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e-fa: News Round-Up January 2012

news bulletin from the European Free Alliance Group in the European Parliament

January 2012 Round-Up

The European Free Alliance (EFA) draws together political parties fighting for democracy and self-determination for the stateless nations and regions of Europe. European Free Alliance MEPs sit in a European parliamentary group with the Greens, making up the fourth largest group in the European parliament.

EFA MEPs are:

Jill Evans MEP - Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales (EFA Group President)

Ian Hudghton MEP - Scottish National Party (EFA Group Vice-President)

Frieda Brepoels MEP - Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (EFA Group Vice-President)

François Alfonsi MEP - U Partitu di a Nazione Corsa - Europe Ecologie

Ana Miranda MEP - Bloque Nacionalista Galego

Alyn Smith MEP - Scottish National Party

Tatjana Ždanoka MEP - For Human Rights in a United Latvia

Key issues this month include:

- New EFA MEP from Galicia
- Half term changes
- Moving forward in Scotland, Wales and Flanders
- Anger over minute's silence
- Action call on farm inputs

- Fifty Years of the FNP
- Co-official languages
- Calls to halve food waste by 2025

New EFA MEP from Galicia

Ana Miranda of the Bloque Nacionalista Galego joined the EFA Group as its newest MEP, replacing Oriol Junqueras at the beginning of January. Ana will be a member of the Regional Development Committee, Petitions Committee and Fisheries Committee. She has pledged to focus on ensuring that Galicia continues to receive EU structural funding.



Ana's election to the European Parliament means that the EFA Group now has a majority of female MEPs, believed to be a first in the European Parliament.

Half term changes

As well as being a time to elect or re-elect the President and Vice President of Parliament, the half way mark of each legislature is also an opportunity for MEPs to change committee membership.

EFA MEPs committee membership for the remainder of this parliamentary term is as follows:

- **François Alfonsi** - full member Regional Development Committee, substitute member Budget Committee and Culture Committee.
- **Frieda Brepoels** - full member Foreign Affairs Committee, substitute member Environment, Health and Food Safety Committee and Human Rights Subcommittee.
- **Jill Evans** - full member Environment Committee, substitute member Agriculture Committee.
- **Ian Hudghton** - full member Fisheries Committee, substitute member Internal Market and Consumer protection Committee.
- **Ana Miranda** - full member Regional Development Committee and Petitions Committee, substitute member Fisheries Committee and Women's Rights Committee.
- **Alyn Smith** - full member Agriculture Committee, substitute member Industry, Research and Energy Committee.
- **Tatjana Ždanoka** full member Civil Liberties Committee and Petitions Committee, substitute member Transport Committee.

Tatjana is also Vice Chair of the EU-Moldova delegation, and Jill continues as Vice President of the Greens/EFA Group.

François has also been elected co-chair of the Traditional Minorities, Languages and Communities Intergroup - an influential backbench group which campaigns to ensure that the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity remains a priority for the EU.

Moving forward in Scotland, Wales and Flanders

The SNP Scottish Government has announced that it plans to hold a referendum on Scottish independence in Autumn 2014, giving the people of Scotland a choice on whether to move forward to becoming a fully independent state. Opinion polls suggest that support for independence is growing steadily.

In Wales, Plaid Cymru published the conclusion of a far reaching review into party structure and organisation. Proposals include establishing a new academy to nurture future activists and politicians, and a radical overhaul of the party's campaigning methods. The party is due to elect a new leader in March.

Meanwhile in Flanders, opinion polls show support for the N-VA continuing to rise more than a year after their spectacular victory in the Belgian federal election.

Anger over minute's silence

EFA MEP **Frieda Brepoels** has expressed her disappointment at outgoing European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek's decision to honour a Spanish fascist with a minute's silence. MEPs were asked to stand for a minute's silence in the Strasbourg plenary to honour Manuel Fraga who served as a minister under General Franco.

Frieda commented: *"Fraga played a key role in the Franco regime and has never apologised for doing so. This is not the sort of person we should be commemorating in the European Parliament, and certainly not in the same breath as a great figure such as Vaclav Havel, as happened on this occasion. The new President of the European Parliament must ensure that such situations are avoided in future."*

Action call on farm inputs

SNP MEP **Alyn Smith** welcomed the European Parliament's support for a new report on farm input costs. The report highlighted how costs have risen by 60% between 2000 and 2010 for energy, by 80% for synthetic fertilisers, 30% for animal feed, 36% for machinery and 30% for seeds. At the same time, farm gate prices have increased by only 25%.

Alyn commented: *"Our farmers want to see action, and soon, against the challenges posed by the gap between farm input costs and farm gate prices. The idea that the free market is working for our farmers is downright crazy and DEFRA absolutely must acknowledge that, especially before they proceed full steam ahead to bargain away direct payments and income support as CAP negotiations progress."*

Fifty Years of the FNP

Frieda Brepoels travelled to Friesland in January to give a keynote speech at a congress held to celebrate fifty years of the FNP. The Fryske Nasjionale Partij belongs to the European Free Alliance association of political parties. They campaign to protect Friesian language and culture, and to defend Friesland's economy.

Co-official languages in the European Parliament

Welsh MEP **Jill Evans** welcomed the promise of new EP President Martin Schultz, to support the use of 'co-official' languages such Welsh, Catalan and Basque in parliament's debates.

Jill and EFA colleagues have been campaigning for interpretation in parliament for languages which have official status in their own countries. This would enable MEPs to use those languages in parliamentary debates. Welsh, Catalan, Basque and Galician already have 'co-official' status in the EU and all the other institutions have adopted rules to recognise this.

Commenting, Jill said: *"Mr Schultz has supported having interpretation of 'co-official' languages in the European Parliament and has promised to put the issue on the agenda of the committee that decides on parliament's rules. I've been campaigning since my election in 1999 for equality for all our languages in the EU and we have been successful on a number of issues. Unlike other European institutions, the Parliament did not adopt the rules to improve the status of co-official languages in full but with the support of Mr Schultz I believe we can change that now."*

Calls to halve food waste by 2025

Estimates suggest that between thirty and as much as fifty per cent of eatable food goes to waste in the EU. This adds up to around 89 million tonnes a year or 179 kilos per person. Unless action is taken, this could increase to 126 million tonnes by 2020.

In Strasbourg in January the European Parliament discussed a report on the issue, and MEPs including **Frieda Brepoels** supported a resolution calling for action to tackle food waste.

Frieda commented: *"It goes without saying that waste on such a huge scale does not only have economic and environmental consequences, but also throws up important ethical questions, with these figures standing in stark contrast to the poverty in Europe and the rest of the world. That's why I'm pleased to support the measures put forward by the EU commission to halve food waste by 2025."*

Food waste can have different causes from overproduction, to being targeted at the wrong audience or from issues with packaging and poor stock management. Frieda highlighted a recent report that suggested almost a fifth of people don't understand the 'best before' advice on packaging, and called for greater clarity for the consumer on the terms used in food labelling.

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Press release

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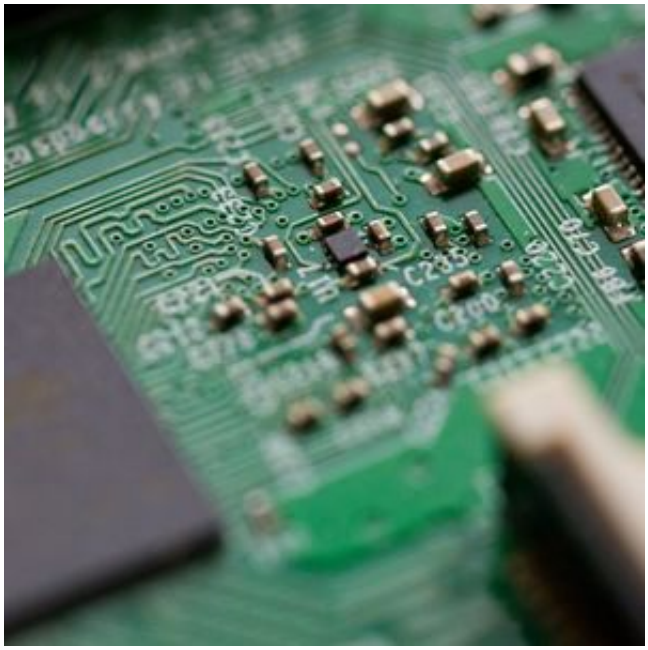


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