

GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

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The Hungarian Foreign Minister sets out the aims and objectives of Hungary's EU Presidency

Democracy

Jerzy Buzek on
its promotion
around the world

Foreign Policy

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discusses Brussels'
relationship with
Russia

Redevelopment

Danuta Huebner
outlines plans to
redevelop central
and eastern Europe

Environment

Gunther
Oettinger
lays out his
priorities



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Publisher
Matt Gokhool
matt.gokhool@governmentgazette.co.uk
020 7840 6061

Managing Director
Jonathan Lloyd
jonathan.lloyd@governmentgazette.co.uk
020 7840 6062

Editor
Marcus Papadopoulos
marcus.papadopoulos@governmentgazette.co.uk
020 7840 6095

Director of Government Relations
Darryl Howe
darryl.howe@governmentgazette.co.uk
020 7840 6074

Communications Manager
Steve Hayter
steve.hayter@governmentgazette.co.uk
020 7840 6097

Advertising Sales Manager
Boris Rogatchevski
boris.rogatchevski@governmentgazette.co.uk
020 7840 6098

Production Manager
Gemma Pritchard
gemma.pritchard@governmentgazette.co.uk
020 7840 6099

Subscriptions
subscriptions@governmentgazette.co.uk

GOVERNMENT GAZETTE

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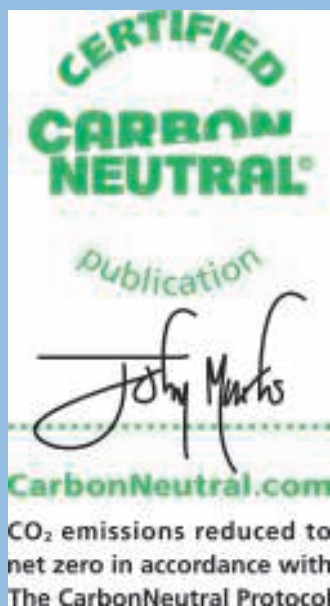
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Meeting the EU's priorities

Hungary is ready for 2011 as it is poised to take on the EU Presidency, says Hungarian Foreign Minister **János Martonyi**

Hungary will take over the tasks of the EU rotating presidency at a time of strategic importance. After long years of institutional debate and a period marked by urgent crisis-management measures, the European Union must at last define the instruments that will ensure its long-term economic and financial stability, and at the same time its competitiveness.

The first six months of 2011 will be decisive in this regard: this is the time for economic policy coordination and once the European Semester is introduced, we will start the implementation of the EU 2020 strategy and open the debate on the future of European policies fundamentally defining the EU—such as cohesion, agriculture, the further improvement of the internal market or new policies like common energy policy.

The priority of the Hungarian Presidency will be to harmonize the interests of all 27 member states and deliver final results on issues that dominate the EU's agenda. We are convinced that the European Union must preserve all those common values that have underlined its development up to the present, and which have so far contributed to strengthening solidarity and cohesion between the member states. Meanwhile, we should also turn to the future and focus on creating the instruments needed to face new challenges.

The main tasks will arise from the need to increase economic growth, employment, job creation and strengthen the EU's competitiveness at the global stage. The world is still passing through a rather vulnerable economic phase, where adequate solutions necessitate wide scale and tightly knit international co-operation. At a European level, the strengthening of financial markets' regulations and the enhanced coordination of national economic policies are in progress. We must point out that national measures should not increase protectionism, and free trade and investment should be upheld.

The aims of the Europe 2020 strategy to create more and better jobs, a greener economy and to foster education address the key factors of our competitiveness. We have the European Semester to be launched in March 2011 to strengthen fiscal discipline, even through sanctions, if necessary. These sanctions also have to be more effective than today, and must have a clear legal base. In order to contribute to the fiscal discipline of enhanced economic coordination, Hungary has implemented an outstanding budgetary correction this year, thus fulfilling the commitment of keeping the budget deficit under 3.8% of the GDP. We are also committed to decreasing the budget deficit to 3% of the GDP in 2011.

The role of old and new European policies must be discussed thoroughly in the upcoming period, as this will constitute the basis of the debate on the next multiannual financial framework of the Union. The debate on traditional values and the possible future of the common agricultural and cohesion policy will be of upmost importance during our presidency, while a common energy market will play a major role as well. Europe needs its own energy security. We have to abolish the existing gaps in order to create a common energy market, to strengthen infrastructure and to find solutions for community financing.



János Martonyi

We also have to be more unified and effective in our relations with third parties to diversify sources, routes and energy suppliers.

At the same time the EU should remain open to those neighbouring countries that are willing to undertake the necessary inner reforms to consolidate the fundamental European values. It is a matter of our credibility. It would be of great significance therefore, if the accession negotiations with Croatia were concluded during our presidency. We will do our utmost to promote the enlargement process regarding Turkey and the other candidate countries in the Western Balkan, but at the same time to ensure a substantial and meaningful cooperation with the members of the Eastern Partnership, too. The EU's role as a global actor has to be guaranteed. With the help of a well functioning European External Service, we might have the necessary preconditions to achieve this aim.

Apart from discussing big European dossiers on the agenda, we think it is very important for Europe to pay attention to the human factor as well as to values arising from the diversity of different communities, ideas, languages and cultures. Therefore the Hungarian Presidency shall give priority to such issues as demographic challenges, focus on families or offering viable European solution to Roma integration. We believe that diversity is the main source of that special creativity and intellectual richness which have characterised Europe for centuries and which are also indispensable in preserving our future competitiveness.

Nokia Siemens Networks

Railway solutions

Making trains the first choice for 21st century travel



Faced with unpredictable fuel prices and growing environmental concerns, governments and travelers around the world are taking a renewed interest in railways as a primary mode of local and regional transport. Authorities in the European Union, for example, have said that they want to see railways take a 30% share of the total EU passenger travel market within the next ten years, up from around 10% today.

For railway operators, achieving these objectives will require significant increases in capacity, speed and security. For train operators, it will mean providing a travel experience that compares favorably with every other mode of transport. Neither of these challenges can be met costeffectively through isolated initiatives and improvements: both demand an integrated, long-term approach to infrastructure and service evolution.

Global standards, local opportunities

As a pioneer and world leader in GSM-Railway (GSM-R), the global digital platform for railway voice and data communications, Nokia Siemens Networks has already helped 27 railway operators in 19 countries benefit from this long-term, end-to-end approach. In Europe, the Middle East, India, China and Australia, the company's proven GSM-R solutions are delivering standardized railway functionalities such as Group Call service or Emergency Call functions, in order to provide the highest operational safety for train drivers and the responsible controller. In addition GSM-R provides a platform for the new European Train Control System ETCS.

According to Johann Garstenauer, Head of Railway Solutions at Nokia Siemens Networks, this combination of global expertise and deep knowledge of railway standards is a direct result of the large number of projects that Nokia Siemens Networks has undertaken around the world, and its close cooperation with leading railway operators and suppliers. "This," he says, "makes Nokia Siemens Networks a highly competent partner for new rail communications projects, wherever they may be".



Johann Garstenauer

Platforms for innovation towards LTE

Today, Nokia Siemens Networks is building on these foundations with new solutions based not only on GSM-R but also on Broadband on trains, an on-board broadband platform that supports a rapidly growing suite of customer and staff applications. Playing a System Integrator role, the company works with third-party suppliers to deliver valuable operational functions such as remote security monitoring, enhanced ticketing and seat reservation services. But WLAN's additional bandwidth is also opening the way to a new generation of information and entertainment applications such as Internet and corporate Virtual Private Network access, video streaming and online gaming that can be used to attract new customers and improve the travel experience. And with Nokia Siemens Networks managing all the partner relationships, these high levels of innovation and customization can be delivered with the lowest possible level of risk.

All these solutions can be delivered via a variety of business models including joint ventures with national telecommunications carriers. But in every case, the objective is to help railway operators make the most of emerging business opportunities, while Nokia Siemens Networks takes care of the enabling technology. Together with standardization bodies Nokia Siemens Networks is shaping the future of Railway Communications towards LTE (Long Term Evolution).

www.nokiasiemensnetworks.com/rail





European Association of Historic Towns and Regions

Historic Cities Working Together in Europe

Heritage Europe was formed as the European Association of Historic Towns and Regions (EAHTR) by the Council of Europe in October 1999. Heritage Europe aims to promote the interests of Europe's historic cities through international cooperation between heritage organisations and historic towns - sharing experience and good practice and promoting vitality, viability and sustainable management of historic areas.

Heritage Europe has members in 30 European countries and through its membership arrangements represents over 1000 historic towns and cities. Dubrovnik is a full member and Poitiers is an applicant member of Heritage Europe. The Association's headquarters are in Norwich, UK.

Heritage Europe is committed to facilitating 'knowledge' transfer both at city and individual levels. We organise international Symposia; fund short 'secondments' for staff between member cities on key issues relevant to our work, organise study visits to member cities to share experience, provide funding information to members and help establish project

partnerships. We also participate in European projects such as those showcased below - HerO where Poitiers is a partner.

Heritage Europe produces good practice guidelines for local and regional authorities on topics relevant for historic urban areas. The first of these guidelines 'Investing in Heritage - a Guide to Successful Urban Regeneration' is the outcome of the INHERIT Interreg project. Guidelines on 'Sustainable Cultural Tourism in Historic Towns and Cities' is currently available and further guidelines on contemporary design in historic areas, the importance of the public realm and on flooding in historic centres are to follow.

We have recently produced, in partnership with the HerO partner cities, a campaigning paper - 'The Untapped Potential of Cultural Heritage - a catalyst for sustainable urban development and an internationally competitive Europe'. This makes the case for a strong urban dimension as part of EU Cohesion Policy with a special focus on cultural heritage and historic urban landscapes. It calls for support for and investment in integrated

and sustainable urban development to ensure Europe's historic towns and cities are attractive places to live, work and invest in.



City of Dubrovnik

Poitiers – Heritage Protection and Urban Revitalisation

Capital of the Poitou Charentes Region, with a rich history going back over 2000 years, Poitiers aspires to combine architectural heritage and the revival of its urban centre.

Built on a promontory as a defensive site, it has seen numerous battles crucial to the establishment of the French State with wider consequences for Europe and beyond. Heir to its medieval past, with narrow streets and 100 listed national monuments, including St Hilaire a UNESCO listed site forming part of the route to St James of Compostela, Poitiers is transforming its city's historic heart to give it a new attractiveness for residents, economic actors and tourists, through harmonious and responsible development.

By becoming part of the HerO network, Poitiers has sought to learn from other cities by sharing and disseminating good practice. Indeed, for many years, the city centre has been a major challenge for the municipality to make it an attractive place with which both residents and visitors alike can identify. But to achieve this, it has to remain a living, vibrant and inhabited place. One example of good practice analyzed by the HerO network was to maintain a social mix by developing social housing, including within listed buildings to avoid gentrification.

The example of Poitiers has highlighted the importance of planning regulations and heritage protection in order to preserve the historic features of the city, whilst at the same



Poitiers viewed from above the river Clain

time not preventing architectural innovation. Inhabitants must be the primary beneficiaries of this urban revitalization which should not force them to live in the outer suburbs, with the resulting increase in travel and use of space impacting on the environment. As the city ensures a social mix you can find all types of residents in the heart of Poitiers.

The second priority for Poitiers is the implementation of a range of actions to improve heritage accessibility for the disabled public. But Poitiers shares with other cities in the network the difficulty of achieving accessibility whilst still preserving the visual integrity of the historic built environment, an issue that the HerO project aims to address.

Dubrovnik - Regeneration of the Peline Playground

As a UNESCO World Heritage site, the architectural heritage of Dubrovnik has been increasingly subjected to various risk factors over the last two decades, which have emanated from the growing pressures of globalization and the rapidly expanding tourism industry.

In response, the planning processes for conservation zones within the historical core of Dubrovnik have placed an emphasis on incorporating modern principles of regeneration and sustainability in line with strict conservation practices and existing legislation.

In January 2010, Dubrovnik submitted the Peline Playground Project (2005-2009) to Europa Nostra's Sixth European Prize for Urban Public Space, which best

demonstrates how a viable interaction of urban public space and architectural heritage can be achieved through regeneration and community involvement.

Archaeological research probes on the only playground adjacent to the city ramparts and tower area revealed the existence of a major 16th c. metal foundry within the city walls without its equal in Europe.

The objective was to re-establish a modern playground and present the underlying archaeological zone to residents and tourists. Conservationists, archaeologists and architects were faced with a major challenge involving the suspension of the playground over the archaeological site using a steel-reinforced concrete floor. The archaeological site was kept intact



PELINE Playground Project – Minceta Tower – lower left

through the use of steel mesh runways suspended from the concrete ceiling/playground floor.

The tower connects two essentially very different users: residents and tourists that can easily access both the recreational playground and archaeological zone via the city ramparts and the tower area, whose three levels now offer tourist information, club locker room and sanitary facilities.

The Peline Playground has visibly improved the quality of life in the historical centre, promoting sport and cultural heritage to residents

and tourists. It also offers a venue for holding theatrical and musical performances, as well as outdoor educational and recreational classes for school children.

The Peline Playground project presents the successful creation of a modern, accessible urban space that blends well with the surrounding architectural heritage, while preserving an extremely valuable archaeological park.

Further Information

Heritage Europe and its member cities and networks and for copies of our publications see: www.historic-towns.org or contact Brian Smith, Secretary General on bsmith@historic-towns.org

Poitiers and the HerO Project see www.urbact.eu/hero or contact Caroline Meriaud, Europe Officer – caroline.MERIAUD@agglo-poitiers.fr

City of Dubrovnik and the PELINE Project contact Biserka Simatovic, Senior Advisor for Capital Projects and EU Funds – bsimatovic@dubrovnik.hr

Hungary must seize the historic opportunity before it



By Edit Herczog MEP

Is it destined to succeed or fail? Based on public statements, defined priorities, statistics on administrative preparedness, the domestic and foreign political climate – especially the global economic trends – it would be too early today to even form a prognosis on how the international public opinion is going to evaluate the upcoming Hungarian Presidency of the European Council in the middle of 2011, and also, how we Hungarians are going to look back on these six months. In this article I am going to argue that if the government works alongside a clearly defined strategy, and the strictly scheduled implementation is coupled with careful diplomacy, then there is a good chance that the entire Central-Eastern European region is going to benefit from the Hungarian presidency. However, to achieve this, the Hungarian government will require not only a deep understanding of the European integration logic, and a joint strategy, but also, a willingness for consensus within the Hungarian political arena.

It is becoming more and more obvious to the general public that the Hungarian presidency will not only have a positive impact on the economy (for example, the preparation of the 2014-2020 budget is going to take place during this period), but it also might strengthen the political image of Hungary for many years to come, and thus might lead to a more stable position during EU negotiations. So, what are the opportunities for the region and the European economic recovery for the Hungarian Presidency?

Central-Eastern Europe can contribute to combating the European economic crisis and thus benefit from the actions aimed at emerging from the crisis, if it realises as soon as possible that EU membership is an advantage, rather than a disadvantage. It is not only about the joint spending of 1% of Europe's GDP – this is just the icing on the cake – the cake itself is the European internal market, and we can be a part of it.

As a politician in the field of energy, I welcome the fact that energy security plays an important role among the presidential priorities, and that Hungary is planning to increase the Central –European cohesion and cooperation in the field of joint energy infrastructure, even though the steps taken towards these objectives may still be immature and delayed. From this aspect it is of great importance that Budapest started negotiations with Warsaw in time, since Poland is going to continue the work started by Hungary in the second half of 2011. However, in my opinion, in order to pacify the European public, it would be better to discuss concrete plans and steps, based on a joint Central-Eastern European strategy.

The issue of the impending extension of the Schengen area, the acceleration of the West-Balkan accession cannot

'Hungary is planning to increase the Central –European cohesion and cooperation in the field of joint energy infrastructure'

be avoided, since these are going to take place during the Hungarian Presidency. The accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen area could strengthen the common interests and joint approach of the CEE countries.

It is also important that the government is committed to the review of the European Roma strategy. As a result of the contradictory events in France, Roma integration came once again into the spotlight; if there is success in accelerating this issue, it might give a strong character to the Hungarian presidency. A balanced European growth is impossible without the elimination of the social exclusion of millions of European citizens. Politically, it would be of great benefit if the first steps were taken during the presidency of a CEE country. From this aspect, it would already be a step ahead, if the Council applied the content of the Parliament's resolution of March 2010.

An even more important question is, whether Hungary will be able – in this relatively short period of time – to start processes that utilise global changes to generate European growth. There is a revolution in production. Global economy today is all about achieving the cheapest and most reliable energy supply, and producing goods with modern, innovative methods. Therefore, economic governance has to create a balance between competition and cooperation that serves a globally competitive European economy. What is clear today is that the future economy uses low carbon technologies, and is digital and mobile. Hungary has to work hard during its presidency to impress this upon its strategic partners, the other CEE countries lagging behind in this field, since this is their only chance to contribute to Europe's growth, and realise their full potentials. Otherwise, in spite of all the benefits provided by legislation, the idea of a one-speed Europe will remain a dream.

DANUBE LIMES

UNESCO World Heritage Project



The Roman Empire used the Danube River as a natural barrier against the outside world and the Roman frontier structures have left their mark on today's landscape. From Bavaria to the Black Sea, their remains (of fortresses, fortlets and watchtowers), whether visible or not, are often in remarkable shape, well integrated into the landscape and without doubt deserve greater attention. Francesco Bandarin, the Director of the World Heritage Centre in Paris stated 'The frontier, once a great divide, now forms a unifying element in today's world'. The Roman Limes was the first fortified transportation corridor and gave rise to vibrant societies along its course, which is why it should survive as a historical witness for future generations.



This impressive archaeological landscape is part of the single largest monument of cultural heritage stretching across Europe and around the Mediterranean Sea. In 2005, the World Heritage Committee approved its inscription as a serial, trans-national World Heritage site entitled the 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire'. This means that the individual countries that share sections of the Roman Limes can join step by step. Three significant artificial barriers in the United Kingdom and Germany are already inscribed as part of the World Heritage. This site will now be extended into the countries along the Danube, potentially including 10 more countries and covering a length of more than 2,800 kilometers.

The Hungarian National Office of Cultural Heritage (KOH), co-financed by the Central Europe Program, is a key player in initiating and leading the project for the sustainable preservation and protection of the joint heritage of the Danube Limes as part of the UNESCO World Heritage. Together with the Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic (PUSR) and with partner institutions in Hungary (the University of Pecs [PTE] and the city of Paks), Germany (the German Limes Commission [DLK]), Austria (the Research Institute of Austrian History [IOG]) and Poland (the Antiquity of South Eastern Europe Research Centre, Warsaw University [CAR]), it is working towards a joint UNESCO nomination by both Hungary and Slovakia in 2012.

After defining a general concept of a Roman river frontier, identifying its main features and harmonizing various national aspirations, the nomination process started with selecting the most relevant sites in Hungary and Slovakia to include on the UNESCO Tentative List, accepted by the UNESCO Committee in July 2009. The coordination work concentrated on general mapping standards of sites and common solutions for the definition of core and buffer zones.



Fieldwork, aerial and geophysical surveys, archival work and excavations were performed in Hungary (on 44 sites) and Slovakia (on 2 sites) to close existing gaps in knowledge about the selected sites. Negotiations with local and regional stakeholders were supported by events to raise awareness, including exhibitions and public lectures. All of the partners are cooperating in developing the criteria for a long-term preservation concept. The up-dating of the Management Plan for the Upper German-Raetian Limes World Heritage site provided an excellent opportunity to discuss and develop a sustainable management structure for the future of the Danube Limes.

This transnational cooperation project is financed within the framework of the Culture and Tourism Priority of the CENTRAL EUROPE program.

For more details see: <http://www.danube-limes.eu>

Contact:

Dr. Tamas Fejerdy (vice-president)
KOH - National Office of Cultural Heritage
Tancsics Mihaly u. 1, H - 1014 Budapest
e-mail: tamas.fejerdy@koh.hu; tel. + 361 2254 958

Top right: Map of the Danube Limes, top left: Acquincum municipium, middle left: Roman galley on the Danube.

The malignant links between terrorism and organised crime

By Agnes Hankiss MEP

The time when we could define terrorism as a partial and eventual social phenomenon, that could be left to the security services and police force to fight, against have long since gone. Terrorism differentiates itself from any other criminal act in terms of ideological or political motivation. Terrorism expands beyond national borders and continents; so counter-terrorism cannot be too limited with regards to the collection of information and the scope and depth of analysis. So the removal of duplicated organisational responsibilities is key for effective counter-terrorism from an operational perspective.

Posterior analysis of the most tragic terrorist acts of the last decades have concluded that most crimes could have been thwarted if information and data analysis by intelligence services and police forces had been channelised in a centre rather than conducting it in a decentralised and duplicated way as it actually happened. As a matter of fact, it is high time for establishing a fusion mechanism and duly corresponding fusion which centres not just on EU-level, but also on national counter-terrorism as it is often urged by Gilles de Kerchove, the EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator. The mission of such fusion centres is to make information sharing possible in a structured way. A European network of fusion centres would contribute to a more efficient continent-wide fight which would be endorsed by an updated EU Counter-terrorism strategy.

While certain countries are faced with the challenge of terrorist groups providing financial background for themselves, other countries are used for illegal arms trafficking, transiting dual-use goods and technologies and other controlled items. Maintaining terrorist groups costs a lot of money so one of the most efficient ways to combat terrorism is to stem its financing. The way international terrorist groups finance themselves is getting more and more sophisticated day by day. One of the areas where more focus is needed is the use of non-governmental organisations for the purpose of money laundering or even financing of terrorist groups.

There are known NGOs that deal with collection and delivery of humanitarian aid with a history of involvement in terrorist acts. Much more transparency is required regarding the financing of such organisations. Today, terrorist groups are “smart” enough to find the loopholes in the local as well as international legal systems for easily covering their real operations.

The way terrorist groups, especially Al Qaeda, operate has changed over the time. They have grown from a largely centralised group to an international network of local/regional “franchise” groups that operate all across the world. These local groups are embedded in the local societies and are very often maintainers of educational and welfare systems. These countries are usually very poor with hardly any public services. They are the weakest links of the world: failing or failed states and this is what terrorist organisations leverage. The EU, as the world’s largest development aid contributor, must play a key role in helping these countries. We should better utilise the EU’s development capabilities for the sake of the security of our continent and the world. The era of strict distinction between development money and funds labelled for security and foreign policy should come to an end and also in this field, the EU should unite its forces primarily for the interest of its citizens. It would make sense to earmark development aids for increasing our security. The practical dimension on the field would be the active involvement of the European External Action Service in the affected regions.

There are a number of reasons why the continuous evolution of terrorist methods must be followed by proportional evolution of counter-



Agnes Hankiss

terrorism strategies in terms of both willingness and capabilities. Continuous mapping is a must, because forms and structures of terrorism keep changing. Besides the example above, we could name the recruitment and training of lone-wolves via the internet from youngsters without a prior terrorism-related, let alone criminal record. Another example of exponential threat is the fact that it has become a priority for terrorists to develop CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) capabilities. Terrorists’ strive for getting CBRN-capacities would most probably lead to a real gain of capabilities through channels of international organised crime networks. From South-American cocaine routes to the arms trafficking in the Balkans as well as the Russian and Russian-speaking organised crime groups – all pose a serious threat both directly and indirectly.

It is rather a paradox that the most ideological form of crime cooperates with the least ideological and most “utilitarian” one. In the future we will need an answer to the question as to exactly how and at which channels organised crime and terrorism are interconnected. Europol, with its new mandate, could play a key role in this regard.

Szolnok – the City of County Rank



Szolnok, a City of County Rank, lies in the centre of the Great Hungarian Plain, 100 km south-east of Budapest, at the confluence of the Tisza and Zagyva Rivers. Now populated by almost 80,000, Szolnok first appears on record in 1075.

Today Szolnok is one of Hungary's most dynamically developing towns - a hub for water, air, road and rail transport. It is the centre for railway engineering and repair, which employs thousands of people along with the strong service and commercial sectors.

Facing serious problems caused by its many factories closing after the economic and political changes in the 1990s, Mayor Ferenc Szalay adapted Szolnok to the new conditions by establishing the Szolnok Industrial Park in 1999. Favourably located, today it employs over 1,000 people and is easily accessible by road and rail. A railway line surrounds the Industrial Park and a loading track inside connects it to a freight yard and a Logistics Centre.

Receiving a goods train from Shanghai every week, the Logistics Centre reloads the goods and despatches these to their final destination in several European countries. It has adequate storage facilities, serves the firms operating in the Industrial Park and is connected to road and rail transport.

The most significant of these firms are Eagle Ottawa (US), Segura (Spain) and Stadler, the Swiss railway carriage manufacturer, whose new plant in Szolnok attracted a Hungarian rolling stock repair company to Szolnok. Many SMEs operate in Szolnok's other districts - these are also important to its government.

The Industrial Park's exploitable area is 96 ha. 53 ha of this are already occupied by local businesses. 43 ha of free space are currently available for investors. This will be further extended to 300 ha. The entire Industrial Park is served by adequate infrastructure and caters for investors' every need.

The Tisza is navigable for 650 - 1000 tonne ships. A 200 ha airfield serves smaller aircraft while the nearby air force base accommodates larger passenger aircraft. The Industrial Park is only a 15-minute drive from Szolnok's centre but far enough to provide a good quality of life for Szolnok's inhabitants.

Mayor Ferenc Szalay considers his main tasks as supporting culture and sports and building an attractive and liveable city. Kossuth Square, Szolnok's main square was renovated and converted into a pedestrian precinct. The Rose Garden, a new leisure park, is being built close to the riverbank.

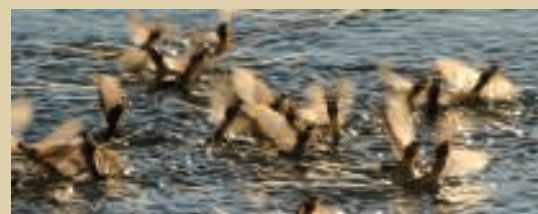
Every June Szolnok boasts a unique display as mayflies fly over the river during their one-day lives.

Szolnok's current most remarkable investment is the construction of the Tiszavirág (Mayfly) - Central Europe's longest pedestrian and cycle bridge. When completed, it will connect Szolnok's centre with Tiszaliget, Szolnok's lungs. Tiszaliget also hosts the new education building of Szolnok College, a renovated football stadium and a new artificial grass field.

Szolnok's government is committed to creating a clean and tranquil environment for its inhabitants, provide modern and secure jobs for them and develop Szolnok into a significant location in Hungary.



Ferenc Szalay,
Mayor of Szolnok



Contact: Anikó Magyar Tel: +36 56 503-821 Email: magyara@ph.szolnok.hu

Tackling vitamin D deficiency in Europe

Policy-makers need to address Europe's growing health deficiency, contends Hungarian MEP, **Janos Ader**

It happened by accident that I discovered the problem of the widespread vitamin D deficiency in Europe. However, after recognising the alarming data, I did not hesitate to step up as a politician and as a member of the European Parliament's Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee to help the scientific, medical and patient communities in their efforts to put the issue on the European political agenda.

To set the scene, we only have to list the shocking new facts connected to the so-called 'sunshine vitamin', which was discovered in the 1930s. One of them is that at least 50 per cent of the European population is deficient in vitamin D.

If we look at the consequences of the lack of vitamin D, we may tell from our childhood that it is one of the greatest risks for bone diseases and muscle weakness. However, it is also a key preventive factor in the overall human health. As it is showed by a growing body of exciting new science, vitamin D deficiency is linked to a wide range of diseases, such as osteoporosis, heart diseases, many forms of cancer (e.g. colorectal and prostate), diabetes, asthma, multiple sclerosis and the list goes on.

Finally, from an economic point of view, as the recent Grant study shows, sufficient provision of the population with vitamin D would lower the health costs in 17 European countries by an unbelievable 187 billion Euros - with only 10 billion of additional costs.

It is common sense that prevention is always cheaper than the treatment itself. It flows from the above, that addressing vitamin D deficiency is a clear healthcare obligation. Actually, any health issue in which 50 per cent of the European population is concerned poses a clear opportunity for health policy. So what should be done?

It is obvious that education and awareness-raising on vitamin D are the most important tasks, not only among the population but also among healthcare-professionals and policy-makers in order to spread the knowledge. The role of vitamin D is still an unknown quantity to many, including the most vulnerable in society, the elderly, young children and pregnant women.

In fact, the body itself produces vitamin D when exposed to the sun, so a daily dose of 10 to 20 minutes could already help cut deficiency. Cheese, butter, margarine, fortified milk, fatty fish and fortified cereals are food sources of vitamin D. Linked to our modern lifestyles, however, Europeans expose



Janos Ader MEP

less than five per cent of their skin to the sun; we do not pay enough attention to our nutrition, not to mention those Eastern European countries, where fish consumption is traditionally less than half the EU average - just to list a few reasons behind the widespread vitamin D deficiency in Europe.

Consumers should be enabled to make the right choice during their everyday life, thus making the first little steps in prevention. As regards nutritional policy, with some changes in regulations concerning food additions, vitamin D supplements and enriched food products would be strategic options and would offer cheap and safe alternatives to sunshine and fatty fish. There is good evidence that the numbers of bone fractures can be easily decreased by more than 20 per cent, by the simple supplementation of 800-1000 units of vitamin D per day. Of course, there is a need to invest in further research in order to model European food and vitamin D intake data and to determine the safe and effective intake of vitamin D.

Now we have a promising opportunity to avoid serious and expensive problems by safe and relatively cheap measures. For me, as a politician this was the most important message to be taken; hence I was delighted to host an international conference on vitamin D in the European Parliament in March this year. It was an unique opportunity to bring together representatives of the scientific, medical and patient communities, as well as policy-makers, to highlight these facts. We all agreed that there is an urgent need for policy-makers to act so as to bring and keep the topic higher on the European political agenda.

'At least 50 per cent of the European population is deficient in vitamin D'

NGOs are the pillars of the liveable Europe

Citizens of the East European countries promoted enthusiastically joining the European Union. They have seen the pledge of democracy and the possibility of reaching higher living standards sooner in joining the EU. Is it visible after the economic crisis that the 20 years that has passed since leaving behind the autocratic regimes and having spent years within the EU were not enough to bring sweeping changes in the East European countries' societies and economics. The problems of these countries are rooted in their histories, such as the late development of the middle class in the region, the inherited economical situation after the changes of former centrally-planned economic systems and the governments' not quite adequate responses to the global and European challenges.

The social changes and modernization of the Eastern regions would be necessary for the success of the new EU policies. The Digital Agenda promises new markets and technologies while half of the population of Europe, or rather a significant part of the Eastern European population remained stuck at the other side of the digital gap. It is hard to talk about tele-medicine and e-government to those who have never seen an internet site and unable to imagine what benefits the social networking sites can bring.

Modernization, realization of higher civilization and cultural standards in Eastern and Southern countries would succeed only if more EU programs were launched stimulating not only technological change but also social renewal. Not only big development programmes are needed in Eastern Europe but a great deal of small programmes that reach wide range of social ranks. Governments and local governments are unable to give appropriate respond to the European level challenges while they are fighting for the monetary and economical stabilization. Therefore civil organisations have to get a greater and an equalizer role in social modernization.

The key of Europe's success is to win over more consumers, users to the new technologies, increasing the domestic market. Therefore eInclusion Programmes should be continued and not stopped; these programmes mean the engine of the extension of the market. Making use of higher quality services of modern economy requires more skills, mentoring and higher living standards. Inclusion of people living in remote geographic areas, aging generation, needy and unemployed people is not a question of technology today. It is a question of awareness raising, mentoring and learning. Making prepared for the new age is not only the task of the national institutions but mainly of those local and national organisations, as well as NGOs struggling with lack of sources, who keep their fingers on the artery of the society, who are the link between the governments, the society, the economy, the scientific field and the EU institutions. It is not the enterprises and economic common interest groups who are able to see the opportunities of society but those who will never have enough money to travel to Brussels and therefore their voices reach Brussels only as a whisper.

As the illustration of Europe's Digital Competitiveness Report "Regular internet use in EU regions" shows the digital divide along north-east and east-west direction lines. Civil organisations can support the extensive spread of the use of digital services, along with the Digital Agenda. The new technologies coming out day by day require new skills, therefore the digital divide is always being reproduced on a higher level.

Inforum would like to contribute to realising that citizens of Hungary and of all EU member countries have the chance to maintain similar living standards to the citizens of the most developed states.

Gabor Dombi
Inforum, Hungary



Forum of Hungarian IT Organizations for Information Society (INFORUM)

www.inforum.org.hu

e-mail: dombi.inforum@gmail.com, farago.inforum@gmail.com

Mobile: +36 20 95 44 176, +36 30 63 50 171

Address: 6. (2.em. 3.) Jurányi u., 1027 Budapest, Hungary



Hungary energised for the task ahead

By Dr Eamonn Butler

University of Glasgow, and Dr Csaba Törő, Hungarian Institute of International Affairs

Energy has long been recognised as a matter of high concern for the European Union. This was reflected in the joint programme of the 2010-2011 EU Presidency Trio (Spain, Belgium and Hungary) where energy was presented as a common theme linking all three presidencies. As this trio comes to an end with the Hungarian Presidency which runs from January to June 2011, the spotlight continues to shine on energy matters with the issue of Europe's aging and fragmented energy infrastructure being identified as a priority action area. This is an issue that Hungary, as a landlocked country with limited natural resources and high reliance on energy imports, is keen to see developed. Hungary recognises that holding the EU presidency offers it an opportunity to further not only its own national interest in this matter but to promote the wider central and east European desire to complete a important aspect of their economic integration with the rest of Europe.

The preliminary priorities outlined in the EU Energy Action Plan (2011-2020) indicate that the north-south interconnections in central, eastern and south-eastern Europe are considered as one of the focal points of planned improvements. The Hungarian government firmly supports this strategic priority stressing that the accomplishment of new connections between the electricity grids and gas transport networks in the four Visegrád (V4) countries (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Czech Republic) as well as other states across south-eastern Europe and the Baltic region constitutes an indispensable requisite for the creation of regional energy markets and greater security of supplies. The construction of energy pathways across the V4 area could also form vital links in the chain of interconnections from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea. This is something that Hungary is likely to promote with the view to its fellow Visegrád state, Poland, continuing to support the position during the second half of 2011 when it takes over the EU presidency.

In recent years there has been a clear development in the

The European Energy Programme for Recovery was conceived to support projects that strengthen the European gas pipeline network.



'Hungary recognises the importance of energy for the whole of Europe'

consolidated practice of the central and east European EU members with regard to energy matters. The most recent example being the Budapest V4+ Energy Summit held in February 2010. The EU presidency offers a new platform to enhance this consolidated practice and Hungary recognises that the co-ordination and representation of central and east European energy interests within the context of its own and future EU presidencies provides the opportunity for significantly increasing the successful promotion of regional priorities within a broader European perspective.

With respect to the intra-European side of EU energy infrastructure development, Hungary views the expected improvements in the connections between national components of the current system of energy networks as crucial, not only for the expected benefits of reinforced security of supply, but also from the perspective of market functionality. New bonds between separate national energy markets could dissolve the existing isolation of "energy islands" within the EU. Enhanced connectivity between national grids and pipeline networks could effectively contribute to the creation of a properly functioning integrated system of energy markets as another manifestation or stage in the evolution of a Single European Energy Network.

In an era of economic uncertainty, the financial demands of building this new energy networks have also not gone unnoticed. Fully aware of the reluctance of private market participants to invest in costly infrastructure projects with less than firmly predictable profitability, Hungary supports the increased use of public resources for that purpose. It will use its presidency to push for national and EU funds to be funnelled to energy infrastructure projects aimed at increasing both security and competitiveness in energy matters across the Union.

In pursuit of the shared benefits of energy infrastructure developments, Hungary could support various solutions; either the creation of new separate EU financial sources assigned to energy policy purposes or the use of already available financial instruments such as cohesion or structural funds in an innovative redirection or redefinition of regional development. The European Energy Programme for Recovery (adopted in 2009) was conceived to support projects that strengthen the European gas pipeline network and represents an innovative and combined approach to the provision of financial underpinning of infrastructure projects in the energy sector. This is the sort of project that Hungary sees as an instructive example of the targeted use of EU sources for improvements in the structural conditions of shared energy interests.

Although a matter of great national interest, Hungary recognises the importance of energy for the whole of Europe. It also recognises that as leading central European state and upcoming host of the EU presidency it possesses a unique and high profile opportunity to promote a central European perspective on the EU's future energy infrastructure, because at the end of the day central Europe will form the crossroads of that energy network.



Zalaegerszeg- the city of prosperous investments

Zalaegerszeg is one of the most dynamically developing cities of western Hungary. Lying among picturesque hills, having 60,000 inhabitants, this place is not only the seat of Zala county, but it is an essential touristic center, too, Lake Balaton, Slovenia, Austria and Croatia being nearby, as well as having unique thermal spas.

The earlier dominant food- and light industry gave place to the extremely developed machine and electronics industry, the former producing basically for the German market. Not to mention the essential role of the traditional oil industry, the financial service sector and the tourist industry. The composition of Zalaegerszeg's local government is stable, having been governed by the same coalition since 1994. As a result, the city's budget is balanced, it is not indebted, moreover, there is room for major developments every year.

Throughout the past years, with EU assistance, the railroad crossing the city has been relocated, as a result of which Zalaegerszeg has joined the pan-European railway corridor number V, the selective waste disposal program and the sewerage project has been completed, due to which the city has become one of the few places in Hungary that have the most modern communal infrastructure. Right now, partly with EU assistance, a major drinking-water project and the reconstruction of the downtown are taking place, already with visible results.

In addition to the major projects, in terms of the proportional development of the city, the modernization of Zalaegerszeg's main roads has been started, several streets have been reconstructed, new bicycle roads and parking lots have been built. Investing in the future, playing fields and playgrounds have been set up, one of which is the "Bóbita" playground - unique in Central and Eastern Europe - , where handicapped children can play together with the healthy. Due to the "One doctor - one surgery" program, all General Practitioners' surgeries have been modernized and fully equipped, also the city operates a highly extended social institutional and social fund system. The "Generations Together" program makes it possible for engaged couples to get wedding gifts, financial support to buy a condominium, and a baby package, for children starting school to get free student's books, for students to get various grants and for the old with financial difficulties to get some extra pension from the city. In addition, the "Egerszeg Card" is still very popular, which –after being redeemed – entitles the inhabitants to various discounts, no wonder the 15,000th card was assigned last year.

An important endeavor of the leaders of the city is to create new workplaces in addition to the existing ones. To make it happen, the fourth industrial park has been set up lately, where a special incubator house helps the settling enterprises. New enterprises are also motivated by the 95-point investment program, the outstanding facilities, the well-trained employees and the fact that in Zalaegerszeg for them the only local tax to pay is the local trade tax.

The most important goal for the near future - related to the "Széchenyi Program" starting in January - is to achieve the city development program that includes the followings: to assist the local and new enterprises, to reform vocational training, to develop institutions and to continue reconstructing public utilities. The eco-city project is also crucial. This project aims at Zalaegerszeg becoming a city where high-quality drinking water is available for generations ahead, where public transport uses bio-gas generated at sewage dumps, where more and more selective waste is being recycled and where energy service uses the city's thermal sources. At last but not least, the M9 dual carriageway project plans to solve the problem of the missing access-road, making Zalaegerszeg also possible to strengthen its economic relations with the near cities and counties in the region.



Promoting democracy: Today Europe, tomorrow the world

Everyone the world over is entitled to live in a democratic society and to choose their government, and the European Parliament is leading the way, says its President, **Jerzy Buzek**

The European Parliament is committed to foster and consolidate democracy worldwide and to make our efforts in promoting democracy more effective and consistent. It is our belief that democratic values have universal appeal and that democracy is a system of governance to which people the world over are entitled.

We are convinced that people around the world want to live in a democratic order and that they are entitled to choose their government and contribute to the decision-making within their society. We know from our continent's experience that democracy can contribute to lasting reconciliation, to material well-being and solidarity.

Germany has just celebrated the 20th anniversary of its unification. The yearning of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe for freedom and democracy, coupled with their rejection of despotism, has helped Europe to unite peacefully and democratically. I am proud to be the first President of a European institution to come from Central and Eastern Europe. The position brings with it great responsibilities.

Only 20 years ago no one would have believed that a Pole would become President of the European Parliament or that Lithuania would hold the presidency of an organisation such as this. Ten years ago we were already halfway along the road towards the European Union. Today, we are part of that Union.

Some may say that we have achieved our goal. I believe, however, that this success has brought with it a shared responsibility for promoting democracy throughout the world.

I am the President of the most democratic of all the European institutions. Our resolutions and our diplomatic efforts help to support democracy wherever it is in need of support. The Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, which we set up more than 20 years ago, backs up those efforts. The Members of the European Parliament play an active part in promoting



Jerzy Buzek

'I am proud to be the first President of a European institution to come from Central and Eastern Europe'

democracy around the world.

This history of a once divided continent and the experience of generations of Europeans living under dictatorship and ultimately triumphing over it, underpins our commitment to support peaceful democratic change and also to assist those committed to democracy, human rights and good governance beyond the EU's borders.

We believe that while social justice is never a certainty, democracy contributes significantly to achieving a fair balance between different peoples and nations and between different groups within individual societies, to prevent and resolve conflict.

We recognise that democracy cannot

be imposed from the outside, which is why our support should focus on assisting - in cooperation with other democratic nations - existing and emerging local efforts and at strengthening the capacity of governments, parliaments and other state institutions, together with civil society organisations and other actors committed to democratic values.

We value and support the essential oversight role of democratically elected citizens' representatives and thus are dedicated to enhancing the involvement of parliaments in developing more inclusive societies, eradicating poverty, building functioning public services and creating a more democratic and peaceful international order. EU democracy support is aimed at democratisation, as well as at sustaining democracy and making it work for the people.

Institution building remains an essential element in transferring the rhetoric of democracy and human rights into practical reality.

The democratisation process is not only about holding elections. What is equally important is to ensure that an entire society - associations, trade unions and, most important of all, parliaments - has a real say. Without strong representative institutions, able to carry the aspirations and expectations of the citizens into state's policies, democracy will remain weak and incomplete. Parliaments have a unique role to play in this. It is in the parliaments that different political groups, different political visions, come together. It is in the parliaments, where the democratically elected representatives of different social groups, from different regions, come together. It is the members of parliaments who are the voice of the entire society.

I must also repeat the European Parliament's commitment to improving the credibility, coherence and effectiveness of the EU's democracy support and call on all actors within the EU to quickly implement the Agenda for action on Democracy Support in EU external relations.



Municipality of Celje
Trg celjskih knezov 9,
3000 Celje, Slovenia
www.celje.si
mestna.obcina.celje@celje.si

Celje – a city looking forward to the future

Celje, Slovenia's third largest city, is the administrative, economic, commercial, educational, cultural, medical, sports, and trade hub of the Celje region. Extending over an area of 95 square kilometres, the Municipality of Celje is populated by 50,000.



Fuelled by bold plans, successful projects, and knowledge, Celje's pace of development is the fastest among Slovenia's cities. It has demonstrated its ability to attract capital and channel it into a number of projects with a common denominator: improvement of infrastructure and quality of life.

Particularly in resolving its environmental issues, Celje has been a leader in the country as it successfully tackled the key environment problems in the city and the region. Central waste water treatment plant Celje, Regional Waste Management Centre,

and district heating plant are three key projects supported by European funds, which brought together the 24 municipalities of the Savinjska region, working together towards a modern and environmentally sustainable solution for waste management in the next three to five decades.

In addition to revitalising the environment, Celje invested in communal infrastructure for development of economy and entrepreneurship. A formerly abandoned industrial zone stretching over 4.1 hectares has been rehabilitated and dedicated to provide business opportunities and to create new jobs while contributing to sustainable development.

Looking to provide a clean, well preserved, and pleasant living environment, Celje adopted a comprehensive and carefully planned development approach that also includes subtle management of cultural heritage and tourist sights. The Old Castle, Celje's tourist landmark, sees 70,000 visitors per year - the contemporary and aesthetically pleasing refurbishment has only added to its appeal. The magnificent Prince's Mansion invites the visitors to the charming Old Town, impressing them with remains of a Roman road that it treasures.



Šmartinsko Lake, located just a few kilometres from the city, has a vast potential for development of tourism and leisure activities. A strategic approach is gradually turning Slovenia's largest artificial lake into a tourist landmark. European regional development funds have been secured to construct pathways and cycling lanes around the lake and its ecological recovery is already in progress. Moreover, the new National Spatial Planning Act provides the conditions for further progress of development centres around the lake. In addition, the project includes building an event centre, natural public baths, holiday cottages and a hotel, golf course around the Prešnik Mansion, and development of countryside tourism and eco farming. Thus far, Celje Municipality has created a solid development platform and it invites domestic and foreign investors to reap the business opportunity offered by this unique tourist destination.

The ideas, knowledge, and resourcefulness drive Celje's development in all areas while it maintains its charm of an open and friendly European city. Driven by a clear vision, such formula for success allows Celje to rank with other successful European cities – cities caring for their urban environment and their residents, cities that bring together their stakeholders to prove they can be important players in the development of the broad European area. That is why Celje is a city that is looking forward to the future.

Financial supervisory reform: a significant step forward for Europe

By Sylvie Goulard MEP,
in collaboration with Heather Bailey

Following the submission of the De Larosière report, and more than a year after the European Commission's original proposal, legislative texts have been adopted. These texts were voted by Europe's finance ministers at the ECOFIN meeting of 7th September and by the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 22nd September, following negotiations between the Parliament, the Commission and the Council.

This is an important stage in the evolution of financial supervisory regulation which should be neither over or underestimated. Before the crisis, financial supervision was executed at a national level with simple coordination at European level. From 1st January 2011 four European authorities will exist, at both a macro and microeconomic level, with substantial supervisory powers. The European Parliament has had to fight hard to maintain even the level of European supervision proposed in the De Larosière report; for some governments a return to 'business as usual' would ultimately have been sufficient. Although some battles have been won work remains to be done, for example increasing the powers of these European authorities as regards the supervision of cross-border entities such as credit rating agencies and clearing houses.

The creation of the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB) endows the European Union with a macroeconomic supervisory body for the first time. The ESRB, made up of central bankers, will be responsible for detecting risks which threaten the financial system - for example, a real estate bubble - and to raise the alarm about this potential risk. Thanks to the insistence of the European Parliament the ESRB will be presided

'Every step of the way the European Parliament has battled with the Member States to put in place effective European financial supervision'



Sylvie Goulard MEP

over by the president of the European Central Bank (ECB), a well recognised and respected figure whose voice carries political weight. On the other hand, the Member States demanded, in contrast to the wishes of the Parliament and the Commission, that it should be them that declare a 'state of emergency'. Once an emergency is declared, the European authorities are responsible for ordering national regulators to act regarding cross-border establishments, which pose the greatest systemic risk. To counter balance the risk of bargaining between Member States, the president of the ECB will have the power to react if it is believed that they are ignoring the opinion of the ESRB. The Parliament has also successfully opened up the consultative bodies to ensure a greater range of financial expertise and a global level consultative scientific committee has been created.

At the micro level, in London there will be the European Banking Authority (EBA), in Paris there will be the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) and in Frankfurt there will be the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA). The creation of the Authorities marks the

creation of the single European rule book, essential for supervision to be carried out at a European and not national level. It is for the European Supervisory Authorities to ensure that regulations are correctly implemented at Member State level. Other significant changes will occur from the 1st January 2011: in order to better protect consumers the European Parliament has imposed that these Authorities are able to temporarily ban dangerous financial products on the market. An important role of the future supervisory authorities will be that of mediators: the ESAs will be required to arbitrate between nation supervisors in the case of disagreement, seen for example in the Fortis case. This system should prevent the failure of national authorities, seen all too frequently in recent years.

Every step of the way the European Parliament has battled with the Member States to put in place effective European financial supervision. This is only the first stage. The European Parliament has co-decision in this domain with the Council and it will continue to be demanding in sectoral legislation, in order to ensure a healthy financial system and to protect tax payers' money.

Koper: In the heart of Europe



The origins of Koper date back to the period when the Gulf of Koper looked completely different and was larger than today. Favorable position provided by the rocky island attracted the settlers almost 2000 years ago. From an old, coastal Istrian town Koper had developed into an important industrial center losing completely its former insular aspect.

Thanks to its favorable geographical position and important maritime and land commercial ways Koper has always been an important port as well as an outstanding economic, administrative and cultural center.

The municipality of Koper lies between Italy and Croatia. Its total area is 307 square km, with its coast stretching for 18-miles. Its highest point reaches a thousand meters above the sea level. In its territory there are over 100 villages and hamlets, counting more than 50000 inhabitants in all. An indigenous Italian community has also been living in Koper.

The administration center of municipality is the town of Koper, with over 30000 inhabitants, where the most important administrative, economic and cultural activities of the Slovene Littoral are being concentrated. Throughout its long and troublesome history, Koper has always played an important role as a traffic and trade center of the Istrian peninsula. Aegida, Capris, Iustinopolis, Caput Histriae, Capodistria and Koper were the names, given to the town during different historical periods.

The Gulf of Trieste, where the city of Koper lies, represents the point, where the Adriatic and consequently the Mediterranean see deep into the heart of mainland. Koper is only 170 km away from Venice, 400 km from Milan, 490 from Zurich, Munich and Vienna and 550 km from Budapest.

Being Slovenia's fifth largest town, Koper is its second most important. The advantage of Koper's economy is its diversity and the versatility, which make it less vulnerable to market fluctuation than other parts in Slovenia. If difficulties arise within a single industrial branch the other manage to stay afloat keeping the economic engine running.

Industry, transport, trade, business and financial services are the most important activities in Koper, besides tourism, craftsmanship and agriculture.

The port of Koper continues to be the heart of the town and its surroundings. It is supported by several activities in the field of transport, forwarding, insurance, banking, etc.

Built only 50 years ago, it uses up-to-date equipment and facilities allowing for the transshipment of 13 million tons of cargo annually. In addition to rapid and efficient port activities it also offers a free customs zone, prompt forwarding services and competitive prices.

The appearance and structure of the town center originates from the 15th and 16th centuries. The town plans reveal the urban scheme with two main squares and eight peripheral squares, which were arranged inside the walls and led to the ports, called "madracchi". At present ancient town squares and streets are being renovated together with the most important palaces.

The hinterland of Koper is extremely rich with a unique cultural heritage. Almost everywhere one comes across picturesque hamlets, small churches, ancient fort sites and valuable architectural monuments. The rural areas surrounding Koper are also undergoing rapid economic and social development. The local inhabitants are investing in country tourism, craft and revitalisation of ancient traditions.

To restore the culture and tradition some of the nearly forgotten activities have been promoted: craftsmanship, tourism, olive oil production, wines typical of the area, ham, goat's cheese and truffle.

The champions of the present sports life in Koper are sailors, famous both at home and abroad for their outstanding achievements at the Olympic Games, World and European Championships.

Our rowers, water-polo players and judokas had also won international recognition. As for the sport facilities, Koper disposes of a small but functional Center for water sports, including a small marina with 80 moorings and a new multi-purpose sports hall.



www.koper.si

Preparing for a European Union after 2013

The European Parliament is paving the way for the new shaping of the EU, writes **Jutta Haug MEP**

The next decade will be decisive for shaping the European Union of the future and for safeguarding Europe's success in the global world. A decision on the key delivery instruments to reach the ambitious goals for Europe 2020, and beyond, is imminent, the alignment of these new political objectives with the future spending priorities the logical - and essential - next step.

The European Parliament is preparing its input for this decisive political debate with continuing a well-established practice of creating a special committee. As laid down in its mandate, the special committee on the policy challenges and budgetary resources for a sustainable European Union after 2013 (SURE) shall submit a report to Parliament before the Commission presents its proposal with figures for the next MFF for July 2010. Presenting its priorities and recommendations ahead of the Commission proposals is a novelty and challenge for the Parliament. But at the same time this procedure secures a maximum political impact by the European Parliament with its ambitious agenda.

Against the background of EU achievements, the added value through European Union activities is challenged by the European public. But this concept must be the guiding principle of all actions, finally leading to an agreement on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). In this context it seems worth reminding that the general concept of European added value is laid down in the Lisbon Treaty as "the Union shall act only if and in so far as the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level." A set of three instruments is available to create added value: coordination, legislation and financial means. In



The special committee on the policy challenges and budgetary resources for a sustainable European Union after 2013 (SURE) shall submit a report to Parliament before the Commission presents its proposal with figures for the next MFF for July 2010.

budgetary terms, expenditures on EU level can contribute to achieve policy targets which could also reduce the need for parallel national expenditure.

Knowing about its responsibility in this regard the special committee has decided to divide its work into several phases: the reflection phase, with a thorough discussion on horizontal issues until the end of this year, an assessment phase which will focus on sectoral issues, and a final phase devoted to the discussion of the report. In order to have the broadest possible picture on the future MFF the committee has started of its work with a thorough discussion on the concept of European added value reaching consensus that this concept is an evident partner of European integration.

The discussion on horizontal issues will also comprise debates on the implications

of the EU 2020 strategy on the post-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework before concentrating on the so-called "technical issues" and crucial issues of the structure, flexibility and duration of the next MFF. Sectoral reflections will involve inter alia Cohesion policy, the reform of the agricultural policy and EU's external commitments.

As the mandate of the special committee defines the timetable the special committee has planned to adopt its report in May 2011 with the final vote in plenary June 2011.

Finally, the committee needs to find an answer on what expectations do we have on the European Union, what policies are necessary to be implemented on European level to achieve the best added value for the financial means spent in the interest of our citizens.



Steel Arena, Košice



Splendid Slovakia!

The Slovak Tourist Board (STB) is a public institution supported by the Slovak State Budget. Since 1995, it has been promoting Slovakia in its target markets as an attractive tourism destination, contributing to creation of Slovakia's positive image abroad and supporting its tourist product sales.

From 9 September 2010, the STB has a new general manager, Peter Belinský, whose main aim is making Slovakia a more visible, attractive holiday destination in the target markets, especially, the EU countries. His other strategic goals include more actively supporting domestic tourism, particularly, strengthening of the STB's regional policy.

The STB plans to focus on promoting two key future projects – the Ice-Hockey World Championships (29 April to 15 May 2011) and Košice – the 2013 European Capital of Culture.

Ice-hockey fans are invited to next year's Championships in Slovakia's capital Bratislava, and Košice. Both cities and their surroundings are important tourist centres for Slovakia. Bratislava is a modern busy metropolis with an incredible atmosphere. The city is a popular place for lovers of history, culture and the arts as well as food connoisseurs, revellers or thrill seekers.

Košice, the centre of Eastern Slovakia, is dominated by the stately Gothic St. Elisabeth's Cathedral. The busiest places are the pedestrian zone and the park with a singing fountain. Košice is also famous for organising many cultural and sporting events. For more information about the Ice-Hockey World Championships in Slovakia see www.iihf.com.

Košice is also proud to be the "2013 European Capital of Culture", the title awarded by an international jury in 2008, which appreciated the project Košice Interface 2013. The non-profit organisation Košice – EHMK 2013 has been actively preparing

interesting cultural projects, international conferences and festivals involving the city's inhabitants. For instance, the last few events included "Summer in the Park", a summer festival full of music, arts and culture, or the worldwide concept Nuit Blanche (White Night). An interesting project, especially for young people is "Kasárne/Kulturpark" – a new arts and culture centre in Košice, providing young artists with opportunities to make distinguish themselves. For other activities organised by Košice – EHMK 2013 see www.kosice2013.sk.

Slovakia is an attractive tourist country where you can find many interesting tourist attractions on a relatively small territory. In each region, you will find unique historical monuments, aqua parks, spas, virgin nature, and gorgeous mountains. For the incoming winter season, Slovakia offers a unique combination of active skiing holidays with relaxation in thermal waters of aqua parks. Relaxing in an open hot pool with breathtaking view of snowy mountains can really be a unique experience. Winter sports fans can benefit from high-quality 5-star ski centres in High and Low Tatras, Malá and Veľká Fatra. The centres offer quality downhill runs, cross-country courses, ski school and nurseries, adrenaline attractions or après ski bars. Near to those centres in High Tatras and Liptov regions, you will find well-equipped aqua parks with thermal pools, wellness and fitness services and adrenaline attractions.

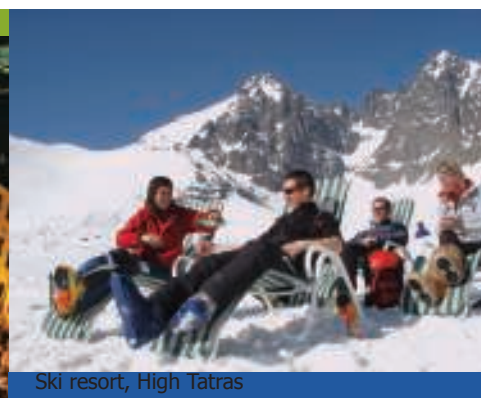
Slovakia is also famous for its high-quality spas, whose therapeutic procedures have been utilised by many domestic and foreign visitors. Natural therapeutic sources, such as thermal waters or sulphuric mud, excellent medical services, additional wellness services and beautiful environment of spas are the signs of the Slovak spa quality.



AquaCity, Pročad



Christmas market, Bratislava



Ski resort, High Tatras



OPERAČNÝ PROGRAM
KONKURENCIESCHOPNOSŤ
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The new regulation on security of gas supplies

Vice-President of the EU Parliament, **Alejo Vidal-Quadras MEP**, details Europe's plans to safeguard its gas supplies

This September the European Parliament approved by a large majority the Regulation on the Security of Gas Supply. The Regulation is a historic improvement in achieving energy supply security, and this in several optics. Not only is a Regulation the strongest legal instrument that the Union possesses, but it has also established different sets of standards through which it primarily ensures the supply to the most vulnerable European gas consumers.

We all remember the winters of 2005-2006 and 2008-2009, during which thousands of European citizens were left without gas, due to unresolved issues between third countries. And so one of the key achievements of the Regulation is the adoption of a definition of "protected customers" in the EU. Having identified European "households" as protected customers, the Regulation will safeguard the supply of each and every one of the European citizens. A certain flexibility has, however, been left to the Member States to widen this definition to certain essential social services such as schools and hospitals, provided that these extensions do not exceed 20% of the total gas demand of that country. However, any potential over dimensioned zeal of a National Authority has been balanced by the mutual solidarity obligation resting on all the Member States towards the protected customers of any European Union neighbour.

As regards the supply standards, the Regulation states that the Member States will have to ensure that the different gas undertakings supply the protected customers during at least 30 days in case of a crisis. Since it is a fact that some countries depend on one gas supplier only, and that those countries would be in great difficulties in case of a crisis, the Regulation foresees that the supply standard can be ensured by national stockpiles of another Member State. In this sense, the supply standard obligation towards the protected customers cannot



Alejo Vidal-Quadras MEP

be understood without the obligation to respect certain infrastructure standards, also imposed by the Regulation. Indeed, these infrastructure standards lead, on the short and middle term, to increased interconnections between the Member States, the installation of reverse flows capacity and the establishment of stockpiles. In a nutshell, the Regulation's main objective is to reduce to a minimum the risk of not being able to supply one's protected customers due to a lack a diversified supply.

With regard to the management of potential or existing supply threats, the Member States will be obliged to previously establish preventive and emergency plans. During their elaboration, those plans will have to be consulted with the other Member States and sent to the European Commission for its approval (for the preventive plans) and for its consultation (for the emergency plans). The European Parliament strongly insisted on this point, since the competence as such attributed to the Commission is to be considered a great advance compared to today's situation. Indeed, once having received all the different national preventive plans from the Member States, the Commission will

enjoy a global European vision and be able to identify possible and potential inconsistencies between the different national plans. This way, it will detect infringements of the single market or the solidarity obligation between the Member States, and ask the Member State in question to modify the disposition.

More than extinguishing a fire, these measures are about preventing it. Of course this does not mean that a fire may never occur, which would activate the emergency plan of a Member State. Moreover, in case of a crisis the European Commission has also been endorsed with the responsibility to declare a Union or regional emergency. This way, an early warning mechanism will be triggered, which will allow for a quick and adequate reaction from the different Member States that will have been previously determined in their emergency plans, and this under an unprecedented coordination and supervision of the Commission.

Once correctly implemented by the different Member States, the two intrinsically linked supply and infrastructure standards, will allow for the market to operate as the adequate response to any gas supply problem. It was crucial for the Parliament to limit the possibility for Member States, when invoking a crisis, to take measures that intervene in the market in such way as to disrupt the competition. For instance, if a supplier were to be unable to supply its customers, it would have to buy its gas from another supplier that has available gas, in the same Member State or in a neighbouring one. This will be the logical working of the market in which Government intervention will only be considered as a very last resort. This Regulation is historical in the sense that the Member States have finally accepted and enforced the principle that the solution to an external threat can be found within the Union and by joint action, rather than exclusively through bilateral diplomatic initiatives.



REGIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT CENTRE CELJE

A good practice example in Slovenia and Europe

Being a regional centre, Celje is Slovenia's third largest town. With its rich history dating back to Roman times, Celje has become a centre for crafts, industry and tourism. In the twentieth century, the town's expanding industries caused widespread air, soil, surface and drinking water pollution. After 1980 many activities aimed to reverse the pollution preventing further environmental damage.

Now, 30 years later, great progress is evident on almost all environment issues. People have become more aware of the problems and are now determined to live in a healthy environment. The region's strategy for future developments in waste management was devised in 1993 - Slovenia created the legal framework for this having adopted the EU waste legislation after 1998.

Programmes to reduce air pollution, to clean drinking and surface water, which included upgrading the sewage system and building a wastewater treatment plant, have all been successfully implemented. One of the biggest challenges has been implementing waste management programmes, including the Regional waste management centre Celje project (RWMC).

The RWMC, Slovenia's first comprehensive waste management project, aims to provide a modern and environmentally friendly waste management solution for the Savinjska region's 24 municipalities. The facilities cater for 250,000 inhabitants. The City of Celje is the main RWMC project investor - another 23 municipalities are co-investors. Simbio, d.o.o., a public company in Celje, operates the centre.

The RWMC project was divided into two phases. The first phase includes a sorting plant for separately collected waste - 10.000 tons annually, a composting plant for biodegradable waste - 5.000 tons annually, a dismantling facility for bulky waste - 5.000 tons annually, a modern landfill for remaining waste - 1.800.000 m³ including all the relevant infrastructure.

The second phase includes a plant for mechanical and biological treatment (MBT) of the rest of municipal waste - 61.500 tons annually and the heating plant using combustible fraction produced in the MBT plant along with wastewater treatment plant sludge - annual capacity of 25.000 tons. The heating plant yields 15 MW of heat and 2 MW of electricity.

Costing approximately €50 million, the project was funded by the EU Cohesion fund (56%) and by the Republic of Slovenia with local municipalities (44%).

To promote responsible environmental management and stimulate new waste management methods, the project focused on comprehensive and systematic communication with the public from the start through numerous brochures about the project and separate waste collection, TV broadcasts, open days and the www.rcero-celje.si website

The RWMC facilities affect the environment but observe all legislative standards. This accomplishes multiple environmental protection objectives: increasing waste recycling, ensuring waste treatment, protecting ground and surface water and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Simbio ensures that the facilities are in good working conditions, and that waste input and output in the centre is reliable and well documented. In recent years separate collection at the source has become a key focus for the region's activities.

The future plan is to upgrade the MBT plant with a temporary facility for storing input material during maintenance periods and storing RDF in case of maintenance periods at the heating plant.



Securing Europe's energy supply

Günther Oettinger, European Commissioner for Energy, lays out his vision for achieving a carbon-free energy and transport system in the EU by 2050

Energy is the heart of our economy and our society. If we invest in our energy system, we are investing in the future. If, however, we neglect our energy supply and energy efficiency, the consequences could be profound and irreversible. In this respect, our plans regarding energy technology and infrastructure are crucial.

The market has to guarantee our energy supply. But the proper regulatory framework is vital for the functioning of the energy market. The third package on the internal energy market has created this new framework at EU level. However, energy supply and technology developments are not just closely linked to our daily life but also to major geopolitical events in the world. Political signals have a direct influence on the decisions of the energy industry.

The need to invest in new energy infrastructure, technologies and sources of energy is enormous. It is estimated that by 2030 up to one trillion euros will have to be invested in the European electricity grids and electricity generation and 150 billion euros in the gas network, excluding import pipelines from third countries.

As the European Commission's new Energy Commissioner, I can confirm that in recent years the EU has succeeded in developing a comprehensive European energy policy. This was a process that was pursued jointly and ambitiously by the Member States (and the German Länder in particular), the industry and the European Institutions.

The EU's energy policy sets out clear requirements and targets for sustainable, competitive and secure energy. Our main aims are to achieve a 20% reduction in greenhouse gases, to provide EU consumers with a supply that includes a 20% share sourced from renewable energies and a 20% improvement in energy efficiency by 2020.

In order to send the right signals to the energy market, we must now begin laying the foundations for a more sustainable Europe. My first priority as Energy Commissioner is to implement the new European regulatory framework promptly and properly. This will also considerably improve the conditions for the security of our energy supply. We must also, however, work together with the Member

States and the European Parliament to develop European measures to foster new energy networks and innovations and improve the investment climate. The challenge for us is to attain a low-carbon economy, with the ultimate objective of achieving emission-free energy generation and transport sectors.

I would like to highlight the topics that are of fundamental importance for the proper functioning of the internal market in energy and our future energy supply:

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is the circulatory system of the internal market in energy. It is intrinsically linked to the security of the energy supply. It is vital for a successful decarbonisation policy, which requires adjusting the network to more renewable and decentral production.

Technology

We must develop a new generation of technologies with regard to achieving the '20-20-20' goals and a CO₂-free energy sector by 2050. Even if some of these technologies cannot be used in the medium term, it is very important to launch them as soon as possible.

Finances

Strategic goals and political commitment alone will not build any infrastructures or place any new technologies on the market. Money is needed for that, but times of both national and EU budgetary constraints are a significant obstacle. The International Atomic Energy Agency has established that following the financial and economic crisis, in 2009 investments in the oil and gas infrastructure decreased by around 21% worldwide in comparison with the previous year. This means that the amount globally invested fell by around 100 billion US dollars (83 billion euros).

New European Energy Infrastructure Instrument

We can also use the experience from the economic recovery package for the development of the new infrastructure package requested by the European Council.

Nuclear energy

We note a growing increase in nuclear



Photo: Jacques Griefmayer

Günther H. Oettinger

energy worldwide. Around 60 States have asked the International Atomic Energy Agency for help in developing this technology. Within the EU, most countries already use nuclear energy. Other Member States are taking concrete steps to start nuclear energy programmes, resume them or develop them further.

Ambitious but realistic

Our vision of achieving a carbon-free energy and transport system by 2050 is indeed ambitious but entirely realistic. Besides a considerable increase in energy efficiency, we want to produce electricity exclusively from sources with the lowest possible CO₂ emissions. We are talking about a future energy mix produced predominantly from renewable and nuclear sources, but also fossil fuels with carbon capture and storage.

For these reasons, the EU must above all create the necessary energy policy stimuli and incentives for investment to boost investments in infrastructure, technology and energy efficiency. Smart grids and networks and alternative fuels will play a major role in this regard. Ultimately it comes down to the energy mix and market players' behaviour.

The internal market in energy, energy supply security, energy efficiency, renewable energies, infrastructure and low-emission energy networks for tomorrow: these are the main issues for Europe's energy policy. Together with the development of an external European policy for energy, they are also my priorities as Energy Commissioner for the coming years.

Sustainable and Innovative European Biogas Environment (SEBE)

The EU policies have set forward a fixed goal of supplying 20% of the European energy demands from renewable energy systems by the year 2020. A major part of the renewable energy will originate from European farming and forestry. At least 25% of all bioenergy in the future can originate from biogas, produced from wet organic materials such as: animal manure, whole crop silages, wet food and feed wastes. Biogas has the potential of covering almost 50% of the 2020 biofuel target of 10% of all automotive transport fuels, even without implying a change in land use.

The German market has grown exponentially over the last 10 years driven by government policies and a supportive banking sector. In 2009 it represented 77% of the total European market. In Germany currently nearly 5,000 biogas plants are to found already, and there is potential for further installations. Other European countries are far more sceptical, economic viability of biogas plants is in doubt and image problems are associated with the topic due to failed projects.

Which technologies should be given priority and which regulatory frameworks are best suited to achieve a more widespread but sustainable implementation of biogas production in the EU? This is what the EU project SEBE (Sustainable and Innovative European Biogas Environment) looks at. "With a total budget of more than €3.2 million, SEBE is the largest biogas project within the programme "Central Europe" (financed by the European Regional Development Fund)", says Gerhard Burian, Head of Department for International Regional Policy and Financing within the Ministry for the Economy, Family and Youth of the Republic of Austria.

14 partners from 9 countries (Austria, Slovenia, Poland, Slovakia, Germany, Italy, Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary) - and Ukraine as an associated partner - work together to establish a common understanding of possibilities, policies and frameworks, aiming towards a sustainable further development of biogas production in Europe. It is within the core aims of the project to focus attention on what makes AD schemes work across Europe and to identify areas which need further development and harmonisation. "The project consortium uses an interdisciplinary approach integrating a variety of different elements including research tasks, educational and promotion issues, the creation of Competence Knowledge Centres in each partner country, knowledge dissemination tasks, in-depth studies of selected specific topics and elements to address and influence political stakeholders", says Michael Azodanloo, the Coordinator of the SEBE-Project.

The figure below provides an overview of the main elements of the project.

Research

- legal issues
- economical issues
- logistical issues
- technology
- financing
- R&D

carried out both on national and transnational level; includes studies on general frameworks, model regions, model plants, lessons from failed AD projects

Education/ Training

- evaluation of educational aspects and the factor human resources incl. educational providers, curricula, training courses
- awareness raising campaigns
- educational trainings

Technology

- general research and evaluation of AD technology
- pilot actions with technical focus (feasibility studies, innovative concepts)
- 4 technical working groups to coordinate research and implementation



Dissemination and Knowledge Management

- establishment of Competence Knowledge Management Centres in each partner country
- Transnational Knowledge Management Tool
- Establishment of structures to last beyond project duration (2013)
- standard dissemination pathways (website, newsletter, online networks, conferences, reports, publications, etc.)

EU Policies

- formation of a Policy Advisory Board (consists of experts/ stakeholders in the area, who however are not members of the SEBE consortium, thus being independent)
- Assessment of research findings and project results and compilation into forms suited to bring results to attention of political stakeholders and key players
- Political Concept Paper



Gerhard Burian
Chairman of the SEBE
Transnational Steering
Committee

Harmonisation of frameworks and elimination of barriers (e.g. when upgrading biogas to biomethane) will play a major role in advancing sustainable AD in Europe. Among the many biogas initiatives throughout Europe, SEBE highlights the necessity to address the topic in an interdisciplinary approach. It is a further strength of the project to build up a transnational network by integrating existing infrastructures. The holistic view on the subject promises good results which will find interest by a variety of different audiences and decision makers all over Europe.

Website: www.sebe2013.eu

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Contact:

Michael Azodanloo

Authorised representative of the State Government of Styria - Austria
for Territorial Cooperation and Coordinator of the SEBE-Project

ICS Internationalisierungszentrum Steiermark GmbH

A-8010 Graz | Koerblergasse 117

T +43 316 601-276 | F +43 316 601-455

info@sebe2013.eu



SEBE Project Group

Is a new entente cordiale on the horizon?

By Dr Duncan Anderson

Head of War Studies, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst

This month President Sarkozy will meet with Prime Minister Cameron for this year's much heralded summit. The French have been preparing their ground carefully since the start of the year, courting the Conservative elite while still in opposition, and carefully allaying the doubts of Eurosceptics such as Liam Fox, then shadow Minister of Defence. Since the last Anglo-French talks, Sarkozy has brought France back into the NATO military command structure. This move was designed to prove that France no longer harbours a design to replace NATO with a European Army. It has, however, led to the accusation from some quarters that France secretly intends to destroy NATO from within -- an indication of the mutual suspicion which continues to overshadow Anglo-French military relations.

There have been other Anglo-French military summits but the atmosphere surrounding this one is different, and so are the expectations. Both countries, struggling with major economic problems, believe themselves to be in decline relative not just to the United States but also to China and India. This malaise is particularly strong in Britain, where the debacle in Basra has soured relations with Washington, if not with more understanding old friends in the American armed forces. For more than 60 years the British Army had prided itself on its ability to conduct counter-insurgency operations more effectively than any other nation. We patronised the Americans, and we are now paying the price for our hubris. The cosy relationship that existed during the presidencies of Clinton and Bush no longer exists; indeed, there is a distinct chill, exemplified by Harold Evan's report of Obama's removal of the bust of Winston Churchill from the Oval Office and its return to London.

Both the prime minister and president are approaching this meeting with a determination to achieve something more than another St Malo declaration. The press offices in both Paris and London have been deliberately playing down the more exaggerated expectations, and have been leaking information on areas where co-operation will be of practical benefit. Speculation that ballistic missile submarines and aircraft carriers would have joint crews has been denied. However, discussions are continuing over proposals for co-ordinated and staggered submarine patrols which would enable both nations to enjoy their protection at reduced cost, and for modifications to the British carriers making it possible for French aircraft to operate from them. At the very least British and French submarine patrol patterns could be rationalised, so that they could avoid colliding in the middle of the Atlantic.

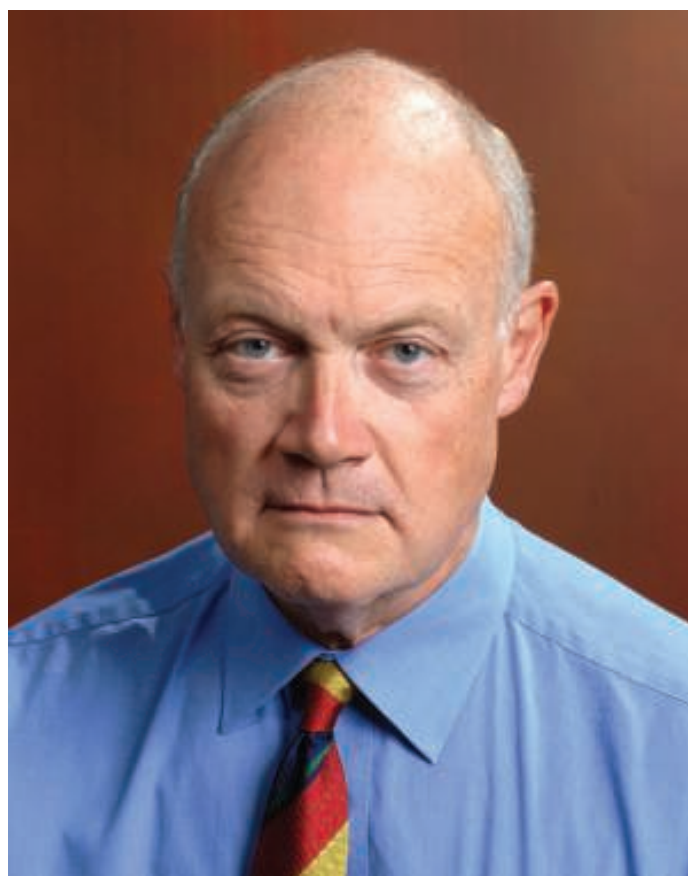
Unlike the British and French navies, defence industries in both countries have a long tradition of working together (notably the Jaguar fighter and a family of helicopters). The sticking point has always been the reluctance of British and French procurement departments to purchase the others' ordnance, even when particular items were cheaper and of superior performance. Procurement is intimately connected with local political pressures, and no nation with a democratic system has yet been able to square this particular circle, even though the most baneful effects can be mitigated by stringent controls.

A more promising area is that of logistics and maintenance. Britain and France are the only nations, apart from the United

States, which aspire to maintain substantial expeditionary capabilities. Long range transport aircraft like the Boeing C-17 and the Airbus A-300 tanker could be pooled and their maintenance programmes shared, cutting costs and increasing capability. In addition, training programmes for both air and ground crew could be combined. The main barrier here might be the unwillingness of many English-speaking servicemen to become fluent in French, as opposed to Pashtu and Arabic, in which increasing numbers excel.

All this seems very modest, and a long way short of the heady days of St Malo, but it is through such comparatively small steps that the foundations for fuller co-operation can be laid. Despite the chill which now pervades relations between the White House and Downing Street, the United States will be Britain's major ally for a long time to come. At any one time the British armed forces have between six and seven hundred officers seconded to the American military, at academies, staff colleges, training establishments, and dozens of other institutions and head quarters. Scarcely a fraction of that number is deployed with the French military -- indeed, in the last few weeks some have been withdrawn as an economy measure. The problem with Anglo-French relations is that they tend to work through institutions, whereas our relations with America work through personal friendships. Thus it was that General McChrystal and General Lamb could work in perfect harmony in Kabul, and that the families of Generals Petraeus and Richards seek each other's company, not because they have to but because they want to. Until we have a similar degree of personal interaction between the French and the British militaries, we will remain neighbours with some mutual interests -- still some distance from a close partnership.

Dr Duncan Anderson



Modernisation is the word for EU-Russia relations

By Knut Fleckenstein MEP

Chairman of the Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee

Modernisation has become the new buzzword in EU-Russia relations since the Russian President launched his big modernisation campaign. This project has been welcomed by Russia's partners in the European Union and has even led to the creation of an EU-Russia partnership for modernisation. But what is the common objective behind it? The usefulness of yet another new framework for cooperation with Russia has been discussed a lot, sometimes even controversially. I would argue that this partnership allows the EU and Russia to work on the very basis of their relationship.

The start of the modernisation campaign speaks for the Russian President's will to launch a true debate: Medvedev presented his ideas on modernisation of Russia's economy and its political and social life in a dedicated article called "Go Russia!". This article was published first in a Russian online newspaper in November 2009. Shortly after, Medvedev reiterated his main ideas in his second annual state-of-the-nation address to the Federal Assembly. He pointed out Russia's economic dependence on the export of raw materials and called for economic diversification and technological modernisation.

The EU and Russia quickly agreed that Medvedev's modernisation project would receive the EU's support and that it would lend itself to become a joint project by both partners. At the EU-Russia summit in Stockholm in November 2009, Medvedev and the President of the European Commission, Barroso, spontaneously decided to establish a partnership for modernisation. Over the last year, both sides have been working together in order to determine concrete projects. Coordinators have been named on both sides. The following EU-Russia summit on 7 December will hopefully bring the partnership even more forward.

Although Russia's modernisation project met a lot of enthusiasm among European partners, some EU member



'Russia seems to understand modernisation primarily as an economic and technological modernisation'

states were afraid the new partnership for modernisation might actually undermine the cooperation under the partnership and cooperation agreement, which is currently being renegotiated, or the four Common Spaces. On the other hand, several EU member states like Germany or France had already established their individual and bilateral modernisation partnerships with Russia and supported the idea of bringing the modernisation up to the European level.

The partnership for modernisation cannot replace existing frameworks for cooperation with Russia and it does not intend to so. Its interest rather lies in the fact that it is a very pragmatic tool presenting several advantages: it can help to establish confidence and reliability in the cooperation between the two partners and it can contribute to reaching concrete and visible results which would benefit the citizens on both sides.

However, the devil is in the detail: different understandings of the term 'modernisation' rapidly appeared, when the EU and Russia began to single out modernisation projects which could be implemented by the EU and Russia jointly. For the time being, Russia seems

to understand modernisation primarily as an economic and technological modernisation, whereas EU member states quickly adopted the point of view that modernisation should also touch upon the civil and social sphere.

Indeed, it seems obvious that a sustainable modernisation can only be reached by modernising not only the economy itself but also its social environment. Modernisation is an extremely comprehensive objective which cannot succeed without modernising the framework conditions for doing business. For example, the state must encourage the private sector to undertake innovation, to invest, to take entrepreneurial risks. It seems obvious that legal security plays an important role here.

The challenge of modernisation does not lie in the missing political resolution which has been expressed by the Russian President on many occasions. A successfully modernised economy needs a stable and efficient framework for its activities: rule of law, control of red tape, fight against corruption, energy efficiency as well as strong human resources and free entrepreneurship.

Modernisation, though, does not only concern Russia. The partnership for modernisation between Russia and the European Union serves the interest of both partners. Whereas negotiations on a new cooperation agreement between the EU and Russia are currently advancing only very slowly, the partnership for modernisation would allow doing some small steps on very concrete projects in the meantime.

Thus I would argue that the modernisation partnership can and should be used not only for modernising one partner but for modernising the relations between both of them in general. The EU and Russia should take this opportunity as a starting point on their way from a purely declaratory strategic partnership to a partnership with visible achievements. If the end result of the partnership for modernisation were cooperation on concrete terms - beyond all declarations and on the basis of common interests and values - this would surely give a boost to the general relations between Russia and the EU.

The advancement of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

By Dr. Zoltán Tóth

Secretary General, Association of European Election Officials

In discussing the development of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe, it is essential to make mention of some significant historical developments: the World Wars; the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947; the formation of the post-war Soviet sphere of influence with tacit acquiescence of the US and the Allied Powers; the Warsaw demonstrations; the 1956 Hungarian revolution; the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968; the Ceausescu dictatorship in Romania; the Polish Solidarity movement; the power of Soviet gerontocracy and Gorbachov's glasnost and perestroika.

The weakening of the military, economic and domestic power structure within the Soviet Union was one of the decisive political changes to the process of enhanced democratisation in the region.

The new balance created in the global political arena coincided with the pent up desire of Central and Eastern European nations to achieve their own freedom. This desire was further fueled by the serious socio-economic and political crisis characterizing the region between 1985 and 1990.

Domestic and foreign policy conditions have come of age in the area: the process of political changes got under way in all countries, namely in Hungary, Poland and Romania. The collapse of the Soviet Union provided additional impetus to various independence movements and democratisation processes.

In addition to the official establishment of a multi-party system, legitimate parliaments and governments sprung up everywhere, marking the end of the exclusivity of state ownership in the newly sovereign states. All countries declared the need to join Europe. To belong to Europe became equivalent to holding free elections.

The Association of European Election Officials (ACEEEO) established in Budapest in 1991 was one of the prominent founding players in organising the first free elections in the region.

In the course of the past 20 years, ACEEEO's membership grew to 24 countries during which time it has



Dr. Zoltán Tóth in the Hungarian Parliament

regularly interacted with ten international organisations specialising in global elections.

How many countries in the world can be characterised as democracies? It is clear that the 206 U.N. member states cannot be considered a maximum; should we count the current members of the European Union and NATO as a minimum, their number would be around 30. Additionally, the number of so-called transitional countries is between 30 and 50.

Upon closer examination it can be concluded that a real democracy does not exist in the majority of the world's countries, thus elections held there cannot be considered to be democratic either.

We cannot speak of democracy in a one-party system even if, certain great powers based on their own well-formulated politico-military considerations, declare elections held by certain dictatorial regimes to be 'democracy initiatives'.

Some people representing 'mature democracies' make themselves appear in the role of 'democracy instructors', while characterising representatives of 'new democracies' as 'students of democracy'.

Based on the lessons of history of the past 20 years, it is quite clear that nowadays there are no students or instructors in democratic countries.

In countries of the 'old democracies', the transgressions and immoralities of the past also tend to become undone. However, the gradual revelations of election fraud should not dishearten the new democracies; on the contrary, they should make it unequivocally clear before everyone that democratic elections are part of a learning process for mature democracies as well, and that they are not based on an instructor-student relationship, rather on integrity, a level playing field and transparency.

The constitutional foundation of electoral systems is the principle of proportionality. From a perspective viewpoint of democracy, the principle 'winner takes all'-long accepted and considered to be democratic is unacceptable. The same can be said for the archaic indirect (electoral) system of elections.

ACEEEO is clearly aware of the fact that both of the above principles are deeply rooted in the Anglo-American tradition. However, it is also clear that the future belongs to the proportionate electoral systems. The United Kingdom has already taken positive steps in this direction.

We also cannot idly sit by without commenting on the endeavors of some countries who attribute peculiar characteristics to the democratic principles of the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union.

According to Western political terminology, these countries are characterised as dictatorships, even if they do everything in their power to make their laws appear to be as democratic as possible. One of the essential prerequisites of a democracy, however, is the existence of a real multi-party system, a legitimate parliament and government as well as the dissolution of exclusive state ownership of all means of production.

ACEEEO is diligently laboring to the end that the above named preconditions be realised in an increasing number of countries globally.

Our motto has been: "Not by the might of bullets, but by the power of the ballots!"

In the spirit of the above, we would like to extend a heartfelt invitation to our 20th anniversary conference to be held in Budapest from June 15-18, 2011.

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Repackaging Europe's Parliament

Given the lack of media attention on EU politics, it is inevitable that the bloc's citizens feel detached from its work, says **Andrew Duff MEP**

Andrew Duff MEP

Much time has been spent over the last number of years in boosting the competences of the European Union and the powers of its institutions. Much less effort has been put into developing the popular legitimacy of the European Parliament. Indeed, in Britain most of the media and much of the political class remain largely ignorant about and hostile to the work of MEPs. European elections remain rigidly national in tone and content. The politics of the European Parliament, which are lively and serious, are not reflected in the electoral campaign. Citizens remain deprived of real choice between candidates and parties about serious issues where the role of the European Parliament is decisive: EU enlargement, reform of EU finances, economic governance, the election of the new European Commission and its political programme. Even the routine legislative work of MEPs, now ranging across the spectrum from single market to asylum policy, scarcely gets a look in at election time.

In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that turnout for the European elections continues to decline. The public are wise enough to have pricked the pretensions of national political parties in European affairs, but are dissatisfied by what they see coming from Brussels. The European-level parties that do exist are little more than glorified conference organisers: it has not been possible for them to break free from the grip of the national political parties which make up their membership. The concept of direct membership of individual citizens in EU parties is as yet little more than a federalist dream.

So what can be done? The European Parliament is considering a large reform package. Some elements of the proposed changes relate solely to the composition of the present House. For example, we are in search of a mathematical formula to redistribute the 751 seats prescribed by the Lisbon treaty according to the principle of degressive proportionality. Other measures relate to the minimum age of electoral participation or to how to encourage EU citizens who live in EU states other than their own to engage in the elections. But the key proposal, and the one which causes most controversy, is to add an extra 25 MEPs at the next elections in 2014 to be elected from transnational lists for a single EU-wide constituency. The gender-balanced lists would have to be composed of candidates drawn from at least a third of EU states, and voting would be by the preferential semi-open system. Each voter entering the polling station would be given two ballot papers, one for his or her national or regional constituency, the other for the European constituency.

The effect of such a change will be dramatic. The European political parties will be responsible for finding and ordering the candidates on their lists. They will then have to campaign for



votes and seats against each other. The European parties will be empowered to fish for support in countries where they have at the moment no national counterpart such as the Liberals in Greece or the European People's Party in the United Kingdom.

The media would have something chunky to report. And from those transnational MEPs might well emerge Mr Barroso's successor as President of the European Commission. The elections would be at once Europeanised, personalised and politicised.

In all these matters the right of initiative falls not to the Commission but to the European Parliament itself. Some of the changes, including the transnational innovation, will require a treaty change. Everyone is watching to see which way the British coalition government will jump. Could it be that Mr Cameron would really dare to risk a referendum on enhancing the legitimacy of the European Parliament? We will know the answer soon.

Andrew Duff is the Liberal Democrat MEP for the East of England and spokesman on constitutional affairs for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)

'It is hardly surprising that turnout for the European elections continues to decline'

Looking beyond the veneer of African elections

By Dr. Phil Clark

Lecturer in Comparative and International Politics, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and Convenor of Oxford Transitional Justice Research, University of Oxford

The electoral cycle spins rapidly in Africa. In 2010, twelve African countries held presidential or parliamentary elections or constitutional referenda, including Sudan, Rwanda and Kenya which receive substantial UK donor assistance. In 2011, twenty-one African nations will go to the polls, with the world focused on the potentially volatile independence referendum in Southern Sudan, presidential elections slated for Nigeria, Egypt, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and a parliamentary election in Zimbabwe. All of these countries are experiencing ongoing or recently halted conflicts, and their internal politics invariably affect the entire continent.

The vast sums of international donor assistance spent on elections in Africa and the travelling hordes of foreign vote observers show the importance that Western policy-makers attach to electoral processes. But the focus on elections and their immediate aftermath often clouds deeper political realities in Africa, especially in countries recovering from mass conflict. Elections are often the public performance distracting from more important developments off-stage.

The recent example of Rwanda – the largest per capita recipient of UK foreign aid – is salient when considering the

meaning and impact of elections in African countries recovering from mass violence.

Elections tend to bring out the worst in Rwanda and the 9 August 2010 presidential vote was no different. In the lead-up to the election, opposition leaders, journalists and dissident military officers were jailed, injured or murdered. Human rights groups accused Rwandan President Paul Kagame and the ruling party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), of authoritarianism and of rigging the election.

Understanding the local context highlights that elections in Rwanda both illuminate and exacerbate ethnic and political relations. Moves toward multi-party democracy in the early 1990s allowed the rise of extremist Hutu political leaders who sought the extermination of political moderates and Tutsi civilians, culminating in the 1994 genocide. Like the 2010 presidential election, the lead-up to the 2003 presidential and parliamentary vote was also marred by violence and the quashing of political dissent. In Rwanda, elections typically mean volatile contestation over power and fears that extremist ethnic voices will again be amplified.

The 2010 election period, however, was different. This time around, Kagame and the RPF faced little serious political opposition and were assured of victory. While the Tutsi-dominated RPF is hardly loved in the countryside, many Hutu (who constitute around 85% of the population) view a vote for Kagame as a vote for continuing peace and stability – no mean achievement after years of violence. Kagame could have won this presidential election without campaigning. So what explains the crackdown on the opposition and the press which generated global condemnation?

The answers lie inside the ruling party. Contrary to depictions of a cohesive, repressive state, the RPF is a deeply divided, fragile entity. It has a tendency to pursue innovative social policies during the good times but to lash out during periods of perceived uncertainty.

Kagame's repressive tactics in the lead-up to the August election were less about external threats to his power than about internal RPF pressures. Kagame

was sending a message to the RPF ranks that he is in charge. Increasingly, the divides within the RPF have widened and more moderate voices as well as senior RPF military figures have challenged Kagame over a host of issues, including the openness of political and media space and the question of presidential succession. To maintain cohesion in a divided party, Kagame struck out against relatively unthreatening targets as a show of strength.

With the election over, international actors must now work more closely with the many reformist members of the RPF who share their concerns over the current state of Rwandan politics. RPF moderates have substantial clout within the government and have scored major political successes in the past.

What are the more general lessons for Western policy-makers from the Rwanda example? First, democratic processes are unpredictable and can have very unexpected results. Elections in Africa are never a singular solution to issues of conflict or repressive government. Instead they can often exacerbate conflicts by encouraging further political contestation.

Second, external perceptions of African governments may not mirror the internal reality. Political fluctuations on the ground require sustained attention and the advice of domestic and international country experts to interpret the changing landscape.

Finally, African governments are never monolithic and rarely cohesive – they do not speak with one voice and invariably comprise factions of moderates, conservatives, radicals, hardliners, isolationists, multilateralists and numerous other political identities. Nuanced diplomacy requires identifying powerful individuals who are dedicated to popular advancement and political reform. Denunciations of authoritarianism or repression tend to sideline more moderate voices and thus empower hardliners. Outsiders can play an important role in encouraging and emboldening domestic agents of change. Such productive collaborations are only possible, however, if foreign policymakers look beyond the set-piece of elections to the political subtleties emerging within African countries.

In 2011, twenty-one African nations will go to the polls.



One is the magic number: Hydrogen in Europe

Hydrogen is Europe's solution to reducing the continent's carbon emissions, argues **Ian Williamson**



Millions of vehicles cross European national borders every day, with road transport generating a staggering 20% of the EU's CO₂ emissions. National governments are singularly enacting measures to decarbonise road transport, but there is a real need for a harmonised EU policy in this area.

An overarching strategy for the development of low carbon transport infrastructure across the entire EU will ensure co-ordination of the system, and longevity for millions of users.

The benefits of hydrogen

There are a range of low carbon transport options, including electric, hydrogen and hybrid vehicles.

Electric vehicles powered by a battery are repeatedly cited as the answer to Europe's problems. Yet there are significant limitations to the technology; not least the lack of range offered by electric cars and the hours it takes to charge them. Hydrogen powered transport would address both of these issues. Hydrogen cars have a range comparable with conventionally fuelled vehicles and take just under four minutes to fuel; water is the only substance emitted from their exhaust pipes.

Support of hydrogen projects would go a long way to meeting the reduction in carbon emissions the EU desperately needs. But hydrogen cars will need a hydrogen refuelling infrastructure, which requires the commitment of a range of suppliers including major energy companies, industrial gases companies,

electrolyser suppliers, station fitters and providers; and this needs to be consistent across the EU.

What needs to be done?

Currently, there are excellent examples of local hydrogen transport infrastructures across Europe, and areas of best practice include the UK and Germany. To give one example, Air Products is working with Transport for London to provide a fleet of hydrogen buses for London's roads. By November, there will be five buses travelling on the RV1 bus route.

Hydrogen powered public transport buses have the potential to be the most cost effective and environmentally friendly public transportation system, and commercialisation of the technology can play a significant role in providing economic benefits to a community, as well as encouraging the users to reduce their personal carbon footprint. Recently the EU has proposed various financing support programmes to facilitate potential projects for the integration of fuel cell buses in public transport fleets.

Although this is not the economic climate for large-scale government investment in research and development, EU governments do have the opportunity to work more effectively with public and private partnerships and small public transport projects are within our grasp. We already have local hydrogen projects existing in Europe, but these need to be consistent in order to be linked to create regional hydrogen infrastructures. In the US, Air Products is linking Texas and Louisiana with a new 180-mile hydrogen pipeline.

Best practice: Germany, and how manufacturers and industry can play a part

Germany's coherent strategy for implementing a hydrogen infrastructure is one great example of a collaborative approach between government and industry. Along with the automotive industry and energy companies, the German Government created a forum known as the Transport Energy Strategy which identified hydrogen as a fuel of the future; and a public-private partnership

was created to collaborate on the next stage of development.

The projects emerging from their National Innovation Programme (NIP) are on a huge scale and with a clear strategy of supporting the market introduction of hydrogen fuel cell technology, through research and development as well as demonstration and market preparation projects. The NIP imagines the gradual build-up of infrastructure starting beginning in urban areas; the initial transportation of hydrogen by tanker and then eventually by pipelines; and the localised production of hydrogen from natural gas and or biomass. Last September, Daimler, Ford, GM, Honda, Hyundai, Kia, Renault-Nissan, and Toyota jointly announced plans to introduce hydrogen-powered vehicles by 2015.

Just around the corner?

Whilst localised projects continue to be implemented by states across Europe, these would have so much more potential if they were co-ordinated at a European level. Hydrogen power which is consumed across European borders by professional drivers, public transport and personal car users is within our reach.

With a little investment and co-operation, moving forward towards the same goals, we can ensure that the opportunity isn't missed, and that the low carbon vehicles of the future have the range we require of them to travel these distances. It is essential that we take consumers away from fossil fuels and towards a low carbon future.

Local projects provide a clear demonstration of how developments in hydrogen technology can be done in collaboration with governments and car manufacturers to bring low carbon vehicles to communities across Europe. If we are going to see a low carbon future for Europe, our renewable transport infrastructure needs to be consistent and comprehensive across all states within the continent.

Ian Williamson is President of the European Hydrogen Association and Director of Air Products

Influenza: the lull before the storm

Professor John Oxford highlights the lessons learnt from the 2009 outbreak of swine flu

Paradoxically, but also fortunately, preparations for the influenza 2009 'A' Swine (H1N1) outbreak began long ago in 1997. In that year, it became apparent that an avian influenza virus, designated H5N1, had jumped the species barrier from chickens to humans.

By 1997 it had finally become clear that influenza 'A' was a truly avian virus and that the irregular global pandemics of 1845, 1889, 1918, 1957 and 1968 could therefore be explained by such viruses being able to jump across the boundary of the bird reservoir. But until 1997 the domesticated pig remained at centre of our virology focus.

The events in 1997 in Hong Kong catalysed a huge international effort to prepare for a future influenza pandemic. In the past, we humans had just waited and taken the influenza attacks as best we could. From 1997 onwards, a new, more strategic, 'manner of thinking' can be identified: prepare a three zone, in-depth defence system and then venture out and destroy the vehicles of avian influenza, namely (at that stage) domestic birds. Anti-virals and vaccines would be stockpiled as two defence zones and improved hygiene measures would be promoted as the third. In short, the world had a war plan. Indeed, these battle plans began to be refined not only in governments but in businesses and homes across the world. In Europe the EU formulated its own specific pandemic plan. These plans, spearheaded by WHO and the UN, were to prove critical in March 2009 and thereafter.

So the first lesson that can be drawn from the 2009 pandemic is the absolute need for prior planning; for our 2009 efforts, we can award ourselves a B+. But not all sovereign countries reacted in this way. At least three EU nations were not bothered and did virtually nothing until the new pandemic H1N1 virus arrived at their doorstep. Fortunately, for the first year of this pandemic they escaped lightly.

The history of influenza shows us that newly emerging influenza viruses strike unpredictably. The second lesson we can draw, therefore, is that the unpredictability of influenza needs to be



The influenza 'A' (H1N1) has therefore been incorporated into the yearly seasonal vaccine.

taken to heart.

The influenza 'A' (H1N1) has therefore been incorporated into the yearly seasonal vaccine. I have just been vaccinated myself and the vaccine will protect me not only against the H1N1 from now onwards, but also from the epidemic influenza A (H3N2) virus.

The third lesson from the (H1N1) outbreak is that it is not over. At present, we are still calculating the social and medical impact of the 2009 pandemic. So far, the 16,000 laboratory confirmed deaths equate to 2 million years-of-life lost. But the first analyses show us that our interventions, social distancing, hygiene, anti-virals and vaccines reduced levels of mortality and hospitalisation by at least 50%. As in previous global outbreaks, last year nurses and doctors were kept on the front line and were some of the first to fall sick and die; in intensive care units around the world, highly trained specialists saved countless lives. So perhaps somewhat unexpectedly for some, lesson three is not to assume that it is all over. Rather, we should already be preparing for this H1N1 virus to mutate and enable itself to move into the over 60+ year groups, perhaps as early as next year. Most importantly we should already begin to plan for the second pandemic of our new century and I would place two viruses on the risk register, H5N1 and N2N2.

The fourth and final lesson is

sobering. There is a growing anti-science chorus objecting to, for example, Genetically Modified foods, to vaccines, to disinfectants, and to evolutionary theories especially in the USA but also in Northern Europe. This retrograde movement sees the world through starry eyes and asks why they need to vaccinate their children to protect them against diphtheria and/or polio when the incidence of these infections, at least in their own country, has dropped. We know, however, that with 93 million EU citizens vaccinated to date without serious side effects, the protective effect of the influenza H1N1 vaccine exceeded 95%.

So, based on the experience of the 2009 Swine flu outbreak, we can conclude that for the future, we must learn to be even more pro-active – improving on our previous good efforts – continue to prepare for the next pandemic and not allow fringe anti-groups to dominate the airways, twitter, blogs and chat rooms. Infectious diseases do 'not go gentle into that good night'. Smallpox had to be forced off the planet, in spite of protests from religious groups that God's word was being thwarted. Polio could be forced out this year; but with 6 billion of us on the planet, all our efforts against pandemic and epidemic microbes will need to be harnessed, now and forever.

John Oxford is Professor of Virology at Barts and The Royal London Hospital.

Smarter EU borders equals smarter EU security

Commissioner for Home Affairs, **Cecilia Malmström MEP**, outlines the measures needed to strengthen the security of the EU's borders

The world appears smaller today than when I was a child. Globalisation and technological developments have made our means of communication ever more sophisticated. People are connected in real time across the globe while transport is fast, cheap and increasingly accessible to more and more people. This is something that most of us enjoy and take advantage of. It has become easier to travel, explore the world, do business across international borders and so on.

However, there is a drawback to this evolution. As Europe has become more accessible for both businesses and tourists, Europe's wealth and resources are also attracting criminal organisations. Drugs, illicit or counterfeit goods or, even worse, women, children and men, are smuggled into the EU. How can we efficiently fight such challenges?

A traditional security doctrine would advise that borders should be reinforced, but the answer is not that simple. Turning borders into walls is not the way forward for a European Union that respects values such as human rights and free movement. We cannot turn our backs on those who are in need of protection, or those who come to Europe looking for a better life. Neither can we penalise a large number of well intentioned travellers who would then be obliged to wait in long queues to be checked and questioned before getting through the wall. Many tourists and businessmen would understandably think twice before entering Europe, which would cause potentially significant losses for the European economy.

Throughout my mandate as Commissioner for Home Affairs I intend to pursue a border management policy based on the respect for both security and freedom. Faithful to my liberal values I believe that restrictions to freedom of movement should be minimal and always proportional to the security risk. At the same time the EU must have a policy of zero tolerance towards organised criminals and their networks. We must make use of the new technologies to make our borders smart so that we can reconcile these two policy goals.

Large scale border management projects such as SIS, VIS or the upcoming Entry/Exit and European Surveillance Systems will greatly contribute to anticipating and disrupting criminal activity. On the other hand, the automated border controls and the Registered Traveller Programme will make it extremely easy for well intentioned travellers to cross any border via dedicated border gates.

We have to move away from the traditional border controls where every person is checked by a border guard. This is not sustainable for anyone. For one thing, the number of staff would have to increase proportionally to the number of travellers. If we use intelligence based risk analysis in combination with technological solutions we will instead allow for the human resources to be allocated where they are best needed.

The Commission has a clear and concrete plan for the implementation of this border policy, as outlined in the Stockholm Programme and its Action Plan. We will take the next step in turning these plans into reality in the action-

oriented Internal Security Strategy which I will present later this year. That strategy will devote one part exclusively to the operational implementation of the border management policy.

When I first took office in February 2010, I proposed to reinforce the EU external border agency Frontex, whose role is to assist Member States in dealing with exceptionally difficult situations at its borders. Any Member State can be confronted with difficult border situations that it lacks the necessary expertise, staff or equipment to deal with. In such situations, Frontex should be able to help quicker than what is the case today.

Next year, I will also propose a Registered Traveller Programme and an EU Entry/Exit System, which will represent a follow up step on the road to the future of smart borders. This will be completed with the launching of the EUROSUR project later in 2011. EUROSUR will establish a mechanism for national authorities to share operational information related to border surveillance. It will be used for cooperation between Member States, but also in the cooperation with Frontex at tactical, operational and strategic level. EUROSUR will make use of satellite imagery and other new technologies in detecting and tracking targets at the European border – for instance tracing fast vessels transporting drugs to the EU.

The EU needs to adapt its borders to the reality around us. I believe that we have the tools needed to do this, but we need to use these tools wisely and with continued respect for the values that our European cooperation is founded on. The key to getting smart borders which both makes life easier for people travelling to the EU while at the same time are efficient in stopping criminal activity is to join forces. Some of the necessary tools are in the hands of the Commission while others are managed individually by Member States. With mutual trust and information sharing, we are well on our way to getting better managed and smarter borders for the EU.



Cecilia Malmström MEP



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Providing employment for Europe's young and old

By Thomas Mann MEP

According to the latest statistics, the average age of European citizens will increase up to 10 years by 2050 while at the same time less young people will be in the labour market. Hence, the question arises as to how the European Union will cope with 48 million less employees together with an increasing amount of people who are over the age of 80. Although numerous summits have already offered recommendations to meet the demographic challenge, Europe remains hesitant.

The Committee of Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) has now found a completely new approach while including concrete measures both for young and elderly people in one package. This is all included in my report on solidarity between the generations, which the EMPL accepted on this September. But against the votes of my own party, the EPP, a majority in the committee could achieve the demand for new anti-discrimination directives for elderly people such as conclusions of insurance contracts, booking of journeys or car rentals. Additional anti-discrimination rules can lead to more bureaucracy and restrain the growth that is required to lead a country out of a crisis.

The EMPL Committee is demanding an introduction of generation balances from all Member States on a statistical database. Thereby, the flow of payments between different age-groups as well as benefits and burdens of every generation will be reliably represented and forecasted. Via the "Generation-Check" EMPL demands a binding law impact assessment on national and European level concerning intergenerational justice.

At the older side of society, just half of 55 to 64 year olds are in work right now. The fact that 15% of people over 65 live under the poverty line in the EU is alarming, especially given the fact that they live in an economically powerful Union. In reference to the elderly, the Committee agreed a concrete 'European Pact 50plus'. The Member States shall reach the three following objectives by 2020:

1. The proportion of employees aged over 50 shall be extended to more than 55%;
2. Early retirement and its financial incentives shall be banned EU-wide;
3. The Member States shall create financial incentives for people over 60 so that they can be longer available on the labour market.

The pact is complemented by EU-promotions for mixed-age groups in enterprises as well as the control of age limitations concerning the exertion of jobs and mandates, which shall lead

'15% of people over 65 live under the poverty line in the EU'

Thomas Mann MEP



to a cancellation of age limitations until 2012 in all Member States.

At the other side of the age scale stands the European Youth Guarantee. In times of the financial crisis, young and old people are equally confronted with the lack of sufficient jobs, an adequate payment or even have to suffer grave poverty. Shocking facts such as that the group of under 25 year olds have the highest unemployment rate whereby every fifth of this generation in the EU is unemployed fill the headlines almost every day. Consequently, youth employment is one of our most pressing problems while leading to a denial of opportunities, rising social costs and the lack of prospects that existing potential will never be used.

Via the European Youth Guarantee the EMPL-Committee demands from Member States that every young person is offered a job, an apprenticeship or participation in a training programme for future employment after a period of unemployment for four months, based on the principle of Promoting and Demanding.

Furthermore, initiatives like 'Active Ageing' secure older people's dignity, health and quality of life. It is important to clarify that our parents' generation are not a burden on economy and society, but rather present a personal asset through their working experience and extensive knowledge. The first step is already made: the Commission followed my report and proposed 2012 as the 'European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between the Generations'.

The vote for this report is foreseen for this November in Brussels and shall be followed by a directive proposal of the EU Commission in the short run.

GATEWAY TO EXCELLENCE



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Technology Park Ljubljana is an organization set up in 1995 to create a supportive and stimulating business environment for the development of high technology entrepreneurship.

Technology Park Ljubljana devotes special attention to **accelerating the transfer of knowledge, experience and technologies to the economy**, which reflects in the creation of new jobs with higher added value. In this way contributes to the higher competitiveness of innovative entrepreneurship in the region and promotes the creation of new knowledge-based companies. At the same time it ensures the **transfer of research findings and innovative business ideas to the global market**.

By preserving **tradition** on the one hand and promoting a **professional approach** and innovation on the other, as well as **comprehensive support**, Technology Park Ljubljana enables companies to develop their **entrepreneurial and market potential**, alongside achieving a higher level of **business excellence**.

Technology Park Ljubljana has **relationships with reputable research institutes and institutions**. Together with pervasive companies creates business success stories. With the assistance of **partners from the private and public sectors**, along with the City of Ljubljana, Technology Park Ljubljana is also contributing to **the development of national schemes and mechanisms to support entrepreneurship**. This comes from its rich experience of more than 15 years, while drawing on the successful practices, based on providing both **infrastructure** as well as **a wide spectrum of services**:



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President of Microsoft Europe Jan Muehlfeit at Technology Park Ljubljana

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The **ACADEMY OF BUSINESS EXCELLENCE** trains future entrepreneurs in the preparation of a business plan and the efficient presentation of business ideas to investors. The **BUSINESS MENTORSHIP** programme is tailored to individual companies, aimed at facilitating the implementation of company strategy and growth. While the **GATEWAY TO FINANCE** programme prepares entrepreneurs for investors and financial contributions, **INTERNATIONALISATION** helps them to penetrate foreign markets; the **CHALLENGER, HACKERGROUND** and **BOUNDBREAKER** services are designed for the specialized selection of high potential initiatives. Technology Park Ljubljana simultaneously addresses foreign entrepreneurs via the **SOFT LANDING** programme, through which they verify the feasibility of launching a foreign company on the Slovenian or South East European market.



Technology Park Ljubljana is striving to achieve excellence also in **transferring its expertise** in the field of **physical and intellectual services development to South East Europe**. In this respect Technology Park Ljubljana is valuable contributor to the Development of Innovative Business Parks to Foster Innovation and Entrepreneurship project – **FIDIBE**. Project's, which is co-financed by South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme, main aims are to develop standards, provide mechanisms of cooperation and exchange of experience. Technology Park Ljubljana and eight partners from six countries are thus working on the **first comprehensive manual on establishing and running business innovation parks**.

Credibility and excellence of Technology Park Ljubljana has been reaffirmed also by International Association of Science Parks by entrusting it the **presidency of the European division** of this world association.

Contacts for collaboration:

Technology Park Ljubljana, Tehnološki park 19,
SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia,
tel. +386 (0) 1 620 34 03,
fax. +386 (0) 1 620 34 09,
e-mail: inf@tp-lj.si, www.tp-lj.si



TEHNOLOŠKI PARK LJUBLJANA

01

A bigger and better Europe awaits through regional development



By Professor Danuta Hübner MEP
*Chair of the Committee on Regional
development in the European Parliament*

Cohesion is, according to the Treaty, a basic principle of European integration. This principle makes cohesion policy a policy for all citizens of the Union. But, of course, cohesion policy should do more in regions where catching up is a challenge.

Focusing more efficiently on results is a challenge not only for cohesion policy; it is a must for all policies in Europe, designed and delivered at European, national, regional and local level.

The recent financial and economic crisis is drawing a new economic map of Europe. We must spare no efforts to see at the end of the day a better map.

To achieve this, disparities must be addressed through both mobilising development potential in territories which lag behind and in territories where a new generation of investment in competitive advantages is needed.

Through networking and cooperation, we can link more effectively locomotives, growth and innovation centres with those that are catching up. But all regions and cities have to measure today their strength and competitiveness against the global context.

In the years to come, cohesion policy should support across Europe restructuring and innovation and knowledge-based growth as well as

use better the potential of networking and cooperation. The role of European territorial cooperation will be more precious than ever.

By adding the third, territorial dimension to the European cohesion we have put our finger on a hugely untapped potential which is hidden behind national or even regional statistics.

A harmony in European development can be achieved if every territory across the Union makes most of its potential and cooperates with others in the pursuit of EU 2020 strategic objectives of the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

We must realise that growth in Europe will be supply driven in the years to come. Development and investment policies like the cohesion policy will be of utmost importance in putting Europe on a long-term path of structural change and growth for all.

The future policy architecture should take into account the post crisis territorial reality at the regional level. It seems justified to rethink the position of regions that graduate from their less advanced status and/or face restructuring challenges too deep to make them part of Objective 2.

Territorial cohesion is not only a goal to achieve. It is also an instrument to achieve more and better growth. Responses to all major challenges that Europe is facing have a territorial dimension. That is why we must take the territorial impact assessment seriously, take into account more effectively territorial specificities, adjust urban development axes of the policy to the current challenges and opportunities, reinforce local growth initiatives and invest more in the territorial cooperation taking barriers away.

I am convinced that proposed

'Development, investment policies like the cohesion policy will be of utmost importance in putting Europe on long-term path of structural change and growth for all'

reforms of cohesion policy will take us further towards a more result oriented policy, harnessing all levels of European governance and based on a comprehensive future oriented investment strategy; policy operating within a common European framework covering all European structural funds; policy based on incentives but also on conditionality working towards more effective interventions; policy focused on priorities of European importance but leaving the space for their adjustment to territorial specificities.

Hopefully, in the years to come, structural and institutional reforms, contributing to the macroeconomic stability, growth and restructuring, will be taking place in Europe.

Cohesion policy and its instruments should both enhance those reforms and benefit from them. We will need in Europe better coordination between all European policies and between European and national ones.

But Europe, to achieve its goals, needs as well to move further towards new forms of finance for its investment. Cohesion policy has already accumulated some experience in this field. More financial engineering based funding will be needed with a view to strengthen leverage of public funding and promote risk taking. The next steps towards a simpler delivery mechanism must be taken.

Five years ago we made together the decision to take Lisbon down to regional and local level. Let me say that European regional policy is the only European policy that has taken the Lisbon strategy with the highest accountability, and today we can say that this strand of Lisbon strategy has been the only clearly successful one. Today let's decide on taking EU2020 Flagship Initiative down to regions and cities. I am sure it will work and we will deliver. Territorial Pact could be our excellent platform to make EU2020 work for Europe.

It is important to understand that extending Europe beyond European and national level of governance to regions, cities, and local communities does not only take it closer to citizens but it makes Europe bigger. Let us make Europe bigger.

CENTROPE Capacity: A level playing field for cooperation

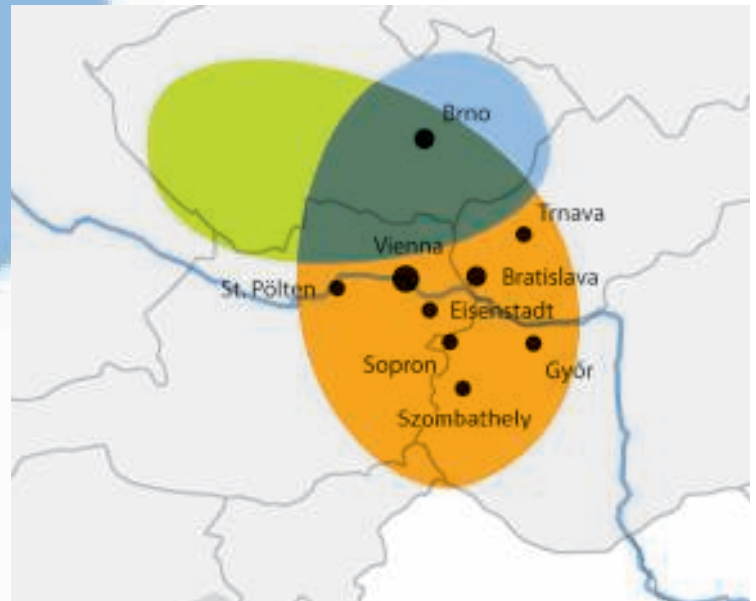
'The Central European Region is today known as a model region where European integration at the interface between 'old' and 'new' EU Member States has been achieved quickly and smoothly.'

This phrase is not (yet) a status-quo description, but quoted from 'Vision CENTROPE 2015', which was formulated in 2005/2006.

In this foresight document, sixteen partner cities and regions of the border region between Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary set themselves a common goal: In keeping with the motto 'We grow together & together we grow', they outlined the vision of an integrated region that manages to overcome barriers long considered insurmountable and to break down the 'borders in people's minds'.

Five years after the formulation of the 'Vision' we have arrived at a milestone towards the attainment of the ambitious goals set: with the beginning of 2010, the EU-funded project CENTROPE Capacity entered its operative phase. It will lay the groundwork for numerous cooperation activities, which may be cooperative business ventures, joint programmes of universities and research institutions, the development of common tourism products or cross-border agreements on spatial and infrastructure

planning. Together, these efforts will mark the emergence of a new and prospering metropolitan cross-border region in Europe, home to 6.5 million people in four countries and comprising two capital cities.



Hungarian partner cities taking CENTROPE chair in spring 2011

CENTROPE Capacity stands for the joint conviction of the partner cities and regions that the dynamic development of this transnational region can only be advanced if efficient structures are created in all four partner countries & regional CENTROPE offices that generate impulses for intensified cooperation, develop concepts and promote the idea behind CENTROPE in the partner regions. At the same time, the four regional CENTROPE offices, supported by a central coordination office, are to cooperate closely in the years ahead.

With CENTROPE Capacity, all partners take an equal share in project financing, thus creating a level playing field in the formal sense as well. This shared responsibility finds another expression in the fact that, starting in 2011, each of the four partner countries is reflecting the regulations for the EU Council Presidency & will assume political leadership of CENTROPE for six months, thereby serving as the face of the common region for this period. This procedure will be initiated by Hungary that will at the same time host the EU Council Presidency

From made-up acronym to established brand

The fact that CENTROPE today is seven years after the first policy declaration & is much more than just an acronym made up to designate a project is evidenced by a look at the internet, regional media or university publications. 'CENTROPE' has become a fixed concept frequently referenced by politicians, economists, planners or researchers. Now this concept is to be evolved into a successful brand so that CENTROPE will increasingly be perceived on an international scale as a location with concrete assets and a good place for investment.



Promoting eco-friendly modes of transport within the EU



By Jo Leinen MEP

Chairman of the Environment Committee of the European Parliament

Road, air and maritime transport impacts on many, if not all, economic sectors in our modern societies. While the free movement of persons and goods is one of the objectives of the EU and a cornerstone of the single market, we also have to consider how it affects our environment, our ecosystems and our climate.

Transport was responsible for 27% of total Co2 emissions in 2008, a figure that has since increased. In the fight against climate change it is, therefore, important to tackle this area, searching for ways and means to reduce Co2 emissions and other air pollutants which do not only influence the environment but also people's health and quality of life.

The European Parliament supports the aim of creating a low-carbon transport sector. It has welcomed legislation on ambitious Co2 emission targets for cars and lorries, on better fuel efficiency, on the use of biofuels-based on comprehensive sustainability criteria- and is now in the process of also developing ambitious Co2 reduction targets for light commercial vehicles. The potential is huge: speed limits on motorways alone could contribute up to 30% Co2 emission reductions. Lower limits would lead to improvements in air pollution, noise nuisance, traffic safety and possibly congestion. The environmental aspect of cleaner transport means is only part of a larger picture- clean cars, based on clean, preferably renewable energy, hydrogen or on biofuels are an opportunity for the European car industry to reduce the dependency on ever scarcer and thus increasingly expensive fossil fuels and to re-establish their position as a market and technology leader globally.

In 2008, the Parliament also successfully worked for including air transport in the EU's emission trading scheme ETS. Efforts are now also focused on the maritime sector. We know that 90%

of transport in international trade, for example, is conducted using ships. Thus, if we are serious about the concept of internationalising external costs in transport, we must ensure that all modes are scrutinised taking their Co2 emissions and impact on the environment into account.

The EU Commission, in 2009, published a communication on the sustainable future of transport. The Parliament supports in particular the notion of regions and cities playing an important role in implementing and further developing eco-friendly ways of transport, including the accessibility of public transport means as well as infrastructure developments favouring the use of bicycles and of clean cars. Without innovative and forward looking projects on the local level we would not be able to achieve our climate targets. Communes often own building stock, co-fund the public transport system or set-up tenders for infrastructural developments. They thus have many areas in which to apply sustainability criteria and environment friendly standards. The more they use these instruments, the bigger the contribution for the EU's environment and climate goals.

Research and Development is a key factor in the search for a sustainable future for transport and the transition to low carbon transport. Investment in environmentally friendly infrastructure should be given priority, for example smart grids for electric transport or hydrogen distribution networks. The

'Research and Development is a key factor in the search for a sustainable future for transport'

demographic change, in particular in urban areas, brings about many challenges for cities and regions in the field of transport and mobility. They should receive all possible support in dealing with it. When looking for solutions it is crucial to focus on the reduction of environmental damage, making mobility healthier and more efficient. Sustainable means should be used in order to achieve this, such as a renewable energy mix promoting environmentally friendly technologies and modes and price formation measures that give positive incentives for clean transport modes, while reducing or eliminating environmentally harmful subsidies.

In a recent resolution from July this year, the Parliament also recognised the need for better information and awareness rising campaigns to consumers on their carbon footprints. In this regard, public consultancy and encouragement for the civil society to take part in environmental impact assessment and nature protection, in particular for transport infrastructure investments, should be strengthened. We can only expect people to change their behaviour if we properly inform them on the impact their actions have on the environment.

There is a bundle of measures which needs to be implemented in a coherent way to achieve the aim of an eco-friendly and low-carbon transport in Europe. Investment in research and development, setting the right incentives for business and individuals, creating a predictable regulatory environment for producers, applying the principle of internalising external costs, providing the appropriate infrastructure as well as informing and involving the civil society must go hand in hand to support the shift in our mobility with benefits for the environment, the climate and people's health.

BAPTS



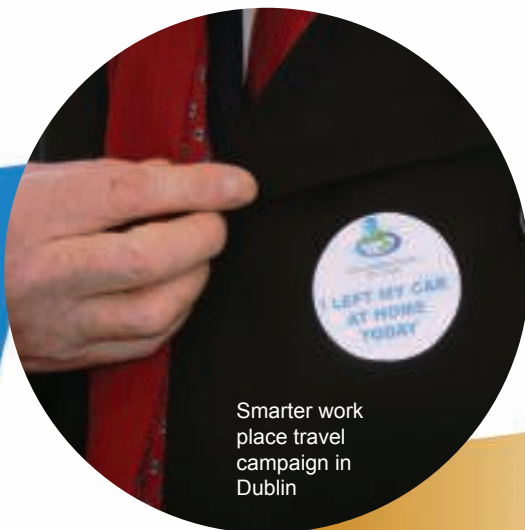
Football fans in Bielefeld using public transport



A large majority of European citizens live in an urban environment, with over 60% living in urban areas of over 10.000 inhabitants. They live in the same space, and for their mobility share the same infrastructure. Urban mobility accounts for 40% of all CO2 emissions of road transport and up to 70% of other pollutants from transport. It is widely agreed that according to this situation public transport systems in urban areas must be developed further in order to be truly considered an alternative to individual (car-based) mobility.

The mission of BAPTS is to implement an integrated package of high-quality public transport systems and services as model solutions for clean, efficient, accessible and sustainable mobility in Northwest-Europe (NWE). The project runs from January 2008 until December 2011, with a budget of about 15,3 € m. BAPTS brings together nine partners from six European countries who translate different regional approaches into tangible actions and high-quality outputs. The BAPTS-partners are Stadt Bielefeld as Lead Partner and Rhein-Main-Verkehrsverbund (RMV) from Germany, Darlington Borough Council and Southend-on-Sea (both UK), Dublin Transport Authority (Ireland), Gemeente Eindhoven (Netherlands), Ville de Liège (Belgium), Lille Métropole Communauté and Nantes Métropole Communauté (both France).

Smarter work place travel campaign in Dublin



The project delivers concrete solutions for sustainable urban transport systems which can be widely adopted in Northwest-Europe and beyond. During implementation particular emphasis is put on five areas of intervention:

- Multimodality and interoperability
- Integrated mobility planning
- Marketing and mobility awareness
- Intelligent transport systems
- Transregional learning and knowledge exchange

Concrete examples for results of the BAPTS project are:

- Sustainable travel plans and smart card operated bicycle parking/ cycle hire
- Development and implementation of new public transport oriented marketing strategies focussing on the specific needs of different target groups and life-cycles
- Development and implementation of new contactless and smart card-based ticketing schemes
- Design of intelligent ticketing and traffic management schemes
- Development and implementation of integrated multimodal transport corridors
- Test and comparison of on-board and off-board infotainment systems
- Implementation of new ICT-based flexible bus corridors
- Development of integrated regional strategies and analysis of the wider socio-economic benefits for the re-introduction of the tram (Liege).

Promoting cycling in Darlington



BAPTS Lead Partner:
Stadt Bielefeld / City of Bielefeld
Name: Mr. Olaf Lewald, Project Manager
Address: Niederwall 23 / 33602 / City of Bielefeld / Germany
Phone: +49 (521) 512825
Email: olaf.lewald@bielefeld.de
www.bapts.eu

Bielefeld



SALVERE - Semi-natural grassland as a source of biodiversity improvement

An Interreg Central Europe funded Project

In the European mountain areas high nature value grasslands are still present. They can be used as a seed source for the revegetation of degraded areas.

Farming practices have led in the last centuries to a variety of agricultural habitats, mainly grassland, that host a large number of plants and animals. The farmland biodiversity, however, has rapidly declined across Europe in the last few decades. Vast surfaces of semi-natural grassland, containing native, often rare species, were abandoned or got lost due to agricultural intensification, urbanization and wide use of plants from selective breeding.

To maintain high biodiversity levels (what is the main aim of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Convention on biological conservation and the recent EU regulations) it is therefore necessary to protect the remnant high nature value areas but also to use every opportunity to create, wherever possible, new biodiversity rich surfaces to replace those eliminated through impacting human activities.

The greatest problems encountered by the involved institutions in the implementation of the second strategy are the difficulty to find native plant material with high biodiversity content and the insufficient knowledge on the methods suitable for the establishment of biodiversity rich areas.

In this context, the project SALVERE (www.salvereproject.eu) was started in 2009, whose main aims are the improvement and transferring of the techniques:

- to obtain native plant material from semi-natural (agriculturally used) grassland, which can be used as a source of biodiversity-rich seed of herbaceous species;
- to use that material to create new high nature value areas in all types of degraded surfaces (e.g. road embankments, ski-slopes, agriculturally used land etc.).

The project is coordinated by the Department of Environmental Agronomy and Crop Production (University of Padova, Italy) and is implemented by eight partners from Italy, Poland, Slovak and Czech Republics, Germany and Austria. The main activities include the study of the seed production and harvesting in semi-natural grassland and the methods of grassland ecological restoration. The acquired knowledge, integrated with already available information, is the content



Seed harvesting with a special equipment (seed stripper) on a biodiversity rich Alpine grassland.

of a comprehensive "Practical handbook for seed harvest and ecological restoration of species-rich grasslands", which will be the main final project output.

Knowledge transfer takes place within regional and international workshops and conferences. It aims at contributing to the removal of the mentioned important obstacles to the practical realization of the EU policies on biodiversity but also at creating an European common background concerning the use of semi-natural grassland for the ecological restoration of degraded areas.

Michele Scotton
Department of Environmental
Agronomy and Crop Production
University of Padova
Viale dell'Università 16
35020 Legnaro (PD)
Italy
E-mail: Michele.Scotton@unipd.it



Testing and Certification of welders according to the Standard prEN ISO 9606-1
no: 2008-1-SK1-LEO05-00223



The duration: 01.11.2008 - 31.10.2010

Aim: transfer of innovation prEN ISO 9606-1 in qualification of welders in Slovak Republic (SK) a higher level of qualification of welders.

Main target group: welders of steels

Secondary target groups: certification bodies of persons in welding; welding school (training organization).

Main results: certification scheme, training test questions, test questions, methodology of practical testing of welders for the particular welding technologies.

Secondary results: publication material for pilot course of welders testing - study material

Partners are from: Slovak Republic: VUD - coordinator, PZ - co manager

Slovenia: IVAR - partner

Czech Republic: EWE - partner

Impact for:

- welders – they can use their qualifications not even in SK, but also in EU countries and other world; their lifelong learning program
- certification bodies - testing and certification of welders by EN ISO 9606-1
- welding schools - training of welders by EN ISO 9606-1

Information about project: www.teceweld.sk

Quality of education and organization documents was testing in pilot course of testing of welders in welding school SES, a.s., Tlmače on 10.06.2010. Course participated welders from SES, Inc., Tlmače with minimum three years experiences who has already obtained the certification according to the EN 287-1. Each of them made 2 test samples, which were subjected to visual inspection and radiographic examination. The basic material was **steel VM 12 SHC**, which belongs among the top materials for boilers and power plants and it is difficult to weld. The welding specimens used by TIG. Welders verify the status of their theoretical knowledge in preparation by training test questions and as a supporting document was used publishing material of Pilot course.

Manufactory SES, a.s., Tlmače



Participants of Pilot course of welders testing



Welders and Welding School staff commented in writing and oral form used project documentation and checks the level of their skills in difficult conditions. The project partners gained practical knowledge on the state of documentation of the project and presented the purpose and objectives of the project. The pilot course was long-term prepared with a close cooperation with SES, Inc., Tlmače and its progress was monitored.

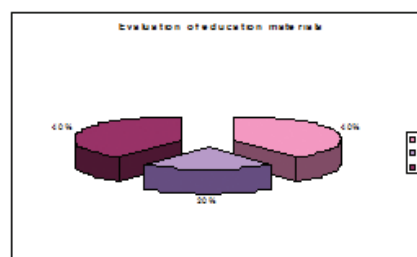
Part of questionnaire from Pilot course

Valuation:

- 40% excellent (1)
- 20% very good, (2)
- 40 % good (3)

Evaluative:

- 8 welders
- 1 welding instructor - welding school
- 1 welding technologist - welding school



Outputs and results of the project are going to be presented to the welding public on evaluation seminar in Žilina (SK) on 29.10.2010.

SOL – SAVE OUR LIVES

a comprehensive road safety strategy for central europe



PROJECT CONTACT DETAILS

Mr. Guido Piccoli

SOL Project Manager

A.L.O.T. s.c.a r.l. - Agency of East

Lombardy for Transports and Logistics

Via Cipro 16, I-25124 Brescia, Italy

mail: info@sol-project.eu & info@alot.it

web: www.sol-project.eu & www.alot.it

In the WHO's European region, road traffic crashes take a huge toll, causing more than 120,000 deaths and 2.4 million injuries per year costing an estimated average of 2% of a country's GDP. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death among 5 to 29 year olds in the region.

The countries of Central Europe have a higher number of road fatalities per million inhabitants than Western Europe. In 2008 there were 143 fatalities per million inhabitants in Poland, 104 in the Czech Republic, 99 in Hungary in comparison with 43 fatalities per million inhabitants in Sweden and the UK in the same time period (CARE Database). The project "Save our Lives – A Comprehensive Road Safety Strategy for Central Europe," (SOL) is supporting twelve pilot communities in eight countries in the region, including western Ukraine, to strengthen their approaches to road safety and sustainable mobility in order to prevent death and injury caused by road crashes. SOL is co-financed by the European Union through the INTERREG IV B programme for regional cooperation in the Central European Space (www.central2013.eu).

In the EU, road crashes comprise 97% of all transport-related deaths, more than 93% of all transport-related crash costs and are the leading cause of death and hospital admissions for people under 50 years. In 2009, road crashes resulted in 35,000 fatalities in the EU alone.

Road safety and sustainable transport are community issues. Forty percent of fatalities in the EU are in built-up areas. More than 30% of these deaths are pedestrians. Motorized transport also creates pollution, noise and congestion in built-up areas. The threat of road crashes presents a significant public health and economic problem to communities and influences people's travel choices. According to a report by WHO Europe "Preventing road traffic injury: a public health perspective for Europe" (2004) real and perceived safety concerns are an important barrier preventing many people from choosing walking and cycling as means of transport.

Communities that manage their transport systems with road safety, environmental and public health objectives in mind are more liveable, attractive and offer their citizens higher living standards.

SOL's main objective is to reduce road crashes and trauma in the context of sustainable transport by:

- empowering the participating communities in Central Europe with knowledge, skills and networks derived from global good practice experience;
- strengthening road safety management and coordination in the participating communities by improving the capacity of multi-sector/disciplinary teams to plan and coordinate action to develop more sustainable, safer and healthier transport systems for their communities;
- implementing behaviour change programs to reduce risky or risk taking behaviours;
- optimising public education programs to increase knowledge and to motivate behaviour change;
- increasing political commitment for road crash and road trauma prevention within the context of sustainable and healthy mobility;
- creating a transnational platform to exchange experience, lessons learned, local success stories and promote cross fertilisation of successful regional interventions.



For more information on SOL, please see the project website: www.sol-project.eu

The schizophrenic relationship between Vienna and Brussels

Die Presse's **Axel Reiserer** examines Austria's uneasy relationship with the EU

On 12 June 1994, Austria voted overwhelmingly in favour of joining the European Union. In a referendum, which attracted a massive turnout of 82.3 per cent, no less than 66.64 per cent of the voters said “yes” to the government’s proposition to become a member of the EU on the basis of the accession treaty negotiated over several years.

These talks had not always been easy and had offered an indication of what was to become even more visible and pertinent after EU accession: because of its geographical position at the heart of Europe, its history as a Central European power (and often beyond), its condition as a country firmly rooted in the West with a parliamentary democracy and a market economy and - last, but not least - its affluence, Austria could have been expected to be a perfect match for the European Union.

Consequently, membership was supported by virtually all major political parties with the exception of the far right Freedom Party but also churches, trade unions, employers’ associations and media. Critically, the government succeeded in winning the support of the populist, right-wing, mass-circulation tabloid “Kronen Zeitung”, which in return benefited handsomely from expensive (and extensive) government advertising campaigns.

However, the euphoria of 12 June 1994 quickly faded. With membership came new obligations such as the need for the country’s heavily-subsidised agricultural sector to adapt to EU rules, pressure on the local economy to withstand increased competition and the fiscal burden to pay Austria’s membership fees.

This disquiet did not disappear but rather increase over the years in a grotesque disconnect between the country’s objective state and its subjective condition. As Austria benefited more than any other country in Western Europe from the fall of the Iron Curtain and the subsequent EU-accession of its East European neighbours, the approval ratings for the EU in Austria fell into an abyss. For a large - and rising - part of the population Brussels became synonymous with all evils, not matter whether perceived or real: open borders, the euro and the EU constitutional debate.

As Austria succumbed to the global financial crisis in 2008, the country was on track to achieving a unique feat by simultaneously being the richest (behind Luxembourg) and most disgruntled EU member at the same time. The crisis, temporarily, changed this. The EU gained some recognition as a protective shield and witnessing the meltdown of currencies like the Hungarian forint, Austrians suddenly began to appreciate the euro in their pockets.

But with the worst of the crisis over, the attitude towards Europe again is taking a turn for the worse: in the Vienna municipal elections on 10 October the far right Freedom Party won more than 27 per cent of the vote. The anti-EU party was campaigning on one single issue: immigration. The party is strictly opposed to the EU accession of Turkey and consciously exploits the fears and concerns of voters.



Axel Reiserer is the UK & Ireland correspondent at Austrian daily newspaper *Die Presse*

Given Austria’s affluence and the benefits EU enlargement has brought for the country, the big question is why anti-EU sentiment is so strong in the country. There are several reasons which, taken together, can serve as an (incomplete) explanation.

- (1) When preparing Austria for EU membership, the authorities had not been entirely honest with the voters: while the population was led to believe that a land of milk and honey was waiting, membership actually came at a substantial price which still is acutely felt by the population.
- (2) An informal coalition emerged between the Freedom Party and the “Kronen Zeitung”, with both claiming to speak on behalf of the powerless, the losers of EU accession, those who feel threatened by immigration - the classical populist, right-wing, anti-foreigners campaign which we find in many countries of continental Europe and which traditionally defines the EU as its bogey man.
- (3) The lack, unwillingness and failure of much of the political class to pro-actively, and with a positive connotation, promote Austria’s membership in the EU. Hardly ever has an elected Austrian official withstood the temptation to blame Brussels for any kind of issue (while shamelessly taking credit for any success achieved together with the EU).

15 years after joining the European Union Austria thus remains an uneasy member. Among the political class as well as among the electorate the realisation that “they” in Brussels today actually means “us” in Austria is still very limited. As the former Austrian EU Commissioner Franz Fischler put it: “We joined the EU 15 years ago, but we haven’t arrived yet.”

Ending Europe's shame

The EU must not forget that the Lisbon Treaty recognises that animals have feelings, say **Mark Glover** and **Dr Jo Swabe** of *Humane Society International*

Since the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, which recognises that animals are sentient beings, animal welfare has now been set in stone as a key principle which the Union should take into consideration during the legislative process.

While this is a significant development for animal welfare, legislators constantly need reminding to take animal welfare into account. With every step they take, such as the reform of the controversial Common Agricultural and Common Fisheries Policies, we - the animal protection NGOs - have to make sure that the voice of the voiceless animals is ever-present.

Although the Treaty provides a framework for improving animal welfare in Europe, it also contains loopholes since it stipulates the "customs of the Member States relating in particular to religious rites, cultural traditions and regional heritage" must also be simultaneously respected.

This means that the Union has a get-out clause when it comes to eradicating some of the worst animal abuses that still persists in Europe, such as bullfighting, perceived by their apologists as cultural traditions. Such cruelty has to be dealt with from within Member States. The recent ban on bullfighting in Catalonia provides a prime example of how the animal protection movement has worked to change opinions and stamp out - at least regionally - the torture of animals for public entertainment. Cultural traditions can change; they can die out and be replaced by a culture of respect for animal welfare.

The use of animals in cultural and sporting events is another example of the limitations on animal welfare policymaking at an EU level. At present, EU legislators can only operate within the competencies conferred on the Union in the Treaties, and only if the objectives of legislative action cannot be achieved by Member States alone. The use of animals in sport and entertainment does not therefore, currently, fall within the competencies of the EU.

That being said, it cannot be denied that decisions taken in Brussels have had

an enormous impact on animal welfare in the past decades. Some of the very worst excesses of factory farming have been curtailed, or are currently being phased out, thanks to a variety of Directives.

Anaemic calves and veal crates, the tethering and use of sow stalls for pregnant pigs, and battery cages for laying hens, will all soon be relegated to the annals of history, within the EU at least.

There is still major room for improvement in farm animal welfare in the EU, certainly with respect to the implementation and enforcement of existing legislation, but at least the first steps have been taken to eliminate some of the worst abuses of factory farming.

One of the greatest victories for animal welfare in Europe happened in May 2009 when the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly in favour of an EU ban

on seal products.

Although voters tend to show very little interest in the minutiae of EU politics, public concern about animal welfare is actively represented by organisations, such as Humane Society International, which have successfully advocated for legislative change, through campaigns to ban seal products and dog and cat fur for example. It is from the public outrage about cruelty to animals that such campaigns are born and succeed.

Politicians who pick up the gauntlet for animal welfare now have even greater opportunities in the post-Lisbon period. With issues, such as the revision of the seriously flawed shark finning Regulation, returning to the political agenda in the near future, MEPs will have the chance to make their votes for animal welfare count more than ever before.



Public concern about animal welfare is actively represented by organisations, such as Humane Society International, which have successfully advocated for legislative change, through campaigns to ban seal products and dog and cat fur for example. Photos: HSI/Mark Glover.



Europe's caged animals

Michelle Thew looks at the impact of the new European Directive on animal experiments

Animal experiments are deeply controversial. As with all controversial issues, legislation dealing with them should aim to reflect public ethical opinion, as best that can be determined.

So how does the recent revision to the European animal experiments directive measure up? Pretty poorly, it has to be said. A recent YouGov survey across six member states - the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden and the Czech Republic - showed consistently very strong majorities against experiments causing any suffering to primates, dogs and cats (as any experiment will inevitably do) and those causing severe suffering to any species.

Most significantly, a resounding 79% of respondents thought that the new directive should prohibit all animal experiments which do not relate to serious or life-threatening human conditions - and of course very many believe that even these experiments should be banned, on ethical and scientific grounds.

The new legislation ignores all this. Experiments will continue to take place for all sorts of reasons which have nothing to do with finding the cure to serious diseases. A great many are driven by commercial considerations. Primates receive little additional protection (and will continue to be plundered from the wild long into the future), cats and dogs none. Animals will continue to be used in experiments causing horrific suffering. Individual animals can even be used repeatedly in experiments causing 'moderate' suffering (a single 'moderate' experiment might involve multiple surgical procedures and side-effects).

Moreover, the new directive does not mandate anything like the level of transparency necessary for informed public debate and accountability. The Commission and Council even refused to countenance a ban on the duplication of particular animal experiments. And, the rules on retrospective assessment of projects - so important for human health as well as for animal welfare - are weak.

Certainly, the directive talks the talk about moving away from the use of animals but does little to ensure that aspiration is turned into reality. The



Over 21,000 dogs are tested on every year in the EU.

European Coalition to End Animal Experiments (ECEAE), a coalition of leading animal protection groups across the EU, argued for a targeted approach towards the goal of animal-free science, with frequent review of the legislation so that evolving public opinion and science could be reflected. Its plea fell on deaf ears, politicians preferring to listen to the scaremongering of the multibillion animal research industry, which predictably raised the old chestnut of research migration and claimed, absurdly, that children would die if it did not get its way.

So, animals in laboratories and the European public alike are entitled to feel let down. However, all need not be lost. The new directive generally requires national governments to authorise particular animal experiment projects, astonishingly not a requirement in several member states at present. In doing so, governments will have to conduct an ethical evaluation. Although, under the harmonisation principle member states will not be able to introduce new legislation to give protection over and above the new rules, there is nothing to prevent them from banning or restricting particular experiments or the use of particular species under the ethical evaluation, as the UK has done over the past 15 years. This gives an opportunity to make up current yawning ethical deficit.

As part of the authorisation process, member states will also have to take a close look at the scientific justification for the experiment. In so many areas, animal experiments have been shown to be at best unreliable. Even the staunchest supporter of animal experiments would acknowledge that they are a blunt instrument.

In addition, the new directive reinforces the Three Rs principle (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement), under which a particular animal experiment cannot take place if the scientific objective could be achieved without the use of animals, by using fewer animals or causing less suffering. This principle has been more honoured in its breach in the past, by researchers and regulators alike. There is now a real opportunity to ensure that the full enormous potential of alternative methods is tapped.

If governments have the imagination and political will, even under this inadequate directive, researchers can eventually be weaned off their unhealthy reliance on animals. Everyone will then benefit, people as well as animals in laboratories.

Michelle Thew is Chief Executive, European Coalition to End Animal Experiments.

Photo: BUAV

Protection of biodiversity calls for a common approach



By Esther De Lange MEP

In September, the European Parliament adopted a report on the implementation of EU legislation aiming at the conservation of biodiversity. I was chosen to guide this report through the decision-making process of the European Parliament. It was not an easy report as many (often conflicting) interests and stakeholders are involved in the debate on this important issue. Yet, the challenge that the protection of biodiversity poses is comparable to climate change. We therefore need an ambitious but realistic approach to dealing with it.

With its report, the European Parliament sounds the tocsin about the state of European biodiversity, the richness and diversity of plants, animals and ecosystems. The EU has missed by a long way the target it set itself for 2010: halting the loss of biodiversity. Quite to the contrary, species are threatened with extinction at a rate 10 to 100 times faster than ever before; 30% of amphibians, more than 40% of mammals, birds, butterflies and reptiles, and over 50% of freshwater fish are threatened with extinction.

This is unacceptable. Not only from a biological or ecological viewpoint, but also from an ethical point of view. Furthermore, it makes economic sense to invest in biodiversity. Healthy ecosystems provide us with fresh and clean water, capture CO₂ and guarantee better harvests. The weakening of ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity currently costs us €50 billion per year, and these numbers are rising. By 2050 the costs will have risen to €14 trillion, or 7% of estimated global GDP per year.

At this very moment the EU is preparing a new biodiversity strategy, looking towards the year 2020 and beyond. After the blatant failure to reach the 2010 target, the central question now is how we can commit ourselves to ambitious and realistic targets that we can and will actually fulfil by 2020.

Obviously, political will is a key

factor. The European Commission and Parliament are quite up to speed. This cannot be said, however, of many Member States. As long as they try to keep EU biodiversity legislation vague and do not implement legislation in the right spirit, we will be looking at another target that will not be met. In order to point Member States in the right direction, the Parliament's report calls on the Commission to clarify certain elements of the EU's Natura 2000 legislation, as the differences in interpretation and implementation between Member States are sometimes huge.

Secondly, we need to think out of the box to do this complex issue justice. This will be a difficult challenge for the EU, whose policies are fragmented, dealt with by many different Director Generals and sometimes even conflicting. This needs to change fast to a more integral approach: biodiversity considerations need to be 'mainstreamed' into other policy and budgetary areas, such as fisheries, agriculture, research and regional policy. The CAP reform, for example, can offer us possibilities

'Species are threatened with extinction at a rate 10 to 100 times faster than ever before'

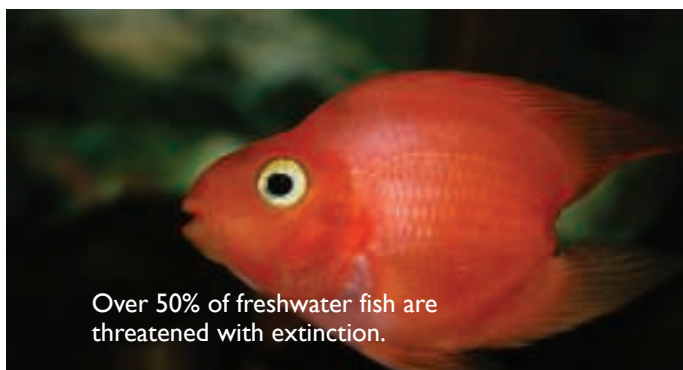
to incorporate biodiversity goals, for example through compensation for the delivery by farmers of public goods.

Mainstreaming, however, will not be successful if we fail to create win-win-situations, where economy and ecology go hand in hand. Mainstreaming is not a matter of "taking CAP money and using it for biodiversity", as one lobbyist put it. The challenge is to compensate approaches that fulfil both the objectives of the CAP (such as food security) and the EU's biodiversity targets, thus creating 'added value'. The most successful projects I have seen were the ones where economic and environmental factors worked together, not the ones where vested interests were locked in a fierce battle. The green job potential of such an approach is impressive, thus contributing to the EU's 2020 strategy, aimed at "smart, sustainable and inclusive growth".

Finally, international and cross-border cooperation on biodiversity issues need to be improved. Animals and plants move freely across borders. Yet Natura 2000 areas in neighbouring countries are often not - or very badly - connected to each other. Furthermore, we need worldwide international cooperation.

All in all, the minimum level of ambition for the EU should be to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services by 2020, to restore ecosystems where possible and to step up its international efforts. This ambitious target will only prove

realistic if the EU follows a common and shared approach: with EU institutions and Member States working together and showing political will, mainstreaming biodiversity into other policy fields, creating added value and win-win situations and improving cross-border and international cooperation. We owe it to the next generations to succeed.



Over 50% of freshwater fish are threatened with extinction.

Ending immunity in the Democratic Republic of Congo



By Veronique De Keyser MEP

A sexual genocide continues to be perpetrated in the Democratic Republic of Congo and with complete impunity.

The United Nations revealed that 1,244 women were raped during the first three months of this year and that at least 200,000 cases of sexual violence have been reported since 1996. The numbers are, in fact, much higher because of under-reporting. This summer, in only 4 days, at least 500 women were gang raped in the province of North Kivu by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda - a Hutu group - and the Mai Mai military. On a daily basis, old women, adolescents, children and even babies are raped, torn apart and left for dead. This cruelty is an attack on the dignity and the identity of entire communities, spreading horror and terror.

But the rebels in Eastern Congo are not the only ones to practice this abuse. The Congolese regular armed forces are

regularly implicated in such cases; even the United Nations mission has been involved in the past, and today is too often powerless to protect the population.

The international community is urgently calling for an end to the violence, the impunity and the human right abuses committed on a daily basis. Various measures-legislation, guidelines, and sanctions-have been put into place by the Congolese government. President Kabila has declared a zero tolerance policy regarding violence against women; projects for the reform of the judiciary system are in progress while MOMUNSCO, United Nations mission to the Congo, has a new code of conduct.

However, there is great concern that the implementation of these measures will be slow and that they will be unable to

'On a daily basis, old women, adolescents, children and even babies are raped, torn apart and left for dead'

stem the violence. The fact that the notorious criminal Bosco Ntaganda is far from being punished, and enjoys an enviable position in the Congolese forces, show us the "acceptance culture" of human rights violation in DRC. The international community should take further action in putting pressure on the Congolese government to fight against impunity and corruption in order to consolidate democracy and human rights in the country.

The United Nations has just suspended their logistical aid and operational support to certain units of the Congolese army because these troops supposedly committed atrocities in the Kivu province between May and September 2009. In DRC, rapes are a weapon of war with economic and military ends, since they are mainly committed in mineral rich areas where armed groups are involved in illegal mining. In its October resolution on the failures in the field of protection of human rights and justice in the DRC, the European Parliament called on the Commission to provide for a legislative initiative inspired by the U.S. law on "mineral conflict". This legislation implies that to cut off funds used by the rebel militia to arm themselves, you must strike at the source and therefore stop the militia's main source of income-the illegal trade. These minerals are used in the manufacture of objects we use on a daily basis such as computers, mobile phones and even hybrid cars. The American legislation prevents consumers from purchasing high-tech technologies that are manufactured by companies using "blood minerals" and obliges US companies to report the precedence of their mineral purchases to the security Exchange Commission.

Europe should follow this initiative and put into place, with the governments in DRC and neighbouring countries, effective traceability systems and proof of the origin of natural resources. One cannot imagine that a country as big as the Congo, which has the support of the international community and immense natural resources, continues to allow a sexual genocide within its borders. Peace is certainly fragile and must be preserved, but not at the price of justice, not at the price of life and the dignity of thousands of women and children. We can no longer tolerate this impunity.

A rising Turkey without Europe?

Turkey's growing regional influence can only benefit the EU, says Chatham House's **Fadi Hakura**



In the midst of European antipathy regarding Turkish accession to the EU, Turkey is attempting to chart an alternative path to secular democracy and economic prosperity. Yet Turkey should go one step further and question the unbridled axiom that, without Europe, it is destined to the scrapheap of Muslim radicalisation or unrepentant nationalism.

Since the end of the Ottoman Empire, the conventional wisdom that Europe is Turkey's ultimate saviour implies that Turkey is unable or unwilling to become a liberal democracy absent of external agency. This fallacy is not rooted in cultural or political realities, but is an accident of history.

While the European Union accession process is comatose, Turkish society is undergoing a transformation to greater democracy, secularism and socio-economic rejuvenation. Surveys indicate that Turks favour a more spiritual vision of Islam, greater public accountability of government officials and state institutions, and a deeper engagement with the global economy. Not dissimilar to Western democracies, the population wants civilian authorities to deliver employment opportunities, high quality education and a world-class healthcare system. The ideological battles of yesteryear attract scant attention at best.

India's economic success offers a sobering challenge to the belief that a Turkey unaffiliated with Europe is doomed to eternal stagnation. Only three decades ago, it was fashionable to envision India as an economic basket case condemned to low annual growth rates. Hindu culture was falsely seen as antithetical to economic growth, in sharp contrast to the galloping economic expansion of non-Hindu Southeast Asia.

Replace Hinduism with Islam and Turkey finds itself in a similar position to India. Culturally, the unspoken assumption goes, Turkey does not have the wherewithal to resolve the Kurdish problem, embrace a new civilian and democratic constitution, solidify secularism among a Muslim-majority

populace nor accept social freedom as a bedrock of society. Yet, this viewpoint betrays the achievements of nation-building after only 87 years of Turkey's existence, a mere drop in the ocean of history.

'Turkey's society and business community are uncharacteristically steaming ahead of its politicians in terms of adopting modern political and social values'

In fact, unlike the Balkans, Turkey has largely succeeded in integrating a diverse group of ethnicities after the disintegration of former Ottoman glory. It is also establishing a functioning legal system, entrenching quasi-secular and democratic traditions, and forging a class of entrepreneurs who are making waves in markets in Europe, Middle East, Russia, Central Asia and Africa in the areas of construction, agriculture and textiles.

This in no way suggests that Turkey does not face major challenges. It surely does. To start with, Turkey has failed to adequately address the disenchantment

of a significant segment of its Kurdish population over cultural rights and poverty. Its winner-take-all politics, which is dismissive of minority views; reactive nationalist sentiments; mistrust of non-Muslims; and enduring obsession with social control at the level of the ruling elite are at variance with a diversifying and modernising Turkey.

In other words, Turkey's society and business community are uncharacteristically steaming ahead of its politicians in terms of adopting modern political and social values. Urbanisation, economic globalisation and democratic progress are changing societal outlook and traditions.

Despite its forward, albeit sometimes halting dynamism, Turkey is still categorised as a conflict-ridden country – whether between Turks and Kurds, Islam and secularism, or East and West. Witness the raging debates over Turkey's alleged abandonment of Western alliances in favour of an Eastern orientation. These debates ignore public opinion, which surveys suggest prefers international cooperation with Europe, and particularly Germany, rather than with Saudi Arabia, Iran or Russia. So, there is little risk of an Eastward-looking or a religiously politicised Turkey in the absence of a credible EU accession process.

Europe is committing a major error in casting Turkey aside. Turkey stands out as a real beacon of hope and inspiration to many countries, both Muslim and non-Muslim, fashioning a future relying on its own wits. For Turkey, however, a reduced dependency on the European Union will finally debunk the myth that only Europe can spur the liberalisation of Turkey and, by extension, of the Arab countries of the Middle East.

St. Sophia, Istanbul



Fadi Hakura is a specialist on Turkey at Chatham House and a United Nations Global Expert (www.globalexpertfinder.org). This article was first published by Global Expert Finder, a project of the UN Alliance of Civilizations.



Europe's bridge to terrorism

Bosnia has become a breeding ground for Islamic extremism, warns **Marcus Papadopoulos**

Imagine a land of Wahhabi mosques, radical imams, Islamist charities and former Mujahedeen fighters. You could be mistaken for thinking of Saudi Arabia or another country on the Arabian Peninsula or perhaps even Pakistan or Afghanistan. However, the land in question on this occasion is situated in Europe with a Muslim population slowly becoming radicalised under the noses of the European Union and the United States government.

The common perception in many Western countries is that Bosnia is a secular and tolerant country whose politicians and people identify themselves with Western principles of democracy. That notion, created and perpetuated by politicians, media outlets and PR firms principally in the US to justify the support that Washington gave to the Bosnian Muslims during the Bosnian civil-war, is nothing but a façade.

Today, Islamic extremists, through their presence in Bosnia, have a strategically important base from which to plan and carry out terrorist attacks in Europe and beyond. The fact that Bosnia has become a base for Islamism should not only be a wake-up call for the West but it should also serve as a chilling reminder as to what can happen when governments, ignorant of a region and its history, use proxies in war to achieve objectives.

The civil-war which engulfed Bosnia from 1992-1995 was ignited as a result of the US encouraging and then recognising Bosnian independence. American policy-makers viewed the prospect of an independent Bosnia as yielding geopolitical benefits for US global power. Supporting the emergence of such a country would also allow Washington to counter any future Russian influence in the region-Russia is the traditional ally of the Serbs.

Bosnia's Serb community, which constituted a third of the region's population at the outbreak of the conflict, having first settled on these lands in the seventh century, was quickly portrayed by American PR firms working on behalf of the Bosnian Muslim government, such as Ruder Finn, as an invading army of genocidal maniacs. That enabled President Bill Clinton to justify his

administration's support for the Bosnian Muslims to the US public.

Commenting on the Western media's portrayal of the war in Bosnia, Lewis MacKenzie, the former UN protection force general in former Yugoslavia and commander of the Sarajevo sector, said: "Those of us who served as UN commanders in Bosnia realised the majority of the media reports were biased, to say the least."

What followed during the course of the Bosnian war laid the foundation for what Bosnia has become today: a base for international Islamic terrorists.

The US unofficially permitted the arrival into Bosnia of thousands of Mujahedeen fighters from the Middle East and Afghanistan-who had been invited by the Bosnian Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic. These Islamic fighters brought with them a hatred of non-Muslims, a loathing of the West and, naturally, a desire to see the annihilation of Jews. Many were also followers of Wahhabism-a puritanical and extremist form of Islam-which is the official

religious ideology of Saudi Arabia.

Washington also turned a blind eye to arms shipments-which broke the UN arms embargo on Bosnia-and the deployment of Islamic fighters from Iran to Bosnia, specifically to Tuzla.

Following the end of the Bosnian war, many of the Mujahedeen fighters remained in Bosnia-contravening the Dayton Peace Accord-and blended into Bosnian Muslim society. Some were given passports by Sarajevo, including, allegedly, Osama bin Laden, who was seen in Sarajevo by a Der Spiegel correspondent in 1994.

Saudi influence is today very noticeable in Bosnia. Wahhabi mosques, financed by Riyadh, can be found across the Muslim part of Bosnia. The largest is the King Fahd Mosque in Sarajevo, a magnet for radical Muslims who listen to violently anti-Semitic sermons from its chief imam, Nezim Halilovic. Furthermore, according to a survey, over 3 per cent of Bosnian Muslims today are adherents of Wahhabism while 10 per cent express sympathy to the creed.

Links between Saudi Arabia and terrorism in Bosnia have been highlighted by Professor John R. Schindler, of the US Naval War College, who wrote that the CIA concluded that one-third of Saudi charities working in Bosnia, including the International Islamic Relief Organisation, had "facilitated the activities of Islamic groups that engage in terrorism."

Al-Qaida's links to Bosnia are today clear; the chief architect of the 9/11 attacks, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, fought in Bosnia as well Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi, two of the 9/11 hijackers.

Bosnia's connection to Islamic extremism is an enormous embarrassment to Washington and Brussels. Nonetheless, both must now afford serious attention to this part of Europe. There is little point in fighting (justifiably) against terrorism in Afghanistan while at the same time neglecting a region in Europe itself which has become a fifth column for Islamism.

As the professor at the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo, Resid Hafizovic, has said: Wahhabism constitutes a "potentially deadly virus" for Bosnia.

Entrance to the King Fahd Mosque in Sarajevo



Croatia – making the case for enlargement

Gunnar Hökmark MEP puts forward the merits for Croatian accession to the EU

Croatia is one of the priorities of the upcoming Hungarian Presidency. The country hopes to conclude EU accession negotiations and sign the Accession Treaty in the first half of 2011.

It has been a long road for Croatia that entered into its first formal relationship with the EU as far back as 2001, when it signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. A lot has changed since then, not least the EU's own attitude towards enlargement.

After the EU's historic enlargement to the East, in which enlargement as an EU instrument was used to achieve a higher political goal of re-drawing the architecture of Europe, Croatia has been negotiating on its EU membership in a different political climate. Today more than ever, when the historic argument is not as strong, we have a responsibility to make a strong and convincing case in favour of enlargement to our citizens, in order not to endanger what has been the most successful EU foreign policy.

Croatia is in this respect crucial. It will be the first country to follow the recent big enlargement that included the accession of Bulgaria and Romania. It will demonstrate the continuing strength of the EU's pulling power and reinforce a commitment the EU has made to countries of South-East Europe. With Croatia in its midst, with its specific knowledge and historical experience, the EU can reinforce its position within a region that still counts on the EU to be a stabilising factor.

Croatian membership can serve as an example for other countries in South-East Europe on how to tackle the challenges of an EU membership bid. For the European Union it is important to send a message of no country left behind in a region which is not only beyond a doubt European in that it shares the same values on which the EU is built, but that finds itself as of 2007 surrounded by EU Member States, from Hungary to the north and Greece to the South, to Italy to the West and Bulgaria and Romania to the East.

However, in order for enlargement

to be credible, Croatia also needs to demonstrate its preparedness to take on the burdens of membership. Now that the country finds itself within inches of membership, it can concentrate more of its reform efforts on the remaining challenges. The EU will be closely following developments in the reform of the judiciary and in the fight against corruption and in that respect the Croatian authorities have our full support.

Communicating enlargement is also a shared responsibility. Now that there is consensus within the European Union that Croatia is running the last meters in its EU membership bid, I look to the sometimes not too animated public support within Croatia for EU integration. In all fairness public support has known to be fickle particularly when it comes to the question of EU membership, as it is quite volatile and can demonstrate big swings either way depending on the nature of messages from Brussels.

But precisely for that reason Croatian politicians across the board have a big responsibility in making sure they communicate to the Croatian public all

the advantages of membership. The EU is prepared to support them in their efforts. The reforms are not an end in itself and the negotiating process is not an end in itself; they are tools to give Croatian citizens the certainty and security of a country that has applied the highest standards of democracy.

The Hungarian Presidency has prepared an ambitious and charged political agenda. Croatia, a neighbouring country, is on the political priority list. And perhaps it would be only fitting if it would be during the Hungarian Presidency that Croatia was to conclude accession negotiations. Apart from the common history, Hungary as one of the new EU Member States can testify to the societal transformation that comes as a result of EU membership.

As for the European Parliament, we hope to have the ratification of the Croatian Accession Treaty on our agenda as soon as possible in 2011, so that we can welcome our Croatian colleagues into this House.

Gunnar Hökmark is Chair of the Delegation to the EU-Croatia Joint Parliamentary Committee



Introducing Innovation from within the SMEs



i3SME started in 2008 and should deliver results by mid 2011. The project partners come from regions in Italy, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia where economic production is characterised by a high concentration of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Due to such concentration the SME innovation application and R&D expenditure are quite low.

i3SME **aims to create a prolific environment for innovation** in the economic systems of the participating regions enabling SMEs to face the main difficulties in acquiring knowledge and innovation to increase innovation application and R&D within Central Europe. SMEs can improve their performance by identifying the most suitable instruments, methodologies and strategies.

i3SME developed and implemented a specific **methodology** for benchmarking analysis and developing innovation reports by a web platform.

The project Identified good practice examples by conducting a **benchmarking analysis** of the approaches and services operated by the 802 SMEs in the participating areas considering the different economic, territorial features and entrepreneurial activities. A set of **indicators** was defined to identify the hidden champions among these SMEs and to diffuse the best practices of innovation application. As a result, by the end of 2010 i3SME will publish a **multilingual catalogue** featuring these hidden champions.

Having defined **common methodologies** by introducing benchmarking and ICT platform as tools to assess and improve the SMEs performance, i3SME developed specific **guidelines to be adopted by the SMEs** with input from the relevant stakeholders.

Through five specific international training sessions i3SME created a community of **Facilitators** - advisors supporting SMEs in self-assessment, learning, formulation and transfer of knowledge processes. i3SME also facilitated **consultative committees** to support and influence regional policy, **International Conferences and Research Cocktails** to involve entrepreneurs, researchers, policy makers, and various stakeholders.

i3SME will implement **pilot projects** involving at least ten SMEs in each partner country to transfer the best practices and apply the new services and methodologies for innovation assessing their effectiveness.

Aided by its partner CNA Emilia Romagna, the Facilitators and external experts, the Province of Bologna will organize a visit to the Research Laboratories of Technological Transfer and Research (Tecnopoli) in the Province and other university laboratories in Emilia Romagna as well as a workshop to support interested entrepreneurs in areas like innovative finance methods, credit support and participating in international tenders.

To publicise the pilot projects and Multilingual Catalogue i3SME will organise a **study visit**, a final **International dissemination Conference, Research Cocktails** and similar **local events** involving entrepreneurs.

Applying **the new instruments identified by i3SME** will boost their performance by encouraging SMEs to use the instruments in managing their production processes, human resources, and participation in R&D schemes, ICT systems and many other opportunities.

This will be necessary to foster improved arrangements for sharing innovation systems and intensified cooperation between companies and research systems as well as facilitating access to high-level technologies at transnational level.

Contact details:

**A. Tiziana De Nittis, Province of Bologna
Economics Development**

**Via Benedetto XIV, n. 3 - IVp. 40122 Bologna,
Italy**

Tel. +39 051 659 8539

Fax. +39 051 659 8432

email: i3smes@provincia.bologna.it



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Who would benefit from Croatian accession to the EU?

University College London's **Dr Miriam Manchin** discusses the benefits accruing from Croatia joining the EU

The EU single market consists of roughly half a billion consumers. Most countries in the Western Balkans and some other neighbouring regions, trading mostly with the EU, are eager to join this big economic space which offers among other things reduced transaction costs for traders. Croatia appears to be the next country joining the EU. A question one might ask is about the economic implications of Croatia joining the EU, as well as on the distribution of foreseeable benefits, if any.

Croatia obtained the status of candidate country in 2004 and opened accession negotiations in 2005, the same year the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) between Croatia and the EU also entered into force. The SAA established common political, economic, and commercial objectives and serves as the basis for the implementation of the accession process. The SAA also introduced a free trade area by 2007 for industrial products and most agricultural products. Thus most trade taking place between the EU and Croatia is already free of tariffs.

So how important are the two economies for each other? While about two-thirds of Croatian trade is conducted with the EU, in 2009 only 0.4% of EU imports came from Croatia and 1% of EU exports were sold in Croatia. Furthermore, the size of the Croatian economy is tiny compared to the EU, its GDP is about 0.004% of the EU's GDP and its population accounts for about 4.4 million people compared to the EU's 500 million.

Thus given Croatia's size, the economic impact of its accession will be very marginal for the EU. The issue of migration often comes up in enlargement related discussions as soon as countries with significantly lower wage levels approach negotiations for EU accession. In the case of Croatia, the number of possible migrants after enlargement would be almost negligible. Even if 3-4% of Croatian population would migrate to current EU member states, the effects would be very limited as this would imply about 180,000 people migrating possibly towards different EU countries.

The impact on the Croatian economy on the other hand, is likely to be much more pronounced. Although Croatia already has a free trade agreement with the EU, joining the internal market and aligning national legislation with the *acquis communautaire* could still have important economic consequences for the Croatian economy. In particular it would imply free movement of goods, services, capital and labour. It would also result in reduction of non-tariff barriers to trade which would lead to lower transaction costs. Furthermore, joining the EU can also act as a vehicle for improving institutional quality in Croatia. This could happen, for example, via the method of open coordination whereby economic policies of each member state is regularly assessed by the European Commission and the other member states. Also, Croatia will have to comply with all EU legislation and enforcement by the European Court of Justice.

One of the most important challenges faced by the Croatian economy is its heavy external debt burden. This creates pressure for keeping a broadly stable exchange rate and implies that alternative measures are required for strengthening competitiveness. Croatia's competitiveness has been deteriorating, with labour costs increasing significantly faster than those of trading partners, resulting in the overall wages being relatively high compared to productivity. The low competitiveness level of the Croatian economy is partly due to a rigid labour market with low participation, a restrictive and costly business environment, which is also burdened by corruption. Thus there is a strong need to implement competitiveness-enhancing policies, structural reforms, and corruption reduction measures.

These things imply hard choices and political courage which are more likely to take place and be encouraged if Croatia joins the EU. The Stabilisation and Association Process, the regular progress reports and the requirements of the SAA put pressure on Croatia to meet the political and economic criteria for membership and to assume compliance with the *acquis*, secondary legislation,

and policies of the EU. The process of improved institutional infrastructure, and structural reforms should be further reinforced once Croatia joins the EU through open coordination processes.

Better institutions, less corruption, better regulatory environment could lead to increased inflow of much needed foreign direct investment. One of the most important sectors of the Croatian economy is tourism, accounting for about half of exports of goods and services. During the boom years before the crisis tourism failed to attract significant FDI inflows. This was pitiful. The sector would crucially benefit from FDI in physical infrastructures and service quality which is likely to produce improved competitiveness. Quality investment is also much needed in other sectors of the economy. To achieve this, and to fully reap the possible benefits of the EU accession, Croatia needs to address a number of critical issues through structural reform policies which should go beyond satisfying the economic and political criteria needed for EU accession.



Croatia obtained the status of candidate country in 2004 and opened accession negotiations in 2005.

Promoting Innovation in the Industrial Informatics and Embedded Systems Sectors through Networking : SEE I3E Project

Periods of economic turmoil highlight the need for change, so that economies become more competitive. European enterprises need to increase their flexibility and improve their competitiveness in the globalized economy. Innovation plays a key role in achieving such competitiveness. The I3E project promotes innovation in the geographical area of South East Europe (SEE), focusing on the sectors of embedded systems and industrial informatics, which have strategic importance for Europe. Almost half of the top European industries conduct embedded systems research, while the European manufacturing sector contributes approximately 22% of the European GDP.

SEE is a dynamically growing European area, currently characterized, mostly, by developing economies with low cost labour. With a GDP growth twice the EU average and a GDP per capita less than half of the EU average, SEE is challenged to narrow the gap with developed European economies. Investing in the new-market economy and promoting innovation is expected to facilitate meeting this challenge.

SEE has a significant R&D critical mass in the sectors of embedded systems and industrial informatics, with strong human potential as a result of efficient education. Yet, research teams operate independently, without aligning their activities at a transnational level, thus resulting to low effectiveness. Furthermore, there is a significant gap of activity towards entrepreneurship and exploitation of innovation at both SEE national and transnational level.

The I3E project addresses the above challenges through two major outputs: a Strategic Research Agenda (SRA) in the aforementioned sectors and a Methodology Guide for Innovation (MGI).

The SRA takes into account similar European experiences and brings them down to the individual needs of SEE countries. Local consensus in the SEE countries among research teams, in industry and academia, contributes the local research vision to the SRA. Promoting the SRA towards policy makers in the SEE area is expected to influence state research funding and help SEE countries to align their research potential towards common goals, thus increasing the overall impact and visibility of the SEE area to the European research map.

The MGI builds on Best Practices relevant to the transformation of research into innovation and will provide guidelines for the processes to bring mature research results to innovative products and services. Innovation is the payback of research to society through increased competitiveness, high employment, improved quality of life and protection of the environment.

I3E involves 12 partners and will run until May 2012.



Contact Details:
Industrial Systems Institute
PSP Building, Stadiou
26504 Platani Patras, Greece
kalogeras@isi.gr
tel: +302610910308
fax: +302610910306
Project website:
<http://www.i3e.eu/>

A view from Serbia

The EU is not ready to run the Balkans, argues the Democratic Party of Serbia's Dusan Prorokovic



From Brussels' perspective, things look extremely successful. They managed to persuade President Tadic to start official negotiations with the government in Prishtina at an equal footing. This was verified by the new resolution passed by the UN's General Assembly on September 9. Even though Kosovo's Prime Minister already stated that "Serbia has recognized Kosovo", the best description of the situation was given by the Russian newspaper Pravda which referred to it as "the Serbian handing over of Kosovo to the EU". We can add that Serbia has also "handed over to the EU" all other issues. The EULEX mission has extended its mandate to the entire territory of Serbia. Put simply, until now, the progress of Serbia's European integrations was contingent on Serge Brammertz's report, and now it will also hinge on EULEX's account. European integrations became a matter of life and death for the Serbian government because, following the diplomatic turnaround, the country has completely lost credibility with its allies outside of the EU.

From Belgrade's perspective, the situation looks completely unsuccessful. Even the proponents of "accepting reality" are asking what Serbia has got in return. Western officials have restated the phrase that "Serbia has a European perspective", but have not provided any additional guarantees. This probably means ratification of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and candidate status and after that, like Turkey, Serbia might stay in the Brussels waiting room for several decades.

However, the EU should be aware of three things.

Firstly, this can still be viewed as a result of "extra US involvement" and not new diplomatic skills in Brussels. In the next period, when the US temporarily will cede the leading role in managing the affairs in the Balkans to the EU, we will be able to see the true reach that Brussels has. Results so far do not leave room for optimism. The EU, within the UNMIK framework, has been in charge of economic strengthening and development in Kosovo since 1999 and what is the achieved outcome? Despite the enormous financial means poured into Kosovo

through different aid programs, Kosovo's GDP per capita is around the GDP of East Timor.

Secondly, by giving up on the Thessaloniki Agenda the EU has missed a chance to establish itself as a key factor in the Balkans. That was the time when the EU should have encouraged strategic talks between Belgrade and Zagreb, and status talks between Belgrade and Prishtina. It was the time when talking about "Yugosphere" made sense and when the EU had both the capacity and favourable circumstances on its side.

'Western propaganda has created a picture that we are on the verge of joining the EU and when that happens, we will live in opulence'

Today, with the economic crisis, strategic confusion about how to advance forward, many open internal issues, public opposition to further EU enlargement and gradual but constant strengthening of the political right in key EU members, the EU, despite its wishes, will not be capable of running the Balkans.

The EU's weaknesses have already been exploited by others. Turkey's interest in this part of Europe has increased and, we have to keep in mind, that Turkish diplomacy, based on the neo-Ottoman doctrine, has nothing in common with Turkish policies of just few years ago. It is not necessary to mention Russia as its presence is visible on a daily level. And finally, the "Western bloc" does not look like a monolithic whole.

By giving up on the Thessaloniki documents, the EU left the Balkan issue wide open in a strategic and geopolitical sense. That is why the future of the region will depend more on geopolitical interests, strategic regroupings and balance of power between the global and regional forces interested in South Eastern Europe.

Thirdly, and finally, all the above will lead Serbs to ask themselves the question, "what is our direction and where do we belong?"

Western propaganda has created a picture that we are on the verge of joining the EU and when that happens, we will live in opulence. However, propaganda aside, there is no real statistical indicator that we can be better off in the next ten years. Someone should explain why the industrial production in 1998, at the time when NATO was preparing to launch a bombing campaign against Serbia, was higher than in 2010, when we have a "European perspective".

Maybe, a comprehensive answer lies in the following question: "Why the economic, social and political westernisation did not give any results in Orthodox Christian countries?" After three decades this finally becomes evident with the Greek example.

The sudden imposing of "western" values, accompanied with aggressive fulfilment of geostrategic and financial interests of western countries and their economies, did not bring an expected progress to Serbia but a tremendous demographic decline, brain drain, debt-which with the current rate of economic growth will linger for several generations-collapse of the education system and an increase in defeatism.

That is why a string of political defeats which Serbia has experienced in the past several months can help break illusions and initiate more dynamically the process of re-examining Serbia's positions and results in the past ten years.

Even though it seems like Brussels has a reason to be satisfied, while Belgrade cannot see an end to hopelessness, in the long-term things can go completely differently as often is case in the history of the Balkans.

Belgrade at night



Photo: Aleksandar Čosić

CO₂PipeHaz



Quantitative Failure Consequence Hazard Assessment for Next Generation CO₂ Pipelines: The Missing Link

As part of the challenge to reduce the impact of global warming, pressurised pipelines are considered to be the most practical option for transporting captured CO₂ from fossil fuel power plants for subsequent sequestration. This has significant implications for Europe given its heavy reliance on coal fired power plants for its electricity generation.

Funded by the FP7 EC Energy Programme, this 3 year project commenced in December 2009. It brings together leading international experts to develop and test mathematical models for safety assessment of CO₂ pipelines. The results are expected to provide the tools for determining the minimum safe distances to populated areas and allow emergency response planning in the unlikely event of pipeline failure. Such knowledge will assist the public acceptability of CO₂ pipelines and hence facilitate the success of Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS) as an effective means for tackling the impact of global warming.

Consortium

The CO₂PipeHaz consortium is made up of 7 partners from 5 different countries involved in diverse but complementary aspects of the project. The members include

- University College London (United Kingdom, coordinator)
- National Research Centre for Physical Sciences (Greece)
- Dalian University of Technology (China)
- Health and Safety Laboratory (United Kingdom)
- University of Leeds (United Kingdom)
- GexCon (Norway)

The CO₂PipeHaz team have expertise in the fields of thermodynamic and transport properties, CO₂ purification, multi-phase heterogeneous flows, and dispersion at both small and large scales (near- and far-field). The grouping also contains experts in the development of good practice guidelines, in performing cost/benefit analysis, consequence, safety and risk assessments and developing the tools required to undertake them, and in the means that can be used to mitigate the impact of any accident. This expertise spans the experimental measurement of relevant processes and parameters, as well as the mathematical modelling of such processes, and the embodiment of theoretical understanding within computational design and decision support tools.

An important part of the project involves the validation of the mathematical models developed based on comparison with the results obtained following the controlled rupture of a real CO₂ pipeline in China.

Additionally, the collaboration contains experts with direct practical experience of capturing, processing and transporting carbon dioxide, and in one case, experts who have direct experience of CCS systems at an industrial scale. This gives the CO₂PipeHaz team the confidence to generate the basic engineering science required to ensure understanding of the safety of CO₂ transportation systems, and to translate that knowledge in to the tools needed for practical application in order to ensure the safe and commercial deployment of power generation technology based on CCS.

Contact details

Professor Haroun Mahgerefteh
Project Coordinator
University College London
Gower Street, London, United Kingdom
Tel: +44-2076793835
Fax: +44-2076793835

Please visit us at: www.co2pipehaz.eu



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Starting Point

No one could have foreseen in 2000 and 2001 at the time when the EU formulated its Lisbon and Gothenburg goals that there would be a global financial and economic crisis in 2008 that would change many of these ambitious transnational goals and cause widespread uncertainty, especially in the daily lives of European citizens who see their jobs, lives and security under threat.

As new ambitious transnational goals are being formulated and presented

(e.g. EU 2020, http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index_en.htm) who can predict what will happen in the future?

One thing is certain: regional economies must be in a position to cope with the pressures. They have to be able to react to and predict changing conditions, and they must be able to educate, train and retrain their workforces to meet the challenges.

Individual citizens have to be supported so that they can contribute to their own individual economic security, as well as to the security of the region and in a wider context to a united Europe.

Time to act

The CENTRAL EUROPE supported project ET-struct aims at supporting regional stability and growth. How?

1. ET-struct will bring together three of the major players that influence regions in permanent management structures: regional politics; regional economy; regional education-training
2. ET-struct will compile a dynamic inventory of skills and competences needed for CENTRAL EUROPE (“new-skills-for-new-jobs”)
3. ET-struct will develop and pilot on-site and online learning systems to educate, train and retrain regional workforces.



A partnership for growth and stability

Until the end of 2012, 16 partners from 6 EU CENTRAL EUROPE countries, plus a partner from the West-Ukraine will work together towards *regional stability and growth*...



Announcement

ET-struct Event: 10. November 2010, 11:30, Vienna House in Brussels

(Avenue de Tervuren 58, B-1040 Brussels)

For further questions please contact: +32 2 743 85 00

Registration under: post-vbb@md-v.wien.gv.at

Contact

If you would like to find out more about ET-struct, please contact either the Lead Partner:

European Office, Vienna Board of Education, Tel.: (+43 1) 52525 77087, eMail: office@etstruct.eu,

or your regional institution or visit the ET-struct Homepage: <http://www.etstruct.eu>

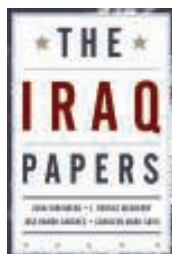
Links

CENTRAL EUROPE: <http://www.central2013.eu>

ERDF: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/index_en.htm



A bushfire in the Middle East



The Iraq Papers

Edited by John Ehrenberg, J Patrice McSherry,
José Ramón Sánchez and Caroleen Marji Sayej.
Oxford University Press, £15.99

When Ed Miliband, in his first speech as new Labour leader, told his party conference in Manchester “we were wrong” about Iraq he was lancing the boil on the backside of the last Labour government.

Mr Miliband told delegates: “Iraq was an issue that divided our party and our country. Many sincerely believed that the world faced a real threat. I criticise nobody faced with making the toughest of decisions and I honour our troops who fought and died there. But I do believe that we were wrong. Wrong to take Britain to war – and we need to be honest about that. Wrong because that war was not a last resort, because we did not build sufficient alliances and because we undermined the United Nations.” And, to sustained applause in the conference hall, he added: “America has drawn a line under Iraq and so must we.”

Tony Blair is still dogged not just by his

decision to take Britain into an unpopular war – one million people demonstrated on the streets of London to try to Stop the War – but by the way the decision to go to war was taken and the grounds – those infamous weapons of mass destruction which were never found – on which that decision was made.

No foreign policy decision by a British Prime Minister in recent years has had greater repercussions than Mr Blair’s decision to join George W Bush in the US-led mission to invade and occupy Iraq. That decision by Bush and Blair launched a new doctrine of pre-emptive war, mired the military in an intractable armed conflict, disrupted oil supplies, cost hundreds of billions of dollars and killed or injured or otherwise damaged the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, Americans and Britons. It also seriously undermined the standing of Britain in the world.

The Iraq Papers, edited by John Ehrenberg and J Patrice McSherry, both Professors of Political Science at Long Island University, Brooklyn, José Ramón Sánchez, Associate Professor of Political Science at Long Island University and Caroleen Marji Sayej, Assistant Professor of Government and International Relations at Connecticut College, New London, is, they say, “an interpretative collection of primary sources to help readers understand how the United States got involved in Iraq and to help them consider some of the consequences of that involvement for both countries and for the world.”

This collection of documents traces the rise of the neo-conservatives and reveals their strategic thinking about oil supplies. It provides congressional resolutions, speeches by President Bush, internal security papers, Pentagon planning papers and the report of the Future of Iraq Project. It addresses every aspect of the conflict, from the evolving counter-insurgency strategy to statements by Iraqi resisters and political figures from the Coalition Provisional Authority to Donald Rumsfeld and his dismissal of the insurgents as “dead enders” and Iraqi discussions about nation-building under the shadow of occupation.

After 650-odd pages the editors conclude: “The war raised profound questions that urgently demanded answers. Did the United States really want to dominate the world? Did other peoples have the right to determine their own national directions? Were domestic democracy and prosperity compatible with militarism and expansionism? Were Americans willing to live with a government that insisted on unchallenged military dominance, invasions and interventions; that rejected diplomacy and routinely degraded democratic rights in the face of challenges? After eight years of President Bush...the electorate seemed ready to answer these questions. It did so in 2008 in an election that represented decisive repudiation of Bush’s policies.”

Keith Richmond is deputy editor of *Tribune*

Recipe

Chicken with Tarragon

This dish – from Bergerac in south-west France – uses mushrooms, onions, garlic, cream and wine to make a heavenly sauce for these succulent chicken breasts. Serve with rice and stir fried cabbage and leek for a very easy but gloriously tasty main course.

Serves 6

2tbsp olive oil
1 large onion, chopped
2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
300g punnet closed cup white mushrooms, wiped, trimmed and sliced
6 boneless, skinless chicken breast fillets, cubed
150ml/¼pt white wine
150ml/¼pt chicken stock
300ml/½pt double cream
salt and freshly ground black pepper
3tbsp freshly chopped tarragon plus extra to garnish



Photo: Alicia Richmond

Heat the oil in a large heavy based pan (or flame-proof casserole) and cook the onions, garlic and mushrooms for 5 minutes, or until softened. Remove from the pan with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Add the cubed chicken breasts to the pan, with a splash more oil if necessary, and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Tip the onion mix back into the pan with the wine and stock. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 10-15 minutes or until reduced. Add the cream and seasoning, stir well, and simmer for a further 5-10 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through and the creamy sauce is thickened and reduced, stir-

ring every now and then.

Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper and stir in the tarragon. Serve on a bed of plain boiled brown rice with stir fried cabbage and leek and a glass of...

Bergerac Sauvignon Blanc/Sémillon Grande Reserve 2009 (Sainsbury's, £9.99)

Bergerac has always been the poor (and less well known) relation of Bordeaux (think of the relationship between Stoke Newington and Islington or Highgate and Hampstead) but the truth is that this region turns out stylish, well made wines from similar grapes grown on similar soils in a similar climate at a fraction of the price of its better known neighbour. This beautifully balanced dry white wine, made by cru classé consultant Pascal Poussevin, is full of lovely fresh flavours, especially lemon. It cuts through the richness of the cream and goes brilliantly with this chicken dish.

Lucy Knox is a freelance food writer

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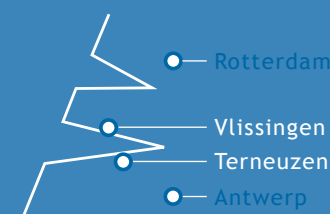


Zeeland Seaports
Port Authority

Zeeland Seaports

Schelpenpad 2 (port no. 1151)
P.O. Box 132
4530 AC Terneuzen
The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)115 647400
Fax: +31 (0)115 647500

port@zeeland-seaports.com
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