

# Report from our MEP, Bill Newton Dunn

## dated 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012

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**The euro financial crisis** continues to threaten all of us.

There was another long debate in the parliament this week. See

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/pressroom/content/20120608IPR46526/html/Economic-governance-two-pack-dominates-morning-debates>

There will be a summit of the 27 national leaders in Brussels on 28-29 June.

MEPs are heartily sick of several years of consecutive summits between the national leaders which, so far, have all ended with promises but none of which solved the crisis. Merkel of Germany has been extra cautious but, interestingly, now is openly talking about political union "but with strict rules".

If the summit of leaders "fails" again, there is now talk among MEPs that we may give an ultimatum to Barroso (President of the Commission, the executive body) to produce a full plan for union, and if he fails to do it, the whole Commission will be dismissed. The parliament represents the people and the people are tired of inaction and fear. As one leading Liberal put it, "in a revolution it is the people who take charge and there are no leaders any more - even though this time we may not use the guillotine."

### **Fisheries reform**

The 27 Ministers for Fishing met behind closed doors in Brussels (despite their obligation of the Lisbon Treaty to meet in public) and they arrived at a kind of initial consensus about what should be done to reform the EU's Fisheries Policy. No vote was taken and four countries expressed different reservations (Slovenia, Malta, Sweden and Netherlands). It would be prudent for you to ignore the UK press reports because the secrecy enabled every minister to return home and claim a triumph - which is patently impossible. The 27 ministers ignored that this is only the first reading, and they still have to reach agreement with MEPs who have equal powers with them.

What was encouraging was that, a year after the Commission published its proposals, the 27 state ministers have finally agreed to ban discards, but have not agreed about what to do with the undiscarded dead fish.

Still ahead in the negotiations lies agreement about "regionalisation" i.e. agreement that conservation measures that are suitable in the North Sea may be unsuited in the Mediterranean.

How member states can be stopped cheating - as they have including the UK so far - is not in this text. It remains to be decided in a separate text about control and rules. The Commission say they hope to be given power to with-hold money from states that cheat and overfish.

The Council's press release can be found here:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/agricult/130884.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/agricult/130884.pdf)

The Council's press conference in presence of Commissioner Damanaki can be viewed here:

<http://video.consilium.europa.eu/default.aspx>

### **Important elections to watch this Sunday**

The second Greek general election - which (at this moment) seems likely to end in a narrow victory for the main centre-right party, which would mean Greek acceptance of the austerity measures and of the loans. But what the reaction of the world financial markets will be on Monday morning is impossible to predict. In the worst scenario, they would topple Sopaia, then turn on Italy and then on France...

There will also be a French parliamentary election, which will tell the world how strong is the support for new socialist president Hollande.

## **Strasbourg v Brussels**

Last year MEPs voted to cut down the number of annual sessions they hold in Strasbourg. The French took the parliament to court. The ECJ (the European Court of Justice) heard both sides this week (for twenty minutes each only). The preliminary advisory ruling is now expected on 6th September from the court's Advocate General, and the definitive ruling by the judges later this year.

### **Furious argument about how the EU borders are controlled.**

Furious members of the European Parliament have threatened to cut relations with the Danish EU presidency following a decision by member states to exclude parliament from having a say on how rules in the Union's borderless area are applied.

"Since the evening of June 7, the Danish Presidency is no longer a credible interlocutor," said French MEP Joseph Daul, who chairs the parliament's largest group the EPP. "From now to June 30 at midnight, we shall address ourselves exclusively either to the European Council or informally to the next Presidency of the Republic of Cyprus," said Daul.

Member states on 7 June rejected a European Commission proposal that would have lifted evaluation of the Schengen area from the current peer-to-peer review up to EU-level supervision. The Commission package, tabled in September, followed the large influx of migrants and refugees from the Arab Spring earlier last year. The migrant numbers sparked debates on how and under what conditions member states can impose internal border control checks.

The Commission was pushing for greater oversight into how Schengen would be evaluated. But member states resisted saying evaluation should remain in their hands. They also argued that a reduction in the Commission's oversight should automatically lead to parliament being granted just observer status. Morten Boedskov, the Danish minister for justice, told Parliament that the decision was purely legal and had no anterior political motives. "There was no other possible decision in the Council," he said.

He pointed out that the regulation on Schengen border codes, which governs the movement of people across borders, would still require Parliament's decision-making input. As for its evaluation, Boedskov promised that member states would consider the views of MEPs to the "fullest extent possible". But MEPs believe it is a calculated attempt to weaken EU institutions. "This is the saddest day in your whole Council presidency," said Rebecca Harms, a German MEP and Green group chief.

Hannes Swoboda, the Austrian head of the centre-left S&D group, accused the Danish EU presidency of "going down a dangerous path".

Liberal leader Guy Verhofstadt called the decision a "disgrace." He and others want to challenge the decision before the European Court of Justice. Verhofstadt also said the Parliament should suspend relations with the Danish EU presidency but specified in matters concerning justice and home affairs.

The Commission, for its part, also protested. "The peer-to-peer review has proven to be quite useless," said EU home affairs commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom. "It is not just about a legal proposal, it is about political ambition," added the commissioner. "We are clearly disappointed about the Council's decision."

### **Finally...**

Reporting about the recent referendum in Ireland by which the EU's new Fiscal treaty was approved by over 60% of voters, a Liberal MEP, Pat The Cope Gallagher, said it was very satisfactory because "even if we had a referendum in Ireland about going to heaven, 25% of Irish would still vote No". His unusual name is because his father founded the Co-op movement in Ireland and now his son is famous as "Pat The Cope".

All the best, Bill