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# e-fa News Round-Up November 2010

## News bulletin from the European Free Alliance Group

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 (Vice-President)*
*Frieda Brepoels MEP - Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (Vice-President)*
*François Alfonsi - U Partitu di a Nazione Corsa - Europe Ecologie*
*Oriol Junqueras MEP - Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*
*Alyn Smith MEP - Scottish National Party*
*Tatjana Zdanoka MEP - For Human Rights in a United Latvia*

This has been a busy month, and EFA MEPs have been in Strasbourg and Brussels for committee meetings and plenary sessions of the European Parliament. November also saw EFA organise a conference on independence in Europe at the European Parliament in Brussels.

Important issues for EFA MEPs this month have included: EFA Conference on Independence in Europe Safer Electrical Goods EU's engagement with Scotland Iraq human rights concerns Discussing multilingualism with Commissioner Vassilou International Day against violence against women Calls to improve screening for colorectal cancer CAP reform proposals welcomed Hedge funds compromise MEPs shocked by Van Rompuy's ignorance

### EFA Conference on Independence in Europe

An audience of over 150 people attended a conference on Independence in Europe organised by the EFA Group at the European Parliament in Brussels on 17 November. The conference emphasised the need for 'Equality for Nations in the 21st Century' and featured speakers from mainstream democratic nationalist

parties including the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru, N-VA, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya and Bloque Nacionalista Gallego. MEPs urged EU leaders to think ahead and prepare for the enlargement of the European Union from within its existing borders. They argued that the EU needs to be ready for 'internal enlargement', a process whereby stateless nations which are part of existing EU Member States become EU members in their own right. The conference also discussed the size of nations and economic integration as well as discussing the importance of civic nationalism and cultural diversity in nation building projects.
N-VA MEP Frieda Brepoels commented: *"As part of its ongoing evolution, the European Union should prepare for its eventual enlargement from within. I have no doubt that inclusive, democratic nationalism will play a crucial role in the EU's further development."* Catalan MEP Oriol Junqueras said: *"There is a growing body of academic research which supports the assertion that smaller nations are better equipped to deal with economic difficulty in the longer term. This is particularly relevant during this current time of economic difficulty when we see how, for example, the size of the Spanish state has not helped avoid recession. Catalonia is netly contributing 10% of its GDP to Spain each year and yet the state has hugely increased its debt, threatening the euro and Euro stability. Catalan independence is clearly in the EU interest."*

## Safer Electrical Goods

New legislation drafted by Plaid Cymru MEP Jill Evans will help ensure that electronic waste is safer and easier to recycle. The RoHS Directive sets rules regarding hazardous substances in every-day items such as mobile phones and laptops. MEPs meeting in Strasbourg approved the new directive at first reading. Jill said: *"The revised rules will make electronic goods safer for the environment by facilitating restrictions of further hazardous substances in the future. I would have liked to see the law go even further and impose an outright ban on more chemicals, but I am confident that an effective law is now in place. This is a signal to the electrical and electronics industry that they must develop alternatives to hazardous substances."* See Jill speak in the debate at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/wps-europarl-internet/frd/vod/player?language=en&menusearchfrom=bymep&pageby=unit&idmep=4550&discussionId=0&page=0&category=0&format=wmv&askedDiscussionNumber=0

## EU's engagement with Scotland

The SNP's Ian Hudghton urged the European Commission to take every opportunity to directly engage with the SNP-led Scottish government to help meet important important challenges such as sustaining economic growth and tackling climate change. Ian was speaking at a debate in Strasbourg with European Commission President José Manuel Barroso on the Commission's work programme for 2011.
Speaking in the debate, Ian said: *"The Commission in its work programme has some worthy priorities. Sustaining economic growth; preserving and creating jobs; improving energy efficiency and developing renewable energy sources. The SNP Scottish government, a pro-European Nationalist government shares these objectives and is making maximum use of its limited devolved powers and is achieving progress in addressing these and other challenges.*
*"The European Free Alliance Group of MEPs which includes the SNP and other pro-European nationalists from Wales, Catalonia and Flanders are contributing to good government in our home countries. Our ambition is to play a full part in EU decision making, taking our place as normal independent member states so that we can exercise the full range of governmental powers at home and work constructively together with a better Europe too."* See Ian speak in the debate at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/wps-europarl-internet/frd/vod/player?language=en&menusearchfrom=bymep&pageby=unit&idmep=2338&discussionId=0&page=0&category=0&format=wmv&askedDiscussionNumber=0

## Iraq human rights concerns

N-VA MEP Frieda Brepoels spoke in the debate in Strasbourg on the situation in Iraq, where the issue of the death penalty for former Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz was raised. Frieda regretted that the parliament's resolution didn't go further and deal with the numerous human rights violations attributed to Amercian and European troops. Frieda said: *"My group fully supports the two points in the resolution. Firstly, the fight against the death penalty and the demand that the death sentence on Tariq Aziz and two other former officials should not be carried out. Secondly, every person in Iraq should enjoy freedom of worship and we condemn any attack on this. But we are more concerned with what's been left out of this resolution and the European Parliament's failure to take a clear line on human rights abuses in Iraq in which European member states are implicated. Member states that commit troops should hold people responsible for their deeds. The European Commission and Council should insist on this. Remaining silent is no longer an option."* See Frieda speak in the debate at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/wps-europarl-internet/frd/vod/player?language=en&menusearchfrom=bymep&pageby=unit&idmep=28463&discussionId=0&page=0&category=0&format=wmv&askedDiscussionNumber=0

## EFA discusses multilingualism with Commissioner Vassilou

EFA representatives including Oriol Junqueras (ERC), François Alfonsi (PNC) and Ana Miranda (BNG) met European Commissioner Androula Vassilou in Strasbourg to discuss concerns about multilingualism in the EU. Mrs Vassilou also attended the minorities intergroup meeting and is the Commissioner responsible for Education, Multilingualism and Culture. Oriol Junqueras emphasised the need to officialise Catalan as an EU language and warned the Commissioner that Catalans may be alienated from the EU institutions unless progress is made. Ana Miranda highlighted concerns with the current language policy of the Galician government or Xunta and its discrimination against the Galician language. *Ana Miranda, Oriol Junqueras and Androula Vassilou*

## International Day against violence against women

The European Parliament backed a resolution co-sponsored by N-VA MEP Frieda Brepoels which called for a greater emphasis on women's role in conflict resolution and building sustainable peace. The vote coincided with International Day against violence against women which takes place on 25 November. Brepoels used the occassion to call for a stronger role for women in the EU's new external action service. Frieda commented: *"It's all too often forgotten that women play an important role in restoring stability in internal and international conflicts. The European Parliament should therefore keep emphasising the positive role of women in the field of security. But there is much more work to do. And it seems that there is to be no gender balance established in the appointment of the EU's foreign representatives as part of the new External Action Service. It is time for High Representative Ashton to make gender balance a reality in her work."*

## Calls to improve screening for colorectal cancer

MEPs adopted a written declaration calling for improvements in screening for colorectal cancer which affects around 400,000 people annually in the EU. The declaration was co-sponsored by N-VA MEP Frieda Brepoels who welcomed the support of other MEPs. Brepoels commented: *"Europe can make a difference by sharing expertise and best practice in screening, and through raising awareness and financing research. I hope that the relevant authorities will respond positively with concrete measures."*

## CAP reform proposals welcomed

EFA MEPs generally welcomed European Commission proposals for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy published earlier in November. SNP MEP Alyn Smith responded: *"This publication very closely mirrors the Pack Report produced in Scotland, and while both remain work in progress as we gradually piece together a final position on a future CAP, I am glad to see that Scotland's views are well-represented so far. We've still got a long road ahead before we have a final CAP package, but what is clear is that we have it all to play for. Scotland has a vast stake in the reform of the CAP and it is vital that it is represented in any final agreement."* Plaid Cymru MEP Jill Evans welcomed the fact that the European Commission had acknowledged the challenges faced by farmers in Wales in their communication. Jill commented: *"I'm glad to see the general tone of the CAP communication reflects the concerns of farmers I have visited across Wales in the past few years, especially in that payments will be focused on the farmers on the ground who produce the food. The communication also proposes to make sure farmers get a fair price for their product."*

## Hedge funds compromise

SNP MEPs Ian Hudghton and Alyn Smith welcomed the European Parliament's support for a 'workable compromise' on new regulation for alternative investment funds - the so-called "hedge funds directive". Agreement was reached in early November after 18 months of negotiation. The Directive requires all European managers to register with a national competent authority: in return for disclosure requirements on investment strategies, fund rules, and proof of adequate capital, they will receive a "passport" to operate throughout the 27 Member States of the EU. Alyn Smith said: *"It was important to strike the right balance between tough regulation while resisting any unproductive populism. Alternative investment vehicles are major, valuable, players in the Scottish and European economy, and employ 18,000 people in Scotland and the UK, so any compromise had to strike a very careful balance between encouraging continued positive economic activity, while at the same time protecting Europe's citizens from excess."* Ian Hudghton added: *"I am happy that this legislation recognises reality in leaving most of the day-to-day regulation to the national competent authorities: AIFM will be registered by them, and leverage limits will be worked out on a firm-by-firm basis. We need a European framework: financial transactions can cross borders at the speed of light. However, we also need local flexibility: arbitrary rules and limits set for the whole continent may turn out to do more harm than good, as they do not recognise different realities."*

## MEPs shocked by Van Rompuy's ignorance

EU Council President Herman Van Rompuy's declaration in late October that he knows of 'no pro-European nationalist party in Europe' provoked shock and anger amongst EFA MEPs. The comments were made in Flemish TV programme *Ter Zake.* Jill Evans said: *"Mr Van Rompuy's comments are simply wrong. One of the characteristics of EFA parties is that we see our future as equal partners in Europe."* Scottish National Party MEP Ian Hudghton said: *"Mr Van Rompuy is an intelligent man who's always seemed politically astute. I can only imagine that his comments were provoked by his frustration at the situation in Belgium. But he needs to remember that in saying what he said, which is so plainly wrong, he has stepped far outside his remit as EU Council President."*
Oriol Junqueras from Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya said: *"My own party has been fighting for freedom and democracy for Catalonia since its foundation nearly eighty years ago. This has continued since the restoration of democracy in the Spanish state in 1977. Many people in Catalonia will be shocked by Van Rompuy's comments given the pro-European nature of the Catalan nationalist movement, and our nation's attachment to the European Union."*

François Alfonsi (U Partitu di a Nazione Corsa) responded: *"We are a Corsican political party which is nationalist, ecologist, progressive and pro-European and which campaigns through exclusively democratic and peaceful means. We want to see a Europe that rejects the centralised power of the big member states, in favour of a Europe of the peoples, nations and regions working together. Van Rompuy's statement is unfair*

*and inaccurate. This is inappropriate behaviour for someone in his position."*)

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Press release

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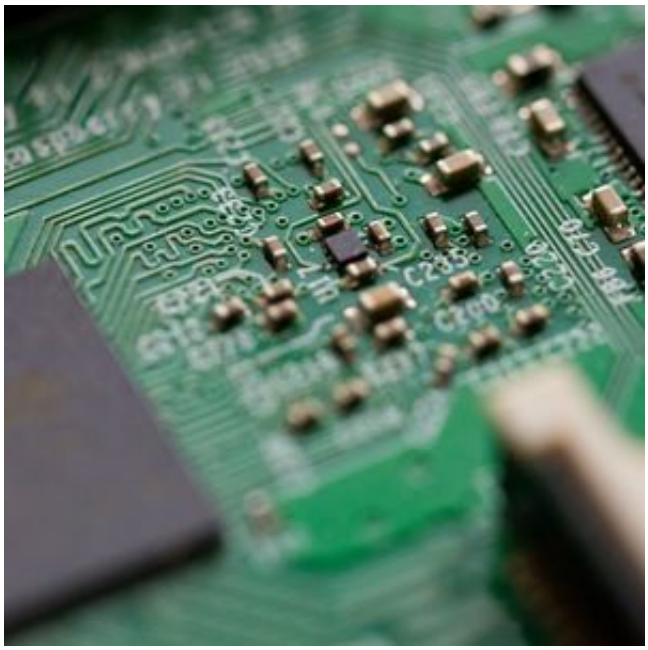


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**Responsible MEPs**



Jill Evans

Member



Ian Hudghton

Member



Heather Anderson

Member

**Contact person**



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