovations which companies can commercialize. Public procurement and venture capital could play a role here.

As regards the European Patent, there finally is good news. Following a request from 12 Member States, the Commission presented on December 14th of last year a proposal for "enhanced cooperation" to create unitary patent protection. This breaks a decade-old deadlock. Instead of 27 costly patents, we will be able to do with a single patent. The cost for our industries to protect the fruit of their work will be reduced tenfold.

### **Sustainable energy**

In the February European Council, we will also talk about innovation's twin theme: energy. It is definitely a field where we need smart ideas, where we need new techniques and discovery.

We need to provide our citizens with abundant, affordable and environmentally acceptable energy. By 2015 no Member State should be isolated from the European internal market for energy. An integrated European energy market and a proper infrastructure across Europe are the two underlying objectives.

The European energy market is the world's largest regional market and largest energy importer. In practice, however, we do not yet leverage the strength and the size of the EU market in our common interest. Our relationship with Russia, improving in itself, makes this clear.”

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# After Cancun: MEPs back binding energy targets

Following the Cancun summit, MEPs have called on the EU Commission to propose binding energy efficiency targets as a cost-effective way to fight climate change, improve energy security and promote economic recovery.



The success of the resolution was hailed by Lib Dem MEPs as a vital step to back up Energy Secretary Chris Huhne's battle for tougher multilateral action both at Cancun and at a special follow-up

summit for heads of government due to be held in early February.

North West MEP and Lib Dem Energy Spokesman **Chris Davies** welcomed the outcome in Cancun, and wants Britain to press the European Union to set more ambitious targets for reducing CO2 emissions. He believed the confer-

ence gave a major boost to those campaigning for binding agreements to reduce global warming emissions.

He said: "The outcome far exceeded expectations. Although the measures agreed at the summit are nothing like enough to prevent devastating climate change the process exists to tighten them each year.

***"It's important that people realise that every single government in the world accepts that global warming represents a threat and that measures must be taken to combat it. This is not some kind of trick or conspiracy, it's about the future of mankind."***

Davies stressed the need for Britain to become more energy efficient and to develop a low carbon economy. "China is taking great strides forward in this respect and if we don't do more we will find ourselves left behind," he warned.

## Efficiency top of agenda

In a letter to President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, the Liberal and Democrat group in the

European Parliament (ALDE) has asked for energy

efficiency to be at the top of the agenda of the Council's special meeting on 4th of February. The summit is set to discuss the shift towards an efficient low-carbon economy and greater security of supply in Europe, including through a better integrated and interconnected energy market.

**Fiona Hall MEP, UK LibDem group leader**, and rapporteur on the EU's Energy Efficiency Action Plan said:

"In the preparatory discussions ahead of the summit, I trust the European Commission is being ambitious and proactive to ensure there are real proposals on the table for Ministers and Heads of States to discuss.

"Member States and the Commission need to send out a clear signal that they are committed to energy efficiency as an important means to tackle climate change and energy security whilst stimulating economic growth."



## Liberal Estonia joins the Euro



The Liberal coalition government in Estonia, led by Prime Minister **Andrus Ansip**, (leader of ELDR member, Reform Party) has brought Estonia into the single currency after the Baltic country joined the euro zone on 1 January 2011.

"The accession will bring greater integration within the EU and euro zone and a closer collaboration on financial issues between the Estonian government and the other European liberal leaders whose countries are already members of the single currency", commented Annemie Neyts, President of the ELDR Party.

"Additionally, financial stability afforded by the euro zone will certainly provide small EU member states like Estonia's Baltic neighbours, Latvia and Lithuania, a strong incentive to join the euro zone", envisaged Neyts.

Mr Ansip also led the negotiations for the accession of Estonia to the prestigious OECD (the worldwide organization to stimulate economic progress and world trade). And thanks to its liberal leadership, the Baltic state can finally take its place in the influential club of the world's 34 most developed countries.

● **Andrus Ansip, Liberal PM of Estonia, celebrates joining the Euro.**

# Milestone vote for cross border health care in Europe

The European Parliament has paved the way for new European rules allowing people to receive medical treatment in other EU Member States and have the treatment paid for or reimbursed if their home country is unable to provide essential medical care within a reasonable time.

UK Liberal Democrat MEP Liz Lynne, 1st Vice President of the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee, which followed this report, commented:

"The new rules provide a coherent and clear legislative framework for UK patients seeking treatment in another EU Member State and are a real milestone for cross-border healthcare in Europe .

"I think we have found the right balance between protecting national health systems and strengthening patients' rights.

"NHS doctors will still have to give prior authorisation for treatments abroad that can be reimbursed. But there will be clearer rules and guidelines and decisions must be taken on a case-by-case basis.

"Crucially, patients will receive important information of the quality and standard of care as well as the

kind of treatment they are likely to receive in another Member State."

Currently, UK citizens who fall ill abroad can already access emergency care across the EU with their European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The new scheme is designed to help in cases where the nearest hospital or specialist clinic is in a neighbouring country or where a treatment can be provided faster or more expertly abroad.

## Not health tourism

Liz Lynne added: "The new rules are not designed to encourage health tourism. Patients are only entitled to reimbursement for treatment that their home health authority would normally provide. Travel or hotel costs cannot be claimed back.

***"Patients from other Member States travelling to the UK specifically for healthcare will have to pay the full NHS cost of treatment."***

The new cross-border health care legislation will now have to be approved by national ministers in the European Council before being transposed into national legislation. The new rules could be in place as early as 2013.



Chris Davies MEP, Lib Dem spokesperson on the Environment and Public Health, said, "This new system will protect our NHS but provide options for people who need treatment. NHS hospitals will get the full costs of treating other EU nationals paid and British people will have the option of travelling if that is what it takes to get treatment."

ALDE health spokesman Dr Antonia Parvanova MEP was one of the original Members campaigning for a European directive to guarantee patients' rights. "Since our campaign "Europe for Patients" launched in 2007, Liberals and Democrats have argued forcefully for the guarantee of patients' rights across the Union, and I am glad to see that our efforts will now become a reality."

## MEP Sharon Bowles named as most influential Brit in global financial regulation

South East Lib Dem MEP Sharon Bowles has been named the top Brit on the GFS Power 50 - a list of the most influential figures in global financial regulation as voted for by readers of Global Financial Strategy, a leading financial and regulatory news outlet.

Sharon was voted 20th for her work as Chair of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee, an influential body made up of elected Members of the European Parliament who debate and amend key financial

legislation, including new rules on bank capital and bankers' bonuses which were rolled out across the EU earlier this month.

Sharon came ahead of Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne (25), former Prime Minister Gordon Brown (35), Bank of England Governor Mervyn King (39), and FSA Chairman Lord Turner (48), and is the only Brit to make the top 20.

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# FEDERALISTS FIGHT BACK

**Andrew Duff MEP chairs the new cross-party Spinelli Group of MEPs dedicated to building a European federal union. Here he explains his view.**

The Treaty of Lisbon has strengthened the European Union. Its full and rapid implementation is vital. However, the future of the Economic and Monetary Union is now at serious risk. The loss of impetus behind enlargement diminishes the EU's moral authority and political credibility in world affairs. And the EU's new statutory authority is not replicated by a growth in its popular legitimacy.

**Political solidarity benefits all. There can be no solidarity without government people can trust. Because trust is lacking today, several states are adopting reactionary positions on EU finance and obstructing the necessary debate on federal options for the future of Europe.**

At best, this situation negates the logic of the Lisbon treaty; at worst, it risks a return to nationalism and xenophobia. Europe's political leaders must move decisively now to prevent the

disintegration of Europe. They should concentrate on enhancing the EU's capacity to act effectively to deal with current and likely future challenges. They must avoid actions which make further steps towards European integration more difficult.

## Economic governance

The EU's existing arrangement of Economic and Monetary Union has been tested and found wanting. The current proposal of the European Council to amend the Treaty to install a permanent crisis mechanism for the eurozone is a short-term measure which falls well short of a proper economic government whose eventual features should include:

- establishment of an EU treasury facility to issue eurobonds for investment in innovative and sustainable projects with European added value,
- introduction of automatic penalties in the case of breach of fiscal discipline,
- the revision of the euro convergence criteria,
- an enhanced role for the eurogroup in international monetary affairs.

In addition, the early completion of the single market is a vital element in boosting European competitiveness.

Negotiations on reform of EU expenditure and own resources system need to be radical if the EU budget is to contribute to fiscal stabilisation and economic growth. The EU needs sufficient financial means on the basis of new genuine own resources without increasing the financial burden on national budgets.

## Democratic governance

We must act now to enhance democratic practice at the federal level. The European Citizens' Initiative is one element. The next must be the development of federal political parties through the electoral reform of the European Parliament.

**The introduction of a pan - EU constituency in time for 2014, electing a small number of MEPs from transnational lists, would improve the European dimension of the elections and bring vitality to Europe's emerging post-national democracy.**

The aims of the Spinelli Group and the Union of European Federalists are to:

1. support the creation of an economic government committed to financial stability and economic growth;
2. press for an ambitious multi-annual financial framework financed to a much larger extent by autonomous own resources;
3. fight for a reform of the electoral procedure of the European Parliament in time for 2014 which will introduce transnational lists and galvanise EU-level political parties;
4. use the new instrument of the citizens' initiative to push for further reforms targeted at deeper integration;
5. campaign for a renewal of the Union's enlargement strategy;
6. work in the medium term to prepare proposals to transform the Treaties into a constitution for a federal union.



## MEP plea for Khodorkovsky and Lebedev to Russian President

A cross-party coalition of MEPs has used Human Rights Day (10 December) to send a letter to Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev, highlighting the ongoing persecution of Mikhail Khodorkovsky and Platon Lebedev.

ALDE MEP Graham Watson (Liberal Democrat MEP, UK), who led the initiative to

raise the profile of the Khodorkovsky-Lebedev trial, said: "The Human Rights Day is an important occasion to reposition human rights abuses at the forefront of the political agenda. There is a clear consensus among objective observers of the Khodorkovsky and Lebedev trials that their ongoing persecution is unjust and not truly motivated by law."



# All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe



# Liberals back tougher action over Hungary's media laws

**Hungary's first six month period in the Presidency of the EU has been overshadowed by growing outrage at a media law which imposes draconian restrictions on journalists and newspapers in the name of 'national security.'**

ALDE leader **Guy Verhofstadt** said: "When EU core values, like freedom of media, are at stake there is no time to lose before taking action. We have asked the Commission to act promptly to ensure freedom of media in Hungary, under threat by the newly adopted Media Law."

He welcomed Commission President Barroso's promise to send a letter to the Hungarian government indicating the crucial points of the Media Law that Hungary should change.

***"Hungary is starting its first EU Presidency. In that function it not only needs to accept and endorse but also defend all democratic principles that we commonly share, including freedom of information and press."***

"No Member State can be allowed to put, in the name of undefined national security, restrictions to freedoms that lie at the heart of our Union of values."

## **Ludford disappointed by "technical" approach.**

Liberal European Commissioner Neelie Kroes said: "The recently adopted Hungarian Media Act raises specific concerns regarding its compliance with the EU Audiovisual and Media Services Directive and respect for the fundamental media freedoms such as freedom of expression and media pluralism."

Justice spokesman and London MEP **Sarah Ludford** said she was disappointed by the Commission's "technical" approach: "The Commission is pursuing this matter through a quite narrow technical analysis of compliance with the EU audiovisual services directive."

"One might have expected a wider consideration of press freedom led



by Vice-President Reding who is responsible for fundamental rights. I hope this is tactical political cunning by the Commission, rather than cowardly retreat following the row over Reding's challenge to France about treatment of Roma people."

"Liberal MEPs are pushing for a strong, permanent mechanism through an annual review by the Fundamental Rights Agency of EU media freedom. This would provide a systematic basis for action on all possible grounds if necessary."

## Legal trade of tropical wood must not cause more deforestation

**The European Parliament has adopted a resolution urging the Commission to better supervise the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with major tropical-wood exporting countries to make sure the legal wood trade is not causing more deforestation.**



Lib Dem MEPs say the development of this type of agreement poses a number of questions over environmental issues and good governance.

**South East MEP Catherine Bearder** said: "The Voluntary Partnership Agreement aims to

stop the illegal trade of wood, but in this international year of the forests, the EU mustn't forget the larger objective of combating deforestation and the degradation of forests.

"If the Commission wants to avoid voluntary agreements being perceived as legal permits to over-exploit, or raze tropical forests, some operational guarantees must be taken urgently".

"To respect forests, it is essential to take into account the desires of local populations. The Commission in the future shouldn't engage in any negotiations for a VPA unless they have the necessary legal framework to ensure civil society is fully informed and associated with the process of exploitation".

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# Cameron fails to make real British case on EU Budget

**East Midlands Lib Dem MEP Bill Newton Dunn comments on the conclusion of negotiations for 2011.**

It is always easier to nit-pick rather than changing the big picture, especially when scoring cheap points to please the public. So, when David Cameron attacks the European Parliament's proposals for a small increase in the EU 2011 budget and insists on a slightly smaller increase, without giving details, that was the easy way.

Why, I wonder, does Downing Street not look at the overall EU picture and propose where really large savings could be made in the EU annual budget?

Why does he say nothing about the vast expense of MEPs being forced to travel back and forth between Brussels and Strasbourg - a treaty obligation

which was put in place under the chairmanship of his Tory predecessor John Major? Not to mention the vast extra carbon emissions incurred from maintaining two sets of parliament buildings and the many trucks carrying papers to and fro.

Why not propose the abolition of EcoSoc in Brussels (the Economic and Social Committee) which has no powers at all and on which British appointees sit?

## **Scrap the Committee of the Regions**

Why not propose the abolition of the CoR in Brussels (the Committee of the Regions) which also has no powers at all and to which British councillors are appointed? Why not propose action to fight growing cross-border organised crime -



which smuggles drugs and tobacco and people, and fakes of every possible kind, into the EU and into the UK, so destroying legitimate jobs and cutting governments' tax revenues? All it would take is to give the police cross-border powers and share the sovereignty with the other member states.

So, come on Cameron. Be a Euro-realist, deal with real EU problems, and make really big savings for the UK and whole EU in the process. The tussle over the 2011 budget may be over now, but your real opportunity awaits, in the broader discussions on long-term EU funding.

## **Liberals gain great victory in Catalonia**

**ELDR member party *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (CDC)* has overwhelmingly won the elections for the Parliament of Catalonia, the economically strongest region in Spain which includes Barcelona.**

ELDR Party President Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck has congratulated CDC's leader Artur Mas who led the party alliance *Convergència i Unió (CiU)* during the election campaign and is now due to become Catalonia's next Prime Minister.

ALDE leader Guy Verhofstadt added, "This is truly a convincing victory for CiU, a member

party of the European Liberal family. I congratulate Artur Mas and his colleagues on the tremendous result in obtaining the support of almost 1.2 million voters in Catalonia."

"Spain, like most European countries is facing testing economic times. It is only by pulling together in a common economic strategy that European nations can exit successfully from the present crisis. I am sure that CiU will play its part in building a stronger Europe based on sound economic fundamentals, a competitive business environment and a vibrant labour market."



# New EU law against trafficking: no reason for UK to stay out

**The European Parliament has approved a new European directive to fight human trafficking.**

Through more effective EU cooperation and a wider definition of trafficking it aims to hit the cross-border criminal networks buying, selling and exploiting other people. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of people are trafficked into or within the EU every year, mostly exploited for prostitution

but also as slave labour, begging and stealing human organs.

Since EU governments have given the legislation their approval it will now become EU law. In order for the UK to benefit from this legislation the coalition government will have to opt-in to the directive. The UK, which decided not to 'opt in' when it was first proposed, now has a second chance to participate.

## **Fighting modern day slavery**

**South East Lib Dem Euro MP**

**Catherine Bearder** said: "This new EU-wide push to fight the illegal sex trade and modern-day slavery and put its perpetrators in jail is vital. Criminals who dehumanise vulnerable people and exploit them for profit must be stopped."

"The law against this pernicious crime is tougher, for instance a new maximum sentence of 10 years instead of 8, there is much better care for child victims and an EU anti-trafficking coordinator. Trafficking now covers selling a person as a beggar or pickpocket, or for adoption, forced marriage or harvesting of organs for transplant."

"MEPs have also insisted that victims receive protection, maximising the chance that they will help with prosecutions of the gangsters. If they

are deported as illegal immigrants or punished for involuntary offences, such prosecutions are undermined."

***"UK concerns about the text have been met and it meets the test in the coalition agreement. Cross-border cooperation is essential to combat people-trafficking and the UK should be leading the way in the international effort to stamp it out."***

The agreement made by the Permanent Representatives Committee of the Council of Ministers was previously negotiated with the European Parliament. As Parliament confirmed its agreement on the text as it now stands at its December plenary session, the Council has given its green light to the text, resulting in a first reading agreement. Member states will then have to comply with the new rules within two years.

● ***On EU justice & home affairs, the UK coalition government agreement says: 'We will approach forthcoming legislation in the area of criminal justice on a case-by-case basis, with a view to maximising our country's security, protecting Britain's civil liberties and preserving the integrity of our criminal justice system.'***



## **EU should act on homophobic 'Section 28' law plan in Lithuania – Ludford**

**The European Parliament has called for the Commission to examine and challenge proposed legislation in Lithuania which would criminalise with fines the 'promotion' of homosexuality.**

MEPs have long followed developments in this Baltic country which joined the EU in 2004. Lithuania still lags behind in tolerance of diverse sexual orientation, despite implementing EU anti-discrimination laws.

**Lib Dem European human rights spokeswoman Sarah Ludford MEP**, vice-chair of the Liberal Democrat LGBT group (DELGA) and an active member of the Parliament's lesbian & gay rights intergroup, spoke in the debate.

She said: "Coming from the UK, I was able to warn from experience of the dangers of a 'ban on gay promotion' law, since of course we had the infamous 'section 28'.

"But I was also able to offer hope of changed attitudes, as has happened in the Conservative party leadership.

"A law which bans 'promotion' of homosexuality could collide head-on with EU law on equal employment rights. On the wider human rights front, it would inhibit proper sex and citizenship education, have a chilling effect on free speech in the media, arts, and political activity and be a pretext to ban gay pride marches."

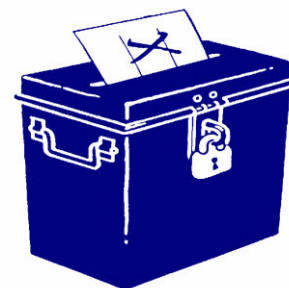
## **No freedom for hate crimes**

"The Commission must not wait for this legislation to come into force. It must consider infringement proceedings for prospective breaches of job rights and warn about breaches of EU/European Convention on Human Rights."

"People and politicians are entitled to their opinions on homosexuality, as confirmed by the UK court judgement finding the owners of the Chymorvah Hotel in Penzance breached the law when they banned a gay couple. But that freedom of thought must not be translated into discrimination, hate crime or silencing of protest."

# **All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe**

# Winning the vote of EU Nationals



*This piece by Dinti Batstone and Mark Pack first appeared in the November edition of ALDC's Campaigner.*

It's been a case of two steps forward, one step back in many local parties when it comes to getting more out of direct mail over the last few years. As covered previously in Campaigner, the emphasis on doing direct mail more often and to more people has sometimes come at a cost in variation. Rather than, say, one batch of direct mail involving five different letters to 2,000 people, it has involved doing the same letter to 6,000.

Yet one of the powers of direct mail is the ability to vary the message so that it tries to cover the issues and provide the information most pertinent to the people whose names are at the top. The recent European Voters Initiative in London has shown how letters aimed specifically at non-British EU citizens resident in the UK ('EU Voters'), can deliver more Lib Dem votes in the ballot box.

EU Voters can vote in every election except the General Election. It is a common experience when out canvassing to find that EU Voters think they cannot vote even though they are on the electoral register; receiving a polling card is often dismissed as a clerical error.

Even those who know they are entitled to vote often don't know how to go about it – polling station formalities vary widely from country to country and the prospect of voting in a foreign country can be intimidating. All this contributes to lower turnout, which is why many campaigners have traditionally ignored EU Voters.

Yet in their outlook, EU citizens living in the UK are often very well disposed towards the Liberal Democrats – instinctively pro-European themselves, they are attracted by our party's positive attitude towards the EU. This makes them a perfect group of people to target with their own specific messages, talking about specific foreign policy concerns or, if appropriate, providing material in other languages.

## Opportunity to target

It is this opportunity that the European Voters Initiative was founded to address in London. It began with a pilot in the 2008 Assembly/ Mayoral elections, continued with the 2009 European elections and ended with all-up local elections in May 2010. In several parts of the capital EU citizens make-up a significant part of the electorate. In Childs ward in Barnet, for example, EU citizens comprised around 15% of the electoral register.

Monroe Palmer, whose local team in Barnet received a grant from the EU Voters Initiative, reported: "The Lib Dem team targeted European citizens with an extra addressed item of literature in the run-up to local elections in May.

***"When the votes were counted around 275 EU Voters had voted – and we had won our third seat in the ward by a majority of just 119. There was strong feedback on the day that many of the 275 voted because of the efforts our team had made – and voted Liberal Democrat."***

In widespread phone canvassing of thousands of EU Voters across London during the 2009 European election, the

EU Voters Initiative team consistently found that around four in ten EU voters said they would vote Lib Dem – a very promising sign of how much potential support is available in this group.

Phone canvassing is a very efficient way to reach EU voters, not only because it enables campaigners to cover more ground than they would on foot, but also because it gives canvassers the opportunity to inform EU Voters personally about their UK voting rights and answer any lingering doubts or queries. Evidence from London suggests that when EU Voters are properly informed about their voting rights and signed up to postal votes (making the experience of voting in a foreign country less daunting) their turnout matches – or even exceeds – turnout by UK voters. Some EU voters even decide to join the party!

So next time you do a pool mailing, why not flag up the EU citizens separately and send them a different version of the letter? Follow up with phone canvassing and a postal vote form and you could secure those precious few extra votes you need to win your marginal ward. And don't forget, varying your pool letters and integrating with other campaigning works for other groups too.

**A former National Campaigns Officer at Cowley Street, Mark Pack is Head of Digital at MHP Communications and co-editor of Liberal Democrat Voice ([www.LibDemVoice.org](http://www.LibDemVoice.org)).**

**Dinti Batstone founded the EU Voters Initiative and was No.3 on the London Euro List in 2009.**

## New website to infuriate Eurosceptics

What's the EU ever done for us? That is the eternal question on the lips of Eurosceptics, and one which a new website - [www.the-eu-and-me.org.uk](http://www.the-eu-and-me.org.uk) hopes to answer. The website is billed as a "no-nonsense guide for UK citizens to what the European Union delivers" and features information on subjects such as consumer rights, working in the EU and even examples of EU funded project in the local area. It will no doubt agitate Eurosceptics, but Lib Dem MEP Graham Watson believes it is important to

counter the many false stories flying around about the EU. "The benefits of EU membership are often less visible than work done at local or national level. It is important that people know more about the EU so they can truly recognise what it does well and what it does not. After all, if we took as gospel all of the claims made by parties like UKIP, we would probably believe this cold weather was caused by someone in Brussels turning down the 'EU-thermostat'!"

# Change that works for Europe & for you

# Lyon concern at Commission report on CAP reform



**Scotland MEP  
George Lyon,  
ALDE Spokesman  
on Agriculture,**

**has broadly welcomed the European Commission's report on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as another step on the long road to reform.**

Mr Lyon, who wrote the European Parliament's report on the future of the CAP that was overwhelmingly adopted in the summer, commented: "The Commission's paper is so widely drawn that nearly everyone will find something in it that appeals to them. It focuses on greening the direct payments through a top up payment, a fairer distribution of funding between Member States, making activity a condition of support payments, bringing to an end to historic payments, and moving some of the LFA support into pillar one.

"The Commissioner has taken on board many of the ideas in my

report. However, while similar to the European Parliament's position, the Commissioner's report also contains proposals that raise real concerns."

## **Incentives not rules**

"We must make sure that his proposals to green part of the direct payments system are based on incentives and not rules. They must be clearly targeted at sustainability and production efficiency otherwise we run the risk of making European agriculture uncompetitive.

"Clearly this is only the second step along a very difficult road to reform. The task of taking this broad brush approach and focusing it on real measures that provide farmers with a viable future will not be easy.

***"The real threat of big budget cuts still hang over the whole policy debate and the final decision on the budget will have a profound impact on the final outcome."***

## **EU must reform fishing policy - Davies**

**Comprehensive and ambitious reforms are urgently needed if we still want to see fish on our menus in 10 years time, says North West Euro MP Chris Davies.**

Chris was co-organiser of a seminar in the European Parliament where representatives from the Commission, WWF, Carrefour and EDEKA all committed themselves to finding a solution for sustainable fishing.

Chris Davies said "Europe has too many boats chasing too few fish. If there is to be hope for the future the fish must be given a chance to breed before they are caught."

**Carl Haglund**, vice chair of the Fisheries Committee and co-host of the seminar said: "88 per cent of Community stocks are today being unsustainably fished. The widespread practice of discarding - throwing millions of tonnes of dead fish back into the sea - makes it very difficult to be a proponent of the current CFP. ALDE favours an ecosystems-based approach. I personally envisage a strong framework, with space for regionalisation and a separate policy for small-scale, coastal fisheries."

## **Tough action needed on illegal battery hen cages**

**George Lyon, Liberal Democrat MEP for Scotland, secured a debate in the European Parliament to push for tough action against Member States and their egg producers who fail to phase out battery cages before the legal deadline set by the European Commission of 1st January 2012.**

In a resolution drafted by Mr Lyon, MEPs call on the Commission to stick by its deadline and strongly oppose any attempt by Member States to extend the deadline beyond the beginning of 2012. It also calls for Member States, who have complied with the legislation, to be able to ban imports from other Member States who are producing eggs illegally.

Commenting, Mr Lyon said: "It is scandalous that by the beginning of 2012 83million eggs, nearly one third of total EU production, will still be produced illegally in battery cages. European producers have had 10 years to make the transition to the new

standards but it is quite clear that many countries are ignoring the deadline.

### **Time to name and shame**

"In the UK, producers have invested millions to comply with the legislation and therefore it is vital that the Commission take tough and robust action against those countries and their producers who fail to get rid of battery cages by the deadline."

"The Commission should name and shame those who are not compliant by deadline and take infraction proceedings against the countries that are ignoring the legislation. We cannot just stand by and allow our egg producers to be put out of business by those who choose to flout the law."

# **All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe**





# “The EU Fiscal Crisis - forcing Eurozone political union in 2011?”

**Longstanding LDEG campaigner and financial expert Graham Bishop previews his new book.**

In early 2011, the eurozone debt crisis looks likely to take a dramatic turn for the worse. In a little-noticed pre-Christmas statement, the eurozone leaders collectively affirmed “that they stand ready to do whatever is required” to ensure the stability of the euro area as a whole. Since the decisions at the fateful crisis weekend in May 2010 which created a structure to resolve the situation in Greece, it has been increasingly clear that the eurozone was going to take tough collective action on the economic governance of its members.

It was also made dramatically clear to private lenders to ‘imbalanced’ states that they will face default risk in the future. This precipitated an immediate re-assessment of the creditworthiness of some states – exemplified by the run on Irish banks to the tune of about 100% of GDP once their guarantor was

itself doubted. In parallel, the eurozone took upon itself, rather than the EU as a whole, the task of financing its members that were unable to access market financing – provided they agreed to ‘strict conditionality’. If the eurozone does indeed do “whatever is required”, then it will survive. A political entity will emerge with centralised funding of public debts and a collective oversight of fiscal balances.

Failure of the euro is seen as unacceptable because it would lead to an unravelling of ‘Europe’. Why do they say that? EU solidarity has been built through practical achievements; notably the steps to create a single market giving “free movement of people, goods, services and capital”. The single market is by no means complete but is universally seen as delivering enormous benefits to the citizens of Europe – not only in terms of growth and employment, but also quality of life. If things happened that smashed the concrete achievements, then it is a fair bet that the solidarity would vanish soon afterwards as blame was cast around.

So the eurozone must move swiftly and decisively to convince lenders who have grown sceptical after a decade of failed promises from finance ministers.

The lenders need to be sure that sound fiscal policies are put in place and will be adhered to – no matter what the short-term unpleasantness. It is now clear that without that reassurance, they will take their money elsewhere.

But there remains a scenario that has a good outcome. It requires a truly credible policy framework in combination with a collective financial facility that is manifestly big enough to fund all states at risk until the benefits of the new policies come through. That may require a quadrupling of the existing European Financial Stability Fund (EFSF) facility so that it has the capacity to disburse €1 trillion of loans that will be repaid if the recipients perform as they have promised.

**Eurozone will have emerged from the financial crisis as a political federation – loose in some respects, but with tightly centralised economic governance at its heart. The proven commitment to fiscal probity may even make it attractive relative to alternative investments around the world.**

**Graham Bishop**

To find out more or order the book, go to <http://www.grahambishop.com>

## Ivory Coast: Liberal International demands Gbagbo must go

Leaders of Liberal International meeting in Brussels have condemned attempts by Laurent Gbagbo to cling to power in Ivory Coast after the independent electoral commission had announced the victory in the November presidential poll for Alassane Ouattara, of the ‘Rassemblement des Républicains’ (RDR) with 54% of the vote. The RDR is a full member of Liberal International (LI), the international Liberal network. LI is calling on the African Union and EU to remain firm in their support for Mr. Ouattara as the legitimate winner of the elections.

**Hans van Baalen** MEP (VVD, Netherlands, *left*) and President of Liberal International, had sent a delegation of LI observers to the Ivory Coast in the run-up to the November elections. He expressed his disappointment that the regime was refusing to concede defeat. “The solution to the crisis in Cote d’Ivoire can only be the recognition of Allasane



Ouattara as legitimate President. Services by former South African President Thabo Mbeki are only of help if this is the outcome of the process he leads. **It would be extremely unhelpful if Mr. Mbeki tries to broker a deal along the lines of Zimbabwe and Kenya, allowing a defeated President to stay in office”**

**Lamine Ba, Senegalese Minister and President of the African Liberal network** underlined that the Ivorian electoral commission had declared Ouattara the winner with 54% of the vote: “It is unacceptable that the Ivorian Government refuses to acknowledge the outcome of the freely expressed will of the people. All democracies amount to a commitment, at some point, to give up power to someone else. Western Governments must insist on the transition of power in Ivory Coast to the legitimate winner if we are to avoid continued tension and a repeat of divisions seen elsewhere in Africa when incumbents refuse to step down. Gbagbo must leave office.”

**Change that works for Europe & for you**

# Renewed push to put citizens at the heart of EU agenda

**Yorkshire MEP Diana Wallis reports on growing momentum to a genuine citizens' Europe.**

As I write, the EU institutions are returning from their Christmas break with Hungary taking the helm as the EU Presidency for the next 6 months. Operating in a so-called "trio" presidency to allow a more coherent longer term plan of action, Hungary follows Belgium and Spain with a co-ordinated 18-month programme. The priorities for Hungary include work along the theme of "bringing Europe closer to the citizens". By that they mean producing legislation that will have a beneficial result for citizens and consumers.

*This ties in closely with two strategy papers the European Commission recently launched, which include the EU Citizenship report, published on 27 October last year and the Single Market Act. The Single Market Act is not a legislative measure in itself but an array of 50 initiatives that the Commission hopes will reinvigorate the European economy. It deals with, among other things, company law, tax, competition and dispute resolution.*

The Commission is actively seeking views from stakeholders and civil society and contributions to this debate can be made until the end of February 2011. Not all of these ideas are new and many have been on the table for years. Areas of debate may include workers rights, free movement rules, access to justice and the Charter of Fundamental Rights.



The EU Citizenship Report also launches a consultation on steps to tackle the obstacles created by national boundaries to the effective exercise of citizens' rights. The report includes reference to free movement rights, electoral rights and citizenship and family law and children's rights.

## Cross border families

At the end of November, national parliaments joined their counterparts in the European Parliament to discuss how to make improvements for "cross-border" families in Europe. MEPs opened the session and keynote speakers included the Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Viviane Reding and the Minister Wathelet, Belgian State Secretary for Family Policy representing the Belgian Presidency. The workshop entitled "How to facilitate the life of European families and citizens" started

from the premise that more and more Europeans choose to live, work and marry in a country other than their own. However when problems arise the consequences of relationship breakdown in these circumstances are all the more complicated, and indeed traumatic, where two or more jurisdictions are involved.

A number of themes were examined during the day and workshops dealt with family law, child law and private client matters. The workshop centred on how to remove legal and administrative burdens in these areas. It also provided an opportunity for a recap on proposals currently on the table in the field of divorce and succession.

With the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Single Market looming, it is now it is up the Hungarian Presidency to urge its counterparts to make these political goals and strategic commitments a legislative reality.

## Concern at violent clampdown in Western Sahara

**MEPs have expressed their growing concerns about the deteriorating situation in Western Sahara and condemned recent violent incidents in protest camps during which some people were killed or injured.**

In a resolution in the European Parliament (Thursday 25 November), MEPs called on all parties to refrain from any further violence and play a constructive role in regional talks. MEPS also asked for a UN led inquiry and an international human rights monitoring presence.

**ALDE MEP Ivo Vajgl (Slovenia, Zares)** said: "I hope that this resolution on Western Sahara will be a cornerstone of a new pro-active European position on a problem that is one of the last reminders of the colonial era.

"The problem can only be solved if Morocco complies fully with its obligations on the right to self-determination of Sahrawi people. It is indispensable that transparency, freedom of the media and a thorough investigation of recent incidents are guaranteed."

# All year round LibDem ACTION in Europe



# EU rescue package windfalls must be refunded - Bowles

**Lib Dem MEP Sharon Bowles, who chairs the European Parliament's Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee, is calling for countries bailed out by the European rescue schemes to be refunded some of the high interest they have had to pay, once they have managed to pay off all their debts.**

Concerned by the high interest rates now being applied on the loan to Ireland under the formalised EU rescue schemes, Ms Bowles argues that her proposal represents more solidarity with neighbouring European countries and a more effective way of dealing with deficits. As with other countries, the UK currently stands to get a large windfall on the interest rate being charged on Ireland's debt repayments.



Sharon Bowles MEP said: "Fellow EU countries should be acting out of solidarity with their neighbours, not like investment banks. It is fair that a country sponsoring a rescue package should not be out of pocket, and should be guarded against risk, but that does not mean they have to pocket windfalls.

***"I propose the profit, or premium, which sponsoring countries currently make out of the high interest rate, and which is higher than the cost to them of providing the loan, should be returned to the borrowing country once they have repaid their debt in full.***

"These premiums should be kept in a pool that acts as insurance against default - a bit like a no claims refund. The overall health of the EU economy will be much more viable and sustainable if struggling countries get these premiums back, rather than letting better-off countries pocket them. Also, markets would respond to the likelihood of the borrowing country winning back the pool.

"It is far more important that we find tools such as this to build sustainable economies across the EU than risk forcing struggling countries into worse-off positions."

## ALDE calls for debate over US Government Wikileaks subpoenas

The ALDE group has asked for a Parliamentary debate on whether the US subpoenas over Wikileaks meet EU data protection rules.

**Sarah Ludford MEP (Liberal Democrat, UK)** said: "The US administration could have prevented the Wikileaks scandal through better security measures. It is incredible that diplomatic cables could not only be accessed by a junior employee, but downloaded in bulk.

"It would be advisable for the US administration to concentrate now on tightening their own data security, while respecting citizens' fundamental rights including privacy."

**Sophie In't Veld MEP (D66, Netherlands)**, ALDE Vice-President in the LIBE committee, stated: "The EU should as a matter of urgency ask the US authorities for clarifications on the subpoenas imposed on Twitter and on other private companies to provide personal information and communications of persons - including EU citizens - they consider related to Wikileaks. The Commission should explain if EU data protection rules have been violated and if the US authorities have jurisdiction to lift EU citizens' privacy rights".

"The lack of an identified illegal act and of a judicial enquiry in the US casts a shadow on the whole process of lifting the protection privacy for the sake of national security," added **Renate Weber MEP (PNL, Romania)**.

## Watson demands inquiry over Christmas travel chaos

**South West and Gibraltar MEP Graham Watson has called on transport officials to carry out an immediate investigation into the travel disruption over the Christmas holiday period.**

Speaking in the European Parliament, Graham commented, "The failure of our airlines and our airports to deal with a few centimetres of snow caused devastating delay, disruption and despair for travellers.

"I call on Parliament's transport committee, the European Union's transport Commissioner and transport ministers in council to conduct an enquiry."

A major concern has been that some airlines will refuse to compensate passengers affected, leading to a situation

similar to that during the ash cloud disruption last year, where Watson had to intervene with major airlines in order to ensure passenger rights were upheld.

The snow disruption left thousands of passengers stranded across the country. Airports such as Heathrow cancelled hundreds of flights. Mr Watson also suggested that in future cases, responsibility for compensation might be shared between the airlines and airport operators.





# Historic victory for disabled people as EU signs up to UN convention - Lynne

**The decision by the EU to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is a landmark victory in the struggle of Europe's 65 million disabled people for equal rights, says Lib Dem Euro MP Liz Lynne.**

The decision confirmed in January is the first time the EU has become a party to an international human rights treaty. Disability campaigners including the West Midlands MEP have long been lobbying for the EU as a whole to back the UN treaty, which sets out clear minimum standards on political, civil and economic rights for people with disabilities.

Liz Lynne, First Vice President of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee, was the Parliament's Rapporteur for a Report on the Convention and has lobbied strongly for it to be ratified by the EU and all member states in the years since.

She said: "This decision marks a huge victory for Europe's 65 million disabled people. The Convention also obliges EU bodies to produce regular reports on what practical steps they are taking to stop dis-

crimination and help disabled people enjoy their rights to work, education, travel and healthcare and so on, just like anyone else.

"Though all 27 EU member states have signed the convention, only 16 have ratified it. It is very good news that the Belgian presidency decided not to wait for the remaining 11 states to complete the process, which could take years.

"This decision is also a massive boost to the campaign to persuade all EU member governments to pass laws to protect disabled people from discrimination in buying goods and services. In some countries the level of discrimination is still appalling."



## Ireland faces most unpredictable election in recent history

ELDR member party **Fianna Fail** face a difficult election in Ireland, as polls suggest that they will be punished for presiding over the banking crisis, which was proportionately far worse than in the UK.

As we go to press Brian Cowen is due to dissolve parliament for an election probably in late February, after seeking opposition cooperation to pass the Finance Bill to expedite the EU bail-out fund. We wish new Fianna Fail leader **Micheal Martin** well in the election and hope that the party can confound the polls or re-group as an effective opposition.

## Will Egypt follow Tunisia with revolution?

**Phil Bennion writes:** The popular movements for change in North Africa seem to be borne out of a feeling of disempowerment rather than a desire for fundamentalism. Some commentators compare the situation with the fall of communist regimes in Europe in 1989/90, but this could be premature. At Eurofile we await comment from our LI sister parties in Tunisia and Egypt and will bring you a full report from an informed Liberal perspective in our next issue. We hope perhaps optimistically that democratic change can be won without further violence.

## Eurobonds could fund a green energy supergrid

European Commission President José Manuel Barroso has signalled to Euro-MPs the possibility of using Eurobonds to fund large renewable energy projects and supergrids that could help the Europe take advantage of its green energy potential.

Barroso was responding to a question from **former ALDE leader and South West MEP Graham Watson**, who has long advocated a "supergrid" to transfer renewable energy around Europe. Watson believes this will be good for the environment, consumers and security.

Commenting after his debate with President Barroso, Watson said: "The EU Energy Commissioner told the European Parliament that he needs 1000 billion euros over ten years for energy infrastructure to tackle the challenges of climate change and energy security.

"Eurobonds could raise a large chunk of this. If we are able to fund an energy-supergrid through Eurobonds, our green energy could be sold across Europe. This means jobs, cheaper bills and a cleaner environment, and it is something we could not achieve without the EU."

# Change that works for Europe & for you



# Lib Dem EuroFILE

News from LDEG Ideg.org Editor: Phil Bennion No 7 Jan/Feb 2011

Published by Phil Bennion for the Liberal Democrat European Group, Haunton Manor Farm, Haunton, Tamworth, Staffordshire. Design, sub-editing and typesetting by Ben Jephcott

## ELDR backs Eurofile

Edited by Phil Bennion, the Eurofile magazine is now supported by ELDR. It will appear six times a year every other month.

The Lib Dem European Group launched Eurofile in 2009 to fill a large perceived gap in the range of publications produced by the Liberal Democrats for activists and members. It has been so well received that it was included in the Lib Dems' successful bid to ELDR for political funding for 2011.

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