

January Report from Claude Moraes MEP



Dear Friends

Welcome to my first newsletter of 2011.

2010 was a very busy year, with the European Union under pressure associated with the wider recession. Now 2011 looks set to be just as busy, with issues reaching my committee such as media freedom, LGBT rights, and the asylum and legal immigration package. In the Parliament generally there will also be a focus on the recession and recovery.

I regularly update my website and Facebook page on these themes and other issues and hope that this report to you will be both informative and interesting.

Please feel free to get in touch with any of the issues below,

Claude Moraes

Labour MEP for London

Media Freedom under threat in Hungary & other EU countries

The Hungarian Fidesz government has taken the reigns of the EU presidency only weeks after implementing one of the most draconian media laws seen anywhere in post-Communist Europe.

A new national broadcasting authority, the National Media and Communications Authority, has been appointed by the prime minister and will decide what is “balanced” or “unbalanced” broadcasting or press coverage within Hungary.

I led on this issue for the Socialist Group as we questioned European Commissioners on this law. I assured the Commission that the concerns of Labour and other MEPs are not an attack on a centre right government, but instead a refusal to compromise of media freedom in Europe. I also welcomed the Commission’s decision to embrace the S&D position on freedom of expression in Europe, threatening legal action if the Hungarian Government remains stubborn.

Labour MEPs will always defend the bottom line on human rights.

For more on this story, please click [here](#).

UK Immigration Cap

Before Christmas, the UK courts struck down the coalition government's temporary immigration cap.

The temporary cap was imposed by border authorities in June, and the policy aims to limit skilled and highly skilled workers entering the UK to 21,700 a year, down from 28,000 in 2009.

I've recently written on this issue, saying that the cap "works clumsily to affect the minority component of the UK's inward immigration, while at the same time the biggest immigration numbers are still from the EU.

The net result is a clumsy bar on those key workers needed to power the engine of any sophisticated economy".

You can read the full article [here](#)

Lithuania LGBT Rights

Lithuania's Parliament has recently debated amendments to legislation that would punish and fine any "public promotion of homosexual relations". The law will penalise references of homosexuality and bi-sexuality in public and carries a fine of up to €2900 (£2433) and has provoked widespread criticism.

This is an unacceptable development and I and other Labour MEPs are set to oppose this law. I therefore authored a Resolution on LGBT rights in Lithuania, calling for the protection of these rights in that country. This Resolution was voted through the Parliament, and this is the second Resolution I have successfully steered for my group in this mandate in a Parliament which has a centre right majority and some hostility to these issues.

You can read the full resolution [here](#)

S&D calls for Export Ban on Lethal Injection Drugs

Following some media reports claiming that a UK based company has supplied the state of Arizona with the drugs needed for the execution of a convicted murder, I called for an immediate EU-wide export ban on the export of lethal injection drugs.

As the EU is a death penalty-free area, our bilateral agreements also prohibit extradition to third countries where the death penalty is imposed. This should mean we cannot allow European companies to cooperate with countries that execute prisoners by exporting lethal injection drugs.

I have asked a parliamentary question on this issue, asking if the Commission intends to act quickly and ban exports of these lethal inject drugs, as well as promote the issue in the European media.

For more on this story, please click [here](#)

Victim's Rights in Europe

I have recently been contacted by a constituent whose son was attacked whilst on holiday in Crete. She found that there is a real lack of information and practical support for victims of crime who may be unfamiliar with the system when in a different Member State. There is a real need for EU action in this area and I am pushing the European Commission and the Hungarian Presidency for more action.

You can read more on this issue [here](#)

Resettling Refugees in Europe

As the 2012 deadline for the creation of the Common European Asylum System is rapidly approaching, I questioned the European Commission and Council this month on lowering long-term costs, harmonising practices and raising standards across the EU.

What's most important is that the opportunity to make sensible, long-term cost reductions are not lost in the current climate of cuts, and Labour MEPs will continue to fight for a fairer, more effective asylum system in Europe.

You can read more on this issue [here](#)

UK's AV Referendum

There are currently two Labour campaigns on the planned AV referendum in May. These are the Labour Yes to AV campaign, and the Labour No to AV campaign. I have lent my support to the Yes to AV campaign, and I would genuinely like to seek your views on this complex issue for our party, as the AV campaign cuts right across the Labour movement in terms of the views party members are taking.

You can read more about the Yes to AV campaign [here](#)

Opposition Watch

Michal Kaminski has resigned as President of the UK Conservative's group in the European Parliament. Kaminski said he has been 'hounded out' by his former party colleagues and, when he left in November, also said the group was "being taken over by the far right".

Glenis Willmott, Labour's leader in the European Parliament, said: "This is the latest embarrassment for David Cameron who was warned of the dangers of abandoning the Tories' centre-right allies".

You can read more on this story [here](#)

Human trafficking is a crime that shows no respect for international borders and acting together with other EU countries is the obvious way to protect vulnerable people.

Despite pressure by campaigners, the British government has refused to opt in to tough new EU rules designed to counter human trafficking. This means that the new rules won't apply to the UK.

For more on this story, please click [here](#)

Labour Party News

My London office is linking up with London GLA members Nicky Gavron AM, Murad Qureshi AM and mayoral candidate Ken Livingstone on the important issue of London's air quality. We are pushing the European Commission to hold the UK government accountable for its failure to meet Europe-wide air quality targets.

The latest meeting, with European Commissioner for the Environment Janez Potočnik, took place in London, on the 27 January, and was led by Campaign for Clean Air's Simon Birkett.

For more on the Campaign for Clean Air in London, please click [here](#)

On the 19 February, the Fabian Society is hosting Douglas Alexander MP at its conference 'Britain and Europe: in out or somewhere in between?' This will be a great event, and an exciting chance to meet many pro-Europe Labour campaigners.

Douglas Alexander MP will present the keynote speech, his first major European policy speech as Shadow Foreign Secretary. Other confirmed speakers include Wayne David MP, Linda McAvan MEP, Ben Shimson (BritainThinks), Alexandra Pardal (Foreign Policy Centre), and many more.

To buy a ticket and find out more, please visit the Fabian Society website www.fabians.org.uk

In the coming weeks, I'll have reported or be reporting back to the following Labour CLPs personally:

Southall CLP New Year Dinner – January 21st 2011

Cities of London & Westminster - January 25th 2011

Hackney North CLP - February 24th 2011

Ilford South CLP - March 24th 2011

Islington North CLP – April 20th 2011

Hornsey and Wood Green CLP - April 27th 2011

Ealing Central & Acton CLP - April 28th 2011

Romford CLP – May 26th 2011

List of events and meetings

We use a number of abbreviations in our newsletter and these are listed below.

LIBE – the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee in the European Parliament

EPLP – the European Parliamentary Labour Party

DROI – the Subcommittee on Human Rights in the European Parliament

TRAN – the Transport Committee in the European Parliament

S&D – the new name of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament. The Democrats are our sister party, the Italian Partito Democratico

IMCO – the Internal Market and Consumer Committee in the European Parliament

January

11 January – LIBE Committee meeting

11 January – Meeting on Seasonal Workers Directive

11 January – Bureau & Coordinators Meeting

12 January – EPLP officers meeting

12 January – EPLP meeting

12 January – Working Group on Extremism, Populism, Nationalism and Xenophobia

17 January – Meeting with Martin Schulz MEP, Leader of the S&D Group, to prepare for the Hungarian Presidency

17 January – Extraordinary LIBE meeting on the Hungarian media law

18 January – EPLP meeting

18 January – S&D Coordinators meeting

19 January – Led prayer breakfast in European Parliament on the issue of minority religious discrimination and persecution

19 January – Meeting on organised crime

25 January – IMCO Committee meeting

25 January – DROI workshop on Torture and Secret Detentions

25 January - Speech at Speech at European Economic and Social Committee on seasonal workers

25 January – Event , the Next phase of EU labour migration policy, at Centre for European Policy Studies

25 January – IMCO committee meeting

25 January – US Embassy Reception for British MEPs

25 January – Speech to Brussels Annual Think Tank Dialogue Meeting

26 January – Meeting with Stefano Manservigi, Director-General of the Directorate-General for Home Affairs

26 January – IMCO committee meeting

26 January – Live podcast for ILGA Europe on LGBT rights

26 January – S&D Coordinators meeting

26 January – Podcast on LGBT rights in Lithuania

26 January – IMCO committee meeting

27 January – Meeting with European Commissioner Janez Potocnik in London to follow up on London air quality targets

