

**FREE INSIDE:**  
**SLOVENIAN EU PRESIDENCY**  
**PULL-OUT GUIDE**

Treaty talk with  
parliament's group  
leaders:  
Joseph Daul  
Martin Schulz  
Graham Watson  
Monica Frassoni

# Playing its part

**HANS-GERT PÖTTERING ON THE NEW LISBON TREATY**  
**"THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CAN FINALLY TAKE ITS PLACE AS**  
**THE GENUINE JOINT LEGISLATURE OF A DEMOCRATIC EU"**

## GOING GREEN

Andris Piebalgs  
Alejo Vidal-Quadras  
Gabriele Albertini  
Jacqueline McGlade  
Jens Hügel




## PLUS

EU-Africa summit  
Consumer safety  
CAP reform  
MEP profile:  
Jorgo Chatzimarkakis





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## Editor's comment

Globalisation never disappears from the political agenda although the word means different things to different people. It is hard to come up with a definition that truly encapsulates its meaning. On the positive side we are living in an increasingly interdependent world where we are connected to one another in ways which we would have thought impossible only a decade ago. People are travelling across the world, having new experiences from food to fashion, being able to purchase goods and services at ever-decreasing costs. The flip side of this is that this very freedom to think globally has a cost locally where people find themselves out of work with less security than before or taking work that they would not have previously wanted to consider. The losers in globalisation everywhere are those least able to cope with globalisation. In countries across



the world politicians and governments are pondering how to help those who have lost out in this rapid time of change. In Europe losers include unskilled workers, and in China and India, peasant farmers and former employees of state-run industries. The debate

in the EU falls back unsurprisingly to those who accept open markets but want to ensure that citizens are the “masters of change, not the victims” and those who believe in pure unadulterated protectionism. Most people choose to look to the first option as an answer.

Education and training has to be higher up the political agenda to help face the challenges of change and new skills. The Lisbon agenda was the first EU reaction to this global challenge, having the ambitious aim of making the EU the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world.

Knowledge is power and the EU is not the only country recognising the need to educate and skill its workforce. China has now introduced a policy of free school education not just for nine years but for twelve years. China's universities are charging tuition fees and China is set to produce more engineering graduates by 2010 than the entire EU put together. A recent *New Scientist* article commented on the number of scientists and engineers within the Chinese government compared to the high number of lawyers in key positions in European governments. The Chinese see education as emancipation. However, Chinese parents often make sacrifices for their child's education that few Europeans would be prepared to make. If skills and education are central to coping with globalisation, it applies across all of society, not just the unskilled. Governments must put the necessary investment into education for us all to become masters of change and not the victims.

**Catherine Stihler**

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*"How could there be any semblance of reality to talks on governance and human rights with a man engaged in the systematic torture and disenfranchisement of thousands of his political opponents?"*

*"We need to check that the reformed CAP is doing its job as effectively, efficiently and as simply as it can"*



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# Sustainable production technologies for CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduced Lightweight Car concepts - SLC

The EU committed Kyoto objectives on CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions are very ambitious but yet necessary. To reach that level of ambition requires a broad range of expertise and a critical mass of resources both in the carmakers and related research institutions that cannot be found in any single car manufacturer, nor in any single member state.

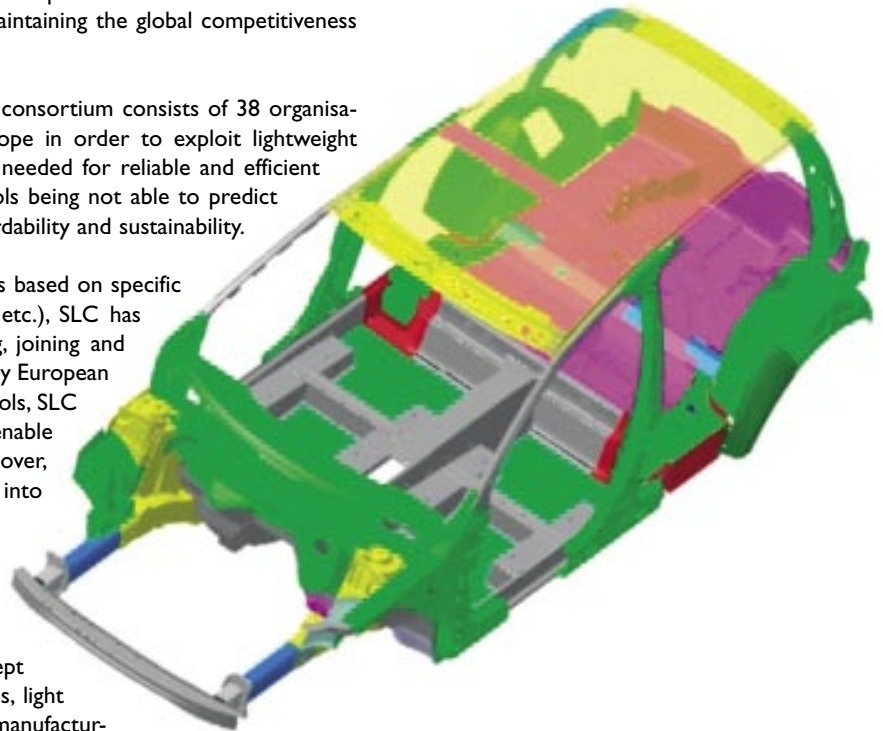
SuperLIGHT-CAR is a collaborative R&D project co-funded by the European Commission under the 6th Framework Programme and is part of the R&D programme of the European Council for Automotive Research (EUCAR) for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the automotive industry.

The overall objective of the project is to develop lightweight, multi-material concepts 30% to 50% lighter than present high-volume series cars. Started in 2005 and to be completed in 2009, the pre-competitive achievements of SuperLIGHT-CAR applied in series production beyond 2012 could serve a basis to save millions of tons carbon dioxide emissions due to reduced vehicle weight. Thus, cost-efficient lightweight solutions developed in SLC could contribute to meet EU objectives regarding fuel consumption, while maintaining the global competitiveness of the European car manufacturers.

To realize this ambitious objective, the SuperLIGHT-Car consortium consists of 38 organisations (carmakers, suppliers and universities) across Europe in order to exploit lightweight materials' combinations, to develop joining technologies needed for reliable and efficient assembling and to fill the gaps on present simulation tools being not able to predict neither multi-material design reliability nor to assess affordability and sustainability.

As it is the aim to steer the development of technologies based on specific vehicle needs (i.e. performance, cost, weight reduction, etc.), SLC has already ensured access to a broad portfolio of forming, joining and manufacturing technologies by involving experts from many European and national projects. Regarding design and simulation tools, SLC is enriching the crash and fatigue simulation toolbox to enable the design and simulation of multi-material concepts. Moreover, SLC has brought together cost and sustainability aspects into early design phases.

14 month ahead of the project completion the SLC consortium is confident to reach its ambitious targets and thus make a significant step towards sustainable mass-produced vehicles structures. The final SLC vehicle concept demonstrates multi-material design using advanced steels, light metals and plastic structures and will be engineered for manufacturing early 2008 and prototyped until the end of 2008.



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## The road to reform

MEPs have heralded the EU reform treaty as an example of the “fruitful” result of co-operation between European and national parliaments. EU leaders are expected to sign the controversial treaty at a summit in Lisbon on 13 December. Speaking at the start of a two-day debate in parliament between MEPs and MPs on 3 December, Spanish centre right deputy Inigo Mendez de Vigo described the document as a “substantial improvement” on the existing treaties, saying it will ensure more “democratic accountability.” “It will enhance the rights of European citizens and improve the effective functioning of the EU’s institutions,” said Mendez de Vigo, who helped draft the original constitution rejected by French and Dutch voters in 2005.

Another speaker, UK Tory MEP Edward McMillan-Scott, who is responsible for relations with national parliaments, said that “anticipating the increased role the treaty will give

to national parliaments, the EPP group wants to develop a network of structured relations between MEPs and MPs. Together, they will debate political issues which will determine the future of Europe. I am convinced that our political family will be able to shape Europe’s future with common sense and conviction. We are now focusing on forging ties with our national, regional and locally-elected partners.”

Meanwhile, UK socialist deputy Richard Corbett said there was “huge potential for conflict” between the proposed president of the European council and that of president of the European commission. Danish eurosceptic MEP Jens Peter Bonde added that “it will be a big battle, be it between Blair and Barroso, or whoever, and will never work. There will be a permanent competition over who should take the initiative between the commission president and the president of the European council.”



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## New leaders for the British contingent

British MEPs in parliament are going through turbulent times, with the centre-right Conservatives electing a new leader and the centre-left Labour party lining up to do the same in 2009. The Tory changes were described as “a lurch towards euroscepticism” with the election of Giles Chichester to the head of the UK delegation, replacing Tim Kirkhope, who had held the post for three years. Chichester was quick to play down any upheaval, however. “I should like to emphasise that this ‘changing of the guard’ of chairmanship after three years does not signal a change in direction. But ALDE leader Graham Watson said that he was surprised by the election result. “I see Chichester as being more on the eurosceptic side of the party than

Kirkhope,” he said. “It will be seen as an anti-European move and suggests that the eurosceptics in the parliamentary party are getting the upper hand.” He added that there was now a “much greater chance” of the Tories leaving the European People’s Party after the next European elections in 2009.

That is when Labour will also have to find a new leader for their parliamentary group after current head Gary Tittley announced he was no longer willing to work as an MEP because of the Strasbourg “fiasco”. In a letter to the regional director of the North West Labour party, Tittley explained that “I can no longer tolerate the shifting of the parliament lock, stock and barrel to Strasbourg one week a month. This



is not only a colossal waste of time and money, but also undermines the EU’s hard work to tackle climate change, as the monthly move is producing 20,000 tons of carbon dioxide, the equivalent of 13,000 transatlantic round-trip flights.”

## Mobilising the masses

MEPs have spelled out their proposals for improving voter turnout in the next European elections and identified the key issues which they believe will dominate the June 2009 poll. Voter participation in the last election in 2004 fell below 50 per cent, a figure many seen

as symbolically important, and given the vicissitudes of the constitution since then, everyone is keen to drum up more enthusiasm for the next election.

German Socialist MEP Jo Leinen said the creation of more pan-European political parties and foundations would help generate more interest in elections to parliament. But, he warned, “persuading the public to vote in European elections is not just the responsibility of political parties but needs the support of civil society organisations as well.” The campaign needed to be ‘personalised’ with the involvement of well-

known celebrities with whom the public can identify, he said.

Monica Frassoni, joint leader of the Green group in parliament, admitted that parties, including her own, still had a lot work to do in getting their message across to a sometimes sceptical public, including mobilising public interest in the new member states, such as Romania and Bulgaria where voters have already been to the polls once this year to elect their first sets of MEPs. Danish eurosceptic MEP Jens-Peter Bonde suggested that there was little that could be done to win over voters. “People gave it a go and voted originally but, having seen that real decision-making is done by EU technocrats, they no longer bother to vote. The reason is that they do not think their vote will make any difference.”







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- |                                 |                            |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
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| - initial capacitor bank energy | - $E_0 =$ up to 1064 kJ,   |
| - quarter discharge time        | - $t_{1/4} = 5.4$ $\mu$ s, |
| - short-circuit current         | - $I_{SC} = 12$ MA,        |

Dense (up to  $10^{20}$  cm<sup>-3</sup>) and hot ( $\sim 1$  keV) plasma column is created on the axis of the device being a source of very intense ionizing radiation (high energy ions, soft and hard X-ray, neutrons) as well as fast ( $\sim 10^7$  cm/s) plasma streams.

PF-1000 is one of the most intense pulsed neutron sources with a yield of  $5 \times 10^{11}$  neutrons per discharge.

The Plasma-Focus laboratory is equipped with very modern diagnostic systems: fast frame and streak cameras in optical and soft X-ray range, multi-frame laser interferometer, several scintillator-photomultiplier probes etc.

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## Monday 10 December

The last Strasbourg plenary session of 2007 opens with two second reading agreements on environmental legislation. On marine environmental policy, member states will have to tackle the environmental status of their respective marine environments by the year 2020, if the plenary confirms the agreement on the Marine strategy framework directive, reached between parliament's delegations and the council. On ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe, the text provides for maximum concentration levels for atmospheric micro particles PM2.5. Under the second-reading deal reached in late November with the Portuguese presidency, the amount of PM2.5 and other gases in ambient air which are the suspected cause of the growth in respiratory

illnesses such as asthma, bronchitis and emphysema, would be reduced.

Monday evening sees the parliament debating population and housing censuses. The employment and social affairs committee is backing a proposal to establish a census for collecting data on population and housing in the EU. MEPs in the committee deleted from the commission's proposal a range of categories to collect including a critical one on "the beginning of consensual unions of women".

There will also be commission statements and debates on: toy safety, safety



of hotels and the risk of fires and on European contract law and deputies will also officially welcome the 35 new Romanian MEPs elected in November.



MEPs will first vote on an urgent procedure on ovine and caprine animals: electronic identification. Tuesday morning's main debate is on the reform of the wine sector. parliament's agriculture committee voted against the automatic liberalisation of planting rights in 2014 and the transfer of

Osman will receive this year's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.

MEPs will also vote on a report by Christopher Heaton-Harris on a paperless environment for customs and trade.

The afternoon is dedicated to debating the second-reading of the EU budget for 2008. At a budgetary con-

## Tuesday 11 December

funding to rural development. It is also in favour of a grubbing up campaign limited to three years (instead of five); the retention of sugaring as well as aid for grape must; increased sales promotion and stricter rules for wine names and labelling. At midday, Sudanese human rights lawyer Salih Mahmoud

ciliation meeting with the council on 23 November, parliament won a number of victories, notably on the Galileo project, the European institute of technology and EU missions to Kosovo and Palestine, while also safeguarding programmes belonging to the Lisbon strategy. On Tuesday evening, MEPs will debate a second-reading report on the European aviation safety agency. MEPs will also vote on a report on the interoperability of the EU's railways.

The last debate on Tuesday evening is on an amendment of the legal protection of design. The legal affairs committee is backing a commission proposal to end design protection for spare car parts and other machinery components. Members of the committee propose a five year transitional period before full liberalisation of the market takes effect.



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## Wednesday 12 December

Wednesday starts with the key debate on the upcoming EU summit just one day before the new EU reform treaty is due to be signed in Lisbon on 13 December. The meeting of the European council on 14 December will be preceded by a presentation by parliament's president Hans-Gert Pöttering followed by an exchange of views.

The votes start at 11am with MEPs voting on a resolution on the Commission's legislative and work programme. Parliament will also vote on a resolution on economic partnership agreements with ACP countries following the debate held at the last Brussels plenary session.

At 11.30am, Hans-Gert Pöttering, José Manuel Barroso, and José Sócrates will sign the charter of fundamental rights in a formal ceremony at the European parliament in Strasbourg. King Abdullah II of Jordan will also address the House in a formal sitting.

MEPs will vote on a resolution on the fight against terrorism. The draft resolution says that governments and EU institutions have often responded to terrorist attacks by adopting laws that have not been sufficiently discussed and some times in violation of basic human rights such as right to privacy or to a fair trial. Later in the afternoon, MEPs will debate "the rise of extremism in Europe" after hearing statements from the commission and council.



## Thursday 13 December

MEPs will debate and vote on a resolution on the textiles sector after questions to the commission. The house also debates and votes on a report from David Martin on economic and trade relations with South Korea calling for the conclusion of

a free trade agreement with South Korea. The session ends with three debates and votes on human rights issues around the world, on this occasion, the topics are: Eastern Chad, Women's rights in Saudi Arabia and Justice for the "comfort women".

# PPP and Private Funding of RTD+I+E: the Major Instruments of Building European Regional Knowledge Society



Together with the Municipality of Nova Gorica and the Slovenian government, the Slovenian Business and Research Association (SBRA) is organizing the 4<sup>th</sup> annual **European Regional Economic Forum (EREF-2008)** in early **June 2008** in Nova Gorica, Slovenia.

Under the high patronage of the Committee of the Regions, the already traditional Nova Gorica Forum will be addressing pertinent issues of implementing the Lisbon Agenda in European regions.

**The focus of EREF-2008 is Public-Private Partnerships, and Private Funding of RTD, Innovation, and Education as the major instruments of building European Knowledge Society with special emphasis on the regional level.**



Besides stakeholders from business and RTD, innovation and education, representatives of regional and local authorities, as well as those of EU institutions, European associations and networks will exchange views on good practice in creating conditions for successful Lisbon-type reforms facilitating the strengthening of knowledge-based competitiveness.

The majority of forum participants will come from science and technology parks, universities, research institutes, clusters, centres of excellence and technology oriented companies.

In view of the Slovenian EU Presidency the EREF Network members decided that the next year's Forum will be preceded by a series of preparatory workshops in their respective regions, addressing most pertinent issues, such as:

- enhancing the role of science and technology parks;
- PPP as instrument of RTD priority setting, with special emphasis on energy research;
- regional support to innovation and internationalization of SMEs;
- role of philanthropic organisations in supporting knowledge society;
- how to upgrade business-academia collaboration.

With specialist recommendations coming from these workshops, the second day of the Forum will be devoted completely to the discussion and adoption of the conclusions and recommendations, which will be widely disseminated among stakeholders and policy makers at regional, national and EU level. This will also give to the participants ample opportunities to actively intervene in the formulation of recommendations.



Next year the RIBN Annual Meeting with the Business Forum will be organized earlier, and in two separate locations, on the 8<sup>th</sup> May in Belgrade, and on 9<sup>th</sup> May in Sarajevo.



**Further information can be found at [www.eref.si](http://www.eref.si) and [www.ribn.eu](http://www.ribn.eu)**

**EU action**

The European and developing countries clinical trials partnership (EDCTP), established in 2003 as a European response to global health crises, unites 14 EU member states plus Norway and Switzerland with 47 sub-Saharan African countries. The partnership helps EU member states to integrate and coordinate their national research programmes and form partnerships with African counterparts. The partnership is based on Article 169 of the European treaty, which enables the European community to participate in research programmes undertaken jointly by several member states. All research proposals directed to EDCTP must include funding by at least two member states and the involvement of at least one African centre. There are currently eight HIV/Aids projects, two malaria projects, nine tuberculosis projects, 38 capacity-building projects and ten networking projects. The total budget until 2010 is €200m from the European commission and €200m from member states. The partnership is currently part of the European commission's sixth framework programme (FP6) for research and technological development. At the end of the programme in 2010 EDCTP, is anticipated to move to the seventh framework programme (FP7).

# Raising awareness

World Aids day 2007: By investing in new clinical interventions against HIV/Aids, the EU is helping to provide global solutions, says **Romana Jordan Cizelj**

**T**wo leading European policies - the Lisbon strategy and fighting climate change - have common mechanisms for achieving their goals. The most important are knowledge, research and innovation. With the establishment of various instruments, the so-called "knowledge society" is developing fast. But we are not alone in the world. Fulfilment of our goals also depends on circumstances and actions in third countries. We must try to achieve synergy and synchronise cooperation as much as possible.

Fighting against poverty, hunger, gender inequality, environmental degradation and HIV/Aids, improving access to education, health care and clean water, all these are known as the millennium development goals (MDGs). The implementation of the MDGs will at least somewhat reduce differences in the world and is thus tightly correlated with the implementation of other European and global policies.

Let me come back to the knowledge society and the promotion of scientific and research work in the EU. Our main instrument for funding research is the seventh framework programme for research and technological development (FP7). Running from 2007 to 2013, the programme has a budget of €53.4 billion and is the largest funding allocation yet for such programmes. While it is the European programme financed by European tax-payers, its door is also open to third countries.

By investing in international cooperation, the EU has shown its responsibility and readiness to take part in global development. But our concerns and compassion are not



*"The EU has the knowledge, technology and resources to eliminate poverty and to create a better world for future generations"*

enough. One of the most important fields of international cooperation is health. HIV/Aids, malaria and tuberculosis are the most harmful diseases in many third countries. HIV/Aids infects over 450 people every hour, and in total more than four million people a year. In 2005, there were 40.3 million people with HIV, approximately 95 per cent of them in developing countries. Women make up almost half of the total number of people infected with HIV. Sub-Saharan Africa remains the region most affected and is home to approximately two-thirds of all people infected with HIV. By investing part of its research budget into basic and clini-





### Malawian children from an orphanage

cal research to develop new clinical interventions against HIV/Aids, malaria and tuberculosis, the EU is helping those suffering in the poorest countries in the world.

Research into sustainable development must include short-term decision support projects and long-term visionary concepts and has to tackle problems of a global and regional nature. There is still a strong need for further research in the interplay between social, economic and ecological systems. Consistency and synergy between different programmes running to achieve MDGs are of utmost importance. For example, HIV/Aids-related research is

without doubt indispensable, but not sufficient for eradicating the disease. To be successful we have to implement them in parallel with other programmes, supporting education and rising awareness of people.

Achieving the MDGs is a challenge that will certainly require firm determination and large amounts of political will. The EU has the knowledge, technology and resources to eliminate poverty and to create a better world for future generations. Our support of balanced sustainable development across the world will enable developing countries to build up their own capacities and contribute to global prosperity. ★



Romana Jordan Cizelj is vice chair of the committee on development



# Put A Little Love In Your Heart



By David Sutherland, Caledonian Science Press

EU states are witnessing a spiralling epidemic in cardiovascular disease and rocketing diabetes and chronic obesity with proportional burden of cost and increasing demands on health systems. Cardiovascular disease alone is estimated to cost the EU 170 Billion€ per year. Lowering the risk of disease has therefore become imperative.

*"We are trying to persuade populations to adopt heart-healthy eating habits by sending themselves a nutritional Valentine's card" says Dr. Cristina Mele of NUTRIUNIT (project partner, Rome). "Literally putting a little love in your heart by making small dietary changes can make massive and instant improvements to your health and quality of life."*

LYCOCARD (**lycopene-cardiovascular**) may be part of the solution; a 5-year integrated project within FP6, that started in April 2006 to identify exactly why lycopene, sourced mostly from processed tomato products, may play an important role in protecting EU citizens by preventing cardiovascular disease.

Project partners, Deutsche Herzstiftung (German Heart Foundation) and NUTRIUNIT (Rome University) will transmit the results with obvious benefits for consumers, health care and EU tomato industry. Studies now show consumers making informed dietary choices based on solid scientific conclusions and as the project progresses, LYCOCARD will develop new health-food products based on its research.

*"Findings will lead to novel dietary guidelines helping consumers select specific diets to prevent and minimise disease risk" explains LYCOCARD project co-ordinator Dr. Volker Böhm of the University of Jena. "LYCOCARD will therefore improve the health of consumers in Europe (and worldwide). This helps reduce the growing cost of health care. In addition, the European food industry will be strengthened by increasing demand for health-related tomato products."*

*"Effectively transmitting these dietary guidelines to the health care community and general public is the greatest challenge. Dissemination activities revolve around the strong image of the project logo and the innovative way the project has branded itself to represent heart-healthy nutrition through personal self-caring." says Dr. Böhm.*

*"The logo in reverse now brands our new, online magazine "Tomato+Health", published to provide a broad range of nutritional information resources for different interest groups, which includes puzzles and games for children, classroom teaching materials, a strong press kit and dietary information for health professionals and researchers. The e-magazine launches at the International Tomato Day in Parma, Italy on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2007."*

While EU states ponder the wisdom of investing in preventative measures against the looming threat of overwhelmed health systems, they might stop and consider taking a closer look at this small part of the solution.



Tomato+Health®

For more information about LYCOCARD  
or to download the Annual Report 2007  
Please visit **www.lycocard.com**

or try the beta version of

**www.tomatoandhealth.com**

Contact: [claudia@lycocard.com](mailto:claudia@lycocard.com)

T: +49 (0) 3641 949 700

# Tea with Mugabe

The Portuguese government's invitation to Mugabe was illegal and patently against the letter and spirit of the visa ban imposed on him in 2002, says **Geoffrey Van Orden**

**T**he Lisbon summit had serious business to do. It was the first gathering of European and African leaders for seven years, and the first since the foundation of the African union. On its agenda were vital issues for the future of Africa - human rights, migration, energy, climate change and trade. It was an opportunity to reinvigorate links, take forward some practical initiatives and highlight issues of importance to both Africa and Europe. Instead, the apparent willingness of Europe's leaders to compromise their own principles and rules meant that the limelight was seized by one man, Robert Mugabe,

and that the overriding need for emphasis on good governance was compromised from the outset.

There is a parallel in the fawning over the Sudanese president in the Gillian Gibbons 'teddy bear case'. Again, we let dictators and human rights abusers call the tune. Flattery and appeasement can be misunderstood. We should be seizing every opportunity to galvanise African governments in condemning and acting against tyranny on their continent.

The Portuguese government's invitation to Mugabe was illegal. It was patently against the letter and the spirit of the visa ban imposed in 2002 and renewed as recently as February



**Mugabe greeting Zanu PF supporters**



*“How could there be any semblance of reality to talks on governance and human rights with a man engaged in the systematic torture and disenfranchisement of thousands of his political opponents?”*



**Independence day celebrations**

2007. In its efforts to find some way round EU sanctions, the Portuguese government broke the international consensus regarding the Mugabe regime. Across the world, institutions such as the Commonwealth, the international monetary fund, the World Bank, and governments including the US, have resolutely sided with the oppressed millions of Zimbabwe. Disgracefully, it is the EU that has allowed its ambition for a ‘global role’ to displace commitment to good governance, human rights and the rule of law.

Contrary to the views of some pundits, the invitation to Mugabe was not a necessary prerequisite for the summit to take place. Less than ten months earlier, almost every nation in Africa had willingly participated in a Franco-African Summit at Cannes from which Mugabe was explicitly excluded. Spared the dictator’s manipulating presence, that event was able to make serious progress on the place of Africa in the world, as an information society, and as a key controller of global raw materials.

The Lisbon invitation to Mugabe was also dismissive of the views of the European parliament. On four separate occasions, the parliament has passed resolutions insisting that Mugabe be excluded from the Lisbon summit. Most recently, and explicitly, on 26 April this year, it called on the council to “ensure that no banned persons are invited to, or attend, the planned EU-Africa summit in Lisbon in December 2007”. Mugabe tops the list of 125 banned Zimbabweans.

There was little or nothing that Mugabe could offer on any item on the agenda of the summit. We have to ask ourselves -

what contribution to talks on trade was expected from someone who has emptied the bread-basket of Africa? What economic insight from a regime where inflation is in five figures, and rising every day? How, most of all, could there be any semblance of reality to talks on governance and human rights with a man engaged in the systematic torture and disenfranchisement of thousands of his political opponents?

What Mugabe could be expected to bring to Lisbon was his own bandwagon and bitter fantasy of a post-colonial plot to carve up the riches of Africa. Time and again he has played this card, and to their discredit, European nations have been slow to call his bluff. It is time they did so.

In their defence the Portuguese Presidency last week made the audacious claim that they wanted to send a “clear and tough” message to the aging despot whose presence they sought at Lisbon. This was an appalling approach. It set at nought the terrible sufferings imposed by a despotic regime on a helpless people. It ignored the very crimes that made sanctions necessary in the first place, and disregarded the pantomime of events that the mere hint of Mugabe’s presence would inevitably create. There was little point in even thinking of an EU-Africa Summit if the overriding necessity of promoting good governance in Africa was cast aside so casually at the outset.

If the EU wishes to be taken seriously, it should not compromise the very values that it so loudly trumpets. It is not surprising that many in Britain regard the EU’s efforts at assuming a meaningful role on the world stage as, at best empty posturing, at worst cynical pursuit of someone else’s foreign policy interests. ★



Geoffrey Van Orden has been personally banned by Mugabe from entering Zimbabwe

# Effects of ARVs on African health systems, and maternal and child health (ARVMAC)



The EU funded INCO DEV 6<sup>th</sup> framework project ARVMAC is exploring health system consequences of the rapid scale-up of HIV treatment programmes, focusing on maternal and child health outcomes related to the MDGs 4 and 5.

With 25 million infected with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa, increasing access to life-prolonging antiretroviral treatment (ART) is an obvious emergency. The response from global actors including the European Commission to rapidly increase ART access nearly doubles the total current health budgets in many affected countries and is the largest health intervention ever in Africa. This poses serious challenges to the overall functioning of fragile health systems and is bound to have major health effects. ART scale-up has been much slower than expected and evidence-based strategies are lacking. How to absorb funds for ART, prioritize among different types of care, correctly distribute, monitor and sustain large-scale life-long ART in under-resourced health systems without harming the most vulnerable remains to be solved.

The overall impact of large health interventions is rarely evaluated on a population-scale in low-income settings. ARVMAC has a unique possibility to do so through comprehensive cross-country comparisons by using three demographic surveillance sites (DSSs) in Tanzania, Burkina Faso and Uganda, where an infrastructure for regular registration of births, deaths, migration and diseases for about 225,000 people already exists.

Entering the 2nd year of the project, launch workshops have been held to establish contacts with local village leaders and policy makers in all three DSSs, formative research has clarified possible challenges related to the study of these sensitive issues and data collection is ongoing. In relation to health outcomes, we are analyzing health policy, human resources, capacity, quality, equity and access to health services to identify bottlenecks for scaling-up, sustaining and integrating large-scale ART with maternal and child care. Results will be widely disseminated.

## Contact details:

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Fax + 468311590

The ARVMAC webpage:

**www.arvmac.eu**, has project information and links to all partner institutions (listed below). This homepage is currently under revision but will be completed during this week.

## Participating partners:

1. Division of International Health (IHCAR), Department of Public Health Sciences, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden (KI) (*coordinating partner*)
2. Makerere University, Institute of Public Health Kampala, Uganda (IPH)
3. Swiss Tropical Institute, Basel, Switzerland (STI)
4. Ifakara Health Research and Development Centre, Tanzania (IHRDC)
5. Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp, Belgium (ITMA)
6. University of Heidelberg, Hygiene Institute, Department of Tropical Hygiene and Public Health, Heidelberg, Germany (ITHOEG)
7. The Centre de Recherche en Santé de Nouna, Kossí, Burkina Faso (CRSN)



# Hand in hand

The European parliament can play a crucial part in the EU-Africa strategy, writes **Gay Mitchell**

I look forward to the adoption of the EU strategy by the heads of EU and African states in Lisbon this week. The establishment of a genuine EU-African strategy that is based on partnership and shared ideals is an important and natural step in EU-African relations. Africa has had a long and difficult history with Europe because for too long European-African relations were not based on partnership.

It is time to forge a partnership that brings our two continents together to work towards the common goals of development, peace, security and prosperity founded on the principles of democracy, good governance, human rights equality and solidarity.

As a vice-chair of the European parliament delegation to the EU-ACP JPA (EU-African Caribbean Pacific joint parliamentary assembly) and a member of the development committee I want to see the EU's efforts in Africa bring about tangible benefits to the African people. The EU and its member states have demonstrated a real commitment to assist Africa in confronting its problems. While things are far from perfect, Africa is beginning to show greater leadership and commitment to bring about real improvements to the lives of its people. The EU should be to the fore in encouraging equitable and sustainable development.

Extreme poverty is still all too present in Africa with 41 per cent of people living on less than a dollar a day, the majority of whom are in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Mugabe regime has inflicted untold suffering on the people of Zimbabwe, and there are conflicts in Somalia, the DRC and the Sudan. The incidence of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa is on the increase, is far behind in achieving the millennium development goals.

Conflict, corruption and the lack of empowerment have all kept Africa back. It is time for Africa to move beyond these

stumbling blocks. The potential of the private sector in Africa could be an important untapped resource. Africa has experienced sustained economic growth in recent years and this growth should be harnessed for the benefit of the people.

The encouragement of trade and regional integration is an important objective under the strategy. European partnership agreements (EPAs) are still being hotly discussed and should be seen as a crucial part of the EU-Africa strategy. EPAs, if framed correctly, can be the key to bring about sustainable and equitable economic growth, development and regional integration, but no country should be pressurised into taking on a burden they cannot carry.

The EU is the most important trading partner for most African countries and the EU market should be seen as an opportunity for Africa. In 2004, the EU imported goods worth a total of €28 billion from the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. This is double the amount of development assistance that was made available through the ninth European Development Fund (EDF) to the ACP region, from 2000 to 2007.

The eradication of poverty and sustainable social, economic and environmental development and in particular the achievement of the millennium development goals is the linchpin of the strategy and is our main priority for the development assistance of the EU. Other challenges such as climate change, human security, migration, the fight against pandemics, the fight against terrorism, the reform of multilateral institutions, and technology imbalances are all rightly underlined as areas of concern and action.

The inclusion of the main stakeholders in the establishment and implementation of the strategy should be seen as critical to its success. It is encouraging to note that the strategy recognises the importance of ownership through the inclusion of civil society actors and local authorities.

*"The encouragement of democracy through real parliamentary participation is an end in itself"*





The EU is committed to assisting Africa in confronting its problems

The role of parliaments should be considered integral to the strategy as parliaments are the democratically elected representatives of the people. I was the rapporteur of the development cooperation instrument (DCI), the main legislative base for financing development action through the EU budget. This instrument established the right of parliament to scrutinise planned development action. This created an important democratic dimension to EU development action. The same scrutinising powers are not afforded to Parliament or the EU-ACP JPA over the majority of development assistance to Africa which is provided under the Cotonou agreement and funded through the European development fund. The European parliament, the pan African parliament (PAP), the EU-ACP joint parliamentary assembly and

African parliaments should be included in the strategy to the greatest possible extent. The encouragement of democracy through real parliamentary participation is an end in itself.

I will be part of the European parliament delegation of MEPs to take part in the parliamentary pre-summit in Lisbon on the 7th of December where these issues will be discussed. I hope that the summit and the agreement of the strategy will open up a promising new chapter in the relations of our two continents. Having visited Rwanda recently I could see for the first time how a country which had suffered so much can recover and plan for the future with their own development plan, "2020 vision". At last Africa can start to move away from perennial poverty but they need our help, understanding and partnership. ★

# SAFENUT

Safeguard of hazelnut and almond genetic resources:  
from traditional uses to novel agro industrial opportunities

<http://safenut.casaccia.enea.it/>

Programme type: Grant under Council Regulation (EC) N. 870/2004 AGRI GEN RES

Thematic Areas: Recovery, characterization, core collection and utilization of genetic resources in agriculture



## **General information**

Nuts represent economically important crops for the European Community, particularly in the bio-geographic Mediterranean area. The interest towards these species is also related to their excellent nutritional properties. The cultivation of species such as hazelnut and almond is strongly related to traditions and cultural identity of people, also contributing to a suitable use and recovery of marginal lands. In many regions where these crops are not a major agricultural resource, they represent an interesting source of income for the local sustainable production system, according to a multifunctional concept of agriculture widely supported by the European Union.

## **Main Objectives**

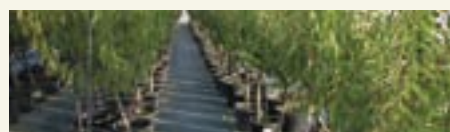
- To increase the knowledge of the European hazelnut and almond germplasm (*Corylus avellana* and *Prunus dulci*) in order to enhance its characterisation, preservation and utilisation
- To recover and valorise local endangered germplasm in the traditional productive areas of the Mediterranean basin
- To create a core collection both for hazelnut and almond species
- To set up a web based inventory linked with the major thematic international databases and to create a strong European network
- To promote a wider application of traditional knowledge to raise stakeholders awareness on the values of biodiversity in the framework of the sustainable development.

## **Actions and means involved**

The first action will be a survey on available germplasm and recovery of endangered varieties of hazelnut and almond. This action will include: data acquisition on the genotypes available in *ex situ* and *in situ* collections, both at the local and national level. Chemical and genetic characterisation of germplasm will be performed in order to define the genetic profile and validate proper cultivars classification. Emphasis will be put on nutritional and nutraceutical aspects. A questionnaire will be used to pursue the objective of recovering memories of traditional uses and agricultural practices as well as social and historical information.

A specific action will be aimed at the conservation and management of genetic resources: core collections for both almond and hazelnut will be established, taking into account the biodiversity value, the recovery of old varieties and the traditional knowledge linked to them.

The final objective of the project, namely dissemination and exchange of information on traditional use of hazelnut and almond genetic resources in sustainable agricultural systems, will be achieved by developing an interactive web-system. Surveys of available knowledge at all biodiversity levels - genetic, varietal, ecosystemic and landscape - will be carried on.



Start date and duration:  
01/04/2007; 36 months  
Total funding 1.114.000

## Co-ordinator:

ENEA, Ente per le Nuove Tecnologie,  
l'Energia e l'Ambiente

## Partners:

- Università degli Studi di Torino (UNITO), Italy;
- Consorzio di Ricerche Applicate alla Biotecnologia (CRAB), Italy;
- Istituto Sperimentale per la Frutticoltura (CRA), Italy;
- Institut de Recerca i Tecnologia Agroalimentàries (IRTA), Spain;
- Centro de Investigación y Tecnología Agroalimentaria de Aragón (CITA), Spain;
- National Agricultural Research Foundation – Institute of Olive Trees and Subtropical Plants (NAGREF - ISPOT), Greece;
- National Agricultural Research Foundation – Pomology Institute (NAGREF), Greece;
- Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique (INRA), France;
- Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška Fakulteta, Slovenia;
- Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD), Portugal;

## Participants:

- ONG Lega Ambiente
- Farmers' Association (Coldiretti)



## The EU-DEVELONUTRI project:

Developing sensitive and fast analytical analysis methods for food micronutrients

**M**icronutrients, such as vitamins, antioxidants and minerals, are essential components of our diet. They are present in food in trace amounts and are thus difficult to quantify. Highly sensitive methods for their quantitation are available, but not yet routine. These methods can help assessing which treatments, before and after harvesting, help preserving the nutritional value of food.

The DEVELONUTRI project will develop and validate state-of-the-art analytical techniques for rapid quantitation of micronutrients. It will analyse three widely consumed crops (potato, wheat and tomato) throughout the production / processing chain. Both traditional and GM varieties will be analysed.

The project involves partners from 7 European and 2 extra-European countries. Advanced methods for micronutrient quantitation will be validated in different labs, and the results will be made available in plain language through a public web-site, for the information of EU citizens and policymakers.

For further information: [www.develonutri.org](http://www.develonutri.org).





# Ideas man

Jorgo Chatzimarkakis tells **Matt Williams** how a chat about trees led him to a career in European politics



**J**orgo Chatzimarkakis says that the inspiration to become an MEP goes back to the day he was born. The child of a German mother and Greek father, Chatzimarkakis was born in Germany but spent the first years of his life in Greece. The isolation he felt for being half-German in Greece, and later for speaking very little German upon his return to Germany, he says has given him a deep appreciation of what it means to belong to multiple cultures.

“From the very beginning I understood that belonging to different cultures needs people to create bridges. This

became evident to me from very early on, that perhaps the best way was not to be a Greek, or a German, but a European patriot.”

Chatzimarkakis’ desire to become involved with European politics goes back to a conversation he had with his Greek Grandfather when he was eight or nine years old. They were discussing the mountains in the Eastern part of Crete.

“We were looking at these mountains from the village we are from, and I can remember saying, ‘Grandpa, why isn’t there any green? Where are the trees?’, as there would be in Germany, and he said, ‘My son, they have been cut by Romans, by Venetians, by Turks, by ourselves.’ So I asked him what I could do to put the trees back, and he said ‘If you want to do that, then you have to become minister of agriculture.’ So for me, at a very young age, I was captivated by this idea of becoming a politician to change things. I had the European dimension from my very first years, then a bit later the political dimension, and there you go!”

In addition to European politics, Chatzimarkakis has also held a long-term interest in research, which goes back to his early role as managing director of a technical consultancy. “I was advising companies about what they had to do within Europe in order to be more competitive, and being part of the research world, a world of competitiveness, high-tech science and problems with competition law, along with the challenge of China and Asia, was absolutely fascinating.”

Chatzimarkakis is currently a member of the committee on Industry, Research and Energy, as well as a substitute member of the agriculture committee. Part of his work, he says, has involved proposing projects such as introducing greater innovation to agriculture, as part of an ongoing process of ‘Lisbonising’ the EU budget.

“This idea of ‘Lisbonising’ the budget means, sticking with the same proportion of the budget for agriculture but instead of using this money to subsidise farmers, using the funds to improve the environment of rural areas and to make them more competitive, more technology-driven, rather than just giving these areas money simply to survive. Using



the money in a different way would transform the whole environment of rural areas in Europe.”

One of today’s key challenges for Europe, says Chatzimarkakis, is to foster brilliant research within Europe and to keep it there.

“We have wonderful universities, it’s true, but we have lost this aura, which now exists in MIT and the US, and increasingly in Asia. Recapturing this aura is something we are working on. We need to ask ourselves, where do we Europeans want to go with our research? We’re not doing badly in research; in fact we’re doing very well. Maybe we don’t invest as much money as others do, but the output of ideas is very high. What we need is to bring these researchers back to Europe and to implement the ideas here.”

Chatzimarkakis has his own personal aspirations for the future of the EU. “I have the vision of turning Europe into the leading biozone of the world. What I mean by biozone

is a zone where life is respected more than anywhere else in the world. We have excellent preconditions to achieve this, because we have a high standard of democracy here. We have the best transparency in the world. Everybody can come to our committees. We also have the highest standard of the rule of law and respect of human rights. Guantanamo bay, for example, shows us that in other parts of the world, human rights are not respected as much as they are here. We have very high environmental standards. These features mean that we are perfectly set up to aim for this vision. Admittedly maintaining these standards means that the decision-making processes are slower, and so we lose competitiveness, but the things that are important for sustaining life will become increasingly important. For this, of course, we will need to learn how to combine our research efforts with this vision of a Europe with the highest respect for life.” ★



In association with



Committee of the Regions

# Champions league

Last Month's European Regional Champions Awards celebrated the very best in regional innovation and best practice

Committee of the Regions president Michel Delebarre was guest of honour at the inaugural European Regional Champions Awards held late last month in Brussels.

The event, hosted by the Parliament Magazine's sister publication the Regional Review in association with the Committee of the Regions, saw 10 outstanding examples of innovative projects and initiatives from across Europe's regions receive 'champion' awards at a gala ceremony held in the Chatelain hotel. Catherine Stihler, the Parliament Magazine's MEP editor presented the awards that showcased some of the best and most innovative regional projects in Europe, and attracted more than 150 nominations. A jury including Catherine Stihler, CoR secretary general Gerhard Stahl, European policy centre chief executive Hans Martens, and the editor of Regional Review, Chris Jones, drew up a shortlist of 30 finalists. CoR members and regional offices

took part in an online vote to select the top 10.

Michel Delebarre told the audience that all the nominees should regard themselves as winners for demonstrating the added value of regional policy in the EU. "The fact that we are associated with these awards that reward best practice in 10 areas, reinforces our efforts in the service

of the European regions. 150 projects were presented – that means that 150 cities and regions wanted to show projects that they consider successful. In that case I wouldn't like to be the jury because I would hand out 150 awards."

#### The winning projects were:

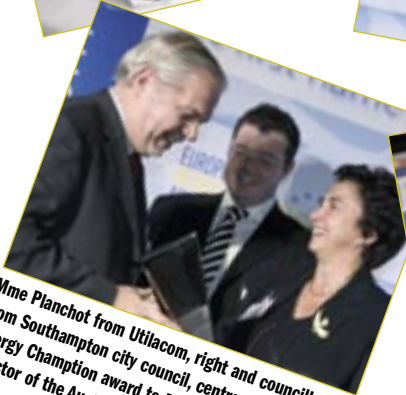
- Communication Champion: Scottish Executive (UK) for 'Building a Bridge' report on communicating Europe to its citizens
- Cultural Champion: City of s-Hertogenbosch (Netherlands) - Water in Historic City Centres
- Employment Champion: Union of Czech and Moravian Producer Cooperatives - Social cooperative, social enterprise
- Energy Champion: Austrian Environmental Expert Group - Central European Air Pollution Monitoring
- Environment Champion: HELCOM (Finland) - Helcom Baltic Sea Action Plan
- European Year of Opportunities for All Champion: JAKK Adult Education Centre (Finland) - NaisWay, female energy to transport and logistics
- Innovation Champion: Andalusian Regional Health Ministry (Spain) - Informarse.Es Salud: A new model of health communication based on innovation
- Maritime Champion: The Baltic Master Project (Sweden) - A bottom-up initiative for increased preparedness and environmental protection
- Social Policy Champion: Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy (Slovenia) --PLYA, project learning for young adults
- Transport Champion: Pays de la Loire region (France) - Destineo: a regional journey planner ★

*"The fact that we are associated with these awards that reward best practice in 10 areas, reinforces our efforts in the service of the European regions"*  
Michel Delebarre





Parliament Magazine MEP editor Catherine Stihler hosted the event



Mme Planchot from Utilacom, right and councillor Dick from Southampton city council, centre, presented the Energy Champion award to Richard Schönstein, managing director of the Austrian Environmental Expert Group



Frederik Norsing from Scania, right, presented the Transport Champion award to the Pays de la Loire region, France. MEP Yannick Vaugrenard holds the award



Committee of the Regions president Michel Delebarre was the guest of honour at the event



Nick Kelso from Philips Lighting, right, presented the Environment Champion award to Nikolay Vlasov of HELCOM, Finland



Roger Hope from the Special EU programmes body, right, presented the Social Policy Champion award to Natalija Žalec from Slovenia's learning for young adults project





# WINNERS ANNOUNCED

- European Regional **Energy** Champion supported by Southampton City Council  
**Central European Air Pollution Monitoring, AEEG, Austria**
- European Regional **Environment** Champion supported by Philips  
**The Helcom Baltic Sea Action Plan, Finland**
- European Regional **Social Policy** Champion supported by Special EU Programmes Body  
**Project Learning for Young Adults, Slovenia**
- European Regional **Transport** Champion supported by Scania  
**Destineo, Region des Pays de la Loire, France**
- European Regional **Communication** Champion  
**Building a Bridge, Scottish Executive, UK**
- European Regional **Cultural** Champion  
**Water in Historic City Centres, City of 's-Hertogenbosch, Netherlands**
- European Regional **Employment** Champion  
**Social cooperative, social enterprise,  
The Union of Czech and Moravian Production Cooperatives, Czech Republic**
- European Regional **Equal Opportunities** Champion  
**NaisWay, JAKK Adult Education Centre, Finland**
- European Regional **Innovation** Champion  
**Informarse.es Salud, Andalusian Regional Health Ministry, Spain**
- European Regional **Maritime** Champion  
**The Baltic Master Project, Sweden**

For more information please visit [www.regionalreview.eu](http://www.regionalreview.eu)

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# Playing its part

The European parliament will finally take its place as the genuine joint legislature when EU leaders sign the Lisbon treaty later this week, writes **Hans-Gert Pöttering**

**W**e are now in the final month of what has been a highly-successful Portuguese presidency of the EU. When, as president of parliament, I address the heads of state and government at the opening of the European Council meeting later this week the signing of the new Treaty in Lisbon and the proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in Strasbourg will have just taken place.

The new treaty maintains the substantial improvements proposed in the original Constitutional Treaty. It simplifies the institutional structure by removing the pillars established in Maastricht. It extends democracy by giving greater powers to the European parliament, by introducing a fairer voting system in the council, by involving national parliaments more actively in policing subsidiarity, and by providing for a citizen's initiative. It strengthens the EU's capacity to act, by merging the foreign-policy functions of the commission and council. It modernises both commission and council, by reducing the size of the college of commissioners, by extending majority voting in the council, and by instituting a more permanent president of the European council.







*"The implications [of the new treaty] for the European parliament are significant. We will need to continue to modernise our procedures and re-focus our resources on law-making at every stage. We are taking better law-making very seriously"*

Some of these changes only take effect in 2014. However, the increased powers of the European parliament come into effect immediately the treaty is ratified. From

then, the parliament will be co-equal with the council in nearly all legislative areas and across the whole of the budget. The implications for the European parliament are significant. We will need to continue to modernise our procedures and focus our resources on lawmaking at every stage. We are taking better law-making very seriously.

This summit is unlikely to have the drama of either the Spring council in March - when we agreed binding targets to tackle climate change - or the June summit, when we saw a huge breakthrough on the reform treaty. It will focus on justice and home affairs, economic and environmental issues, and external relations. In its own way, each of these topics presents challenges which necessitate the forging of a joint approach.

On justice and home affairs, summit leaders will welcome the extension of the Schengen area to the new member states. This happens on 21 December for land and sea borders and 30 March 2008 for air passengers. It will make free movement a living reality for millions more of our citizens and rings a particular resonance in the countries of central and eastern Europe that spent over four decades under the Soviet yoke - with all the restrictions on liberty that this brought. It is for this reason that I plan to go to the Polish-German-Czech border on 21 December to celebrate with the citizens of those countries this significant development.

The heads of government are likely to support the recent commission 'Blue Card' initiative to prioritise the admission of highly-qualified immigrants, with a single application procedure and a common set of rights for legal residents from third-countries. The European parliament will play its part by trying to agree with the council on proposals for standards

applying to the return of illegal migrants and penalties on those who employ them.

On economic reform, the European council will adopt a declaration on globalisation which is likely to stress the importance of investing in 'human capital' and developing knowledge-based economies, to meet new competitive challenges. In the same way that companies and governments are compelled to address their attention to the challenge of globalisation, universities and other higher education establishments need to adapt to a fast-changing world.

A quicker and wider dissemination of knowledge means that, more than ever before, universities are exposed to the winds of competition. Oft-quoted rankings show that only a couple of European universities make the global top ten. We must undertake the necessary reforms, convinced that reaching and staying at the top is genuinely attainable.

Education in Europe, as elsewhere, needs to adapt to a fast-changing environment marked by globalisation, demographic trends and increased competition. Many of our universities are currently over-regulated and under-funded. In particular they do not secure private-sector funding as happens in other parts of the world. Recent research carried out by the European commission also indicates that Europe's universities are often too distant from business and society.

Higher-education establishments can take the necessary steps if they are granted more autonomy. Private sector partnerships are a step in the right direction, along with international cooperation. University reform is a crucial element in the EU strategy to become a more knowledge-based economy and society. The advent of the European Institute of Technology, founded on the right lines, will be an important contribution to achieving this goal.

As regards climate change, we have a moral responsibility towards future generations on this planet to make real progress. The scientific evidence and academic research show how urgent action now is. In conversations with environmental experts like Sir Nicholas Stern and Jeremy Rifkin, I have been convinced that economic growth and a clean environment need not be opposites. A new industrial revolution is in the making with green technology pointing the way forward.

Having agreed ambitious targets in March, the challenge now is to make sure that the EU actually keeps to its word and delivers the outcome, even when - in a transition phase - it could mean painful consequences for individual member states, such as my own, Germany.

Parliament is ready to play its part in helping the EU to meet both the internal and external challenges we face in the 21st century. With new powers under the Lisbon Treaty, backed by internal reform of our house, we expect that the European parliament can finally take its place as the genuine joint legislature of a democratic EU. ★

# Healthy Feed for Food Safety and Quality



**S**ecure handling of feed has a major impact on the quality and safety of food products and consequently, on the consumer. Food quality is widely discussed by society and there are growing concerns about the safety of genetic modification of food. European consumers have become increasingly concerned about food safety, food composition, and the safety of animal feed. The ban on the use of growth-promoting antibiotics has already a massive impact on the farming practices of pig, chicken and fish farmers. The issues of finding effective alternatives to the use of antimicrobials in animal feeds is of particular relevance for the safety of animals and human beings.

Some EU funded projects are focusing on research to improve and develop healthy feed for the safety of livestock and humans. The project FEED-SEG has been set up to bridge the results of different research in the field of feed safety and quality. The main goal of the project is to identify new topics, policies and future tendencies, as well as to disseminate results of running EU-funded projects.

FEED-SEG creates a platform for future co-operation and research efforts and brings together experts from academia and industry, as well as policy-makers. They exchange know-how, discuss and prepare future policy development, as well as identify the most promising research areas.

One main action of FEED-SEG is to organise a Symposium which will be held in Mosonmagyaróvár, Hungary from 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2008. The FEED-SEG Symposium focuses on the presentation of scientific results from successful EU projects and shows the current regulatory efforts in Europe to secure Feed and Food Quality and Safety. The symposium offers a co-operation and discussion platform on the interdisciplinary sciences of feed labelling & traceability, feed additives, Food quality & food related public health.

The latest news from FP7 will be presented by an EC representative, followed by successful examples of European scientific cooperation in the field of feed and food quality and safety. Representatives from the organisation FEFANA, the institution EFSA will present and discuss regulatory issues relevant in Europe. Finally, partnering meetings will take place on the second day in the afternoon, whereby participants can book meetings via the event website according to their research interests, as well as offer themselves and/or their project ideas to attract cooperation partners.

Please, find more information and registration via [www.matchmaking.at/feedseg](http://www.matchmaking.at/feedseg)

# Legume crops: the source of renewable nitrogen for sustainable agricultural systems

*"Sustainability of agriculture requires energy efficiency and a low environmental footprint. Legume crops can contribute to these goals but these are under-used in the EU. Our progress in legume biology can enable us to redress the balance." says the EU consortium that leads the scientific research on nitrogen-fixing plants.*



**G**rain legumes (pea, faba bean, soya bean, lupin, common bean) and forage legumes (lucerne or alfalfa, clover) do not need nitrogenous fertilizers to grow producing protein- and energy-rich raw materials, thanks to a natural symbiosis that uses the renewable nitrogen in the air for the needs of the plant. The production and application of industrial N-fertilizers consumes fossil energy and generates greenhouse gas emissions (mainly the potent N<sub>2</sub>O). Greater use of renewable nitrogen would be efficient for the agricultural sector to minimize its environmental impact, however legumes are currently a marginal component of EU areas.

## **Positive scientific dynamics**

380 experts from 45 countries were gathered in Lisbon from 12 to 16 November (\*) to discuss the progress in legume knowledge, including the first outputs from GLIP (\*\*). *"We hope that the EU Grain Legumes Integrated Project (GLIP) will establish itself as a world leader for the development of new strategies to improve grain legumes for food and feed, and will be recognised as the first reference in Europe not only for scientists but also for users"* said Timothy Hall from the EU DG-Research as he opened the conference.

## **EU resources and multidisciplinary analyses**

Thanks to the European association for legume research (AEP) and GLIP, trans-national and inter-disciplinary scientific collaborations on legumes have now been set up.

The genome sequence project for *Medicago truncatula* (a close relative of all European legume crops) is nearing completion through a collaborative effort between USA and Europe, where GLIP plays a strong role. Genomic and post-genomic platforms have been developed to identify pathways and genes involved in the key aspects of the growth of these crops, their seed set and resistance to major pathogens or stresses. Innovative cropping techniques including intercropping have shown promising control of some diseases and parasitic

weeds. Modelling by Life Cycle Assessment has revealed the benefits of production systems including grain legumes with respect to energy efficiency and lower global warming potential. The nutritional and functional values of grain legumes for feeding pigs and poultry have been confirmed and some enhanced processes devised to generate enriched fractions suitable for feeding fish or piglets.

## **Vision to transfer knowledge and impact onto farms and industries**

Future EU agriculture will require enhanced competitiveness of EU crop rotations providing high quality products for food, feed, fodder, or fuel, with minimal environmental impact. An increased use of legumes in EU agriculture is inevitable if we are to meet our sustainability targets. The scientific community, agriculturalists and decision-makers need to work together to change the current situation where these crops are a 5 to 6 fold lower proportion of the area of arable agricultural land in the EU as compared to other productive agricultural systems. The main challenge to legume research and development is to determine how, once integrated into sustainable farming systems, their profitability, and that of the whole crop cycle, can be optimised for the farmer while exploiting their environmental benefits.

(\*) *Lisbon legume conference* [http://www.grainlegumes.com/aep/events/lisbon\\_2007](http://www.grainlegumes.com/aep/events/lisbon_2007)

(\*\*) *EU Grain Legumes Integrated Project (GLIP, 2004 to 2008, coordinated by John Innes Institute, UK)*

[www.eugrainlegumes.org](http://www.eugrainlegumes.org)





# An historic European council

The reform treaty is a vital step in the continuing process of European integration, says **Joseph Daul**

**N**ext week's European council will welcome two important decisions. The first is the agreement reached on the reform treaty at the IGC in October, and its subsequent signing in Lisbon on 13 December. The reform treaty is an important step in the continuing process of European integration. We now have an institutional framework which will allow the union to function at 27. As a group we will actively campaign for a fast ratification of the treaty so that by January 2009 we will be able to operate under this new framework. This is important since it will have implications on the next European parliamentary elections, and the nomination of the next commission president.

One of the innovations which the Lisbon treaty introduces which I personally find to be the most significant is the charter of fundamental rights. I am glad to note that the new Polish prime minister while addressing the conference of presidents this week indicated that he is personally not opposed to the text of the charter. There is a European consensus being built when it comes to values, which is a key priority of my political group.

I feel that the French proposal to appoint a reflection group (comité de sages) to see where Europe is going to be in 20-30 years time is

*"We will actively campaign for a fast ratification of the treaty so that by January 2009 we will be able to operate under this new framework"*

important. If we wish to build a Europe which is based on solidarity, security, shared values and shared prosperity, we need to reflect on how we use the new instruments which are in the treaty of Lisbon to achieve such a Europe, a Europe which is more political. But we also need to work out how the newly reformed institutions interact with each other, and what will be the competences of each side of the institutional triangle. For example, what will be the relationship between the new president of council and the high representative for foreign and security policy, who incidentally will be a vice president of the commission? What will be the relationship between our president, and the new presidents of the council and commission? What will be the interaction between national parliaments and the institutions as a whole? These are some of the additional questions that the reflection group should ask.

The second important decision to be taken, this one on a more symbolic level, will be the welcoming by the European council of the enlargement of the Schengen agreement to the new member states. We cannot live in a community of shared values if some of our citizens are treated differently when they travel within the union, but at the same time equality of the law also means equality under the law. We believe that our society is based on principles which are applicable to everybody, without this, we will not achieve cohesion. If we wish the EU to continue being a success story, next week's council is important since it gives the final approval for a new framework which will allow us to act together in the future, and it takes a big step of reducing remaining barriers between old and new member states, helping to reinforce their integration within our joint community. ★



Joseph Daul is chair of parliament's EPP-ED Group

The TETRA World Congress Goes To Asia For 2008!

# TETRA

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[www.tetraworldcongress.com](http://www.tetraworldcongress.com)

EFCCA  
EUROPEAN FEDERATION of CROHN AND ULCERATIVE COLITIS ASSOCIATIONS

Across Europe  
1 million IBD  
patients of all ages



In Europe millions of people with inflammatory conditions among them Ulcerative Colitis and Crohn's disease, Psoriasis, Ankylosing Spondylitis and Rheumatic conditions are seeking better treatments, improved quality of life and for some care in coping daily with their chronic often life-long illnesses.

Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are non-contagious and non-infectious illnesses which affect the digestive tract and are generally known as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). At present, there is no known cure although there is now a greater understanding of the diseases and through a range of treatments and sometimes surgery patients can be helped to have a better quality of life.

**EFCCA**, the European Federation of Crohn's & Ulcerative Colitis Associations is founded as an umbrella organization representing at this moment 23 national Crohn's & Ulcerative colitis patient associations. EFCCA's main objective is to improve the well-being of patients of all ages, diagnosed with inflammatory bowel disease - IBD

IMPROVING THE PROSPECTS FOR PEOPLE WITH IBD - [WWW.EFCCA.ORG](http://WWW.EFCCA.ORG)

# Opportunities for all

Our New Year's resolution for 2008 should be to focus on that other crucial Lisbon agreement: the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, says **Martin Schulz**

**T**he end of 2007 will soon be upon us and I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a happy festive season. Before we can all take our well-deserved break, however, there is some important business still to be concluded. In December, heads of state and government will gather to sign the Lisbon treaty - this time last year it was not at all clear that the union would succeed in reaching this point but thanks to careful negotiations and consultation, we are there. It is now important that member states embark on their ratification processes so that we have a more solid basis for taking forward a European union of 27 countries.

We should all agree one key New Year's resolution for 2008 - to focus on that other crucial Lisbon agreement: the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. The commission has to start to listen to what Europe's citizens are saying. All the opinion polls tell us that people want more social measures, greater security, decent work and better public services. Our economic progress should lead to greater equality not less. Working life is becoming harder and more competitive for many people who are going through painful labour market and pension reforms. Our common vision should be a new social Europe. The EU's first phase of development was the single market, its second economic and monetary union. It is now time for phase three: a social Europe that reconnects to its people.

The Lisbon strategy has increased growth and employment. The euro is riding high as a strong currency. But not everyone has benefited. For example, the gap between the trained workforce and less well-skilled people is growing. There are more people who fall into the category of the 'working poor'. Socialists in the European parliament were angered by commission president Barroso's recent refusal to bring forward special legislation on the running and financing of services of general interest. We need to clear up remaining legal uncertainties - public service providers, users, unions and regulators are all saying this. The inclusion of article 14

in the new Lisbon treaty provides a legal basis for the EU to adopt legislation. Universal access to public services is a fundamental right and one of the distinguishing features of the European social model. As I write, crucial climate change negotiations are taking place under the auspices of the UN in Bali. Climate change can be halted. We have the technological know-how to do it. We need the political will.

Next year, 2008, will be the year of intercultural dialogue. One of the biggest risks facing the world right now is the idea that there is a so-called 'clash of civilisations', that different religions and cultures cannot co-exist. This is not true and it is the sort of thinking that inevitably leads

*"Not only do we need to promote intercultural learning, listening, dialogue and respect but we need to make sure that in 2008, we put the concept of fundamental human rights for all back on the agenda"*

to violence and discrimination. Not only do we need to promote intercultural learning, listening, dialogue and respect but we need to make sure that in 2008, we put the concept of fundamental human rights for all back on the agenda. The adoption of the charter of fundamental human rights in the EU is a good start. Finally, I would like to place on record my thanks to the German and Portuguese presidencies for getting us to the stage where ratification of the Lisbon Treaty can go ahead. Of course, we must not take ratification

for granted but actively engage in the argument with national parliaments and electorates that this treaty is a positive step forward for European reform and will put us in a better position to act on jobs, security, public services, human rights and anti-discrimination. ★



Martin Schulz is parliament's PES group leader



# Facilitating the CAP reform: Compliance and competitiveness of European agriculture (cross compliance)

## **Cross Compliance in the EU: a mechanism for meeting standards**

The 2003 CAP reform introduced the requirement for farmers in receipt of direct payments to comply with certain standards in relation to the environment, public, animal and plant health and animal welfare or face reductions in, or withdrawal of, those payments. This system of attaching conditions or requirements to farm payments is known as cross compliance. Of particular interest in the context of this research project is the extent to which the imposition of farming standards, through the cross compliance system, gives rise to on-farm costs which in turn affect the competitiveness of farm businesses with competitors on the world market.

## **Compliance with standards and its effects on costs and competitiveness**

A major report from this project assessed the farm level costs associated with achieving full compliance with a set of selected standards in the EU. Costs of compliance can be significant at individual farm level in the EU, at least for certain farm types affected by certain standards. These costs may, in turn, affect the competitiveness of such farms. However, when scaled up to sectoral level, the costs of compliance with standards are relatively limited and do not have any substantive impact on trade flows. For the dairy, beef, pigs

and poultry and cereals sectors, full compliance with selected standards results in a cumulative total loss of trade of US\$373 million, a tiny fraction of the total EU trade balance for these sectors. Furthermore, when the EU does not act unilaterally, but its key competitors also adopt similar standards or aim for increased compliance with existing standards, the impact on trade flows are neutralised.

## **The CAP Health Check**

The CAP Health Check was recently launched by the European Commission and appears to indicate that practical mechanisms are needed to address pressing environmental issues. There are main challenges ahead of cross compliance under the Health Check, because it is suggested that climate change and better water management objectives could be achieved also through cross compliance. There is recognition that cross compliance is not the only means of achieving standards within agriculture. Political decisions are likely to be highly influenced by debates about the relative costs and benefits of doing so. Cross compliance encourages compliance with these standards and hence can be said to induce the costs associated with meeting standards and any subsequent impacts on competitiveness. That the costs and competitiveness effects of meeting standards, induced by cross

compliance, are negligible endorses the use of the cross compliance mechanism as a means of achieving benefits in the agriculture sector and helps to justify the policy.

The use of cross compliance as a mechanism to achieve compliance with standards currently appears justified and any negative effects on costs and competitiveness rather limited. But as the CAP evolves, the need for a mechanism that defines a link between payments and mandatory standards may, or may not, be necessary or appropriate. What is certain is that the need to meet standards in the agriculture sector will remain; what may differ are the policy mechanisms chosen to help achieve such standards.



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# Making progress

Hot air should not mask the very real progress that the new treaty makes towards greater efficiency within the EU, says **Graham Watson**

For the media, this end of term summit may risk being dominated by the carbon emissions collectively emitted by the heads of state and government making their way back to Lisbon for the formal signing ceremony before returning to Brussels to discuss substantive issues on the EU agenda. This is a pity because it will mask the very real progress that the new treaty makes to efficiency and functionality of the EU.

To recap; the confusing three pillar structure of Maastricht will be dropped in favour of a more coherent framework divided into two parts - the fundamental principles, objectives and competences of the union and the practical operational policies. The union will have a new figurehead in the form of the president of the EU who will ensure consistency and vision through a two and a half year mandate.

New areas of competence are added in energy and climate change which rightly reflect the new global challenges we face as a society and which need supranational coordinated action to resolve. The charter of fundamental rights too will finally find its place in European law via a protocol to the Lisbon treaty.

The outcome of the two years of reflection and revision could have been more illuminating but were derailed by the referendums in France and Netherlands which refused the proposed European constitution. The chief concerns of the 'no' voters have been addressed - reducing the current text to a standard amending treaty - though the gulf between European citizens and the European project remains substantial and must be a priority for succeeding EU presidencies.

Europe needs to focus now on formulating intelligent responses to the effects of globalisation. One of these is clearly climate change. The spring summit this year laid out the ambition and targets of our commitments but leaders must now sign up to concrete action plans and legislative measures to cut carbon emissions and invest in renewable energies. Another concern for Europe's citizens from Aberdeen to Athens is

migration. We must devise a comprehensive migration policy that regulates not only the flow of migrants to and from European countries but also how they integrate once here.

The EU summit will follow swiftly on from an EU-Africa summit which is of vital importance for the future of our relations with that continent. There continue to be serious concerns about democracy and human rights in a number of African nations which are plagued by bad government. But this is not universally the case. Many are struggling to provide a sustainable economy for their people whilst fighting poverty, disease, violence and extreme weather. Both sides have a genuine interest in tackling these very substantial problems.

Six years since the EU adopted its counter terrorism strategy, following the horrific events of 9/11, EU leaders should also reflect on progress and results. A second EU anti-terrorism coordinator is now in place. Before pursuing new initiatives he should begin by reviewing the measures taken thus far and their contribution to preventing terrorist attacks as well as the proportionality of their impact on Europe's citizens and the society in which we live.

It is encouraging to see that Europe's much-maligned Lisbon strategy on growth and jobs is starting to show some results. Like the single market project of the 1980s, the Lisbon agenda has concentrated minds on creating a more dynamic and competitive economy. It is fitting therefore that the renewal of the EU's legal and institutional framework, in the guise of the new treaty of Lisbon, carries the same name as the strategy that is supposed to deliver it. The Portuguese have left us a substantial legacy. ★

*"It is encouraging to see that Europe's much-maligned Lisbon strategy on growth and jobs is starting to show some results"*



Graham Watson is ALDE group leader in parliament

# European LEADER Association for Rural Development

## ELARD



*"Improving the quality of life of rural areas through sustainable, integrated local development"*

### 1. What is ELARD?

The European LEADER Association for Rural Development (ELARD) is a non-profit making association set up to improve the quality of life in rural areas and to maintain their population through sustainable, integrated local development.

The distinctive feature of ELARD is that it brings together Local Action Groups formed under LEADER philosophy, committed to involve all stakeholders in rural development at a local level. At present, over 600 Local Action Groups from the majority of EU countries are involved - either through their national networks or as individual members. The figure is set to increase dramatically over the coming years.

### 2. ELARD's main aim

One of the most important aims of ELARD is to:  
*"campaign to spread the philosophy, principles and scope of the LEADER method grounded in its seven specific features in order to achieve sustainable rural development across Europe",*

### 3. Membership and funding

ELARD is funded from the subscriptions of its members. The organisation is open to the representative networks of Local Action Groups and LEADER type organisations as well as any other entity that works in favour of the rural development of their territory and that it shares the objectives of ELARD.

### 4. Aims of Greek Presidency

The Greek LEADER Network will host the Presidency of ELARD from 2007 to 2009. The main aim of the Greek Presidency, as declared by the new chairman Mr. Panagiotis Patras, is to increase membership, especially among to enlargement countries and to strengthen the institutional presence of ELARD at a European level mainly by participating in the European Network for Rural Development foreseen in Reg (EC) 1698/05.



More information about ELARD can be obtained at [www.elard.eu](http://www.elard.eu)

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HELLENIC MINISTRY OF RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT & FOOD



GREEK LEADER NETWORK



EAFRD



# Time to move on

Instead of taking a long hard look at the EU, an illegible text has been cobbled together that won't make Europe any more accessible, warns **Monica Frassoni**

**T**he signing of the Lisbon treaty on 13 December will hopefully draw a curtain on what have been an awkward two-and-a-half years for the EU since the defeat of the referendums on the European constitution in France and the Netherlands. The final result certainly represents some progress in terms of facilitating decision-making in an enlarged EU but it revealed a big split among member states as regards vision and understanding of what the EU should be.

The so-called 'period of reflection' should have been used to address some of the issues raised in the context of the 2005 ratification process but it wasn't. Instead of taking a long hard look at the EU and attempting to bring it closer to citizens who perceive it as distant and unaccountable, EU leaders have cobbled together an illegible text that certainly won't make Europe more comprehensible, burying the content in protocols, footnotes and annexes. The treaty does not respond adequately to the crisis of confidence expressed in the EU referenda. Instead, EU leaders pushed through their own petty interests, thus further alienating EU citizens.

However, the deal is done and there is no point crying over spilt milk. We need to get over the past couple of years and move on as soon as possible. In order to do this, we need to take advantage of the new powers and possibilities that this treaty offers and try to prepare for the next phase. Clearly, as past experience has painfully taught us, there can be no complacency with regards to the ratification process.

*"EU leaders pushed through their own petty interests, thus further alienating EU citizens"*

While only one member state is set to have a referendum, at the time of writing, it is important that all European politicians actively engage with their citizens in promoting the positive changes that will be enacted by this treaty.

The treaty still retains a number of provisions that will improve the democratic functioning of the EU and these should be highlighted, be it the "citizens' initiative" or the strengthening of the role of national parliaments in the EU legislative process, including the possibility to show a "yellow card" to a proposal. The inclusion of the charter for fundamental rights in the treaty is clearly one of the major successes, setting out the values on which the EU should be based. It is a source of great regret that certain member states have chosen not to subscribe to the core values of the union, with the UK and Poland opting out of the charter.

While the focus must now be on ensuring the ratification of the treaty and thereafter on ensuring that its entry into force is as smooth as possible, we should be under no illusions that this is the treaty to end all treaties. The result of the hatchet job on the constitution is that further reform will be needed to meet the challenges of European integration. This will be a big challenge for the European parliament, which should use its newly won right of initiative to push for a true European democracy, a social union and a Europe of citizens, rather than just a Europe of states.

We also need to be open-minded about how to progress: the EU will clearly need further reform. We must find a way to ensure that those governments which are not interested in reform do not prevent the majority from going forward. Future decisions on EU reform and integration must be taken by majority, as was foreseen in the very first draft constitution proposed by parliament. If only this forward-thinking provision had been adopted, the EU would be much stronger and united today. ★



Monica Frassoni is co-president of the Greens



## AKOMM-PSILORITIS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY SA – ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT



**A**griculture and stock breeding are the two pillars of the region's economy. Due to the geomorphology of the soil, the area's productivity is considerably lower than the one in the semi-mountainous and plain areas, either in Crete or in the rest of Greece. The manufacturing activity is mainly carried out either by small, family-type establishments that process the production of the primary sector (cheese/dairy products, apiaries, oil-processing establishments etc), or by small-scale production units related to the constructions' sector (carpenter workshops, aluminium manufacturing facilities etc).

The tertiary sector of the economy consists of services that support the area's rural tourism product, such as tavernas, accommodation facilities and farms among others, and cater for the needs of the inhabitants. Access to this limited number of services is provided in very few places in the entire region.

### Strategy - Goals

The local authorities and the other economic and social players in the region are conscious of the fact that the region's competitiveness must meet no quantitative requirements but qualitative ones. This is why the strategic goal for the entire area is to add the cultural and environmental aspects of the region into the products and services offered in Psiloritis, thus increasing the latter's added value. Such goal can be met by creating quality products and services, protecting the environment, protecting and promoting culture, supporting all development tools, increasing the participation of the local population, creating business networks etc.

### Tools – Sources of Funding

The most important tool that the region has been able to use up to the present day is the European Union LEADER Initiative, which has nurtured the state of mind for a strategy to achieve territorial competitiveness. Thus, besides funding the creation of public and private infrastructures, the local society has managed to reach consensus on several "thorny" subjects, such as the environment and the local products, through the creation of PSILORITIS NATURAL PARK and the PSILORITIS LOCAL TRADEMARK respectively.

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# 'We don't support golf courses'

The EU's agriculture commissioner recently put herself in the firing line after unveiling plans for a so-called health check of the common agricultural policy. **Sarah Collins** reports how Mariann Fischer Boel is facing her critics

**E**urope's landscape is very different today from what it was in 2003, when sweeping reforms of the common agricultural policy were initiated under then agriculture commissioner Franz Fischler.

The EU has gained 12 new member states, food prices are rising and climate change is very firmly on the agenda. One of the main drivers behind the 2003 reform was to 'decouple' subsidy from production, and current agriculture commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel is keen to stress that her health check, launched on 20 November, will preserve this principle.

"The health check is not 'a new reform'. The objectives that we had in 2003 remain fundamentally the same, though there are a few additions. But the world has not stood still since 2003. We need to check that the reformed CAP is doing its job as effectively, efficiently and simply as it can."

A six-month discussion period is now underway, intended to streamline and to further modernise the CAP. A stakeholder hearing on the general issues covered by the health check took place in December, and a conference on the future of the dairy sector is set for next January.

The priorities for the health check were to examine how market instruments – export refunds, intervention and quotas – fit in with a modern farm sector; to make direct payments under the single payments scheme more efficient; and to address pressing issues like climate change and risk management.

A major proposal is set to increase the rate of 'modulation', whereby direct payments to large farmers will be reduced and the money saved transferred to the rural →





*“The world has not stood still since 2003. We need to check that the reformed CAP is doing its job as effectively, efficiently and simply as it can”*

development budget. “The proposal is partly a response to public pressure,” Fischer Boel explains. “People ask again and again whether very large payments are

a good use of public money. We have to look at this again.”

The commission has also suggested setting a higher minimum amount of land that a farmer must own before qualifying for EU money.

“What we want to take out of the system are pseudo-farmers,” Fischer Boel says. “If you have a goat in your back garden, you’re not a farmer.”

Reports last month that the single payments scheme is being used to line the pockets of large landowners in the UK have been strenuously denied by the commissioner. A 2006 court of auditors report found that side-effects of the payments scheme allow entitlements to landowners who never exercised previous agricultural activity. However, Fischer Boel is adamant that “the CAP is not in the business of funding golf as an activity”. “On the other hand,” she said, “If a company which owns a golf course also owns agricultural land which it is keeping in good agricultural condition – or perhaps, from which it is actually producing something – then, in some cases, that land may be eligible for a decoupled payment.”

Leaders of Copa/Cogeca, the organisation representing European farmers and cooperatives, have warned against causing instability by further reducing direct aid. “The commission has been following the same policy of reducing market support for more than a decade. But we are seeing signs of a fundamental change in the world food situation, with the likelihood of much greater market volatility than we have seen in the past,” said Copa president Jean-Michel Letémayer.

However, Scottish MEP Alyn Smith tentatively welcomed the reforms as reducing difference between EU member states.

“The increase in compulsory modulation is in particular to be welcomed, as this has put Scots farmers at a disadvantage to their EU competition. The commission acting to put the whole of the EU on to a level playing field is a step which all Scots farmers will welcome,” he said.

Fischer Boel agrees. “Certainly, member states and MEPs have their ‘shopping lists’. But it’s clear to me that we’re all in the same shop.”

On the question of climate change and bio-energy, the commission intends to push harder on second-generation biofuels to eliminate competition for land between food and fuel.

But according to the head of the parliament’s agriculture committee, Neil Parish, the commissioner has not gone far enough in earmarking CAP savings for improved environmental performance. “These proposals are not nearly as radical as I would have liked,” he said. “Not enough is being done to fight over-zealous regulation and I would like to see more money moved from direct payments into environmental schemes.”

The European environmental bureau also expressed its disappointment about the “weak sign of the commission’s intention to use this health check as an opportunity to turn the CAP into a more effective instrument for improving the environmental performance of farming”.

Final legislative proposals for the CAP reforms will be unveiled next spring and adopted by EU agriculture ministers before the end of 2008. ★





## Research to the survival of influenza viruses in poultry commodities, poultry manure and the environment.

Avian influenza outbreaks have caused severe losses to the poultry industry and its stakeholders. In addition, the ongoing Asian H5N1 outbreak is a serious concern for food security and human health world wide. It is estimated that since 2000, 200 million birds have died or were culled following infection with influenza viruses subtypes H5 or H7. Importantly, human infections have been reported in infected regions instigating the fear of a new human pandemic.

Evidence is growing that HPAI H5N1 is not only spreading by trade but is also carried by wild birds. H5N1 infected wild birds in the European Union extend our consciousness that this subtype is becoming more and more endemic in wild birds. The finding of a cat and stone marten and raptors that died as result of infection with H5N1 uncovered the consequences of this development. The fact that little is known about the virus resistance in the environment and transmission modes makes it difficult to explain the infection dynamics, the route of entry and transmission.

More questions are raised about the risk of contamination of surface water and the environment for the health of other animals and humans. To answer these questions and to be able to assess risks involved in trading in poultry commodities and litter more knowledge about virus content of commodities of infected poultry, the stability of the virus in these products, in litter and the environment is needed.

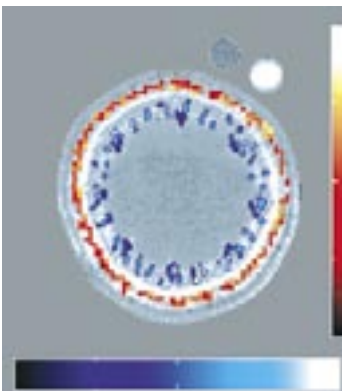
The aim of our research is to provide knowledge to enable proper risk assessment of trade in treated and fresh poultry commodities and litter. Moreover, it will provide knowledge about virus survival under different physical conditions.

More information  
can be found on  
the website

[www.fluresist.eu](http://www.fluresist.eu)



MRI map of water flow in the stem of an intact plant: blue upwards, red downwards flow.



# WNMRC: Added value for Agriculture

Wageningen NMR Centre is a unique facility for Nuclear Magnetic Resonance in Europe and is funded by EC 6th FP, under the Research Infrastructures Actions – Transnational Access. The facility includes various NMR and MRI spectrometers, applicable to wide variety of research in agriculture, food science, biology, environmental sciences, soil sciences, and biotechnology.

The facility offers free access to and training on the NMR and MRI spectrometers, databases (metabolomics), data processing, and interpretation of NMR data (image processing for MRI, molecular dynamics, molecular modelling calculations, complex spectra analysis).

In the recently started spin off company called Biqualy, Hyphenated Liquid Chromatography (HPLC), high resolution cryo probe NMR and Mass Spectrometry (LC-SPE-NMR/MS) techniques are available for integrated advanced analyses, also for third parties.

The 3T intact plant MRI and the LC-SPE-NMR/MS systems are unique and cover new applications on (post)genomics, metabolomics (high throughput non-targeted screening of complex extract and bio-fluid composition analysis, biomarker search), functional imaging (in relation to whole plant performance, stress responses, water use efficiency and plant-soil interactions), food authenticity and safety. For the next years an increasing demand on the use of advanced equipment is to be expected within the European Community with respect to further integration of research in Agriculture, Food, Biology and Health.

In collaboration with partners in Research Center Jülich, RWTH Aachen, University Würzburg and German Aerospace Center, a Virtual Institute for Portable NMR has been initiated, granted by the Helmholtz Association. This Virtual Institute, a network organization and as such not limited to a physical location, pools the expertise of partners in order to develop reliable mobile NMR devices and to demonstrate their application potential by unique types of field studies (Eco-NMR), which provides a big step forward from stationary measurements.



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[www.wnmrc.nl/uk/Isf](http://www.wnmrc.nl/uk/Isf)  
[www.biqualy.nl](http://www.biqualy.nl)  
[www.portable-nmr.eu](http://www.portable-nmr.eu)



**VIP-NMR**

Virtual Institute for Portable NMR



# Fit for the future

Agriculture money should also be moved away from direct support towards more environmental schemes, says **Neil Parish**

**W**hen the European commission published its initial proposals for the long-awaited health check of the common agricultural policy, they were keen to stress it should not be considered as a major reform in itself; it is merely meant to tinker with the substantial reform of the CAP conducted in 2003. These reforms are still being worked through the system in the member states; for example in the UK our government has failed to get the administration of the single farm payment right for the past two years. It looks like they will end up tying themselves up in red tape again during the current payment window, which opened on 1 December.

Farming is facing new challenges. Increased agricultural commodity prices and depleted wheat reserves have raised alarm bells of a food shortage unless drastic action is taken. We are rightfully no longer paying farmers to produce food mountains, but we must continue to find ways to ensure the security of food supplies. Arable farmers have done relatively well out of higher food prices, but livestock farmers have been crippled by them. We need to support the pig farmer I met recently who said he was losing €15,000 a day before he and his colleagues decide to hang up their boots.

When you consider livestock farmers often farm land that has high aesthetic value, their loss would be blight the entire countryside.

So while I believe the commission's recent communication seems to have identified the right symptoms, the prescription it is issuing could be a little stronger.

Thanks to the EU, I imagine there are many farmers who - if they did decide to leave the business - would make excellent clerics! That's because they are required to fill out an unacceptable amount of paperwork under what are known as cross-compliance rules. Scratch a farmer and underneath you'll find an environmentalist, so I believe we can force them to jump through far fewer hoops for farmers by simpli-



*“Increased agricultural commodity prices and depleted wheat reserves have raised alarm bells of a food shortage unless drastic action is taken”*



fyng the regulations but ensuring those that are in place are more strictly enforced and checked more frequently.

Money should also be moved away from direct support and towards more environmental schemes. Followers of European agricultural issues will remember this time last year, the parliament was locked into a fight with the commission and council of ministers over the British government's desperate attempts to move money across into environmental schemes in the UK. The 'modulation' would probably only be implemented in England and Portugal - leaving our farmers at a significant disadvantage to others in the single market. So I believe moving more money across into environmental protection is wise, and so long as an increase in compulsory modulation is met with a comparative decrease in voluntary modulation, I will support it.

Probably the most heavily reported aspect of the health check is the proposal to cap payments to the largest farms. For example, the royal family may find themselves losing some of their supposedly outrageous subsidies. But we must put a little perspective to this debate by remembering that many of the larger farms don't just pocket the cash, but instead they use it to provide rural employment. I even saw one figure in the press saying the prince of Wales receives

the subsidy for the entire 54,000 hectare duchy of Cornwall, which is mostly sub-let to local farmers across the UK.

While the cap may be perhaps more of a PR manoeuvre for the commission, I am not necessarily strictly opposed to it as large farms enjoy economies of scale; but if the commission caps too heavily, farmers will split their holdings into smaller units. A lower cap is also a positive move that will cut down on 'pony paddocks' - people with a pony or goat in the garden who are currently able to claim subsidy in the UK.

The abolition of milk quotas and the anomalous policy of set-aside land are not before time. In a more market-orientated system, it is ludicrous that politicians, rather than the market can tell farmers how much milk they can produce and how much of their land they are able to farm. Environmental groups have expressed concerns over the loss of set-aside land, and while we must continue to monitor the effect its loss has on wildlife, we must also remember it was a policy originally designed to curb production. Of course, none of these policies are set in stone. They are merely ideas at the moment. The parliament's agriculture committee is planning to stamp its authority on the process over the coming months but we also want to hear from anyone who has an opinion on how we can make the CAP more relevant to farming in the 21st century. ★



Neil Parish is chair of the agriculture committee

# Agri-environment schemes and the EU's 2010 Biodiversity Target

**A**gri-environment schemes aimed at counteracting the adverse effects of farming on biodiversity are an important component of the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy. The FP 5 'EASY' project (QLK5-CT-2002-01495) evaluated the biodiversity benefits of agri-environment schemes in five European countries. It demonstrated that common farmland species may benefit from schemes but that endangered species most threatened by agriculture do not. It furthermore showed that the effects of schemes depend on landscape structure and are generally less positive in more intensively farmed landscapes.

Better targeting of agri-environment schemes to the needs of endangered species is required before positive effects can be expected. Research in the Netherlands on a targeted scheme aimed at Red Data Book, grassland breeding wading birds showed however that targeting is no guarantee for success. Positive effects on birds were modest and insufficient to reverse the local negative population trends.

A review of all available evaluations of agri-environment schemes showed that studies have generally focussed on comparing abundance or species richness on fields with agri-environment schemes with that in the conventionally managed countryside. Little attention has been given to the effects of schemes on reproductive success or how ongoing agricultural changes might interfere with scheme effects.



A final outcome of the project was the sobering conclusion that in not one European country there is sufficient information to predict the effects of schemes on the target species' national or even regional population trends. With three years to go, the contribution of the key biodiversity conservation tool in the wider countryside to the achievement of the EU's 2010 Biodiversity Target is therefore unknown.

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# The re-invention of sainfoin: an example of a novel resource for sustainable agriculture



Ruminants, especially dairy cows, are major contributors to environmental pollution, but by eating sainfoin, an almost forgotten traditional fodder legume, the animals' polluting emissions could be cut significantly. Sainfoin (*Onobrychis viciifolia*) was widely grown in Europe before the use of commercial fertilisers and synthetic veterinary drugs, and has a very high voluntary intake by cattle, sheep and horses. As ruminants utilise sainfoin protein very efficiently and make better use of the energy in sainfoin compared to grass of equal metabolisable energy content, this leads to less environmental pollution, in terms of nitrogen and methane emissions.

HealthyHay takes a holistic approach to a unique sainfoin germplasm collection, and will develop a scientific and technical basis for animal feeding systems based on lower chemical inputs by re-popularising a traditional fodder legume for more efficient, animal- and environment-friendly farming systems.



**A** new Marie Curie Research Training Network called 'HealthyHay' is to investigate how feeding an ancient food to livestock could be of huge benefit to the environment.

HealthyHay brings together 13 teams from 10 different countries: Armenia, Austria, Denmark, Greece, France, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, and United Kingdom. It aims at training young researchers in the field of agriculture, veterinary medicine, nutritional science, chemistry, biochemistry and molecular biology. HealthyHay will employ 15 Early Stage Researchers (graduated students) and six Experienced Researchers (post-graduated students). The current young researcher team is coming from Austria, Croatia, France, Greece, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Bulgaria. In addition to the individual scientific work of each researcher, seven complementary skills workshops (soft skills and personal skills training) and five scientific workshops (quality assurance & good practice for research work and background information in the related scientific fields) will provide an in-depth and broad preparation for future professional careers.



**More information about this project:**  
<http://healthyhay.vt.tuwien.ac.at/>



## Organic farming and hygiene regulations



### Fostering producer responsibility

The new hygiene rules call upon producers to assume responsibility more than ever before, and oblige all food firms to engage in self-monitoring in line with HACCP principles. At the same time, the rules limit the capacity of firms to actually act responsibly, as the ultimate say over approvals and required inspections remains with the local administration. Competition based on quality, however, will only emerge when firms are fully responsible for their products and veterinarians in the food monitoring agencies have reconceived their role as one of providers of specialist advice. If this does not happen, then the new formal systems – which depend just as much upon personal diligence and the responsibility of the individual as the traditional-informal systems of regulation always did - will lead away from identification with the product and thus away from producer responsibility.

### Organic farming needs food crafts

Strengthening organic farming and specialities, and thus fostering high-quality development in rural areas, is a declared goal of the EU. The flexibility provisions envisaged in the EU hygiene rules intend to leave scope for the great diversity of processing structures in Europe. At the same time, however, detailed provisions and inspection regimes designed to deal with the risks of industrial-scale processes hamper craft processes and put regional processors out of business. This means that organic farmers lose key partners in rural areas and the EU goals are not attained.

### The working environment counts

The EU hygiene rules entered into force in January 2006. Wherever they demand "absolute" freedom from germs, measures required under these rules are two-faced. They generate new, resistant and virulent germs and greater susceptibility among animals and humans alike. At the same time, they drive processes of structural change in production and processing towards ever larger units and ever deeper division of labour. They thus themselves become part of the problem they purport to solve. What is actually needed is disciplined cleanliness and patterns of production that rely, in many fields, upon self-regulation of germs and active interaction between vital forces and their environment. A hygiene policy guided by these principles would protect consumers more effectively.



### Visions: New concepts in consumer protection policies

The state limits its remit to setting the framework, e.g. by prescribing hygiene guidelines and labelling rules. Producers and processors alike are then able to meet their responsibilities with regard to safer and healthier foods. There is no longer any blanket guarantee of safety. Suppliers are themselves directly responsible for quality. Those who have the greatest confidence among consumers will be the most successful on the market. Consumers, for their part, will appraise goods more carefully and will select them according to the trust they have in them. This is the precondition for competition based on comprehensive food quality embracing safety. This in turn boosts the craft-level processing structures and regional production cycles that match the food product.





# Check-up time

While aspects of the CAP need to be simplified, the overriding priority must be to provide farmers and their cooperatives with a period of stability, says **Pekka Pesonen**

**T**he 2003 reform of the CAP was probably the most radical reform in its history. Farmers have welcomed the opportunity offered by this reform to make production decisions in response to market needs as a result of the decoupling of subsidies from production. But this has meant that they have had to make substantial changes to the way they operate their farm and this process of adjustment is still going on. Furthermore, most of the decisions made in 2003 were not introduced at farm level until 2005/6 and more

reforms are still in the pipeline (fruit & vegetables in 2007, wine and cotton still under discussion and the restructuring process in the sugar sector continuing until the end of 2009). On top of that the reform has resulted in an increase in red-tape which has put an additional burden on farmers. For example, controls to ensure they meet the EU's high standards were reinforced as part of the reform. All well and good. But instead of inspecting the farm as one entity, in many case farmers now receive one visit of inspectors after another - first to control environmental standards, then food →



*“The reform has resulted in an increase in red-tape which has put an additional burden on farmers”*

safety, then animal welfare and so on. This is not only costly for the farmer but for the taxpayer too.

We therefore completely support a health check which achieves simplification of the overly bureaucratic aspects of the CAP, in particular in the areas of cross-compliance and administration of entitlements. But the overriding priority now must be to provide farmers and their cooperatives with a period of stability – both in policy and the rules and regulations farmers have to meet. The health check should not be used as a pretext for further reform. This does not mean we are opposed to change. It was COPA and COGECA after all that called for set-aside to be put at zero per cent in order to respond to a tight situation on the cereals market. Similarly, we need immediate action to deal with the serious situation in the livestock sector, notably for pigmeat, as a result of high feed prices and low producer prices.

What worries us is that, despite evidence that the world agricultural situation of the future is likely to be very different, the commission seems to be determined to follow the same policy path it has been on ever since the McSharry reforms over 15 years ago. Farmers, for their part, have worked hard over the past decades to meet society’s concerns about food safety, the environment, and animal welfare and to place more emphasis on their role as guardians of the countryside. These achievements must be maintained. But there are now clear signs that we will have to respond to new and very different challenges in the future. For example, there are indications that we are moving from a period of abundant world supplies into a period of not only rapidly increasing demand for agricultural commodities, but also much greater market volatility. Yet, at the same time, the EU’s trade policy in WTO and in bilateral/regional trade agreements is making the EU more exposed to world market fluctuations.



**Pekka Pesonen** is secretary general of COPA-COGECA

In addition, there already signs that climate change is having an impact on production through increased flooding, drought and the spread of disease such as blue tongue.

For these reasons we believe that the CAP of the future may need to place more emphasis than in recent years on ensuring that Europe’s agricultural production capacity is optimised so that its 500 million citizens are ensured stable and secure supplies of food. This is another reason why we do not want to go further down the commission’s path of past reforms as suggested by the commission in its health check. It is too early to make a reliable assessment of the changing global environment for agriculture but the commission must review its current policy in this light when looking to the longer term development of the CAP as part of the debate on the EU budget post 2013.

We are also extremely concerned by the commission’s suggestion that the first pillar be weakened still further by cuts in direct payments through modulation. EU farmers cannot maintain their competitive position in the face of EU policy to open markets to imports and at the same time meet high EU standards of sustainability if their direct payments are being constantly cut. The commission suggests that the money can be used to finance incentives for second generation biofuels and to tackle climate change under rural development. Yet it also recognises that EU agriculture has already contributed more than other sectors to curbing greenhouse emissions. There are already a whole series of measures and rules in place to this end. For example, measures to avoid erosion, maintaining land cover and prohibiting straw burning. We believe that the priority now is research, both to understand better the implications of climate change and to find the technology to be able to use second generation biomass. ★



**E**TAL S.A. is a company set up in 1992 in order to promote the strategic planning and implementation of local and regional development programmes, during its course it has and is implementing programmes of about 65 million euros. Its purpose is to provide know-how and support to local entrepreneurs and local authorities in order to enhance the goals set, such as tourism development, environmental care, quality in local products and services, networking, culture, enhancement of local identity...

### 1. TREKKING AND HIKING IN LESVOS

Discovering the island of Lesvos can be a great surprise for the visitors of the island, apart from the classic expectations of beautiful beaches, sun and an active holiday life, Lesvos has a hidden treasure to discover: Its stunning and unspoiled rural environment, mountains, pine and chestnut forests, picturesque villages that sustain life in a way long forgotten in city centres...

The local programme LESVOS: «DEVELOPING OUR WORLD» falling under the LEADER+ Community Initiative has financed a sub-project called “NETWORK OF TREKKING PATHS”, 18 paths all over the island with proper signs that can be walked by visitors who are interested in discovering the beauties of a rural environment. The criteria of choosing the paths someone wants to follow fall under 11 main characteristics and interests such as

- Ecotourism - Protected areas –bird watching - (NATURA 2000)
- Sites with Geological interests (Lesvos Petrified Forest)
- Local culture – art – traditions - religious sites
- The “culture of Olive tree”
- Mountainous areas – Mediterranean terrain etc.



### 2. LOCAL QUALITY PACT ON SERVICES IN TOURISM

The integration of the small businesses into the Local Quality Pact (LQP) is an indispensable requirement for the financial support of rural tourism, within the framework of the local programme LESVOS: «DEVELOPING OUR WORLD» falling under the LEADER+ Community Initiative.

Besides accommodation and eating & drinking businesses, the quality upgrade of service provision enterprises covering rural tourism, is supported, provided they are consistent with the LQP principles.

The LQP is an instrument for the dissemination and monitoring of the quality of the provided tourism services beyond legal requirements, aiming mainly in the “identity” of the product. In the case of Lesvos, the project’s primary objective is for the LQP to constitute the “backbone” of the **Integrated Rural Tourism Product** under the following principles:

- Integrated Rural Tourism Product - it will be addressed to visitors seeking the contact with Lesvos’ countryside, local life and culture, local products of high quality that is the islands unique identity.
- Rural tourism activities and services, the already existing types of rural tourism product can be enriched, and undertake new activities such as diving tourism, sea parks, hike routes, gastronomy bird watching.

Discovering Lesvos can be an experience for the eyes, ears, taste, and knowledge. The idea of the LEADER+ programme was and still is a simple one: to make sure that we use the resources of our island in all its variance in a sustainable way, keeping its identity alive, and promoting its unique characteristics.



*The Lesvos LEADER+ Local Programme is co-financed by EAGGF-G, National and private funds.*

*The programme is managed by: The Hellenic Ministry of Rural Development and Food, National Managing Authority of LEADER+ Programme, and Lesvos Local Development Company – ETAL S.A.*



**For more information: [www.etal-sa.gr](http://www.etal-sa.gr) • [inquiries@etal-sa.gr](mailto:inquiries@etal-sa.gr)**



# Nanotechnology

*Slovenia is preparing for the future in Nanoscience and Nanotechnology as a result of EU investments in infrastructure, education and FP projects.*

## State of the art R&D

Independent studies by the EC have shown that Slovenia ranked 7th in the world in terms of publications per capita in NT in 2003\*, and was ranked 3rd, 4th in Materials science and Physics respectively in terms of impact by the Austrian FWF.

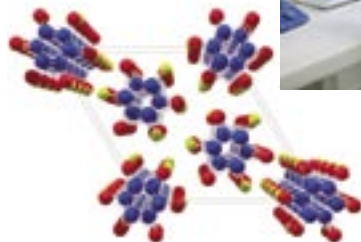
Key players are the *Jozef Stefan Institute, University of Ljubljana* and the *National Chemistry Institute*.

[www.ijs.si](http://www.ijs.si), [www.uni-lj.si](http://www.uni-lj.si),  
[www.ki.si](http://www.ki.si)

\*[cordis.europa.eu/indicators/third\\_report.htm](http://cordis.europa.eu/indicators/third_report.htm)

## Key areas

Slovenian R&D in nanotechnology is focused on different nanomaterials in projects such as NANOTEMP, DESYGN-IT, EREMON and COMEPHS and 18 other projects in the NMP thematic priority area of FP6 including NANOSAFE addressing safety issues.



## Jozef Stefan International Postgraduate School



An international programme of post-graduate studies accepts students 45 new students every year in Nano-science, Eco-technology and New media and E-sciences.

The programme is linked to research facilities of the *Jozef Stefan Institute* and *The Centre of Excellence in N&N*.

[www.mps.si](http://www.mps.si)

## EU Structural fund investment

One of eight priority infrastructure investments from EU restructuring funds is the **Center of Excellence for Nano-science and Nanotechnology (N&N)**. The centre includes 4 research organisations and more than 20 industrial partners.

The EU contribution is 2.8 ME.



[complex.ijs.si/esrr/nano.htm](http://complex.ijs.si/esrr/nano.htm)

## European ETTAR Project Aims to Break Down Barriers to Greener Freight Transport Technologies

The ETTAR Project (Environmental Technologies, Training and Awareness Raising), financed by the European Commission under the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme, has been established to identify and assess training needs, methods and activities for the wider use of environmental technologies in the freight transportation sector.

The lead partner in the ETTAR project is Ecologic, the Berlin-based Institute for International and European Environmental Policy. Their key partners include Deutsche Bahn, Chalmers University of Technology, Ireland's Clean Technology Centre Cork, Prague-based consultancy Enviros, and University of Cambridge Programme for Industry.

ETTAR runs from April 2007 to September 2008 and is a co-ordinated action plan under the 6<sup>th</sup> EU Framework Programme.

The first workshop of a series of three workshops and a concluding conference, took place in Gothenburg on 25-26 October 2007. It focused on the main drivers of and barriers to adopting environmentally friendly technologies available in the goods transport sector. The main groups present at the workshop were logistics companies, producing industry buying logistics services, representatives of transport industry (air-, road-, rail- or sea/river-based), academics, and policy makers.

For many expert speakers, a major hurdle for green transport technologies – encompassing vehicle and fuel technologies – proved to be the apparent lack of a convenient business case for investment in environmental technologies.

Yet delegates of the workshop agreed that the barriers to carbon reduction in goods trade would never come down if individuals in the logistics business continued to wait for others inside and beyond their companies to come up with “silver bullet” solutions: Small scale projects could and should be implemented with willing partners, with the potential of contributing to large-scale change. Promising examples of such innovative projects were given in the workshop. As an additional measure, many participants favoured performance-related, legally binding targets for manufacturers of freight vehicles to foster the use of environmental technologies. An alternative or additional measure to command-and-control measures are emissions trading schemes, which leave even more leeway to the manufacturers and users of transport vehicles to reduce their emissions and are based on market mechanisms.

The next ETTAR workshop on Barriers to the take-up of more efficient transport and logistics planning and processes will take place 24 and 25 January 2008 in Prague.

For more information on ETTAR contact:

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# Focus on the future

**Manuel António Gomes de Almeida de Pinho and Andris Piebalgs** outline the technologies required to meet the demands of the next industrial revolution

**T**he world is changing fast around us. Not long ago, forecasts that oil prices could exceed \$90/bbl, compared to \$40/bbl in early 2005, or that the legendary Northwest Passage in the Arctic Ocean could be declared fully navigable, would usually have been met with scepticism. Both became facts this year. Indeed, security of supply and climate change are arguably among the main challenges of the new century. The investment needed to face these two challenges is evaluated in trillions of euros, and the impact it may have in the economy could be positive or negative depending on our choices.

Europe's choices are well known. The EU has committed itself to a coherent set of targets on renewables, energy efficiency and emission reductions for 2020, establishing a crucial milestone on the way towards a sustainable future. But this is not enough. The time has come for Europe to choose the best path to fulfil these commitments. This implies both a comprehensive assessment of technological options and also a long-term guiding vision for the transformation of current energy systems. We need a roadmap to guide us to what the European parliament has acknowledged is no less than a new industrial revolution, which like previous industrial revolutions will be technology-driven.



*"We need a roadmap to guide us to what the European parliament has acknowledged is no less than a new industrial revolution, which like previous industrial revolutions will be technology-driven"*

The vision proposed will turn Europe's security and competitiveness dilemma, stemming from rising energy prices, into an opportunity for economic activity and job creation while resolutely taking on the environmental challenge. In energy issues there is no silver bullet. No single technology holds, on its own, the promise of an environment-friendly, secure and competitive energy future. This fact, and the new solutions that might appear in 20 years' time, demand more investment to be made in available clean technologies and call for a flexible roadmap.

The first priority is energy efficiency. The biggest economically available reservoir of energy is wasted energy. Doubling the 2020 energy efficiency target by 2050 will be possible through the adoption of technologies in areas such as new building standards, home appliances, cogeneration, industrial machinery and hybrid vehicles. Another priority is the accelerated commercial deployment of existing supply technologies such as wind farms, hydro, first generation biofuels and biomass. It is critical that we ensure incentives and market conditions in order to increase current levels of investment in the energy sector, accelerating the full adoption of these technologies. Additionally, focused R&D in technologies with the highest perceived potential such as off-shore wind farms, second generation biofuels and biomass, wave energy, carbon sequestration, nuclear fusion and hydrogen is also critical.

Finally, a radical change is needed in the network infrastructure. This will require better interconnection between countries, abundant storage capacity and state-of-the-art intelligent grids. The information technology revolution applied to energy networks will enable a similar change of paradigm to that introduced by the internet in the world of communications, i.e. the creation of an open and multi-directional network in which generation and transport are piloted in real time. Europe has already begun investing in all these objectives and has significant assets to spearhead the change. The main weakness so far has been a lack of integration of the different



Manuel António Gomes de Almeida de Pinho is Portugal's minister of economy and innovation, Andris Piebalgs is the EU's energy commissioner

initiatives and a weak link between R&D and the economy. The Portuguese presidency and the EU commission want to propose a roadmap addressing this shortcoming, by ensuring that technology development is encouraged to align with policy goals, and that the appropriate resources are directed towards this endeavour.

Europe has been spending less public funds in R&D than the US and Japan, €2.1 billion, against 2.5 and 3.0 respectively in 2005. In order to keep a leading edge in technology, Europe should double that amount in three years, making sure that this effort is distributed on a more evenly manner among the more promising technologies. All in all, by leading the way towards a new industrial revolution based on efficient use of energy, renewable sources, advanced thermal generation and open and intelligent energy systems, Europe will both rise to the challenges of security of supply and climate change and accomplish, in a sustainable way, the promises of the Lisbon agenda.

Thomas Edison, the man who proved that technology can change things for the better, once said that "if we all did the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves". Europe has now a great opportunity to astound the world with a technology based energy revolution. We should not miss it. ★



# Freight Transport Association: Delivering the economy

**F**TA is delivering for Britain – in more ways than one. Take climate change for example.

This issue is rapidly becoming one of the defining issues of our generation. We all have a role to play in helping to tackle carbon emissions and at the same time, the country – and the economy – must keep moving. The essentials of life still need delivering or else the UK economy will cease to function effectively.

So this is our challenge – to minimise our carbon footprint whilst facilitating the nation's economic growth. It's called sustainable distribution and we believe that freight and logistics managers have a positive contribution to make.

Sustainable distribution sounds technical but actually means something simple: Delivering the nation's goods and services as efficiently as we can.

In recent years, developments in logistics have directly led to improvements in vehicle efficiency. And this investment has occurred at a time when

our industry has had to cope with rising traffic congestion, the crippling cost of delivering in city centres and meeting the toughest safety standards in Europe. These logistical developments have led to a sharp decline in the number of empty vehicles moved around the country – and ultimately a tangible carbon saving.

In fact, carbon dioxide emissions from heavy goods vehicles have been broadly stable since 1995, in spite of a massively expanding economy, showing the efficiencies and savings that the industry has made.

But there is a lot more to do. That is why we are working with the Treasury and with the Department for Transport to help find tangible solutions to climate change, whilst keeping our economy moving.

**FTA is the voice of the UK freight industry, representing and assisting its 13,000 members to distribute vital services in an efficient, safe and sustainable way.**

**[www.fta.co.uk](http://www.fta.co.uk)**



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*“Climate change will have profound effects on everything from availability of natural resources, to how we travel around and build houses”*



IPCC chair Rajendra Pachauri with UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon

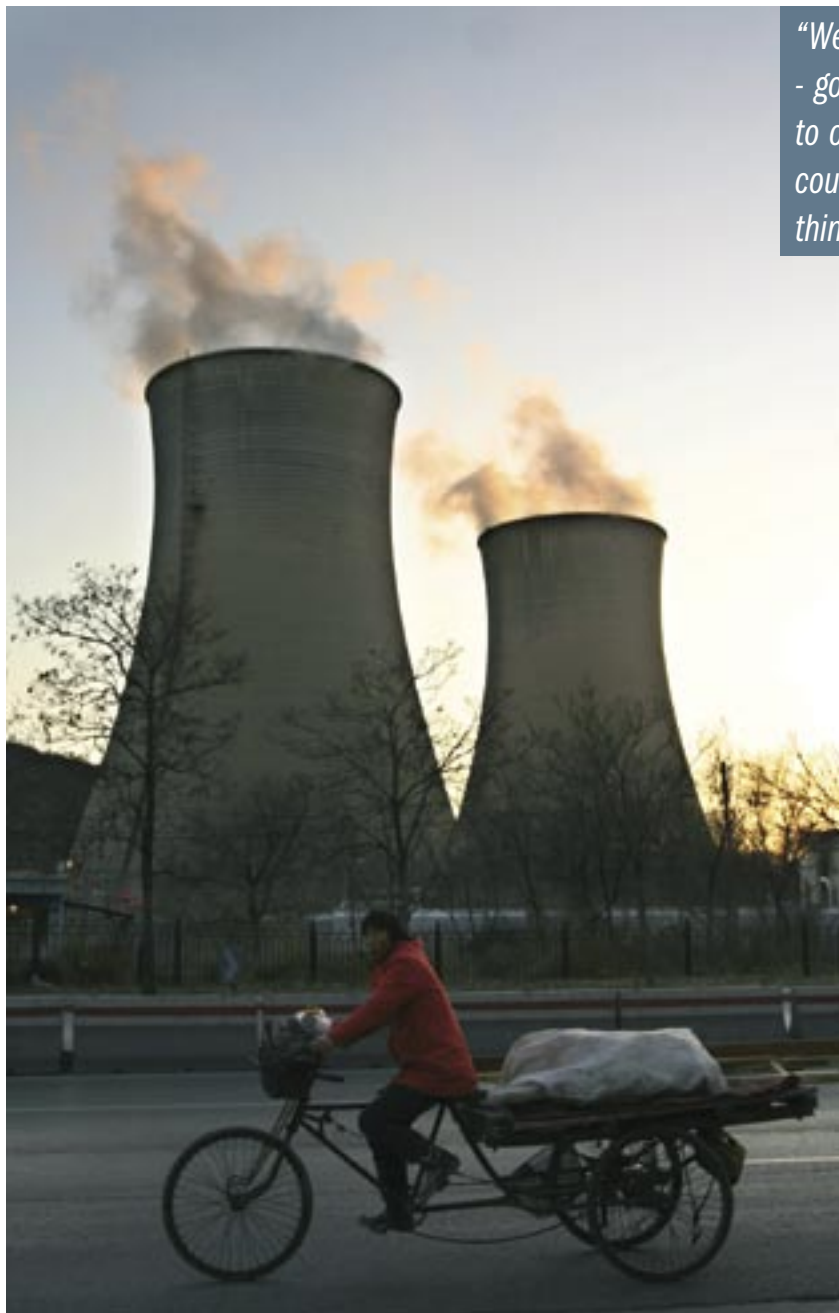
# Time for action

The latest report from the Nobel Prize-winning intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) underlines the need for immediate action, says **Jacqueline McGlade**

**T**he report, the fourth in a series this year, pulls no punches. Climate change could result in catastrophic impacts. While the worst effects of climate change may not hit Europe for many years we must prepare now. Climate change will have profound effects on everything from availability of natural resources, to how we travel around and build houses. We will not only lose biodiversity but also large parts of our territory, such as low-lying coastal areas and river basins as sea levels rise and the number of river floods increase. There will therefore be adaptation costs - building flood defences, improving sewerage systems, finding alternative water supplies, for example, even if there are also effective measures that do not cost much, like heat wave alert systems.

Then there are the mitigation costs - the costs of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The IPCC and the Stern reports estimate that mitigation costs will be somewhere between 1 per cent and 3 per cent of global GDP per year if we take strong, early action. However, the total costs of mitigation and adaptation are lower than the cost of impacts without any actions.

This cost benefit approach, which is sensible at a global level, produces different results at the country level. The Stern report points out that the poorest countries will suffer earliest and most. The costs of adaptation due to increased flooding in a country like Bangladesh are expected to be much higher than in European countries. So the picture will be different from region to region in the world, from country to country within the regions, and even from individual to individual in the countries.



*“We also need a smarter GDP - going beyond today’s measure to one in which the good things count positively and the bad things count negatively”*

been identified as having the highest environmental impacts over their lifecycle: housing, food and drink, and mobility.

Europe can use the concepts of sustainable consumption and production and a post-carbon economy as pathways to help meet the needs of Europe’s citizens without destroying the environment or running into dead-ends.

What is now needed is to establish the pathways to meet the vision. These pathways could include the use of both legal instruments and information. But we also have to give the right price signals to producers and consumers. This is why a green tax reform is necessary, one that gradually shifts away taxes from labour and investments towards taxes on pollution and the inefficient use of materials and energy.

We also need a smarter GDP - going beyond today’s measure to one in which the good things count positively and the bad things count negatively. However, it’s important to keep sight of the fact that redesigning consumption and production is a challenge that requires all actors to take responsibility and make it happen. Many large companies

There is also the time dimension. Because of the complexity of the climate system and the long lead times, we need to invest now to reduce impacts decades or centuries into the future.

Combating climate change – and the range of other environmental problems we are facing – therefore requires a fundamental rethink about the way our society functions. Our consumption and production puts high pressures on the environment in Europe and the rest of the world. In particular we need action to address the three consumption areas that have

already realised that sustainable, low carbon production generates more profit, helps resource security and is better for the environment. Consumers across Europe are also increasingly showing their willingness to move towards more sustainable and low carbon consumption, but they need the right information and the right price signals.

Good ideas and open minds, on a political, business and individual level, are needed to ensure the sustainable, low carbon society becomes a reality. ★



Jacqueline McGlade is executive director of the European environment agency



# A cleaner future

The new technology platform on sustainable nuclear energy is a welcome and timely development, says **Alejo Vidal-Quadras**



**M**any of us are already convinced that nuclear energy is one of the more sustainable means of electricity production, at least when compared to conventional fossil sources. Discounting the aberration of Chernobyl, the impact of the nuclear industry on the environment is practically zero: there are virtually no greenhouse gas emissions and the amount of waste produced is small – less than 0.5 per cent of total industrial toxic waste – and therefore not difficult to segregate and dispose of or store in a safe manner. Known reserves of uranium, according to the OECD, will last for 270 years at current rates of consumption, or 675 years if phosphate deposits are included. It is true that high level radioactive waste will remain more toxic than the natural uranium from which it was produced for in excess of 10,000 years but you have to remember that chemical wastes like mercury and arsenic remain toxic for ever. So, on any reasoned assessment, nuclear power is a relatively sustainable provider of electricity.

There are, however, two principal avenues of research underway that could lead to a vast improvement in the sustainability credentials of nuclear fission. The first is the development of fast neutron reactors to replace the present light water designs. This could lead to a dramatic 50-fold improvement in the energy yield of each tonne of uranium. The second is the possibility of removing and destroying, through the process known as “partition and transmutation”, the longer-lived radionuclides in the spent nuclear fuel or high level waste. By this means, the toxic lifetime of such wastes could be brought down to as little as 300 years. Such research goals are impressive and should be pursued in a co-ordinated way with the support of parliament.

That is why I welcome the inauguration of the new technology platform on sustainable nuclear energy (SNETP), launched in Brussels on 21 September. The SNETP

will bring together nuclear energy stakeholders to implement in a joint activity the strategic R&D necessary to realise the sustainability goals I have outlined above. They will produce in the coming months a strategic research agenda and a deployment strategy that will set out a co-ordinated programme linking public and private initiatives in the member states with the work being funded under the Euratom framework programme. These objectives are of course fully in line with the low carbon energy developments called for in the commission’s strategic European energy technology plan (SETP) adopted last week, on which the parliament and council will comment in due course, and also with the sentiments expressed in parliament’s recent report on conventional energy sources and energy technology.

Japan, Russia, India, China and the United States are already embarked on fast reactor development under the umbrella of the international generation IV programme. In 2006, France announced that it would construct a prototype sodium-cooled fast reactor by the year 2020, heralding the re-emergence of European interest in this technology. The technology platform aims to co-ordinate a wider European involvement in fast reactor research, including the closing of the fuel cycle to optimise energy recovery and diminish waste requiring geological disposal.

As well as the fast reactor, the platform’s vision report entertains the prospect of developing the high temperature reactor pioneered in Germany and presently being exploited in South Africa. Potentially able to deliver process heat at above 900C, the HTR offers the possibility of direct chemical production of hydrogen from water, coal or other organic feed stocks without carbon dioxide release. This has interesting possibilities in the context of future CO<sub>2</sub>-free transportation.

Another important element of the platform is its focus on education and training in the nuclear field. Being a professor of nuclear physics myself, I can wholeheartedly endorse this objective. The research projects and infrastructures envisaged under the platform will provide a much-needed boost to the opportunities available for our students to learn and practise the skills we will need more abundantly in the future.

With world energy consumption likely to double by 2050, I believe nuclear energy will need to constitute a growing proportion of our low-carbon energy supply. In order to further improve the safety and performance of existing nuclear reactors, develop even safer ones for the coming decades and minimise their long term impact on the environment, the sustainable nuclear energy technology platform is a particularly welcome and timely development. Europe has traditionally been the world leader in nuclear technology. We don’t want to sit back and watch while the rest of the world expands its nuclear capacity when Europe could make a more significant and potentially profitable contribution to a sustainable global energy future. ★



Alejo Vidal-Quadras is vice-president of the European parliament

*“With world energy consumption likely to double by 2050, I believe nuclear energy will need to constitute a growing proportion of our low-carbon energy supply”*

HySafe at the second International Conference  
on Hydrogen Safety in San Sebastian, Spain



## Hydrogen Safety - the key to a hydrogen economy

**T**he European Network of Excellence HySafe is a world leading consortium of industrial and research institutions, as well as regulatory bodies and academia involved in the generation and dissemination of knowledge on hydrogen safety.

Research coordination is reached by integrating fragments into large scale internal projects, which address the gaps identified in regular ranking and prioritization activities. Existing and newly generated knowledge, available hardware and software tools are maintained and disseminated in suitable databases and reports, via the International Conference on Hydrogen Safety and via the website [www.hysafe.net](http://www.hysafe.net).

HySafe provides guidance in hydrogen safety issues, organizes special workshops and reviews of new safety relevant information.

However, without contemporary safety provisions and a skilled workforce at all professional levels there will be no hydrogen economy! Therefore the establishment of hydrogen safety engineering as a new profession is the principal objective of the HySafe's e-Academy. One key element, the world's first postgraduate course in hydrogen safety, is highly successful in attracting people from around the world.

The International Academy of Hydrogen Safety with its postgraduate and doctoral programmes is the next step in higher education and training activities in Europe which is in line with the Bologna process.

All HySafe activities comply with the European Commission's objective to improve interaction between the European Research Area, the European Higher Education Area and the private sector. The associated integration and communication will establish an excellent safety culture, which will be the key for the safe introduction of the alternative energy carrier hydrogen.



Burning giraffes facing some fearless NoE HySafe members



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# An inconvenient truth

Road transport has been unfairly singled out for blame in the debate over CO2 emissions, argues **Jens Hügel**

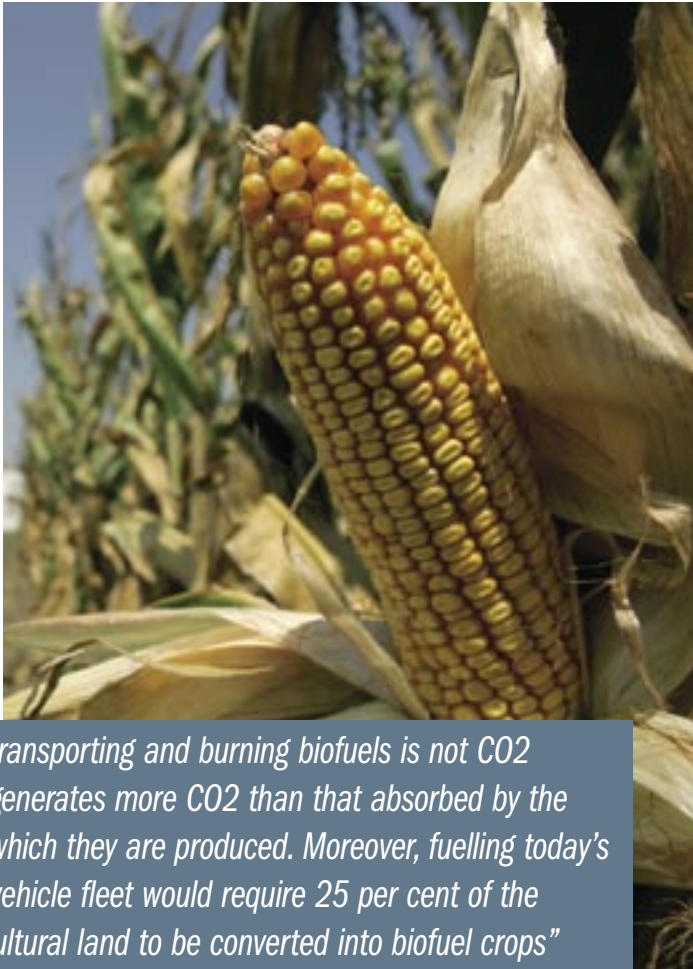


**Financial incentives should be given to keep roads flowing freely and stop propping up the railways, says the IRU**

Any human activity affects the environment. Therefore, the challenge is not to protect the environment by suppressing all human activity or all transport, but rather to make human activity and transport compatible with environmental protection through rationalised activity and optimised transports. As called for in Agenda 21, the road transport industry, under the leadership of the international road transport union (IRU), has made striving for sustainable development a constitutional obligation by signing, in 1996, the IRU charter for sustainable development, a commitment by the entire road transport industry to achieve the goal of sustainable development. It is the only transport mode that has done so.

Recently, emissions and global warming have drawn increased attention. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions has become a high priority on policy-makers' agenda. In this context, what the road transport industry has already achieved is generally forgotten. Over the past decade, toxic and polluting emissions from heavy commercial vehicles (nitrous oxide, hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and particulate matter) have been reduced up to 97 per cent, and will be further reduced in the years to come. Annual energy consumption of heavy commercial vehicles has fallen from 50 litres/100km in 1970 to 32 litres/100km today, and keeps following this trend. This clearly shows that the industry has managed to decouple road transport from its environmental impact.

**Biofuels are not the answer to cutting emissions**



*“Producing, transporting and burning biofuels is not CO2 neutral and generates more CO2 than that absorbed by the plants from which they are produced. Moreover, fuelling today’s commercial vehicle fleet would require 25 per cent of the world’s agricultural land to be converted into biofuel crops”*

Carbon dioxide derives from multiple natural sources, including volcanic gases or the decomposition of organic matter, not to mention the respiration process of living organisms. Additionally, CO2 is generated by human activity and is derived mainly from the burning of various fossil fuels, used for heating and power generation (fixed installations) and diesel fuel. The truth is that road transport has become a vital production tool, but it is and will remain 100 per cent dependent on oil, with no economically viable alternative to diesel in sight. Moreover, while transport accounts for some 30 per cent of CO2 emissions, commercial road transport is “only” responsible for some three per cent of total CO2 output. Indeed, figures taken from the UNFCCC reporting system for the Kyoto protocol for developed countries show that fossil fuel is mostly used for fixed installations, which contribute to over 50 per cent of CO2 emissions, although these are areas where viable alternate energy sources with low CO2 emissions already exist.

Biofuels are not the solution to reducing road transport CO2 emissions. Producing, transporting and burning biofuels is not CO2 neutral and generates more CO2 than that absorbed by

the plants from which they are produced. Moreover, fuelling today’s commercial vehicle fleet would require 25 per cent of the world’s agricultural land to be converted into biofuel crops. As for combined transport, lower CO2 emissions are achieved only with a high proportion of nuclear power used in the generation of electricity for railways.

Effective reduction of road transport CO2 emissions can however be achieved by implementing the IRU’s strategy, based on innovation, incentives and infrastructure as the most cost-effective ways to achieve sustainable development in road transport. Innovations such as eco-driving can reduce fuel consumption, and hence CO2 emissions, by up to 10 per cent, thus contributing both to fuel savings and greater profitability and to lower CO2 emissions. Driver training can also increase fuel-efficiency by up to 10 per cent. Incentives such as public policies encouraging transport operators to introduce new technologies and best practice can also be used to reduce CO2 emissions, and financial incentives should be given to companies willing to do so, rather than wasted in subsidising agricultural production of biofuels or in propping up rail networks. To be effective, these incentives must outweigh the necessary investment costs and be implemented over a long enough period to have an impact on CO2 emissions. Finally, investments in new infrastructure to remove bottlenecks and missing links, and to improve the use of existing infrastructure, are vital. Traffic congestion caused by inadequate infrastructure and bottlenecks exacerbates CO2 emissions and is responsible for 100 billion litres of wasted fuel in the US

and for half the total fuel used in the EU. Yet, lack of space is the common excuse for not building new infrastructure, whereas road infrastructure occupies on average less than 0.5 per cent of a country’s territory. Free flowing traffic is a prerequisite for reducing CO2 emissions.

Many countries impose excessive taxes on diesel fuel yet while every country has a fiscal policy on transport fuel, very few have an effective energy policy. What is needed are improved energy and oil efficiency measures, based on energy savings and a diversification of the energy used in fixed installations. This could be achieved through efficient taxation and incentives, coupled with a moderate and balanced fiscal policy where no viable alternatives to oil exist. Continuous diesel supply for road transport, with moderate taxation, is a prerequisite to enable each country to meet the economic, social and environmental objectives of Agenda 21 and the UN millennium development goals. Addressing CO2 emissions is a global challenge, and each stakeholder must accept his own responsibility. Now more than ever, the IRU slogan Working together for a better future is of crucial significance. ★



Jens Hügel is head of sustainable development at the international road transport union

# Conservation of Genetic Resources of Saffron: a Sustainable Crop with Potential Medicinal Applications



Saffron is made from the dried stigmas of the saffron flower (*Crocus sativus* L.), a triploid sterile plant that is vegetatively propagated by means of bulbs. Saffron is mostly used as spice (the most expensive food product) and food colorant and, less extensively, as a textile dye or perfume. However, due to its analgesic and sedative properties folk herbal medicines have used saffron for the treatment of numerous illnesses for centuries. Nowadays strong research is being carried out on saffron nutraceutical, chemopreventive, and pharmaceutical properties. Saffron is currently being cultivated in Iran, India (Kashmir), Greece, Morocco, Spain, Italy, Afghanistan and China.

While the world's saffron production is estimated in more than 200 tons per year, Iran is said to produce 80 percent of this total. Saffron crop is suited to water deficit areas and it is well adapted to low input cropping systems. The loss of land surface dedicated to saffron crop in many areas has resulted in a corresponding genetic erosion. Sterility in saffron limits the application of conventional breeding approaches for its further improvement. Besides different commercial products are known that could suggest the existence of different saffron ecotypes or commercial varieties, the actual genetic variability present in *C. sativus* at worldwide scale is currently unknown. In order to stop this loss of biodiversity the CrocusBank project pursues to create, characterise and exploit a germplasm

collection (bank) in *Crocus* species, including saffron, at a world global scale. The project "Genetic Resources of Saffron and Allies (*Crocus* spp) (CrocusBank)", funded by European Union through its Community Programme on the Conservation, Characterisation, Collection and Utilisation of Genetic Resources in Agriculture (AGRI GEN RES), is being carried out to prevent genetic erosion and preserve biodiversity in this ancient crop. **The objective is** to create, characterise and exploit a germplasm collection (bank) in *Crocus* species, including saffron crocus (*C. sativus* Linn.).

The collection has two main goals:

- First, to collect and reproduce saffron bulbs, coming from all the countries that cultivate saffron, for direct use of this plant material in selection programmes all over the world; and
- Second, to create a collection of saffron allies for conservation, since they are endangered and threatened taxa and populations in *Crocus*, and for research in taxonomy and evolution, genetics, physiology, ecology and agronomy. This *Crocus* species are exploitable sources of resistances and other agronomical interesting traits to be transferred to saffron, through appropriate breeding programmes and technological tools.

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ENVIRONMENT



# Concerted effort

Europe needs to combine its policies more effectively to move rapidly towards a less-polluting transport sector, says **Gabriele Albertini**

**M**y own-initiative report is not based on any proposals or communication by the European commission but is based instead on my desire to set out some useful guidelines on the role of sustainable transport and to take stock of existing European policies in the areas of energy and environment. The report is based on a study, made public at a hearing in the European parliament on 9 October in the presence of other MEPs and representatives from industry and environmental groups.

The study, entitled Energy and environmental aspects of transport policies, aims to identify all the possible economic and political measures that could be introduced to ensure greater energy efficiency and reduce the negative environmental impact of transport. The study analyses and compares everything that has been done up to now in the field of the transport and recapitulates the most recent studies, statistics and legislation on the impact of emissions from transport, as well as suggesting various possible solutions. These proposals take into account the most effective and efficient measures for cutting emissions, both in terms of their cost-effectiveness and their political feasibility in the short, medium and long term. The study places particular emphasis on the development of new energy technologies in relation to transport.

I consider my report to be something of a compendium of the other reports voted by in parliament in the field of transport. In order to obtain a substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from transport, it is necessary to combine different policies that are mutually supportive and complementary, involving as many actors in the transport field as possible. This policy mix is at the crux of the matter. What we need is a combination of three key elements. First, new technological innovations such as new fuel sources and better engines should be encouraged. Second, we need a more effective pricing policy, with a reform of the taxation system for transport that includes the environmental impact – a higher tax on more polluting cars, tax relief for ‘greener’

vehicles, higher taxes on fossil fuels, an extension of the emissions trading system, and so on. Thirdly, we need to encourage better practice among European drivers and to improve the road infrastructure over the long term.

Since a fully-inclusive policy on transport and the environment would be unwieldy and all but impossible to agree, it is essential that we define the correct priorities at both the specific policy level and areas for action. As far as the policy level is concerned, the idea is to give priority to those measures that can produce effects in the short term, trying therefore to maximize and improve the use of existing trans-

*“Every sector of the transport market and every form of transport has a role to play in contributing to a sustainable, less-polluting future”*

port networks through greater fuel efficiency, better intermodality, a shift to more sustainable forms of transport, particularly in city areas, the integrated use of transport, better planning, etc. As far as the areas for action are concerned, I believe we need to concentrate on the areas such as urban and metropolitan congested areas, the main

European inter-urban corridors and environmentally critical regions where the work is needed the most.

The importance of planning the right policies is clear when you see that in the EU25, around one third of final energy consumption is related to transport (excluding maritime transport and pipelines), reaching 352m tonnes of oil equivalent (Mtoe) in 2004. Road transport is by far the dominant sector, consuming nearly 83 per cent of the energy used for transport purposes. The transport sector as a whole is responsible for 24 per cent of the EU25’s greenhouse gas emissions. That is why every sector of the transport market and every form of transport has a role to play in contributing to a sustainable, less-polluting future. ★



Gabriele Albertini is vice-chairman of the transport and tourism committee

# Moving in the wrong direction

European policymakers need to listen harder to those who benefit from tougher emissions targets and not to those who pay, claims **Jos Dings**

It is abundantly clear that the transport sector is not moving in a sustainable direction. The figures speak for themselves: CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and oil use are up 32 per cent since 1990. This rise cancels out the progress made in other sectors (reductions of around 10 per cent) and jeopardises the achievement of our Kyoto targets. The EU goal of reducing emissions by 20-30 per cent by 2020, agreed earlier this year, looks further off than ever. The problems don't end there. The EU imports around €300bn of oil every year, much of it from unstable regions. Why do we need all this oil? Two thirds of it is guzzled by the transport sector. Air pollution remains a severe problem, especially in our cities. A key reason for this is that carmakers tune their vehicles to perform well in the lab for testing under the EU test cycle, but not for the real world. Noise pollution is also a growing public health concern. Not surprising, considering that despite the EU officially regulating noise from vehicles for the last thirty years, no progress whatsoever has been made.

Many problems can be solved by a focus on meaningful fuel efficiency standards for new vehicles. When Europe finally comes forward with energy efficiency standards for cars later this year, it will be the last major region to do so. But cars should be made much more efficient, not just a little bit. Car fuel efficiency should be doubled within the next decade with stricter standards beyond. Vans and trucks, and ideally aircraft and ships, should follow. Policy should be focused on energy efficiency, not finding replacement energy sources to guzzle. Why? Because 'alternative' energy is not synonymous with 'clean' energy. The serious questions now being raised about the sustainability and overall desirability of biofuels is testament to this. It is time to move away from the old-fashioned approach of setting targets for specific alternative fuels such as biofuels and towards

targets for reduction of the 'carbon footprint' of transport fuels. That approach allows the fuel supply industry to sort out the most cost-effective way of reducing overall carbon emissions. It will also reward the biofuel industry for delivering carbon savings rather than being rewarded on the basis of how much fuel they make, regardless of sustainability. So-called 'second generation' biofuels would get also get a boost from such an approach. The European parliament seems to be moving in the right direction, with the environment committee's vote in November on the fuel quality directive, which sets a low carbon fuel standard.

For decades aviation and shipping have been left out of the debate on sustainable transport. Under Kyoto, responsibility for cutting greenhouse gas emissions from these sectors was handed to two international organisations, ICAO and IMO – but they have sat on

*“There is a strange contradiction amongst many policymakers. In the morning they fret about record high oil prices and the increasing power of major energy producing nations to push Europe around, and in the afternoon they vote to weaken car fuel efficiency standards or measures that would enhance the fuel efficiency of the aviation sector”*





their hands for a decade. As a result, emissions have risen by 90 per cent and 50 per cent respectively since 1990. The EU is starting to pay attention. For aviation, the parliament recently voted to strengthen the commission's proposal to include the sector in the EU ETS. But the transport committee shamed itself by aggressively attempting to weaken all provisions of the law and favouring the former monopoly flag carriers over new players. Aviation's rapid growth can be, for the large part, attributed to unjust pricing. It is bizarre that there is still no tax on aviation fuel in Europe. That makes short haul flights look even more attractive than taking the car: the 50 flights a day between Manchester and London (a distance of 300km) is testament to this. Car drivers and train and bus passengers pay fuel taxes, those that fly do not. Equally strange is that there is no VAT charged on air tickets and only two countries in the EU base airport landing charges on air pollution.

The problem goes way beyond the aviation sector. Under current EU law, it is illegal for member states to include external costs in road user charges. So, once again, all of society picks up the bill for congestion, accidents and air pollution. This must be addressed when the Eurovignette directive comes up for renewal next year. Environmental policy is still, far too often, presented as anti-competitive. It isn't. All environmental policies in transport can be implemented without serious economic distortions. Let's take the example of new cars. Efficiency rules for new cars will be based on cars sold in Europe, not cars produced in Europe. Non-EU car makers will have to comply too – and they get to spread the development costs over fewer cars than European car makers whose sales are mostly in their home region. On fuels, same story. All fuels sold in Europe will have to comply with low carbon fuel standards, not all fuels produced

in Europe. Again, fuels produced outside Europe will have to comply too, so moving refinery operations outside the continent would make no sense. In aviation, all flights from, to and in Europe will be included in the ETS, not just European carriers. So all carriers operating on a specific route would face the same competitive situation.

The competitiveness debate has also been twisted by those companies that pay the costs of environmental regulation, not those that benefit. In the debate on cars, policymakers tend to forget that fuel efficiency standards will finally create a large and long-term market for fuel-saving technologies developed by Europe's world-leading automotive supply industry. In aviation, nobody talks about the fact that serious pressure on carbon emissions will boost the market for shiny new Airbus aircraft and innovative retrofitted fuel-saving technology. The voice of those that benefit is drowned out by those that bear some costs; policymakers should listen harder.

Finally, there is a strange contradiction amongst many policymakers. In the morning they fret about record high oil prices and the increasing power of major energy producing nations to push Europe around, and in the afternoon they vote to weaken car fuel efficiency standards or measures that would enhance the fuel efficiency of the aviation sector. Europe can shift the balance of power, just by reducing energy demand – which would have a massive impact on energy prices. I'm convinced that strong environmental policies in transport will enable European firms to take the lead in technology development and help address many of today's geopolitical tensions. Whether you believe in helping the environment or restoring the balance of power in the global energy market - more sustainable transport and less use of energy is a win-win strategy. ★

Jos Dings is director of the European federation for transport and environment (T&E)

[www.transportenvironment.org](http://www.transportenvironment.org)

# CONSUMERS ARE KEY TO THE TIMESHARE BUSINESS JUST AS THEY ARE IMPORTANT TO EU POLITICIANS

**T**he European Timeshare Industry believes that consumers need to be well informed in order to make the right purchase decisions. This principle should be the cornerstone for any consumer protection law concerned with sales and marketing practices.

Specifically, where consumers have been pro-actively invited by a trader to buy their products or services, they should benefit from having: all material information about the products or services available, ample time to reflect on their purchase decision, protection of monies paid and a full refund if cancellation takes place during the period of reflection.

Out of the 2,2 million families in Europe that have bought timeshare, some 800,000 have benefited from these rights, which have been in place since 1997. More importantly, almost 50% of them appreciate their timeshare holidays that much that they continue to buy more.

Over the past 10 years the sales practices of so-called long-term holiday products have caused consumer detriment. Many consumers are being misled into buying non-guaranteed future travel services with the promise of discount prices. Consumer authorities often classify these services as fraud,

but enforcement authorities simply are reluctant to take effective action. Even though these services are not real estate based timeshare products, the Commission proposes to regulate these services within the Timeshare Directive, effectively making the Timeshare Directive the vehicle for regulation of pro-active sales practices. Obviously, this reactive approach is significantly different from the promised modernisation of the consumer acquis, but one has to deal with what has been presented.

The Commission Proposal for a new Directive would benefit from more clarity in key areas, it needs to place more requirements on the travel services offered by long term holiday products, and better requirements for timeshare that are more in tune with how timeshare works, with respecting existing timeshare owners, and with consumer expectations in general.

The timeshare industry strongly favours a well defined framework for protecting monies paid in advance by the consumer. However, rather than prohibiting any advance payments, which appears to be the easy way out, and which disadvantages legitimate small and medium sized companies, a well regulated protection mechanism, only

available for legitimate companies would push rogue traders out of the market. This would represent better regulation.

The timeshare industry wants a balanced law that is clear and enforceable by authorities. In practice consumer protection is provided by empowered authorities actively clamping down on those companies that do not take consumer laws seriously and cause consumer detriment.

The timeshare industry is committed to delivering exceptional holidays to its customers and has a very low level of complaints. It is an industry that should be embraced by European law makers. The European Parliament recognises this and the outcome of its first round of discussions on a new Directive are promising.



Peter van der Mark  
Secretary General

ORGANISATION FOR TIMESHARE IN EUROPE

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# Have yourself a safe little Christmas

During her web chat on toy safety, consumer protection commissioner Meglena Kuneva said that low-quality toys continue to pose safety problems for the EU. **Sarah Collins** reports

A rubber duck, a toy rabbit, a mobile phone and a novelty candle-holder are all pictured beneath a Christmas tree on the interactive page of Meglena Kuneva's website. They look innocent enough, but hover over one of the images with your mouse and you'll face the truth about what harm these toys can do. The toy rabbit poses "a serious risk of choking" because its nose can detach, which does not comply with the EU's toys directive. The mobile phone poses "a serious risk of damage to hearing" because the 96 decibels it emits is 10 decibels higher than the recommended level. And the rubber duck contains toxic plastic softeners (phthalates) that can cause reproductive disorders.

The picture advertises the consumer protection commissioner's first web chat, entitled 'Have a safe Christmas', which took place on 5 December. The chat was launched as part of efforts to step up consumer awareness in the run-up to Christmas, especially in the wake of a series of safety scandals about toys originating in China. "I do not want to create any fear but we need to be realistic and raise awareness (especially during Christmas) that not all toys which look cuddly and cute are safe," Kuneva said.

In August, the commission announced that US toymaker Mattel would be expanding its recall of dangerous toys in Europe, after the toys in question were found to contain small

powerful magnets that could come apart and be swallowed by a child. In September, Mattel also recalled its 'Go Diego Go' animal rescue boats because they were found to contain excessive levels of lead in paint. "Manufacturers must do their very best to ensure that only safe products are offered to consumers. Recalls are, however, a fact of life, as there is no such thing as a risk-free, or error-free, world," said the commissioner. "With effective controls all along the supply chain, dangerous goods should not be reaching supermarket shelves or arrive in the hands of children at home."

The EU has its own rapid alert system (RAPEX) for dangerous consumer products. "As we see every week from the RAPEX alerts, cheap, low-quality toys continue to pose safety problems," says Kuneva. "Despite the fact that reputable businesses typically make strenuous efforts to ensure that their toys are safe, it is clear that at the lower end of the market many companies are not aware of the rules with which they have to comply."

Since the Mattel recalls, the commission has undertaken a 'stocktake' review of the strengths and weaknesses of the EU's product safety mechanisms and the legislation governing them. The review has found that, while there is no immediate need for a sweeping change to the regulatory system, manufacturers are ultimately and legally responsible for ensuring that only →



Photo: Ian Catlow of London's European Office



**EU stubs out in favour of fire-safer cigarettes**

EU member states have agreed to adopt commission plans that will require tobacco companies to sell only 'fire-safer' cigarettes.

Consumer protection commissioner Meglena Kuneva said the plan, agreed last month, would "strengthen the safety of EU citizens" and called it "a simple but meaningful measure on the ground".

"Clearly it is better not to smoke at all, but if people choose to smoke then requiring tobacco companies to make this small technical change is another step in the right direction," she said.

Data from 14 EU member states shows that cigarettes cause around 11,000 fires every year, with 520 deaths and 1600 injuries. A fire-safer cigarette works by wrapping it with two to three bands of thickened paper, which slows its burning. If it is left unattended, the burning tobacco will soon hit one of the bands of paper and go out.

These cigarettes have been in use in New York for around three years. By 2010, says Kuneva, half of US states will have imposed these standards.

Socialist MEP Arlene McCarthy said, "There is no such thing as a safe cigarette. But we have to face up to the reality that some people will continue to smoke. The more smoking bans, the more people will smoke at home."

Two member states allegedly voted against the plans, which commission sources put down to a powerful cigarette lobby.

safe products are placed on the market. "Manufacturers and importers must take their full responsibilities - they cannot outsource their responsibilities on safety. They must place only safe products on the market and ensure that products they market meet all the legal requirements," says Kuneva.

*"I do not want to create any fear but we need to be realistic and raise awareness (especially during Christmas) that not all toys which look cuddly and cute are safe"*



In the case of the Mattel recalls, says the commissioner, "This will require an increased effort to train Chinese and other toy manufacturers on the rules that apply in the EU. Also, market surveillance authorities will have to focus their surveillance efforts on unscrupulous companies who consistently fall foul of safety rules." According to the commissioner, the latest RAPEX report on dangerous consumer goods shows considerable progress by China on stopping faulty goods from appearing on EU supermarket shelves. Chinese authorities have revoked hundreds of export licences and run a special toy safety campaign. This month, China is to launch a domestic alert system modelled on RAPEX to coordinate work with the regions and increase effective cooperation.

At home, the commission is also revising its 1988 toy safety directive, due to be finalised in 2009. Because of technological developments and added chemical risks in toys, new problems have arisen for EU surveillance. Kuneva is pushing for new safety requirements and stronger enforcement. "Law and enforcement are to me the winning combination to effectively enhance the safety of children and all consumers."

"In this world you cannot give 100 per cent guarantees," concludes the commissioner. "But you can make sure the system is fit for purpose. You can ensure that all the links in the chain raise their game. You can ensure that producers, importers, retailers and governments and EU are ready to rapidly identify and tackle any new problems as they emerge. I can assure you 100 per cent of my commitment to keep the pressure on to ensure the highest possible level of safety for our citizens." ★



[www.eraeurope.org](http://www.eraeurope.org)

### Electronic Retailing: a key component of the internal market economic model of the future

Television Shopping Companies have for 25 years mastered the power of Audiovisual content to promote and sell goods and services **direct to consumers**. Today, the Internet makes possible a true relational business model connecting innovative companies with millions of households.



Electronic Retailing is the core of this model, and exploits the increasing integration of T (television) commerce and E-(online) Commerce, to create and maintain a

direct relation with an exponentially growing number of distant customers, bridging genders, generations and life styles .



In the last 3 years the **digital revolution** in process, has permitted and accelerated the emergence of an infinity of TV or TV like contents on internet and soon now on mobile phones.

Audiovisual Commercial Communication, integrating live programs, video, images, sound and information is becoming accessible **on air, on-line, at home and on the move**, through all possible electronic media, everywhere telecommunications are available.



For corporations or small companies, Electronic Retailing is the most accountable way of investing in advertising, because direct response and sales are **measurable in all possible ways**. Electronic Retailing

complements and extends all forms of direct marketing and commerce,

It attracts now, well known European brands as well as inventors, start-ups, regional or local companies in all member states.

As a trade group, The Electronic Retailing Association is specifically representing this sector of commerce in Europe.

ERA EUROPE is the association for European companies involved in retailing products and services directly to the consumer via audiovisual, Television, Radio and on-line electronic media, in accordance with a recognised code of ethics.



The 75 members (companies) in Europe are present in all member states and beyond. On Television only, they generate over 4 billions € of annual sales, and employ, directly or indirectly over 35,000 persons. The association's goal is to grow the economic impact and size of the industry in Europe, by increasing the confidence of consumers, **when they shop on TV or on Internet**, by protecting them through Self Regulated industry business standards, applicable wherever they live, wherever they buy. This requires the fostering and pursuit of collaborative relationship between the Electronic Retailing Industry , European consumers, European and National law makers, and regulators.



Members of the Association have created and implemented a **self regulation programme**, specific to Television and internet Shopping, aiming at guaranteeing to their customers, compliant advertising and fair commercial practices, in all markets they operate in..

ERA EUROPE is engaged in a collaborative relationship with all stake holders, from regulators to media and broadcasters. to build equal consumer confidence in all member states, and to establish a true level playing field around Europe,



2008-2013 – A Unique Window for accelerating the growth of the Electronic Cross Border Retail Market in Europe. ERA EUROPE's members welcome and support the Commission's objectives to maximize the harmonization of rules involving the access of citizens and consumers to Culture and Commerce on Digital media.

The **Audiovisual Media Services Directive**, after a well thought set of compromises between the Commission, the Council and the Parliament , has been adopted. We call member states to implement it, without unnecessary variations in their national interpretation, for the specific area of Advertising and Teleshopping.

We equally welcome the effort of Commissioner Viviane Reding for opening to more and more citizens around Europe the benefit of high speed broadband telecommunications , **at cost accessible to all households**.

We also warn all stakeholders of the potentially devastating impact on the development of Electronic Shopping , if the web was loosing its current **usage neutrality**. The future hundreds of millions of electronic shoppers around Europe, must continue to have access to the increased benefits of the Web, with no "size related" toll imposed to retailers, when the new generation of the web is implemented.

We welcome, and will actively collaborate with Commissioner Meglena Kuneva and MEPs for the well inspired review and possible **revision of the Consumer Acquis**. We call for an approach which will facilitate and harmonize the execution and administration of **cross border commercial transactions** with European Consumers, equally informed and protected , wherever they live, when they shop on TV, on line and on all types of distant selling channels.

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# Safety first

The launch of the European report cards on child safety suggests more needs to be done to ensure products and services are child-safe, writes **Arlene McCarthy**

**O**n November 20th, the European child safety alliance published a report to urge member states to put child safety at the heart of EU policies. The child safety report cards and the summary for 18 countries provide an overview over 100 policy measures that research has shown reduce accidental injuries to children. The individual country report cards score progress in adopting, implementing and enforcing evidence-based measures for child safety. Although child deaths from accidents have been falling over the past 20 years,

they are still the number one killer of children in every country of the EU. The summary report estimates that if member states perform at the same level as the best performing country, (Sweden), the lives of around 6,700 children under 20 years each year in the EU could be saved.

The policies assessed relate to road traffic accidents, drowning, falls, poisoning, burns and choking. Effective measures include strategies such as child seats in cars, child-resistant packaging for medicines and cleaning products, fencing for private swimming pools, and the adaptation of vehicle design

*“Although child deaths from accidents have been falling over the past 20 years, they are still the number one killer of children in every country of the EU”*





to reduce risk of pedestrian injury. The performance assessment also scores countries on their leadership, infrastructure and capacity to support child safety efforts. The scores indicate that no country's performance is rated "excellent" but nor did any country score "unacceptable", which indicates room for improvement for all countries assessed.

European politicians have a responsibility to ensure that "a high common level of consumer protection" is fully upheld. The key policies identified by this review could help provide a practical basis for improving child safety. But there is also the issue of ensuring enforcement. Some measures already exist as EU legislation, for example the requirement for use of child resistant packaging, but are not always fully implemented or enforced within countries. The new legislative proposals on free movement of goods adopted by my committee builds the foundations for the whole community infrastructure, allowing the testing and approval of products before they are put on the market. This must be followed up with intelligence based and pro-active market surveillance. Member states will be obliged when the new laws come into force, to take action against dangerous products, particularly in relation to child safety. The new system will apply to products covered by community rules, including toys. Current problems regarding the imports of dangerous toys will be addressed by proposal for a new toy safety directive, due from the commission shortly and the parliament will take tough action to protect children's health and safety.

One issue raised during the launch included the marketing of foods, such as cereals and chocolate, containing small, inedible toys that may cause a child to choke. This has been referred to the scientific committee on consumer products to investigate this issue further. The EU has invested in the development of many safety policies to date, but to be most effective these policies need to be adopted as national laws by member states and consistently implemented and enforced. Countries also need to look to their national data and see what is their leading cause of injury deaths and use proven best practice to cut these risks.

Home safety continues to require more action, since fewer of the related prevention policies have been undertaken compared for example to road safety measures. Small children are particularly vulnerable to burns, poisoning and falls and while there are fewer deaths from these causes, they result in a large number of hospitalisations. The report cards have helped us focus more specifically on key action on child safety. It is already a sign of progress that all 27 member states have pledged to participate in the next phase of the assessment. It is important for us as legislators in Europe and for the member states to evaluate what further steps need to be taken to ensure a comprehensive approach to child safety. Such action could include a safety audit of goods and services for children. It is vital for us to work closely with the European child safety alliance and all stakeholders in the development of EU policies and to ensure a safe future for our children. ★

## Report card

The child safety report card – summary for 18 countries, 2007 and other documents are available on the website of the European child safety alliance (ECSA) at [www.childsafetyeurope.org](http://www.childsafetyeurope.org). The child safety report cards are part of the child safety action plan initiative led by the European child safety alliance of EuroSafe in partnership with the European commission, the health and environment alliance (HEAL), UNICEF Innocenti centre, Universities of Keele and the West of England, WHO and partner organisations in 18 countries.

How countries scored on child safety performance out of a total of 60.

Netherlands	40	Hungary	32
Northern Ireland	40	Poland	32
Sweden	40	Scotland	31.5
Denmark	39.5	Czech Republic	31
France	37	Belgium	29.5
Germany	35.5	Austria	27
Norway	35.5	Estonia	27
Italy	27	Greece	21
Spain	22.5	Portugal	20

Scores: excellent (49-60 points), good (37-48 points), fair (25-36 points), poor (13-24 points), unacceptable (0-12 points)



Arlene McCarthy, chair of the internal market and consumer protection committee

# Climate Change and Agriculture: presented in Aeghio the results of the international project "ACCRETe"



**T**he international project ACCRETe (Agriculture and Climate Changes: how to Reduce human Effects and Threats) takes into serious consideration climate change and agriculture, particularly all the possible consequences in terms of economics and employment in farming.

The initiative is a EU co-funded project within the INTERREG III B Cades program; several distinguished scientific centers, universities and public administrations Europe wide joined: Slovenia, Greece, Czech Republic, Romania, German and Italy. The Province of Parma – Italy – was the lead partner.

EU-control organisms and international scientific circles that analyze this specific issue have recognized the success of the project in full, whose achievements were presented upon the International Final Conference in Aeghio (Greece) on November 9, 2007. Final reports and scientific outputs were presented on the occasion.

A long organization and a team work among diverse institutions were concluded with the Conference; they started with the preliminary meeting in Bucharest (RO) in October 2005 when general working criteria were established.

Three thematic Workgroups followed: in Chrissoupolis (GR), February 2006 on renewable energy and initiatives to control energy efficiency in agriculture; in Potenza (IT), November 2006 on the management of water resources and in Parma (IT), February 2007 on the enhancement of sustainable crops.

The project analyzes climate change and agriculture on different perspectives.

On the one hand, it aims at full awareness of the perpetual mutualism between agriculture and climate change so as to change farming procedures, to promote the use of technical instruments and general technology.

On the other hand, it claims to make public and private entities of agriculture field aware

of possible consequences of interaction between agriculture and climate change upon agro produces (quantity and quality) and of likely risks if no actions are taken.

Furthermore, to optimize forecasting and prevention systems of natural risks connected with farming and make sensitive public boards, scientists, farmers and the relative sectors.

Finally, to agree on the implementation of appropriate monitoring measures that is connected.

The Scientific Observatory the University of Thessaly created to collect data represented the scientific basic elements for the activities of the Workgroups and for further works in the future. A scientific publication emerged; it represents an appropriate and analytical instrument in the field.

In Aeghio, the institutional representatives of the partnership officially undersigned the Transnational Declaration on the occasion of the final presentation of activities. The event meant an institutional and political seal for the scientific work.

An agreement to be all active in the implementation of responsible and more climate-friendly measures: this is the meaning of the Declaration and both institutions and economic entities should inquire and find concrete occasions to apply it.

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## EU ACCRETe Project– Agriculture and Climate Change: how to Reduce human Effects and Threats.

### Romania's contribution and future steps.

**R**omania plays an important part among the EU countries regarding the research on mutual impacts between climate change and agricultural activities. Approaching common directions of research and action in this field establishes common instruments to implement on international and national levels.

ACCRETe is a INTERREG IIB Cades project co-financed by the European Union, which went on between 2005 and 2007 and focused on the above mentioned mutual impacts and their related risks. Particularly, the project aims to make people and agricultural users fully aware of this connection in order for them to assume proper attitudes, achieve new technologies, and also promote a sustainable agriculture. The following partners joined this project: Province of Parma - department of agriculture from Italy as the Lead Partner of the Project, Czech Hydro Meteorological Institute (Czech Republic), University of Rostock - Department of Agriculture and Environment (Germany); Municipality of Chrissoupolis, Municipality of Aeghio - Department of EU programs and University of Thessaly - Laboratory of Environment and Spatial Planning from Greece, Agrarian Institute San Michele all'Adige and Department of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Region of Basilicata from Italy, National Meteorological Administration of Romania and Agricultural Institute of Slovenia.

The preliminary meeting of ACCRETe was held on 28-30 October, 2005 in Bucharest,

Romania. The National Meteorological Administration of Romania organized the event, which was joined by all project partners. The role of NMA specialists was to collaborate in every project activity, especially in elaborating the Manual of Attitudes for farmers, the Observatory Network and thematic workgroups. The case studies presented within the thematic workgroups represent a real exchange of agricultural experience between partners, helping them to select the information to be implemented at national level. The National Meteorological Administration scientists are actively involved in preventing and mitigating all the natural risks affecting the environment and agriculture, as well as in disseminating this specialized information to decision-makers and other end-users (farmers, citizens).

The ACCRETe project is a very precious tool for us. The Code of Attitudes for farmers represents the main instrument to be used by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and other involved authorities for raising the farmers' awareness on the necessity to adapt actual technologies to climate change. Furthermore, this code is meant to reduce the anthropogenic impact upon climate. This program will be officially initiated in Romania by the Minister of Environment, Mr. Attila Korodi, starting in December 2007. The awareness of climate change on political level and its impacts on key economical sectors are essential to the development of society. Further

workshops / meetings will be organized on regional and local levels, aiming to disseminate information and discuss with farmers the problems posed by living in areas affected by extreme events. Also, creating a communication plan for the press and the media will improve the perception on the way our change in attitudes will reduce human effects on the environment.

"We still have time!" - the ACCRETe Project's video-spot, is the basic message of this project directed to creating a new attitude towards the environment and making people more sensitive to the risks, in order to tone down human-induced effects on climate change. Broadcasting this message on a national communication channel is only the first step in this direction.

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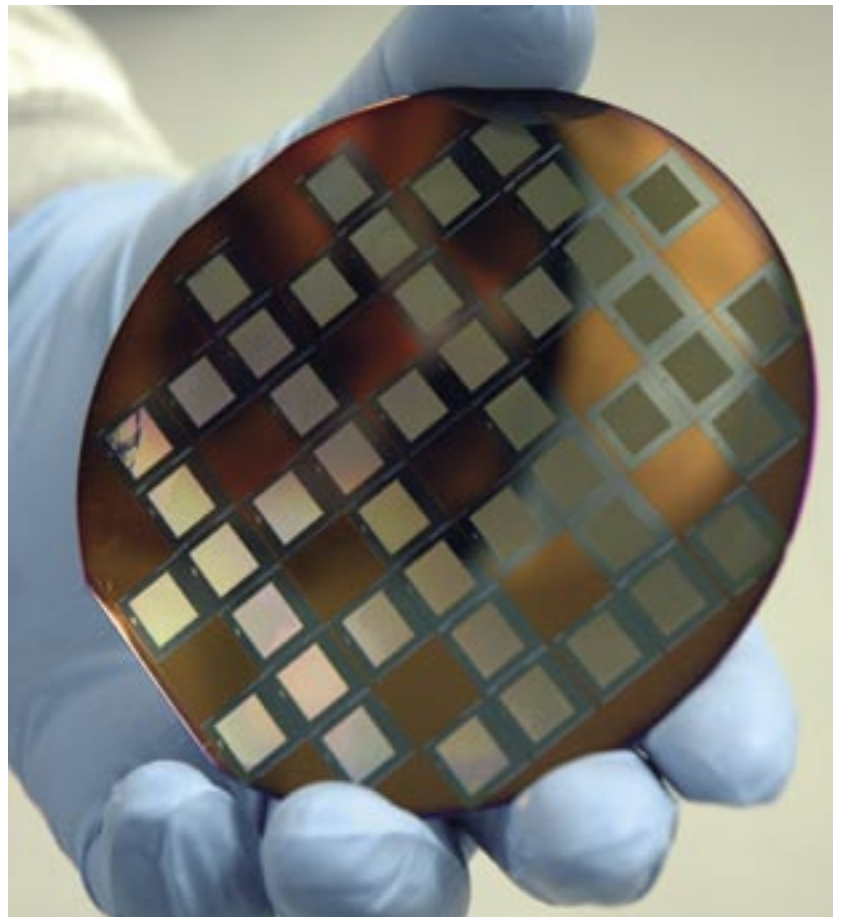
# Innovative Europe

**Giles Chichester** explains how the EU can help SMEs take full advantage of EU research and innovation



*“Parliament has insisted on special support measures for SMEs including minimum funding quotas, higher overhead claims and higher funding rates”*

**T**he ITRE committee is well aware of the importance of SMEs for the European economy and of their potential for growth and innovation and has consistently supported measures to increase their participation in community programmes. Europe’s 23 million SMEs account for about two thirds of Europe’s GDP and employ more than 100 million people and make up more than 75 per cent of employments in sectors such as textiles, construction and furniture. EU support for SMEs covers hi-tech businesses as well as low and medium tech organisations with little research capability that can benefit from the dissemination of research results and the outsourcing of research tasks. The European parliament has insisted on special support measures for SMEs including minimum funding quotas, a wider choice of funding schemes, higher overhead claims and higher funding rates. There are four main EU instruments available to SMEs in this field.





## 1. SMEs and research: the seventh framework programme

Within the cooperation specific programme, research performing SMEs can participate in collaborative research in any of ten thematic areas. Each work programme identifies the research areas of particular interest to SMEs and provides concrete measures to increase their participation. The aim, at the request of parliament, is to enable at least 15 per cent of the funding to go to SMEs. The dissemination and transfer of knowledge are important features in each thematic area.

Within the capacities specific programme, research outsourcing SMEs can participate in two schemes to build their research capacity and technological know how. Research for the benefit of SMEs covers all fields of science and technology and aims to complement national programmes by supporting trans-national research cooperation and technology transfer. Support is offered for increasing research efforts, outsourcing research, extending networks and acquiring technological know how.

Research for SMEs associations on the other hand supports short term collaborative projects involving several SMEs to solve common problems, such as conforming to European standards or meeting regulatory requirements, through research. Results are then disseminated to members of the SME associations. In both schemes projects are required to include activities promoting the use of research results. They also have special rules for ownership and access rights. Also, a people specific programme allows SMEs to participate in joint research partnerships supported by experienced researchers and staff secondments between public and private sectors.

## 2. Risk Sharing Finance Facility

This facility, a new feature of FP7, is supported by parliament and is designed to improve access to debt finance. A contribu-

tion is provided from the EU to the EIB to finance more risky RTD projects. This will facilitate an increase in the amount of RTD actions financed by the EIB, such as joint technology initiatives, large projects, including EUREKA projects, new research infrastructures and projects run by SMEs, to help overcome market deficiencies.

## 3. The Eurostars initiative

This initiative, which is currently going through parliament, is a trans-national support scheme for research performing SMEs. It is a joint initiative between 27 countries, the Eureka network and the European commission, providing funding for SMEs to lead international market driven collaborative research projects. The scheme combines the centralised management of the framework programmes with the decentralised network of Eureka. 22 Member States and seven associated countries have pledged €300m and the European commission is contributing €100m from the seventh framework programme.

## 4. SMEs and innovation: the competitiveness and innovation framework programme

The programme supports innovation activities by SMEs and helps them increase their use of information and communication technologies (ICT). It also promotes energy efficiency to increase competitiveness. SMEs can participate in its three specific programmes - the entrepreneurship and innovation programme, the ICT policy support programme and intelligent energy Europe.

There have always been obstacles in the way of SME participation in framework programme projects but this time we have tried hard to make it easier. The jury is out on some of these initiatives so maybe it is a little early to draw any conclusions but I am moderately optimistic that things will be better this time around. ★



Giles Chichester is a member of the committee on industry, research and energy

## Do you need to:

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# The healing process

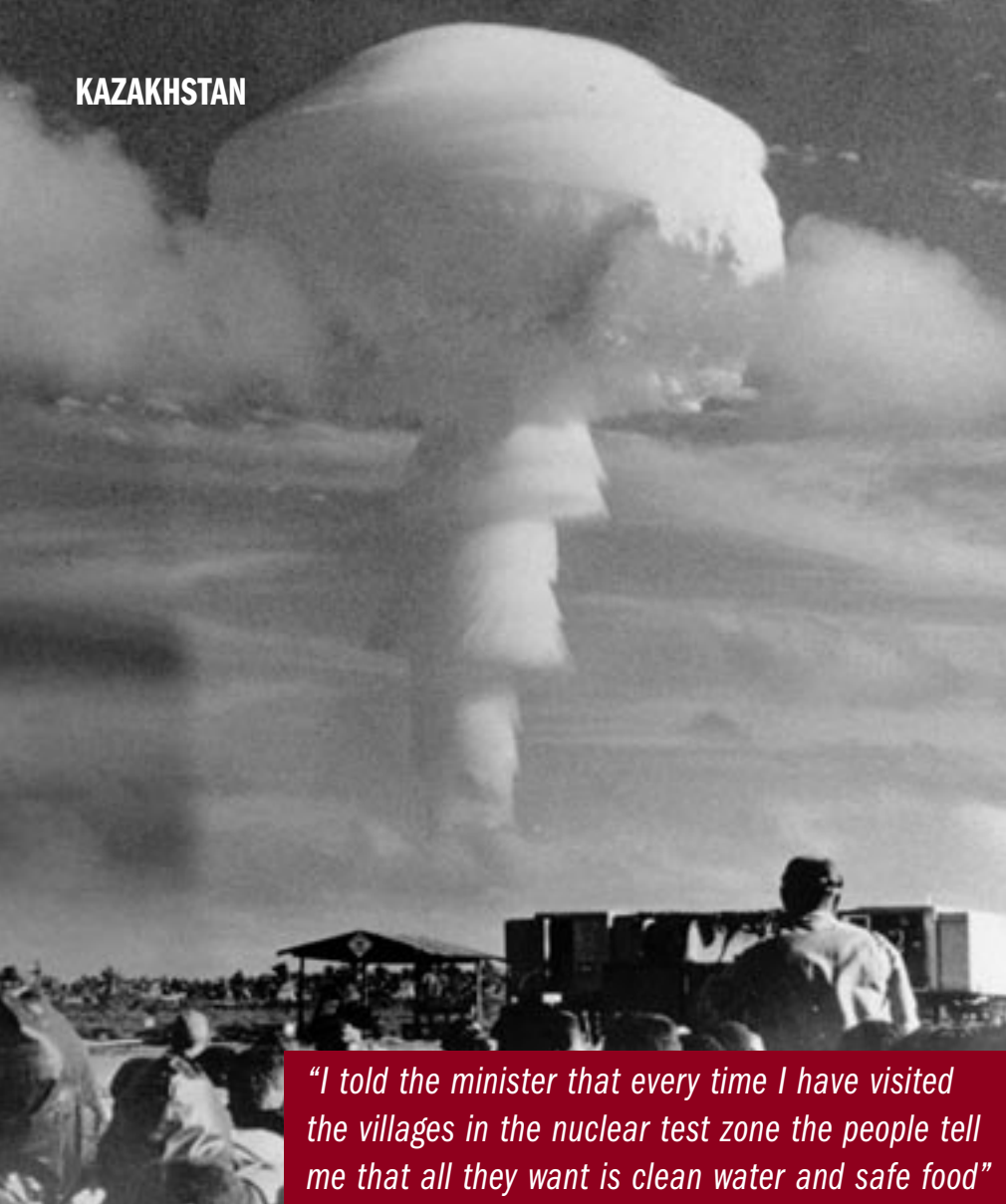
In the second of a two-part series, **Struan Stevenson** examines the human cost of Soviet nuclear tests on a devastated Kazakh community

**T**t was my eighth mission to this desolate part of central Asia known as the Polygon. I was accompanied by Hollywood actress and photographer Kimberley Joseph - star of *Lost and Cold Feet* - who was here for her third visit. It was here in the Polygon, between 1949 and 1990, that the Soviets exploded more than 600 atomic weapons, subjecting the local 1.5 million farmers and villagers to the equivalent of 20,000 Hiroshima bombs. Cynically, the military scientists would wait until the wind was blowing in the direction of the remote Kazakh villages before detonating their nuclear devices. KGB doctors would then closely study the effects of nuclear radia-

tion on their own population, used as human guinea pigs. The legacy of these horrific experiments is everywhere to see. Seepage from the underground tests has polluted watercourses and streams. Farmland has been heavily irradiated. Radioactive contamination has entered the food chain. Almost everyone in the Polygon is ill. Cancers run at five times the national average. Birth defects are three times the national average. Babies and farm animals are born with terrible deformities. Children are mentally retarded and Downs Syndrome is common. Virtually all children suffer from anaemia.

To raise international awareness, Kimberley and I have toured an exhibition of photos of the Polygon around the





*“I told the minister that every time I have visited the villages in the nuclear test zone the people tell me that all they want is clean water and safe food”*

world, from Edinburgh to Dublin, Norway, London, Brussels and New York. Last year we took the exhibition to the old capital of Kazakhstan Almaty, then on to the new capital Astana and to Semey, the main city in the Polygon. We even took the display out to the villages themselves to show the people who featured in many of the photos what we were doing on their behalf. Recently, we launched the Russian edition of my book ‘Crying Forever – A Nuclear Diary’ at special presentations in Almaty, Astana and Semey.

In Astana, a large gathering of MPs had come together in the parliament to listen to Kimberley and me and to get copies of the book. Donations immediately started to flow in to a special fund set up in Kazakhstan to raise money for the victims of the nuclear tests. One MP spontaneously offered to pay for a Kazakh edition of the book to be published, which will be launched next year and which hopefully will raise even more funds for the Polygon. At a meeting with the Kazakh minister of education, I said that it was ridiculous that their government is not doing more to help. Kazakhstan has vast oil reserves, perhaps greater even than Saudi Arabia and with oil now fetching over \$90 per barrel



**Struan Stevenson**  
is vice-chair of the  
EPP-ED Group

the Kazakh government has ample resources to provide more aid to the beleaguered citizens of the Polygon.

The minister told me that the government has, in fact, allocated over \$200 million in its budget for the Polygon, including a one-off payment of \$200 to each person who can provide medical evidence to show they were affected by radiation fallout. But I said the villagers have often told me that it is almost impossible to get such accreditation. They need to provide medical certificates validated by three doctors, after filling in endless forms. Finding three doctors in the Polygon is a test in itself! I told the minister that every time I have visited the villages in the nuclear test zone the people tell me that all they want is clean water and safe food.

During the time the area was being used for nuclear tests the Soviets piped clean water to the villages from the distant mountain ranges. The pipes have long-since corroded and collapsed or being uprooted and stolen for scrap, forcing the local people to drink irradiated water from underground springs and streams. Similarly, more work needs to be done to clean up areas of land that can then be used for farming. Instead of this, millions are spent every year on endless consultant’s reports. You could almost paper the entire Polygon – an area the size of Wales – with these reports. I told the minister that we need

concrete action, not paper. We need safe food and water not red tape and bureaucratic reports.

When we finally rumbled into the airport of Ust Kamenogorsk, the capital city of the East Kazakhstan region or Oblast as it is called, a small crowd had gathered to meet us. Several journalists and a camera crew had been alerted to our arrival and word had got around. A group of teenagers had received permission from their school to come and speak to us. As Kimberley and I gave interviews to the TV crew, the teenagers listened intently. Suddenly a young Kazakh lad of around 17 or 18 stepped forward. He grasped my hand and in perfect English said “I want to thank you on behalf of all of the young people of Kazakhstan for what you are doing. This is our country and our future and the Polygon is our inheritance. The Polygon was constructed using the combined resources of the 15 republics of the former USSR. Now only one republic – our country – Kazakhstan – has been left to tidy up the mess. We have a lot of work to do and we appreciate your help.”

For Kimberley and me to hear such eloquent sentiments from such a young person was deeply moving. This is what motivates us to continue our campaign. ★

# THE PARLIAMENT

POLITICS, POLICY AND PEOPLE **MAGAZINE**

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