

Received from your MEP, Bill Newton Dunn (13 December, 2012)

Here is my final report from the European Parliament for 2012.

Very good news. A single EU patent from 2014

Currently, to get a patent in the EU for an new invention means going to each of the 27 member state capitals and applying for it in the different languages. The total cost for an inventor is estimated at € 30-40,000 per patent. By contract, in the USA the cost to get a single patent for the whole USA is around \$1800. After thirty years of painful negotiations, agreement has been reached on a single patent for the EU. Why so long ? Because of the usual reluctance by national governments to share sovereignty, even though smaller businesses would have benefitted enormously.

The new system will cover 25 of the 27 member states and patents will only be issued in three languages (English, French and German). Spain and Italy have opted out because they wanted their languages to be obligatory too. The Council has insisted on creating three seats for the new EU Patent Office, in Munich and Paris and London. Nevertheless, savings for business will be enormous and the chance for small businesses to have EU-wide patents will be much easier.

This week, the European Parliament approved it. Inexplicably, our region's two UKIP MEPs both voted against : their hatred of Europe outweighs any pragmatism of helping business and jobs and prosperity.

For more details, see <http://euobserver.com/political/118490> and <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20121210IPR04506/html/Parliament-approves-EU-unitary-patent-rules>

And better treatment for animals on long-distance transport

MEPs, in a non-legislative report, called for the rules to be enforced properly by the member states, to step up inspections and to impose more appropriate penalties on offenders, in a resolution passed on Wednesday. See

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20121207IPR04402/html/Better-transport-conditions-for-animals-stricter-sanctions-for-rule-breakers>

Watch out for

13 & 14 December : when the 27 national leaders meet in Brussels. One topic for them is to confirm Banking Union across the EU. For details, click on <http://euobserver.com/news/118516>

The Commission in Brussels also wants to debate the steps to a fully federal Europe, as does Chancellor Merkel of Germany. Click on <http://euobserver.com/economic/118358>

It becomes ever clearer that the UK will have to make up its mind - to be an influential part of a united Europe, or to leave and be isolated and powerless to influence the way the world develops (like Norway but overcrowded and without their oil).

Budget disputes settled

The parliament, and the 27 national finance ministers, have settled their 2012 and 2013 budget differences. So, the UK media has not reported. But there is still disagreement between the 27 national leaders about the longterm financing of the EU, even though EU spending often represents savings instead of the 27 member states doing things separately twenty-seven times over.

For details, see

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20121207IPR04403/html/Parliament-confirms-deal-on-2012-and-2013-budget-package>

After Cameron's attack on Brussels bureaucrats, an interesting comparison emerged. It shows that, surprise, British civil-servants live a more comfortable life than those who work in Brussels. The purchasing power of EU officials has declined 7.6pc, but has only gone down by 3.2pc for British public servants. Eurocrats work a 37.5 hour working week, soon to rise to 40, but British bureaucrats only put in 36 hours. The salary for a top Brussels bureaucrat is €16,919 a month but for a British civil servant it is €25,000. Eurocrats can look forward to a 70pc final salary pension, but the highest earning British civil servants have 75per cent. See the table below.

EU v UK civil service

	EU civil servants	UK civil servants
Purchasing power evolution 2004-11	-7,6%	-3,2%
Net salary evolution 2011	+1,7% (refused by Council)	+1,3%
Weekly working time	37,5 (40 as from 1/1/2013)	36
Salaries (monthly)	€ 1.847 – € 16.919	Up to € 25.000
Pension contributions	11,6%	3,5%
Annual accrual rate (pension rights per year of service)	1,9%	2,3%
Normal retirement age	63 (65 as from 1/1/2013)	65
Minimum early retirement age	55 (58 as from 1/1/2013)	50
Maximum rate of pension	70% of final salary (average: 62% of final salary, will go down to 55%*)	75% of highest earning (2007 scheme) 66% (1972 + 2002 scheme)

Brussels v Strasbourg : MEPs' fight for a single meeting-place

Bad news. The ECJ (the European Court of Justice, which is the EU's supreme court) today ruled against the MEP attempt to cut down the number of visits to Strasbourg each year. To make any change (and to make huge savings in costs) will require a change in the treaty between the 27 member states. Read the ruling at <http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2012-12/cp120168en.pdf>

Two requests for your opinions

1. What are the biggest bugbears that hinder small businesses ? You can tell the EU Commission in Brussels at http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=6202&lang=en
2. The coalition government in London is asking for the public's opinion on "Balance of Competences" - in other words, in what areas should the EU be in charge and in what areas should the member state parliaments be in charge ?
Give your view at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/global-issues/european-union/balance-of-competences-review/>

Italian gossip

As you may have seen, Berlusconi has withdrawn support in the Italian parliament for the excellent government run by Mario Monti. So there will be a general election in Italy soon. Why ? Because Berlusconi faces trial and sentencing on various court cases, but if he is re-elected to the Italian parliament he acquires immunity for another five years. Why does his party put up with this behaviour ? Because, as their billionaire leader, he controls who will be high up on the list of candidates. Anybody who opposes him will not be re-elected to the Italian lower house next year. The party leaders, in Italy, decide who will be their winning candidates : there is no role for local parties to have a say in the choice.

Greetings cards for Christmas and 2013

Next week I shall send you an electronic Greetings card from the European Parliament. For the first time, I shall not send everybody a printed Greetings card by post - to save cost and paper and energy. However a stock of printed cards is available, and if you would really like to have one in the post, please let me know !

All the very best to you for 2013 !

My next report from the parliament will come in mid-January.