

Committee news

November will be an interesting month for EMiL, featuring our Swedish Presidency event to be held at the Swedish Ambassador's residence on 17 November.

The Committee hopes that we will be able to make the Presidency event a permanent feature of our calendar, with an event focusing at the each Presidency's priorities every 6 months.

We hope that you find our newsletter a useful source of EU related news. For more reporting and commentary you can also visit:

- www.esharp.eu
- www.EUobserver.com
- www.Euractive.com

The Committee

The View from Brussels

This past month in the European Parliament there have been key debates on Media Pluralism in Italy & the EU, and British MEPs have also been active on proposed regulations that will affect the UK's financial services industry.

I led for the Socialists & Democrats Group on media freedom & pluralism in Italy and the EU in October. This is after what many perceive as attacks by Silvio Berlusconi against those who criticise or investigate him, his businesses or personal conduct. Berlusconi owns or controls nearly

90% of Italian broadcast, print and advertising media. The internationally respected press freedom organisation, Freedom House, recently downgraded Italy in its index of press freedom, which makes Italy the worst ranking European state in the index. The Berlusconi issue sets a European precedent for high concentration of media ownership. My key argument and that of the Socialist Group in the debate was for an EU Directive which will guarantee and promote the freedom of information and an adequate level of media pluralism. However, the Resolution failed to secure enough votes to pass the 50% threshold required, due to strong opposition from the right.



Source: European Parliament

A key area of concern for British MEPs, particularly those who represent areas with a high proportion of jobs involved in financial services, has been on Commission proposals to improve regulation of hedge funds. After the recent global financial crisis MEPs are determined to ensure effective regulation of financial markets to ensure that we do not face this situation again. A major piece of EU legislation in this regard is the proposed Alternative Investment Directive (AIFMD). This could have a major impact on London and the UK's financial services industry. Labour

MEPs have been critical of some hedge fund managers who acted irresponsibly and contributed to the financial crisis. The City of London is concerned that the Directive as it currently stands could lead to funds relocating, and with them the skilled jobs and employment we need. British MEPs from all parties are concerned with the proposed Directive and Labour MEPs are supporting amendments that will improve the regulation of these funds but are also aware that financial services industry provides many thousands of jobs.

Claude Moraes, MEP (Labour)

[The Lisbon Treaty is finally ratified](#)

Czech President Vaclav Klaus signed on 3 November the Lisbon Treaty, putting an end to a long ratification process. His signature came after the Czech Constitutional court rejected a legal challenge against the Treaty, lodged by 17 eurosceptic senators. Mr Klaus signed after EU leaders offered the Czech Republic an opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights, removing the last fig leaf used by the controversial Czech President to delay the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. The ratification of the treaty by the Czech Republic did not come early enough for EU leaders to appoint the new President of the European Council and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs during the 29-30 October EU summit in Brussels. The Swedish Presidency is expected to hold another meeting between EU leaders around the mid of November to decide who will take the two jobs created by the Lisbon Treaty. Tony Blair's candidacy for the Council President position seems to be losing support, mostly because the socialist and centre-left European parties have not agreed on

whether to back him as a potential candidate. But at the same time David Miliband, UK Foreign Secretary, is emerging as a front-runner for the High Representative role. It is far from clear what is the likelihood of Mr Miliband being the EU's 'Foreign Secretary' but it is worth noting that such a development, which will also make him the Commission's vice-President, will mean that the UK will not be able to compete for any of the other Commission portfolios, leaving the road wide open for France, Germany or Spain to pursue the influential economic policy portfolios.

On another development the current Commission's term in office came to an end on Saturday 31 October. A new Commission can not take over though until the Lisbon Treaty comes into force. That is expected to happen on 1 December but the EP will need to hold hearings with all 27 Commissioners put forward by Commission President Barosso before the new Commission can officially take office. In anticipation of the completion of this process the European Council has extended the term of office of the current Commission. It is expected that the new Commission will be taking up office in early January.

Petros Fassoulas

[From Oslo with love: Norwegians warming up to the EU?](#)

As the cold autumn has taken a firm hold on Norway, the population is warming up to the idea of Norwegian membership of the EU. In the last month the difference between the "nei" and the "yei"- side in the opinion polls has decreased by as much as 12 percent, giving the no-camp a narrow lead by 45.6 percent against 41.4

percent (October poll undertaken by Nationen and Klassekampen). This can be compared with 51.8 and 35.7 percent respectively only a month earlier.

So, what explains this sudden hike in pro EU sentiments? Well, the most evident reason may be Iceland's EU-application on 16th of July. It is generally perceived that yet another defector from the EFTA-club (leaving only Norway and Lichtenstein as partners in the EEA agreement) poses a threat to the practical functioning of the EEA-agreement. Iceland's potential entry into the EU also has a significant symbolic value as it leaves Norway as the only Nordic country outside of the EU. The strategic importance of the Icelandic application is recognized by both sides of the Norwegian EU-debate, who are fervently lending their support to their respective camps in Reykjavik.

However, some would argue that events closer to home better explain the historic large support for the EU. On 14th of September, a general election was held in Norway, bringing politics to the fore of people's minds increasing awareness also about EU relations.



Source: Travelscope

Another contributing factor could be the Swedish presidency of the EU this autumn, illustrating that a small country in the EU, can not only be in charge of the EU, but also play a major role on the world stage as the union's representative to the outside world.

Yet another tip is that the EU, by taking a lead globally on addressing the climate and energy crises in advance of the Copenhagen summit, have made a positive impression on some parts of the population who thought that the EU was all about trade and business, rather than solving real transnational political challenges.

So in light of the above, is there any hope for a new referendum on a Norwegian EU membership anytime soon? The answer is unfortunately probably not. The "green and red" coalition, made up of the labour-, central-, and socialist party, who formed a new government on 17th of October, is constituted by a large pro-party (labour) and two smaller parties which are critical of the EU as well as the EEA-agreement. Their government platform builds on the agreement that the issue won't be raised during the term of the current parliament, which effectively makes EU-membership a politically dead issue for the next 4 years.

However, there is an interesting perk to the government declaration stating that a public committee of representatives from a broad range of interests, will be established and called upon to undertake a research based evaluation of the impact of the current EEA-agreement. The report is unfortunately expected to be politically rather lame, as it will only evaluate the current EEA- agreement, and not the alternatives to the current arrangement. Having said that, it will no doubt give ground to some political debate, and if the opinion polls show a continued growing support for EU membership, it could perhaps give pro-political parties moral support to engage in the public debate. I am cautiously optimistic about the fact that

we, the European Movement in Norway, will be able to use the report to put the issue on the political agenda. In the best case scenario this will hopefully result to the parliament calling for a referendum to be held sometime after the next elections in 2013.

Linda Ehnmark, President of the European Movement in Oslo

[Measuring youngsters' sense of European citizenship.](#)

A large scale international study which will compare young Europeans, aged 14, on their knowledge, skills, values and attitudes towards participation in Europe is now complete. The study carried out by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) of 3000 students per country in schools across Europe is part of a more general international study on civic and citizenship that containing 38 countries around the world. The main body of the study tests general knowledge of political and democratic systems and the role of the mass media but there is an additional module that focuses on Europe. In this module it tested young people's general knowledge of the European Union. It also asked young people about their attitudes towards migration from persons both inside and outside Europe and how much young Europeans trust the European Parliament and the European Commission. In addition, it asked questions that will show how European the young people in the different countries feel.

The main body of the study was first carried out in 1999 so it will be possible to identify trends over the last decade in which the former communist

countries have become part of the European Union. In the 1999 study, it was actually south and east European youngsters who were much more in favour of political participation than their more alienated/apathetic north and west European counterparts. Greece and Cyprus were the countries that came top on citizenship knowledge and skills. On questions of attitudes towards minorities and gender equality north and west European countries youngsters gave greater importance to equality. We will have to wait to June 2010 with the joint European Commission/IEA launch of the official report to see if the same story applies today.

The new data, as with the previous study, will be used by the European Commission to create indicators to monitor the levels of civic competence from across Europe as part of the Open Method of Coordination in the field of education. In recognition of this fact, the EC is contributing to the costs of Member States to participate.

For more information see:

[International civic and citizenship education study](#)
[Results from the 1999 study CIVED used by the EC to monitor citizenship](#)

Bryony Hoskins

[Dates for the Diary – September](#)

- **9 November, Committee Meeting** (agenda is available on the website and facebook page).
- **17 November, Swedish Presidency event**, 18.30-20.30
The Swedish Ambassador's residence - 27, Portland Place, W1B 1QA
- **19 November, EMiL Monthly Social** at 18.30 at the Royal Horseguard Hotel, Whitehall, London.