

Catherine Stihler MEP

www.cstihlermep.com

Member of the European Parliament for Scotland

EUROPE MATTERS: OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2009 E-NEWSLETTER

Lisbon Treaty Approved

The Czech Republic finally approved the Lisbon Treaty on the 3rd November. This historic moment after the yes vote in Ireland, means that the Lisbon Treaty has been ratified in all 27 member states and will now come into force. The Lisbon Treaty will provide the European Union with the legal framework and tools necessary to meet future challenges and to respond to its citizens' needs and demands.

It will create:

- A more democratic and transparent Europe, with a strengthened role for the European Parliament and national parliaments, more opportunities for citizens to have their voices heard and a clearer sense of who does what at a European and national level.
- A more efficient Europe, with simplified working methods and voting rules, streamlined and modern institutions for an EU of 27 members and an improved ability to act in areas of major priority for today's Union.
- A Europe of rights and values, freedom, solidarity and security, promoting the Union's values, introducing the Charter of Fundamental Rights into European primary law, providing for new solidarity mechanisms and ensuring better protection of European citizens.
- The Treaty of Lisbon will give Europe a clear voice in relations with its partners worldwide. It will harness Europe's economic, humanitarian, political and diplomatic strengths to promote European interests and values worldwide, while respecting the particular interests of Member States in Foreign Affairs.

Women on the March!

On the 10th October, I – along with three thousand others – took to the streets of Edinburgh to pay tribute to the women who campaigned against all odds to secure the right to vote. The event was a re-enactment of the original procession, in 1909, when suffragettes from all over Scotland travelled to Edinburgh to raise the profile of women's activism and our democratic right to vote.

A lot has changed in the past 100 years, however, we still have a long way to go before we have true gender equality. If the Lisbon Treaty enters into force in 2010, there will be four top EU jobs to be filled – President of the European Council, the President of the

Commission, the President of the European Parliament and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Thus far, all of the potential candidates named so far are men! The face of the EU cannot be exclusively male. I support the 'Send 2 Women' campaign, which calls for further female representation in high-profile EU position. It is vital that we push for an EU that is more open, transparent and takes account of gender balance.

For pictures of myself and Labour colleagues on the march, log onto my website or facebook page!

For more information on these issues, please visit www.send2women.eu <<http://www.send2women.eu>> and www.gudecause.org.uk <<http://www.gudecause.org.uk>>

A New Vision

With the financial crisis and climate change at the top of the political agenda, we have been kept very busy.

I am currently the lead Socialist MEP working on establishing an early warning system to help stop VAT fraud. This information exchange system would be standardised across Europe, and routinely updated across tax authorities in all member states. I will keep you all posted on more news after the forthcoming debate on this issue.

Throughout the course of the parliamentary term, I will be pushing for new legislation that will prevent insurance companies from ripping off and discriminating against older people who want to travel. Too many people are hit with extortionate travel insurance fees, and some older people are even barred from obtaining a travel policy from some companies simply because of their age. Action at a European level can put a stop to this nonsense and curb unfair age-based pricing in the insurance. Sent from my BlackBerry® wireless device

Countdown to Copenhagen

The UN Climate Change Conference will take place in Copenhagen, Denmark between 7 – 18 December 2009.

It is safe to say that 2009 has been a landmark year for the EU. In January, the European Parliament endorsed the most ambitious and far-reaching climate and energy package put forward by the Commission. The package demonstrates the EU's commitment to slash greenhouse gas emissions, boost the supply of renewable energies by 20% (by 2020) and reduce Europe's dependency on imported fuels. It is vital that we take action now to transform Europe into a highly-efficient, low carbon economy.

The Climate Change Conference will give the EU the opportunity to take centre stage and push for an ambitious agenda that will mitigate the effects of climate change and save the planet. It is vital that we engage with global powers, major polluters and push for action that will tackle the root causes of climate change. We all have a responsibility to adapt our behaviour and respond to the challenge of climate change. It cannot be understated how

important it is that Copenhagen delivers a deal that is just, fair and keeps global warming below 2°C.

Chris Read – from Linda MacAvan MEP’s office – has put together a great video from a climate change and developing countries debate on 20th October. It features both UKIP and the BNP brandishing action on climate change a ‘waste’ of tax payers’ money. You can view the video by clicking on the following link: <http://www.chrisread.eu/?p=23>

Ever thought about showing your support for action to combat global warming? On 5th December, hundreds of people are set to flood the streets of Glasgow for the ‘Wave’ and march for climate justice. This event is part of the ‘Countdown to Copenhagen’ and is being organized by Stop Climate Chaos Scotland. It is family-friendly event, with lots of activities on offer. To register your interest in attending and for more information, please visit <http://www.stopclimatechaos.org/scotland>

Visit to Trondheim, Norway

The European Economic Area Joint Parliamentary Committee (EEA JPC) meets twice a year.

As a member of the Swiss, Iceland and Norway delegation, I was present at the October meeting in Trondheim, Norway. The purpose of the EEA JPC is to have better dialogue and a stronger relationship between the 27 EU member states and the EFTA countries – Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway. The EEA Agreement covers co-operation between EU and EFTA states in important areas such as social policy, the environment, travel and tourism, and consumer protection.

Trondheim, twinned with Dunfermline, was once the capital of Norway as was Dunfermline once the capital of Scotland. I met with the Mayor of Trondheim – Rita Ottervik – and presented her with a ‘A Bond of Friendship’ by Lillian King. The book was commissioned by the The Dunfermline Trondheim Twinning Association. I also gave the Bishop of Nidaros a book of common prayer from the Presbytery of Dunfermline.

New Book on the EPLP

I thought some people may be interested in *Wreckers or Breakers*, the new book by Anita Pollack, former Labour MEP (1989 – 1999). The book offers a history of the European Parliamentary Labour Party from 1979 and 1999.

You can buy the book from most major retailers throughout the UK, including Amazon, WH Smith and Politico’s Bookshop.

Get in Touch!

For more information about my work in the Parliament, or if you require any additional information about the forthcoming elections, please do not hesitate to contact my office – I am happy to help!

25 Church Street,
Inverkeithing,
Fife,
KY11 1LG
t: 01383 417 799
f: 01383 413 335
cstihlermep@btconnect.com
www.cstihlermep.com

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