

July Report from Claude Moraes MEP



Dear Friends

Welcome to my July Newsletter, a chance for me to keep you up to date on what your London Labour MEP is doing on your behalf, as well as to give you a regular analysis of developments in the EU.

In July, there was continued crisis amongst European economies and a host of other legislative and other issues which were understandably over-shadowed by the crisis. I include those issues here.

I've also launched my new website this month, designed to make accessing stories and information on the European Union easier for you, and I also regularly update my Facebook page. I always welcome any feedback you may have and hope that this Report will be informative.

Please feel free to [get in touch](#),

Claude Moraes MEP

Labour MEP for London

Deputy Leader, European Parliamentary Labour Party.

The EU Budget

[Labour is opposing any increase in the EU budget for 2012.](#)

Labour MEPs have in fact called on the European Commission to radically overhaul its planned budget for 2012. What we need is a focus on jobs and growth – not to freeze our actions because of austerity.

Labour also wants an end to wasteful budgets, and Labour MEPs are opposed to the Commission's plans for a 4.9% budget increase.

[Labour's priorities are jobs, regeneration, transport and energy infrastructure, as well as aiding the development and research that will lay the groundwork for future growth.](#) I personally also want to see no diminution of our development and refugee aid while key Member States are involved in military action in refugee producing areas of the world.

As your London Labour MEP, I will continue to oppose any EU budget increase for 2012, as well as continue to push hard for spending EU funds where such funds can make the most difference for people in London and the UK, and the most sensitive war and development zones.

Transport

Britain and London have some of the strictest road safety laws in the world. Labour wants to keep it that way.

The Tory-led UK government, however, is [laying plans to relax our strict MoT testing standards, with Tory Transport Secretary Phil Hammond developing plans to see the vehicles on our streets undergoing fewer MoT tests.](#)

Under the Tory plans, cars and vans will be able to spend another full year on the road in between before their first MoT check-up, plus an extra year between later tests. This doesn't make sense, as 50% of vans and 20% of cars fail their first MoT after three years on the road.

The Tories' transport plans will [reduce road safety in the capital](#), and according to the Retail Motor Industry Federation [will also jeopardize up to 25,000 jobs in the road safety industry.](#)

Labour in Europe will continue to work hard from the European Parliament's Transport Committee to scrutinize and expose such reckless plans for London's roads.

Consumer Protection and Health: Progress from the EU

Protecting the safety of the food you eat, and the products you use to look after yourself and your family, are at the heart of Labour's work in Europe.

Here, July saw developments in two key areas of consumer protection: baby milk, and the transfats added to our food.

[Labour MEPs have opposed claims being made by a manufacturer of baby milk that their product can improve a baby's eyesight.](#) A controversial claim, at best, and one centred on a fatty acid known as DHA, this was challenged by Labour due to the lack of scientific consensus on this issue. Sadly, despite a majority of MEPs in the European Parliament voting to challenge the health claim, this resolution fell short of the 368 votes needed to block the claim.

Labour in Europe's leader Glenis Willmott MEP expressed our frustration, when she said that parents will now be targeted with health claims that many medical professionals and health organisations do not believe should be allowed.

Labour has won the backing of an all-party committee for a campaign [to require manufacturers to tell consumers whether their products include potentially harmful substances known as transfats](#). Labour's campaign is designed to help prevent diseases such as obesity, heart disease, Alzheimer's and infertility. Transfats have already been banned in their added form in some countries, and for Labour's food safety campaign on transfats to become law, it will now need the backing of EU governments.

Labour challenges rip-off credit card fees

Labour in Europe has [challenged the extortionate practices of credit-card companies](#), and the European Parliament has approved new consumer rights.

Consumers are paying anything up to ten times the real cost of processing their credit card transaction. This damages businesses and damages consumers too, especially problematic during a difficult recovery.

Because of the recession we face, and the negative impact on recovery-boosting consumption of such unfair charges, [Labour is now calling on the UK government to ban the fees now](#), rather than wait until the EU laws kick in during 2014.

Your cross-border rights

I and other Labour MEPs have been working hard in July to ensure future European Union regulation will strike [the correct balance between commercial and social rights](#).

We want to see workers' rights in the European Union strengthened, and strengthened in a way that promotes the ability of the Single European Market to deliver stability, jobs and growth.

Now, Labour is waiting to see how the Commission responds to the Parliament's views, particularly as a new European Union regulation, named Monti II, will aim to clarify the balance between commercial and social rights in Europe.

Libya and Tunisia Delegation

This month, [I visited the Libya/Tunisia border to see for myself how people are being forced to live in UN run camps there](#).

Travelling with a delegation from the European Parliament, I visited several areas, including the biggest refugee camp which currently hosts over 3.700 people, and met with the interim Prime Minister of Tunisia to discuss the desperate situation there.

Sadly, [I also saw how limited access to clean water and adequate sanitation and hygiene facilities is also a terrible problem in the camps](#), which have nevertheless inspired me due to how calm the residents were, and to how much solidarity they felt with each other.

I will be reporting back to the European Parliament about what its delegation saw in North Africa, as well as our [clear conclusion that Europe needs to do more for these](#)

[people, both in promoting their safety and in protecting their fundamental human rights.](#)

The US credit-rating agencies

I've followed the Eurozone crisis closely from the European Parliament. The issue is complicated, and has become a mixture of the economic, fiscal and political challenges facing Europe in the immediate future. Europeans will have to work together to find a constructive solution to maintaining Europe's fiscal and economic health. One issue is however clear, [the destructive role of US based credit-rating agencies in the crisis.](#)

It is unacceptable that the timing and context of a credit-rating downgrade can have a disproportionate and destructive affect on a European economy which has the potential to get back to positive growth. [I've written about how such agencies have the power of economic life and death over countries like Greece](#), why this isn't right, and what we can do to ensure the best efforts of major European countries and international institutions are not needlessly damaged by privately owned companies based in the US.

This is especially true when we consider how US credit-rating agencies have themselves been involved in financial crises, in particular handing out dangerously inflated credit-ratings just before the sub prime mortgage crisis which brought the global financial system to its knees. [They were wrong then, and they are wrong now.](#)

Protecting Free Movement in Europe

In July, I've continued to speak on Schengen and I drafted the Socialist and Democrat [resolution on Schengen in the July plenary session of the European Parliament.](#)

You can [read my speech here](#) on this issue, and my position was also [reported in the Financial Times.](#)

My new website

This month, I launched my new website www.claudemoraes.com

The website is designed around a clearer way of helping London Labour Party members [find information on what their MEP is doing](#), as well as commentary on wider European [issues](#), a source of [information](#) and [news](#).

I hope you like the new, clearer lay out and I always [welcome any feedback.](#)

Opposition Watch

The Tories say one thing on the environment in Britain, and are doing another in the European Parliament.

Right now, by 2020, Europeans are committed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent against 1990 levels. Labour wants to see that target raised to 30 per cent. In July, [a crucial vote on raising the target to 30 per cent was lost by just nine votes. Sixteen Conservative MEPs failed to endorse a tougher target](#), directly contradicting the UK Tory-led government's environment policy.

All Labour MEPs supported the more ambitious target of 30 per cent and Labour will continue to push for critical environment reforms from the European Parliament.

Labour Party News

I was present at the London Regional Board vote to endorse the candidates for the London Assembly. The London MEPs will work across London to [help get Ken, the list and constituency candidates](#) elected in 2012. Congratulations to all party members who took part in the selection process.

I am currently Deputy Leader of the European Parliamentary Labour Party (EPLP). This is the Labour MEPs in Europe. We recently made [our submission to the Labour Party's national review on where the party is going](#).

[Tooting CLP has recently launched a new website, which you can see here](#). If you would like us to include links to your CLP activities or websites, [please do just let me know](#).

I'm a member of the [Labour NPF Commission on Sustainable Communities](#), and we will soon publish the Annual Report of the Commission.

In the coming weeks, I will have reported back to or be reporting back to the following London CLPs personally

Hackney South CLP - June 23rd 2011

Ealing Central and Acton CLP - July 28th 2011

Croydon North CLP - September 9th 2011

Cities of London and Westminster CLP - November 22nd 2011

Woodgreen and Hornsey CLP - November 23rd 2011

Enfield North CLP - November 24th 2011

In Parliament

I regularly speak, table motions as a Socialist spokesperson and ask Parliamentary Questions in the European Parliament and [all of this work can be found here](#).