

# EU-REVIEW

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Inside:

## Three new MEPs elected at the European parliamentary elections



**Jim Nicholson**



**Bairbre De Brun**



**Diane Dodds**

On 4 June 2009 European citizens voted for their preferred candidates in the European Parliamentary elections held in each of the 27 Member States. Around 375 million Europeans were eligible to vote, however this year the official estimates show that turnout has dropped to an all time low of 43.01% down from 45.47% in 2004. The candidates are elected for a period of five years to sit in both Brussels and Strasbourg representing the views of the people from their regions on key European issues such as regional development and agriculture.

In Northern Ireland, seven candidates stood for election from across the four main political parties as well as independent parties such as the Green Party. Northern Ireland is entitled to three elected representatives in Europe and the selected candidates on the day were: Bairbre De Brun, Sinn

Fein, Diane Dodds, Democratic Unionist Party and Jim Nicholson, Ulster Conservatives and Unionists – New Force.

The newly elected European Parliament assembled for the first time in Strasbourg on 14 July. At this session, Jerzy Buzek from Poland was voted as the new President until January 2012, receiving 86% of the vote. The 20 European Parliament Committees to serve a mandate of two and a half years were also formed. These committees amend and adopt proposals and reports to be presented to the Parliamentary plenary session on proposed legislation for which they have joint responsibility alongside the national ministers in the European Council.

**Continued on page 2**

- 1** Three new MEPs elected at the European parliamentary elections
- 2** Ireland to vote on the Lisbon Treaty for a second time
- 3** New local energy action assistance from the EU
- 3** EU bright idea to phase out traditional light bulbs!
- 4** Urban sports park in Belfast gets its skates on
- 5** Opportunity to taste Europe in Belfast
- 5** Belfast in Europe platform launch at 20th anniversary celebration of Quartiers en Crise
- 6** OPENCities – how can migrants benefit a city economy?

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# Ireland to vote on the Lisbon Treaty for a second time

On 2 October 2009, Ireland will vote to ratify the Treaty for the second time. The last time that the vote was held in Ireland, on 12 June 2008, the people voted not to ratify the Treaty by 53.4% to 46.6%.

So what exactly is the Lisbon Treaty?

The Lisbon Treaty was negotiated by the EU Member States over a six year period. It was signed in Lisbon on 13 December 2007 by the Heads of State or Government of the 27 EU Member States. The Treaty consists of amendments to the two main EU Treaties, the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

## What are main features of the Lisbon Treaty?

- sets out the European Union's values – including respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights including the rights of minorities;
- defines the EU's competences more clearly than in previous Treaties and makes it clear that competences not explicitly conferred on the European Union remain with the Member States;
- gives legal effect to the Charter of Fundamental Rights and recognises

the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter;

- will allow the EU to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights;
- allows for a citizens' initiative under which 1 million citizens from a number of Member States can petition the European Commission on issues falling within the EU's competence;
- expands the right of individuals to bring proceedings before the European Court of Justice in relation to acts of the European Union;
- gives a new role in EU affairs to national parliaments.
- increases the powers of the European Parliament, which under Lisbon will have 751 members. Under Lisbon, the European Parliament will legislate jointly on most EU issues with the Council of Ministers;
- provides for the appointment of a President of the European Council

who will hold office for a maximum period of 5 years and will chair four meetings of EU leaders each year;

- allows for more decisions to be taken by the Council of Ministers on a new double majority basis, i.e. by at least 15 EU countries representing at least 65% of the Union's population;
- makes changes in the conduct of the European Union's external relations including by the appointment of a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy;
- gives citizens the right to deal with the EU institutions in any EU language;
- makes a number of changes to the EU Treaties in respect of border checks, asylum and immigration, judicial cooperation in civil and criminal matters and police cooperation;
- gives the European Union some new competences in such areas as energy, humanitarian aid, tourism, sport, administrative cooperation

## continued from page 1

The three Northern Ireland MEPs were allocated to the following committees:

### Bairbre De Brun

- Member of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food safety
- Member of the Committee on Petitions (petitions and relations with the European Ombudsman)
- Substitute member on the Committee for Region Development.

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### Diane Dodds

- Member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
- Substitute member on Committee of Fisheries

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### Jim Nicholson

- Member of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development
- Substitute member on the Committee on Regional Development

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and the participation by young people in the democratic life of Europe;

- under an arrangement known as 'enhanced cooperation', the Treaty lays down the procedures for allowing a group of Member States to cooperate more deeply in certain areas of EU policy. This arrangement does not apply in the field of common foreign and security policy.

### What has happened since the June 2008 referendum?

Since the referendum, the Irish Government has been working intensively to find a way forward that respects the decision of the Irish people as expressed in that referendum, while respecting the desire of other Member States to see the Lisbon Treaty enter into force.

Following the referendum, the Government commissioned in-depth research in order to identify the reasons behind the outcome. The research showed that most people want Ireland to remain fully and actively involved in the EU, with 70% believing that membership is a good thing and only 8% disagreeing. The research also illustrated that the main reason cited for voting No was a lack of information and knowledge (42%). Of those who decided to abstain from voting, 46% did so for this reason.

A number of other issues also emerged from the research as being significant concerns for Irish voters. These included: the composition of the European Commission; taxation; ethical issues, including abortion; security and defence issues, including conscription; and workers' rights.

The European Council agreed in June 2009, to a set of legal guarantees and assurances for Ireland in the areas of key concern to Irish voters last year.

## EU bright idea to phase out traditional light bulbs!

Countries across the EU have begun to phase out the use of traditional light bulbs from 1 September, in a move designed to cut CO2 emissions by one million tonnes a year by 2020.

The Eco Design of Energy-using Products Directive was passed last December and will restrict the manufacture and import of frosted incandescent light bulbs over the next three years before imposing a full ban in 2012.

Under the legislation, 100W light bulbs were banned from 1 September, with lower wattages targeted one by one over the next three years.

Environment minister Dan Norris welcomed the introduction of the ban, predicting that it will help to accelerate the UK's efforts to phase out inefficient light bulbs.

"We are glad the EU has put this measure in place to stop the waste of energy and money from old-fashioned,

high-energy bulbs," he said. "The UK has had a successful voluntary initiative in place for a few years, and now the rest of the EU will follow suit on a mandatory basis."

Under a voluntary initiative, retailers in the UK have already begun to remove 150W and 100W bulbs from shelves and plan to remove all old-fashioned bulbs by 2011, a year ahead of the EU schedule.

The government has insisted that there were strong environmental and economic reasons for switching to more efficient bulbs, noting that traditional light bulbs waste 95 per cent of their energy as heat and that savings to the annual energy bill of each household could be between £3 and £6 per lamp.

## New local energy action assistance from the EU

ELENA (European Local Energy Assistance) is the technical assistance facility launched by the European Commission and the EU Investment Bank under the EU Covenant of Mayors initiative (within the budget of the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme), will be operational during the second half of 2009. The purpose of ELENA is to assist cities and regions in developing their sustainable energy investment projects and mobilising investments. 15 million euro will be provided to local authorities for financing their

technical assistance costs associated with the development of eligible municipal investment projects or programmes contributing to the EU energy targets. Sustainable energy projects eligible under ELENA can focus on a variety of sectors, such as retrofitting of public and private buildings, sustainable building, energy efficient district heating and cooling networks or environmentally friendly transport.

Go to [www.eumayors.eu](http://www.eumayors.eu) for more information



# Urban sports park in Belfast gets its skates on

Plans are well underway to transform an area of disused land under the M3 in Belfast city centre into Northern Ireland's first purpose built urban sports park.



Our European Unit has been involved in the project steering group for the past two years and submitted a successful application to the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE III), under its "Shared Spaces" theme. This programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), will contribute £370 000 of the £500,000 total project cost.

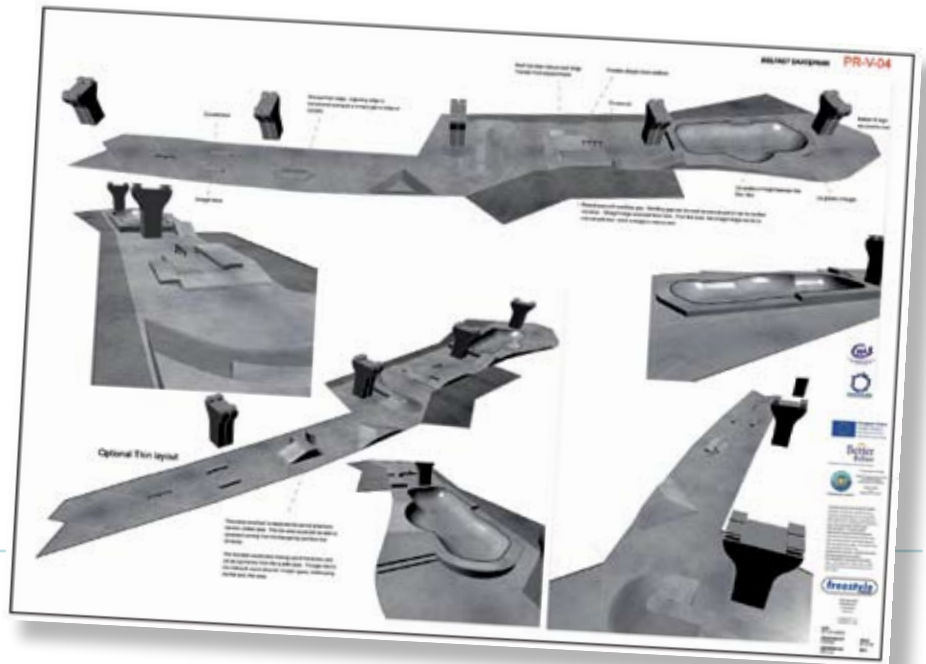
The remaining match fund will come from the Council itself (£80 000) and the Bryson House Better Belfast Landfill Tax Credit Fund.

Once complete, the park will offer a world class facility for urban sports such as:

- skateboarding;
- BMX
- blading; and
- free running

Freestyle skate parks has been appointed to design and build the park and will include apparatus to appeal to beginners and to challenge the most experienced enthusiasts.

Key to the work to date, has been the input of Belfast Urban Sports (BUS) who are a registered charity comprising some of our top local



talent. They are bringing experience, expertise, contacts and a wealth of technical knowledge to all stages in project development. This new facility will build on BUS' work in the indoor arena and add a new dimension to urban sports in the city, and beyond. It is anticipated that this new park will become a key stage in the international urban sports circuit.

Once operational, BUS will be integral to the implementation of an urban sports development programme which will include coaching and mentoring participants as well as a series of local, regional, national and international competitions and events.

Commenting on the fruition of the initiative, Councillor Bob Stoker, Chairman of the Parks and Leisure Committee, said:

"This will be the first purpose built facility of its kind in Northern Ireland and it is another example of how Belfast is developing into a contemporary city that is great to live in and visit. Providing a facility that can

be used by children and young people has been a priority for Belfast City Council and the Urban Sports Park is a positive step in providing a much needed recreational facility that can be used by individuals, community groups and schools."

Howard Keery, Director of SEUPB's Joint Technical Secretariat added: "With the support from the European Union through the PEACE III Programme, we are confident that the project will contribute to peace and reconciliation and the regeneration of this area by creating a shared public space which will be enjoyed by the whole community."

It is anticipated that the Park will be open in December and we will be celebrating with a launch event that will include demos from professionals, music and a chance to try out the Park.

Further details including site plans and artist impressions of the Park can be found on the Council's web site at [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/urbansports](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/urbansports).



# Opportunity to taste Europe in Belfast

Schoolchildren from across Northern Ireland will descend on Belfast's St. George's Market in October for an award-winning fair, reflecting a taste of Europe.

'Opportunity Europe' is being showcased by our European Unit and the European Commission Office on Tuesday 20 October and Wednesday 21 October.

In its sixth year, Opportunity Europe will highlight Northern Ireland's many European links and provide young people with information on working, studying, volunteering and travelling in Europe.

Visitors of all ages will be given the chance to try new languages or take part in salsa dancing, with music and a range of food stalls adding to the continental flavour. The major exhibition and fair will run from 10 am to 2pm each day with free admission.

Highlights will include learning German through song, television workshops, recreating classic pieces of European cinema and an inspirational art project which will be ongoing throughout the proceedings.

This year's event will also have a zone dedicated to the creative industries. Participants will have the opportunity to try out the new iPhone applications, make a school TV programme and learn how local bands made it in the music industry. Coming so soon after the Olympics, there will also be a talk on volunteering and the 2012 Olympics.

Ex-patriots from France, Germany, Romania and Spain will be at the two day flagship event to talk

about living and working in Northern Ireland today.

Teams from schools across the country will also compete for the title of Northern Ireland 'Euro-Quiz' champions as they strive to answer questions on everything from sport, food and travel.

Representatives from the business world will lead workshops on the value of languages in today's global economy.

Councillor William Humphrey, Chairman of our Development Committee, said:

"Opportunity Europe is the only event of its kind in the country. It is the main channel by which we can encourage our young people to consider the merits and value of learning languages.

"Bringing a taste of Europe to Belfast through food, music, dance and language, even now, in its sixth year, the organising team continue to add a new dimension to the diverse programme on offer. This year, our European fair and exhibition will have a complete zone dedicated to the creative industries – a dynamic and growing sector in the economy"

Maurice Maxwell, Head of the European Commission Office, said:

"Opportunity Europe, highlights the importance of language skills in business, employment, travel and building links with our European neighbours"

## Belfast in Europe platform launch at 20th anniversary celebration of Quartiers en Crise (QEC – ERAN)

This year celebrates the 20th anniversary of the QEC-ERAN European network. It was set up in 1989 by 19 small cities and Belfast was a founding network member through the leadership of the Belfast Health Trust.

To mark the occasion an event is being held at the Belfast Waterfront on Friday 18th September. The event will celebrate Belfast's achievements as a member of the network over the past 20 years. It provides an opportunity to review projects, to meet and network with others who have benefited from and participated in European projects as well as the opportunity to look to the future to learn how the network plans to develop and the benefits this will bring.

In June 2008 we took over the role of coordinating the Belfast QEC network from the Belfast Health Trust. Since taking on the co-ordination role of the local group a review has taken place and the group is now known as Belfast in Europe QEC-ERAN under the wider Belfast in Europe platform.

The Belfast in Europe platform will be launched at the event on 18 September. This platform was developed to allow our EU work to be collated under one umbrella. The platform will advise on EU policy, host seminars and conferences and disseminate EU information in order to stimulate debate on European issues.



# OPENCities – how can migrants benefit a city economy?

OPENCities is a European project that Belfast is leading, along with eight other cities from across the EU and the British Council.



The Belfast-led project was selected with 23 other projects under the EU Urbact funding programme. For the project to be selected is a major achievement for the city, reflecting our increased influence on the European stage. Furthermore, the project has been selected as one of the European Commission's 'fast track' projects, under an initiative known as Regions for Economic Change. In practice, this means that the partners in the project will work closely with the European Commission to track policy and transferable practice evolving from the project so that other cities in the EU can learn from our experiences. OPENCities is the only project from the UK to be selected for this prestigious 'fast track' status.

The project aims to address how cities that are open to attract and attain migrants can be more economically stable and successful.

The experiences of the different partners are not the same and the

project provides the opportunity to exchange ideas, to learn from best practice and in the case of the new member states to plan ahead for the future.

We want to better understand:

- What is city openness and how do we define what makes OPENCities? Considering number of factors – economic, regulatory, cultural, amenity, connectivity, risks, leadership and internationalisation.
- Why do some cities appear to be more attractive to international populations despite similar national frameworks and conditions?
- What role does the social and economic integration of migrants play in city competitiveness and the attraction of further international human capital?
- Can we develop clear guidance for city leaders on how to increase and promote the openness of cities to international populations?
- Can we develop an OPENCities 'index of openness' to compare and

benchmark various European cities and to consider the potential for an internationally recognised openness 'standard' or 'kitemark' for cities?

The first workshop of the project took place in Cardiff in June 2009. Partners from across the network met to discuss and learn from best practice examples relating to the theme of leadership and governance. Among the key points discussed was the importance of a champion for migrant issues at a high level, information portals for new arrivals and the desire from cities to be open to new populations and economic change.

The next workshop will be held in Düsseldorf in November and will focus on the theme of internationalisation.

To find out more about URBACT and OPENCities visit [www.urbact.eu/opencities](http://www.urbact.eu/opencities) or [www.belfastcity.gov.uk/europe](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/europe) or contact Frances Dowds, OPENCities Manager at [dowdsf@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:dowdsf@belfastcity.gov.uk)

## Diary dates



29 September 2009

### **Making Europe Work**

Business seminar, The Edge, 7:30am–9:30am.

Contact: Frances Murray, [murrayf@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:murrayf@belfastcity.gov.uk)

15 October 2009

### **Slovak Business Investment Opportunity**

Waterfront, 6pm. Contact: Deirdre Ferguson, [fergusond@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:fergusond@belfastcity.gov.uk)

20–21 October 2009

### **Opportunity Europe**

St Georges Market, 10am–2pm.

Contact: Frances Murray, [murrayf@belfastcity.gov.uk](mailto:murrayf@belfastcity.gov.uk)