



Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for **Europe**
Alliance des Démocrates et des Libéraux pour l'**Europe**

from **Bill Newton Dunn** MEP

ENORMOUS CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD

Bill's Bulletin from Brussels

We are falling behind the rest of the world. The answer is More Europe

Why is our corner of the planet, Europe, suffering from decline, relative to the USA, China, India, and the developing world?

All European countries have aging populations, manufacturing jobs leaving for the east, our once-imperial muscle and influence small, and much more. What can we do to improve our position in the world?

Each European country is now too small on its own, to have much influence on a world scale. But if we all work together, with one voice instead of 27 separate voices, with one combined effort instead of 27 separate national efforts, our united strength and efficacy could be greatly improved. The answer is by acting together, instead of continuing with the present duplication by the 27 member governments of the EU.

Examples where we should work more closely together? Defence (two new British aircraft-carriers but too few aircraft). Space research (but sadly Europe's successful rocket, Ariane, has no British involvement). One currency across all of Europe, instead of today's one big one (the

euro) and ten small national ones. EU Embassies: there are still 27 expensive, national embassies in most capital cities of the world although an EU citizen can already seek assistance from any other EU state embassy, (or even evacuation as in the case of Libya when HMS Cumberland rescued 207 people and carried them to Malta but only 71 were UK citizens). Fighting international criminal gangs which smuggle drugs, illegal immigrants, and fakes of every kind, so destroying genuine jobs and depriving our governments of taxes. Gangs based in China, Russia, Nigeria, and Europe, feed off us: they operate across borders with impunity, but all Europe's police forces are national and cannot cross any boundaries: we could fight the gangs much better by creating a European FBI. Air traffic control: planes in European airspace could save fuel and emissions by a straight flight-path instead of zigzagging according to 27 national controls. Grids for electricity, gas and oil could be connected across Europe. Development Aid should be coordinated rather than the present duplication of 27 separate aid programs.

Why are these improvements not happening already?

The Lisbon Treaty moved all Europeans a little towards more effective decision-making together, but it was not enough. We still suffer from a lack of central co-ordinated leadership in a world which is changing fast and not in our favor.

The basic problem is that the 27 national governments only agree on the lowest common denominator between them. Even when the 27 national governments make commitments to work more closely together, they often fail to live up to their promises.

There is a blinkered uninformed approach by too many MPs in their national parliaments. They do not like to face up to the current predicament of all Europeans. And if national MPs don't like to understand the arguments, how can it be sensible to give the right to voters to decide such big questions in a referendum?

In the powerful European Parliament, Conservative MEPS are totally marginalised and without any influence due to Cameron's foolish



mistake of leaving the alliance of centre-right political parties.

The problem is that Europe is falling behind the rest of the world. We could catch up - but only if we pool our efforts and put nationalism behind us. The sooner the better.

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Looking ahead

HOW POWER IS SHARED IN THE EU

Cross-border laws for Europe enable countries to solve their differences peacefully - for agriculture, fisheries, trade, the environment, climate change, finance, protection of rights, and development aid.

Power is shared between three separate bodies. The European Commission in Brussels is the EU executive body: it does the day-to-day work and drafts laws.

Draft laws are amended by two separate chambers, which must agree in the end : elected MEPs in the European Parliament (the lower house) and the Council of Ministers (the 27 national governments in the upper house).

Disputes are decided by Europe's supreme court, the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg.



Lib Dem MEPs with Nick Clegg MP

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are the EU's annual accounts not approved by the auditors?

Each year the EU's auditors give a clean bill of health to the half of the EU budget which is spent by Brussels.

But the other half of the EU's budget is spent by the 27 national governments on Agriculture and infrastructure projects. And all the 27 national governments, including Westminster, refuse to open their books to the EU auditors.

Naturally the EU auditors are unable to say that they have seen all the accounts

- and therefore cannot give their approval. The blame rests on the national governments and not with Brussels. But Brussels gets the blame.

We British should be careful about being over-critical. The accounts of the UK's Department of Pensions have not been approved by our own British auditors for more than fourteen years in a row!

Why do MEPs work in two parliament buildings in Brussels and in Strasbourg?

Because the EU treaties say that the decision about where MEPs work is made unanimously by the 27 national governments, and MEPs have no say.

France has a veto. That was decided by leaders under the chairmanship of a British Tory Prime Minister, John Major.

"We only joined a Free Trade Area".

All the EU treaties - all of which the UK has signed - say that the goal is "ever closer union." In 1973 we British abandoned EFTA, the European Free Trade Area, in order to join the EU. In the referendum in 1975, a government leaflet confirming the goal of "ever closer union" was delivered to every UK household. Mrs Thatcher too said during the campaign "It is about much more than free trade."

The current financial crisis is NOT the fault of the Euro. The Euro currency is managed by strict rules, along the lines of the previous German Mark.

Our present financial crisis is due the bad behaviour of western banks and to the lax behavior of governments who mis-spent their budgets and who failed to regulate the banks - including Britain. The financial mess which the Coalition is now having to clear up, very painfully, is due to the repeated failures of Labour's Gordon Brown first as Chancellor then as Prime Minister.

The Euro was created in January 1999. It is now the currency of 17 countries. The Krone in Denmark is tied to the Euro but is still separate Danish paper and coins.

The Danish government is excluded from the EU's inner financial decisions.

Joining the Euro means accepting discipline in running your economy. We have seen how Greece, Portugal, Ireland, and others ducked the rules and are now in deep financial trouble.

If a Euro-zone country fails to keep to the rules, either the EU must steer it back to virtue, through sanctions if necessary, or else the offending country has to pay much the tougher market interest rates which the Greeks are now paying.

Britain evaded the question of having to be self-disciplined by not joining the Euro in 1999. The Pound has devalued steadily ever since. Sterling was worth 1.42 euros at the start, but today in 2011

is worth only 1.16 euros. So we British have lost about 20% of our national wealth in twelve years compared to Euro-zone countries. And the majority of British people think we are better off outside the euro-zone !

There are rumours that Switzerland may apply soon to join Euro zone - because, if world financial conditions get worse, it fears a financial tsunami into Swiss banks. If the Swiss join, it would greatly strengthen the Euro.

The 28th member of the EU next year?

Is likely to join in 2012. Croatia will have twelve MEPs and will bring the 24th language which is given official status.

CONVERT TO ENERGY-SAVING DEVICES

Climate Change presents us with an urgent but also attractive opportunity. The risks of failure are immense for humans. Our planet's atmosphere has not contained these CO2 levels for 30 million years. Failure to act to reduce the level and temperature rises will lead to movements of hundreds of millions of people, to famines, and to conflicts.

Humans need to cut annual emissions of CO2 from 50 billion tons to below 20 billions by 2050 - if we are to keep the overall temperature rise to only 2 centigrade.

This means a new energy-industrial revolution. Changes will bring rewards for the pioneers, and will bring opportunities for new industries.

The cost of petrol and of electricity will continue rising because of shortages of fossil fuels and because of the rising world population.



Observing wind turbines in the Baltic. One rotation powers one house for 24 hours. The dark patch of sea is lumpy pieces of Porridge Ice

Doctors say that action against rising emissions will bring health benefits and reduced healthcare costs. Taking action will save health costs, provide security against the oil producers, and provide a technical edge for our businesses.

So converting to energy-saving devices is win-win - for those who do it.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

A delegation of 6 MEPs including myself attended the United Nations conference on the Millennium Development Goals, last September in New York.

Ten years ago, the UN set ambitious goals for 2015 for the elimination of poverty, universal education, clean drinking water for all, and more. The conference was to assess how far the world has moved, and what must done in the next five years.

The conference's Final Statement, setting out the world's goals for the next five years, was negotiated for months before the summit. The document's weakness, from the view of Europeans, is its position over Accountability - about proving where our taxpayers' money goes. African countries did not want any mention of "Accountability". So it only appears weakly in the document.

Accountability is vital because it is also about holding rich national governments to their promises, and about

maintaining public confidence in giving money voluntarily.

At a side-meeting, we heard that it is estimated that ten times as much as the total aid given to Africa leaves Africa each year via tax havens.

Developing countries could help themselves by starting to collect taxes efficiently. Rwanda has done this and is prospering. Property rights need to be given in all developing countries.

The UN project goes hand-in-hand with the Climate Change goals. If emissions continue to rise, sea-levels will rise, low-lying countries will need more help, and deserts will spread across Africa.

The purpose of the DEVE delegation was assess whether the EU should continue as the world's leading donor of development aid and to try to discover what improvements we should make. It was clear to us that we should continue giving but we should emphasise Accountability in the future.

SHANGHAI

I visited my daughter in Shanghai for a week last November - paying all my own expenses, before you ask. It gave me a better understanding of how that fast-developing country China works.

China is now a sharp contrast of prosperous cities but still-primitive countryside. In Shanghai every cafe provides free wifi - unlike in the UK. In their underground trains, there is mobile phone connectivity - unlike in the UK.

The city's ambition is to become the financial centre for Asia - and there are towering new skyscrapers downtown in Pudong opposite the famous old riverbank avenue, the Bund. The city has almost no buildings dating before 1920.

But against these lofty goals, there is rising inflation particularly of food prices, also considerable air pollution, also

no bans against smoking, also no safety belts in cars, and no elections at all - except in villages for local officials when only Communist party members win.

It looks to me that China may develop like the USA - with very rich people but also with extreme poverty, and without adequate social health or pension services.

The challenge for the central government in Beijing is whether they can continue to modernise without a billion people demanding decentralisation, local democracy, and freedom.

See the two photos on the back page. One shows a hobby in a local park, painting traditional Chinese poetry in water. It evaporates, and next day they write more.

The other photo, taken in the Urban Planning museum, not normally a top attraction in the west, shows how Shanghai will be in 2020, as decided by Beijing.

STAY IN TOUCH

Send me your email address so I can keep you informed about the European Parliament.

WATCH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AT WORK

MEPs hold their committee meetings and their full-scale debates in public. You can watch from home "on-line" by going to the following website <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/StartPage.aspx> or by googling EuroParlTV

VISIT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE CITY OF BRUSSELS

You can visit the parliament on your own, or with others. There is no need to book in advance unless you bring a large group. But check in advance whether the parliament will be meeting in Brussels or Strasbourg on your proposed date, and whether I will be there to welcome you.

Mrs Julie Hirst organises groups for me to come to Brussels. Tell her that you might be interested to join a bus group by emailing her at julie_hirst2000@yahoo.co.uk

If you want to bring a large group yourself, plenty of advance notice is required by the parliament because large numbers of visitors arrive every day from all over Europe.

JOIN THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PARTY

Our policies on-line at <http://www.libdems.org.uk/>

The text of the agreement for the Coalition between the Lib Dems and the Tories is at

http://www.libdems.org.uk/latest_news_detail.aspx?title=Conservative_Liberal_Democrat_coalition_agreements&pPK=2697bcdd-7483-47a7-a517-7778979458ff

If you like what we stand for, then please join us or make a donation. The recommended rate is 45 pounds per year but concessions are available.

You can join by writing to our headquarters at 4 Cowley Street, London SW1P 3NB (telephone: 020 7222 7999). Or join on-line at <https://www.libdems.org.uk/support/join.html>

WEBSITES WHICH COULD BE USEFUL

- my personal page on the European Parliament's website is <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/members/public/geoSearch/view.do?country=GB&partNumber=1&zone=East+Midlands&language=EN&id=1394>
- the European Parliament main website <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/>
- the Commission website http://ec.europa.eu/index_en.htm
- the Council of Ministers website <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/>
- the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg <http://europa.eu/institutions/inst/justice/>
- the European Court on Human Rights in Strasbourg (which is not part of the EU) <http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/EN/Header/Basic+Texts/The+Convention+and+additional+protocols/The+European+Convention+on+Human+Rights/>
- a good source for the latest news about the EU is <http://euobserver.com/>
- seek a job in Brussels at <http://www.euro-jobbing.com/> or at <http://Europa.eu/epso/>
- get Solvit to help solve your EU problem http://ec.europa.eu/solvit/site/index_en.htm

STUDY IN THE REST OF EUROPE

Three useful schemes :

- ERASMUS is for higher education students to study for part of their degree in another European country.
- LEONARDO DA VINCI funds people to travel to other parts of Europe for vocational education and training.
- GRUNTVIG is for personal development. It funds adults who are not in higher education to visit other European countries for training, job shadowing, or work placement.

Further information at <http://www.scholarshipportal.eu/> and http://ec.europa.eu/education/index_en.HTML and http://ec.europa.eu/education/study-in-europe/index_en.html



Writing poetry in water



Shanghai as it will be in 2020