

GERMINAL

BETTER TOGETHER, IN THE UK AND EUROPE

Joaquin Almunia on defending Socialist values in the EU

Jack McConnell on Scotland's next steps

The New European Commission

National Policy Forum

Annual Conference

SCOTLAND'S
REFERENDUM

**JACK
McCONNELL**
FIRST MINISTER
2001-2007



“ Scotland has spoken.

A question that has been gnawing away at Scottish politics for 40 years has finally been answered. 84.6% voted and 55% said no thanks to independence.

The incredible turnout shows that people can be engaged and they do want to make choices.

Many of those voting yes were lifelong nationalists. But many voted yes because they wanted a fresh start, fed up with a political elite who seem to look after each other rather than look after the country as a whole.

The majority voted no because they felt that our economy, security and social protection were stronger within the UK. But they also want politics to change.

This rejection of business as usual will be even more potent if a referendum on EU membership happens in the UK. And it is happening across Europe too.

So no thanks must NOT mean no change.

A split that would have shaken Europe and not just the UK has been averted, but we need **far-reaching change in the way politics is conducted and the way we are governed in London and Brussels.**

We need an action plan, not a piecemeal package. Throughout the UK people feel distant from those in power, so **nothing less than radical reform will do.**

Let's abolish the House of Lords and replace it with a directly or indirectly elected Senate of the Nations and Regions.

Set up a UK Constitutional Convention to regenerate politics and devolve power

SCOTS HAVE CRIED OUT FOR CHANGE... IT IS TIME TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

across the whole UK.

Scandals and cover-ups between politicians, civil servants, media, business and others must end.

And in Scotland, debate about what we DO with powers seems to constantly take second place to debate on what new powers we want.

The Scottish Parliament has changed Scotland. But we still have children going without a hot meal. Too many young people leave school without the skills they need.

Scottish Labour, the SNP and others need to move on from 3 years of referendum debate and set out real choices, hard options, radical measures that will tackle these problems.

New tax powers are coming so will the parties use them? Will there be increases or cuts?

Can we shake up and re-energise local government in Scotland, which is a shadow of its pre-devolution self? Can we breathe new life into Holyrood?

MSPs don't need to wait for the new powers that are coming, they can act now.

The referendum vote has taken place against a background of declining trust in politicians and 'the system' to deliver or even to care. It has highlighted once more the difficult, sometimes hellish lives experienced every day by far too many Scots.

We have an opportunity to rise to these twin challenges, build a new politics, and create new hope and opportunity.

I hope those in a position to do so will not miss this chance.



SETTING LABOUR'S AGENDA FOR THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION

NATIONAL
POLICY
FORUM

The National Policy Forum is a key moment in the party's policy making process, especially in the run up to the general election.

This year there were several policy consultation documents which were forwarded so that constituency Labour party branches and some other affiliates could submit amendments.

Most of the Forum was spent in doing amendment meetings between members of the NPF who put forward modifications to the documents.

The Leader of the Labour party, Ed Miliband gave a keynote speech to all the participants and had a long questions and answers session straight after with the audience.

It gave good concrete policy proposals which the Labour party will take through to the general elections next May.

One of the highlights was the after dinner speech by journalist Steve Richards. He has a stand-up comedy show and used some of his jokes and impersonations during his speech which spoke about the importance of language and authenticity. The funniest part was his recap of the pasty tax and how badly Cameron and Osborne had not anticipated it and didn't handle it well.

There was also an international breakfast discussion on the economy organised by FEPS – the Foundation for European Progressive Studies – and the Labour party. Visit www.feps-europe.eu for a full report of the discussion and further details.

The FEPS seminar aimed to provide a



broader context to the policy discussions on the economy. The main conclusion drawn was that Labour needs to make the positive case for the EU because it is our single biggest market and is fundamental for jobs and trade in Britain. In addition the Conservative economic policy agenda is not working on debt and sustainability in Europe.

In general the majority of participants felt very happy with the NPF process and the direct involvement they could have on the policies. They were very happy with the way the party was open to discussion on all the issues. Many felt that it was a very positive exercise also in bringing together trade unions, Labour members, politicians, shadow cabinet members and policy staff. A lot of praise was given to Angela Eagle MP and head of the NPF in how she made the process very efficient and positive.

Charlotte Billingham

MORE ONLINE

ED MILIBAND'S
SPEECH TO NPF

tiny.cc/ED-NPF-speech

FINAL POLICY
DOCUMENTS

yourbritain.org.uk/policy-areas

LABOURLIST NPF
LIVEBLOG

tiny.cc/NPF-liveblog

LABOURLIST
ARTICLE BY
ANGELA EAGLE

tiny.cc/NPF-Eagle



**JOHN
FITZMAURICE
MEMORIAL
LECTURE
2014**

**JOAQUIN
ALMUNIA**
VICE-
PRESIDENT OF
THE EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

**ALMUNIA: WE MUST DEFEND
SOCIALIST VALUES,
TOGETHER IN EUROPE**

A friend of Brussels Labour since he first came to the city as a young lawyer 40 years ago, we were delighted to welcome European Commission Vice President and Commissioner for Competition, Joaquín Almunia as keynote speaker for Brussels Labour's 11th John Fitzmaurice lecture.

Joaquín kicked off the debate by addressing the role of Socialism in today's Europe. A pro-European, he welcomed the decision of the Scottish people to vote to stay in the United Kingdom. Europe is about the elimination of borders rather than creating new ones, he said, and he will always favour further integration – one of the EU's greatest achievements – over fragmentation. No single country can go it alone, and it is crucial for both the UK and the EU that Britain remains a central and active member.

He further rallied spirits by calling for a Labour victory at next year's general elections and reminded us of the party's significant contributions to the proud traditions of Europe's Left. Even if European Socialists may sometimes have differing views, our fundamental values are the same and the EU is the best way of defending and promoting these. Socialist values are central to Europe's key messages of peace, democracy and respect for human rights.

Unfortunately, people's faith in the EU and trust in political leaders has been eroding as we continue to face the harsh realities of centre-right imposed austerity measures – where unacceptable levels of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion have become the new order of the day. Populist parties have been quick to seize the opportunity, but we must take back the advantage and show people across Europe that it is only through our common Socialist values and policies that we can achieve a better future, with sustainable job-led growth, a secure social model, investment in public



services, fair taxation and equal opportunities for all.

“We can do better than our opponents, and we are ready to do so”, Joaquín concluded – Brussels Labour couldn't have put it better, and together we know that we will win!

Maureen Hick

MORE ONLINE

JOAQUIN ALMUNIA'S SPEECH

tiny.cc/Almunia-JFML

PHOTOS FROM THE EVENT

flickr.com/brusselslabour



**LABOUR
PARTY
ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
2014**

**BRUSSELS
LABOUR
FRINGE
MEETING**

BEGINNING A CONSTRUCTIVE DEBATE ON FREE MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

At Labour Conference in Manchester, we hosted a fringe meeting, together with the Labour Movement for Europe and the European Movement on "Our rights under threat: defending free movement and mobility in the European Union".

The meeting was chaired by Richard Corbett MEP and the panel of speakers included Claude Moraes MEP, Claire Hawkins PPC for Dover, Owen Tudor from the TUC, Leslie Skipper from the office of the Prime Minister of Malta, Sanchia Alasia from the LME and Petros Fassoulas from the EM.

Many people congratulated the organisers for choosing the topic of free movement, as this was the only meeting throughout conference on this issue! Many people evoked how important it is to talk about this much more, especially within the Labour Party.

A basic right that has been taken for granted is now being questioned and the discourse is being turned by populist rhetoric of fear.

On the other hand, migration is a global issue that will not simply go away. Addressing the different sides of this topic, the speakers addressed the movement within Europe of EU citizens and of those coming from outside Europe.

For example, the desperate people in Calais trying to reach Britain are often asylum seekers, not migrants, they are often forced from their countries as victims of war or social unrest.

National policies alone cannot cope with global problems and this builds a strong case of the need for better common EU policies. This came out clearly in the Scotland debates this week and this topic illustrates these issues.

It is believed that the next campaign battle with Farage will not be about Europe in general but more specifically about migration in 2015, as it was also a



big topic at the European elections this year.

Recognising that there were challenges linked to the free movement of people, the speakers offered a number of policy proposals. These included:

- Higher wages
- More regulation of the Labour market
- Putting an end to agencies who only advertise abroad for jobs in the UK
- Change feelings of fear, hatred with integration policies such as cultural and social activities in the community
- Better regulate agency workers and posted workers directives in the EU

One of the first fringes of Conference, the atmosphere at our meeting was friendly and lively, with over 100 people taking part. There was a really engaging and constructive debate, showing that friends in the Labour Party are ready to take on this issue.

Charlotte Billingham



EUROPE'S YEAR OF CHANGE

MOGHERINI FACES 'RING OF FIRE'

The EU HRVP is again a socialist woman. It will be very interesting to compare and contrast the Ashton and Mogherini? Early signs, following the Mogherini EP Hearing, are that they will be quite different in style and process as well as on priorities.

The place of the EU in foreign policy remains up for grabs. The world is not getting safer and simpler and the existing nation state led foreign policy is not providing all the answers. There is clearly an opportunity, a need for Europe to do more. The first challenge for HRVP Mogherini will be to find an angle for the EEAS to intervene in a way which adds value within a field which is very crowded. The EEAS should not replace national Foreign Ministries but neither should it act like just another one them. To make a distinctive contribution at European level Mogherini will need to bring about some convergence of national foreign policies around a shared sense of priorities. A real capacity for making policy proposals will be tested.

Another way to be distinctive is to offer integrated proposals together with the Commission. That is something national Foreign Ministries cannot do, by definition. It is well known that many foreign policy challenges have economic roots and consequences which require global action. Climate change, energy security and immigration are just a few examples. The EU needs to act on these to achieve durable change, addressing the real issues behind the headlines. The holy grail of EU foreign policy remains to marshal our policies in these fields and to join them up. Beyond that, the EEAS needs to do its bit to contribute to the EU's economic recovery by ensuring excellent relations with our main

economic partners around the world.

On security questions, Mogherini and the EU may actually have less room for manoeuvre. On Israel/Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Iran, the Ukraine, the US dominates and sets the framework, either directly or through NATO. Also, the Member States with most defence capability and intelligence have traditionally led policy making. Here the EU can nonetheless help in certain cases by being a smart political partner, acting as a foil to overcome national sensitivities. As Mogherini has said, "the EU should move from being a payer to being a player", by taking diplomatic initiatives in conflict zones and not just being relegated to paying for reconstruction.

On process, HVP Mogherini has made a fresh start with the Commission by striking a pragmatic agreement with President Juncker and by nominating Manservigi, a Commission official and Head of Delegation to Turkey, as her Head of Cabinet. The relationship with Donald Tusk, President of the Council and former Polish PM, will also be pivotal. The potential for cutting across the old silos is now becoming more tangible.

From a Labour perspective, we hope that Mogherini will be able to infuse progressive values into EU foreign policy. Fighting poverty, standing up for human rights, modernizing global governance and ensuring a sustainable and equitable globalized economy are key parts of that agenda. However, the EU's neighbourhood has never been so unstable and addressing this "ring of fire" will be the first priority.

Martin Dawson

NOTICEBOARD

BRUSSELS LABOUR ONLINE

Website
brusselslabour.eu

Twitter
[@brusselslabour](https://twitter.com/brusselslabour)

Flickr
[flickr.com/
brusselslabour](https://www.flickr.com/photos/brusselslabour/)

Facebook
[facebook.com/
brusselslabour](https://www.facebook.com/brusselslabour/)

General enquiries
[secretary@
brusselslabour.eu](mailto:secretary@brusselslabour.eu)

GERMINAL

Email
[germinal@
brusselslabour.eu](mailto:germinal@brusselslabour.eu)

Editor
Martin Dawson

All views expressed in Germinal reflect the views of the individual authors, and not necessarily those of Brussels Labour or the Labour Party.

EUROPE'S YEAR OF CHANGE JUNCKER'S TEAM TAKES SHAPE



Europe's year of change is coming to an end, with the formation of Jean-Claude Juncker's Commission team.

Although dominated by the centre-right, which has half of the commissioners, the new team features more centre-left members than the Barroso II administration, including two powerful vice-presidents: Frans Timmermans (pictured above with Juncker), the Dutch nominee who will be First Vice-President, and Italy's Federica Mogherini, who will be High Representative for Foreign Affairs.

Pierre Moscovici takes the economic and monetary affairs portfolio, but will be part of a team headed by former Latvian PM Valdis Dombrovskis, of the EPP.

Although the EPP and Liberals control some of the more attractive portfolios, including vice-presidencies and roles such as Trade, Competition, Internal Market and Energy, the Socialists are now part of the 'grand coalition', and face a new responsibility over the next five years.

At the time of going to press, a new Slovenian nominee - Violeta Bulc, who replaced Alenka Bratusek, a victim of the parliamentary hearings - is awaiting approval and a portfolio. Britain's Jonathan Hill was approved after a second hearing and provided some refreshingly positive words on Europe from a Conservative.

It seems likely that the new Commission will enter office a couple of weeks late, in mid-November. Then the real work begins - putting life back into the European economy, creating job opportunities, dealing with issues such as energy security, climate change and transatlantic trade, and re-asserting Europe on the international stage.

SUBS 2014

ARE YOU UP TO DATE?

Please don't forget to renew your Brussels Labour subscription for 2014.

The easiest way to do this is to set up a standing order to pay your subs. The details for this are below:

Rates

€25 per annum

€5 for unwaged people or stagiaires

Account number

001-1128765-52

IBAN: BE64 0011 1287 6552

BIC: GEBABEBB

Account name

Brussels Labour Party Group

Bank

BNP Paribas Fortis

FUTURE EVENTS

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 15 October - 19:30

Branch meeting with Anna Colombo, Secretary-General of the Socialists & Democrats Group in the European Parliament

FEPS, Rue Montoyer 40, Brussels

Wednesday 19 November

Brussels Labour pub quiz

Venue tbc

To register your team of four people for €20, contact secretary@brusselslabour.eu

Wednesday 10 December

Christmas Social

More information to follow via email