

## **MEP Report received 19 February, 2014**

This report covers : Coming Legislation, the Swiss referendum, Corruption, Cyber-warfare, European elections, and Floods.

The parliament's committees are completing their work as the 22 May election approaches. They are also preparing for the new parliament and for the new Commission, both to be elected this summer.

### ***Legislation soon to be voted by the present parliament includes:***

- The new law about the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco and related products including e-cigarettes.
- Creation of a new EU Volunteer Corps for youngsters to help with Humanitarian Aid around the world
- Roadworthiness tests for motor vehicles and their trailers (but Caravans and Trailers have been removed from the obligation to have MoT tests).

### ***A significant Swiss referendum***

Ten days ago, a narrow majority of the Swiss (50.3%) voted to restrict foreign Europeans from working in Switzerland. The Swiss government, which disagrees with the result, has three years to put the result into its national constitution or to find a way out, maybe by asking its citizens again in another referendum but that is up to the Swiss. Contrarily, an opinion poll after the referendum revealed that 74% of Swiss citizens want free movement to continue.

Currently, all EU nationals need special permits to work in Switzerland. The permit restrictions were set to be lifted for 25 member states at the end of May although would continue until May 2019 for Romanians and Bulgarians.

There will be a debate in the European Parliament next week. The EU has replied that if the Swiss government puts that decision into Swiss law, it would breach EU agreements with Switzerland about two-way free trade and participating in joint research programmes. It would also create obstacles to trains and trucks using Swiss tunnels under the Alps.

### ***Corruption across Europe***

The European Commission published a 350 page report about corruption in the EU member countries. The summary is at [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-14-86\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-86_en.htm)

Denmark is the least corrupt, Italy the worst. The UK is far from perfect : think of the nepotism whereby all our upper house of parliament, "the Lords", is appointed by friends at Westminster. David Cameron and the Conservatives refused Nick Clegg's proposals to reform the Lords. See [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/organized-crime-and-human-trafficking/corruption/anti-corruption-report/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/organized-crime-and-human-trafficking/corruption/anti-corruption-report/index_en.htm)

An NGO, Transparency International, also publishes valuable reports about corruption around the world - see <http://www.transparency.org/enis>

Can corruption be reduced ? Yes, the best solution is transparency. If the public can see exactly what is going on, then corruption is not possible.

### ***A briefing from NATO about cyber-warfare.***

Cyber-warfare is growing every day and is one of the new emerging threats, alongside Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Terrorism. Traditional forms of defence are shrinking : our army is now the smallest since 1815 and our navy (only nineteen ships now) is the smallest since 1690.

Cyber warfare is used for espionage, stealing secrets, paralysing vital assets, propaganda, and recruitment. The enemy can be unknown : the famous cyber assault on Estonia in 2007 came from botnets in the USA although Russia was strongly suspected as the originator. The Red Army cyber-centre in Shanghai stopped its activity for 30 days when it was identified by the

West, but has now started again.

Unlike traditional NATO defence, in cyber-warfare the strong don't help the weak - because if the strong give their best software to the weak, it is an easy gift for the enemy. At present NATO members use 36 different kinds of hardware and software : it should be one. (I'm revealing no secrets : the Russian ambassador was present at the meeting). NATO's role is two-fold : planning, training, threat assessment, crisis management, education, and exercises. In a hot war, its role would be coordination. But cooperation and information sharing between the member nations for cyber warfare is still very weak.

NATO is assisted by "the five eyes" worldwide Anglo-Saxon listening network (revealed by Edward Snowden). The future of NATO is at stake as the nature of modern warfare changes. Watch for the NATO summit in Wales in September, when they try to agree a new cyber strategy for NATO.

Although NATO's 28 members are not the same as the EU's 28 members, the EU and NATO cooperate closely. NATO can not legislate or set standards, so the EU does that.

### ***European elections are approaching***

It is very rare that I agree with Nigel Farage. But when, on national radio, he described all his policies as "drivel", I fully agreed with him.

Farage publicly disowned all UKIP's policies! See

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/23/nigel-farage-ukip-2010-election-manifesto>

"The Scotsman" newspaper wrote : *"If there was no other reason to vote Liberal Democrat, the party's commitment to the EU, and to the principles of its founding fathers, would be an adequate one. Given the rise of Ukip, and the aims and character of that party, **anyone who believes in the value of the European Union should certainly think of voting Liberal Democrat at the election for the European Parliament in May** – and, indeed, do more than think about it."*

The link to that is <http://www.scotsman.com/news/allan-massie-lib-dems-deserve-praise-not-censure-1-3284858>

### ***Flooding***

The Chancellor in London has refused to apply for EU finance to help with the flooding in the UK, despite a strong letter from Lib Dem MEPs. Apparently his refusal was because it would affect the UK Rebate, would revive a dispute from 2007, and would require an additional small amending EU budget which the UK would have to vote in favour. However, under great pressure, the Treasury is reported to be reconsidering.

### ***Finally***

I enjoyed these photos of different UK party leaders posing for photos in the floods.

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/jimwaterson/pictures-of-politicians-in-wellies-and-staring-at-floods>

Sorry this was so long. My next report will be in mid-March.

All the best, Bill Newton Dunn