

Catherine Stihler MEP

Member of the European Parliament for Scotland

March 2008 e-newsletter

Welcome to the latest edition of my e-newsletter. Please feel free to forward this to friends, family and colleagues. Should you wish to stop receiving email updates please reply directly to this email with "unsubscribe" in the subject header.

Thank you,

Catherine

Contents:

- **Five Building Blocks for a Europe of Social Justice and Decent Work**
- **April and June 2008 European Forum Dates**
- **Spaces left on the 2008 Annual Trip**
- **An Effective and Efficient European Parliament**

Five Building Blocks for a Europe of Social Justice and Decent Work

The future of Europe's social model has been the subject of fierce political battle, and as Europe's socialist, social democratic and labour parties, we have rescued and revived our vision of the European social model. We need a determined and activist European Union. Member states must be prepared to re-examine assumptions about European social and economic policies, and to tackle social challenges of the 21st century head on.

The European Union is one of the richest places on the planet – yet one in six, some 74 million people – live below the national poverty line. We want a new social Europe – far more and better jobs, against poverty and inequality.

Here I have summarised our vision and the five building blocks for a Europe of social justice and decent work:

More and better jobs, against poverty & inequality:

High quality employment is the best means to fight poverty and inequality, and we believe co-ordinated investment in the five core Lisbon goals – research, education, active labour market policies, childcare and incentives for private investment – would create millions of jobs and substantially higher growth. We need to encourage firms to build long-term, trusting relationships with their workforce and investment in skills and adaptability.

Commitment towards minimum income from all Member States, in relation to per capita GDP would lift the recipient's income above the poverty threshold, and we are appealing for an EU-wide national

minimum wage. An end to the gender pay gap is necessary, and equal pay for equal work is amongst Europe's oldest Treaty objectives.

We need to align EU revenues and expenditures with Europe's social and economic objectives and to close the gap between rich and poor regions. Alongside producing a national strategy and action plan on how to prevent the reproduction of poverty through generations and strengthening children's rights.

Economic Security:

We need the rapid adoption of European legislation to protect temporary agency workers and Europe-wide action against undeclared work, and the exploitation of workers. We need strong unions and closer consultation between companies, employees, trade unions and public authorities. We need to integrate the workforce, and Member States should coordinate improvements in access to training and retraining. Unclear employment regulation should be revised and clear guidelines issued – all employment protection legislation should be applied effectively.

Diversity, integration and inclusion:

The newly enlarged Union embraces a wider range of cultural traditions, greater extremes of poverty and wealth, and a wider range of problems of social exclusion. We are calling for diversity, integration and inclusion throughout the EU. Anti-discrimination legislation (and enforcement) needs to be strengthened, and a Common Migration Policy introduced, with further protection of basic rights, alongside access to quality education and training.

Europe needs to face the challenge of helping parents to work, and using Europe's Structural and Cohesion funds used as a weapon against exclusion and poverty. Lifelong learning provisions should also create opportunities for all age groups including the elderly.

Better Managed Globalisation:

Building world-class institutions of education and research, to create a highly skilled workforce to build on Europe's competitive edge, should be at the heart of EU globalisation policies. Globalisation can also be better managed if the Works Council Directive was revised and strengthened, the European Monitoring Centre on Change strengthened, and the Globalization Fund expanded. The funding for long-term investment must be stable and transparent, alongside trade agreements reformed to include commitments to labour standards. Anti-corruption and good governance should be key reform priorities for EU foreign policy.

Social Market Economy:

Yes to the market and no to a market society! Our approach to the social market economy is that everyone has clearly defined rights and duties, which is why we insist on consumer rights, protections for citizens and transparency and accountability for businesses and financial markets.

We are calling for reinforcement of the social pillar of the Single Market, and the introduction of binding social impact assessments of single market legislation.

Forum Dates:

The confirmed forum dates for 2008 are as follows – I look forward to seeing you there:

5th April – Kirkcaldy – Adam Smith Theatre – 10am till midday

28th June – Glasgow- John Smith House – 10am till midday

2008 Annual Trip:

There are still places available on the 2008 annual trip to Brussels. The trip allows you to see the Parliament in action, as well as visiting the surrounding areas of Antwerp, Leuven and Bruges.

The itinerary is as follows:

- Leaving on **Tuesday 7th October**, setting sail on an overnight crossing on the Rosyth to Zeebrugge ferry
- Coach transfer to Brussels
- 2 night's Bed and Breakfast at the Astrid Centre Hotel, Brussels
- A visit to the European Parliament in Brussels
- A day trip to Antwerp and Leuven
- A trip to Bruges
- Coach transfers to ferry for overnight crossing to Rosyth, returning on **Saturday 11th October**

The total cost of the trip amount will amount to £250 per person (£405 with a single supplement). Optional travel insurance is available at £20 per person. Please note there is limited single accommodation available on the ferry transfer.

A place on the trip can be secured by a £50 deposit. Please direct all enquiries to Kirsty in the office (01383 417 799, or kirstyleiper@live.co.uk).

An Effective and Efficient European Parliament:

As a founding member for the Campaign for Parliamentary Reform (CPR), my colleagues and I stepped up our campaign to scrap the parliament's current two-seat arrangement by presenting a petition to parliament on Tuesday 26th February.

The petition set up by the CPR appeals for the European Parliament to have one permanent seat in Brussels, putting an end to the monthly trips to Strasbourg, estimated to cost around £150million a year.

If one seat were to be agreed for the European Parliament it would help to:

- Save taxpayers money
- Meet climate change objectives
- Reduce travelling time, ensuring MEPs can dedicate more time to constituency matters

Although it is up to member states to vote on any institutional changes, the parliament will continue to apply pressure.

Visit www.oneseat.eu for further information.

For more information please do not hesitate to contact me at:

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