



# EFA Bulletin

**January - March 2005**

News Bulletin from the Parliamentary Group of the  
European Free Alliance in the European Parliament



**President - Ian Hudghton MEP (Scottish National Party),  
Vice President - Bernat Joan MEP (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya)  
Vice President - Jill Evans MEP (Plaid Cymru - The Party of Wales)  
Member - Alyn Smith MEP (Scottish National Party)  
Member - Tatjana Zdanoka MEP (For Human Rights in a United Latvia)**

## CONTENTS

March 2005.....	3
• Ian pushes EU case for Scotch Whisky Industry (17.3.05).....	3
• EU Delegation Visits Scotland (14-18.3.05).....	3
• Ian welcomes delay on Croatia talks (16.3.05).....	3
• Tatjana outraged at violence in Riga (16.3.05).....	3
• Jill backs better food labelling (15.3.05).....	3
• Ian concerned about services directive (14.3.05).....	4
• SNP MEP meets Commission to discuss Scottish ferry services (14.3.05).....	4
• Bernat calls for coherence from Spanish MEPs (9.3.05).....	4
• Welsh Version of EU Constitution (8.3.05).....	4
• SNP wants constitution translated too (8.3.05).....	4
• Alyn highlights Scotland's Green Energy Potential (8.3.05).....	5
• EFA call for more women in politics (8.3.05).....	5
• Criticism for ministers' blow to small software developers (7.3.05).....	5
• Regret at Latvian President's Comments (4.3.05).....	5
• French Referendum announcement puts pressure on Blair (4.3.05).....	6
• Plaid Cymru launch Euro funding campaign (1.3.05).....	6
February 2005.....	6
• Tatjana welcomes visitors from Latvia to Intergroup Hearing (24.2.05).....	6
• Ian welcomes rethink on Tsunami aid (24.2.05).....	6
• SNP Euro-MP backs 'Jim Baxter Bridge' at Wembley Stadium (23.2.05).....	6
• EU Health Privatisation Threat condemned (22.2.05).....	7
• Ian backs rethink on software patents (17.2.05).....	7
• Jill and Ian call for progress on translating the EU Constitution (15.2.05).....	7
• Jill wins key concession from European Commission (14.2.05).....	8
• Alyn welcomes key vote on EU funding (1.2.05).....	8
• Jill backs Natura 2000 plans (1.2.05).....	8
January 2005.....	8
• Scotland trailing in EU wealth figures - SNP Concerned (26.1.05).....	8
• Plaid fight for ongoing EU funding for Wales (26.1.05).....	8
• Europe urged to take up Tsunami Help Offer (24.1.05).....	8
• Bernat protests about Greek Human Rights Abuses (20.1.05).....	8
• Bernat launches his book on the EU Constitution (19.1.04).....	9
• Jill welcomes Hiroshima Mayor to the EP (19.1.05).....	9
• SNP Euro-MPs vote no on EU Constitution (12.1.05).....	9
• Jill hails Luxembourg's example (12.1.05).....	10
• Alyn seeks backing for Blair impeachment bid (10.1.05).....	10
• Bernat launches his campaign for a 'no' vote (11.1.05).....	10

## March 2005

- **Ian pushes EU case for Scotch Whisky Industry (17.3.05)**



The SNP's Ian Hudghton MEP highlighted the plight of the Scotch Whisky industry in a debate in the European Parliament on the sale of spirits to European consumers. He focused on the importance of distilling to the Scottish economy - and in particular its key role in providing jobs in many rural areas. The European Commission is proposing that eventually whisky should be made available to the public in bottles of any size. The Scottish distilling industry has grave concerns as regards moving away from the current situation where bottle sizes are regulated.

Ian said: *"The Scotch Whisky industry plays a huge role in the Scottish economy and accounts for a large proportion of Scottish exports. The Scotch whisky industry has stood the test of time and produced a world-class product down through the centuries. We hope that the EU will recognise this - and do everything in its power to allow the industry to continue to flourish."*

- **EU Delegation Visits Scotland (14-18.3.05)**

A delegation of MEPs from Parliament's Regional Committee visited Scotland to look at projects funded by the European Union. Alyn Smith invited the delegation of MEPs from across Europe with the backing of other Scots on the European Parliament's Regional Committee, European Funding partnerships and local authorities. He said: *"There are numerous projects across Scotland that would not have happened without European funding and that have made a significant contribution to improving the lives of local people and to improving local economies."*

- **Ian welcomes delay on Croatia talks (16.3.05)**

Ian Hudghton welcomed the decision to delay the start of talks on Croatia's membership of the European Union. But he urged EU leaders to be ready to begin preparations as soon as outstanding issues are resolved. EU Foreign Ministers decided to put off the start of membership talks - which had been due to start in March - until Croatia fully co-operates with the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague. Ian said: *"Under the circumstances, and with Croatia's reported failure to co-operate fully with the UN War Crimes Tribunal, this decision was the right one. We support Croatia's aspiration to join the EU and I hope the Croatian government will now read the signals and step up its co-operation with UN authorities. A small independent country has a lot to bring to the EU and I look forward to the day when Scotland too will achieve full membership of the European Union."*

- **Tatjana outraged at violence in Riga (16.3.05)**

Tatjana Zdanoka expressed her outrage at the heavy handed tactics used by police in Riga in breaking up an anti-Nazi protest and detaining protestors that included members of Parliament. The anti-Nazi protestors included members of Ms Zdanoka's party, For Human Rights in a United Latvia, which represents the country's significant Russian speaking population. Two MPs from her party were briefly detained by police and three members of Riga City Council were detained for several hours.

The protestors tried to prevent Waffen SS veterans marching along the streets of Riga. March 16 is the day when traditionally former Latvian soldiers who fought during the Second World War on the side of Nazi Germany commemorate the deaths of Latvian SS members killed fighting the Red Army. Some two hundred SS veterans marched to Riga's Freedom memorial to lay flowers. Protestors from the "Russian National Union" NGO dressed in striped prison clothes bearing yellow stars to remind people of atrocities carried out in Latvia by the SS. They formed a human chain to try to block the march by SS veterans. Tatjana said: *"I was outraged at the conduct of police who detained peaceful protestors who were trying to halt this awful march. It is a disgrace that anti Nazi protestors should be held by police to allow former Waffen SS members to march through the streets of Riga. I am particularly concerned about the reported comments of Latvia's Prime Minister Kalvitis that my party is at fault for protesting in the first place. We make no apologies for standing up to fascists. Today's events in Riga will do no good for Latvia's image in the European Union as a country of tolerance and respect for human rights."*



- **Jill backs better food labelling (15.3.05)**

Plaid Cymru MEP Jill Evans is campaigning to tighten up new European rules to ensure that health claims made on food are clear, accurate and useful. The Parliament's Environment Committee considered proposals to require food manufacturers to be more honest in making nutritional and health claims on foods. The new rules respond to widespread concern about the accuracy of claims being made on food labels. A recent survey by consumer organisation 'Which' found that just seven per cent of foods they tested contained the levels of nutrients stated on the packet - and some leading brands were shown to make claims which were questioned.

Jill said: *"Many people, myself included, rely on what it says on the packet to help us decide what food we buy. But it's clear that at the moment food manufacturers are able to get away with making exaggerated and misleading claims. That's why we need new rules to make sure we can trust the claims on food labels."*

- **Ian concerned about services directive (14.3.05)**

The SNP's Ian Hudghton expressed concern following comments by Euro Commission President José Manuel Barroso on the controversial 'Services Directive'. Mr Barroso reportedly told a Brussels conference that the Commission would stick to the so-called 'country of origin' principle in proposed new regulations designed to liberalise the market in services in the European Union. Ian - a member of the European Parliament's Internal Market Committee - has called for a radical overhaul of the proposals following concerns they could lead to a 'race to the bottom' in the services market and lead to privatisation of health services by the back door.

Ian said: *"The Commission's position on this key legislation seems to change from week to week - this will hardly inspire confidence amongst service providers concerned about a race to the bottom in the services market. Barroso's comments seem at odds with what we've heard coming out of the Commission previously. Under the country of origin principle, a company could set up in an EU country with the lowest standards and then operate anywhere in the EU based on those standards. The concern is that we could have a company registering in a country with weak health and safety laws and then operating in Scotland based on those weaker rules."*

- **SNP MEP meets Commission to discuss Scottish ferry services (14.3.05)**

Scottish National Party MEP Alyn Smith took independent transport expert Professor Neil Kay of Strathclyde University to meet with the European Commission to discuss the current position regarding tendering for ferry services in relation to Caledonian MacBrayne ferries. Alyn organised the meeting to short circuit the 'blame game' currently being employed in Scotland and to take new ideas direct to the Commission for their view. Alyn said: *"Professor Neil Kay outlined a number of ideas to the Commission, and they listened carefully. Professor Kay will be submitting his proposals to the current consultation on Clyde and Hebridean ferry services, perhaps the Scottish Executive could learn from it. One idea I remain myself particularly keen on is the creation of an independent regulator along the lines of OFCOM or OFGEM as the status quo is untidy and I suspect long term unworkable."*

- **Bernat calls for coherence from Spanish MEPs (9.3.05)**

Speaking in the European Parliament's debate to prepare for the forthcoming European summit in Brussels, Bernat Joan called for coherence from those Spanish MEPs who have been demanding greater pluralism and respect for diversity within the EU, due to the ongoing reduction in the use of the Spanish language in the EU institutions. Speaking in the debate he said: *"You cannot call for pluralism in Europe and then on the other hand refuse it, for example as happened in the Spanish state Parliament"*.



- **Welsh Version of EU Constitution (8.3.05)**



Jill Evans welcomed the news that the proposed EU Constitution will be translated into Welsh. The announcement came earlier from UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw in a response to a parliamentary question tabled by Plaid Cymru's parliamentary leader Eifyn Llwyd MP. Previously, Ms Evans and Eifyn Llwyd had met the UK government to press the case for recognition of the Welsh language.

Jill said: *"We're delighted that we've won this battle to get the EU constitution translated into Welsh. This was the first step in our campaign for Welsh to be recognised as an official European language."*

- **SNP wants constitution translated too (8.3.05)**

The SNP wants to have the proposed EU Constitution translated into Scotland's indigenous languages. The move came after it emerged that the UK government intends to translate the document into Welsh. The government had previously informed that SNP that it does not intend to translate the document into Gaelic or Scots. The SNP believes that translations should be provided prior to any referendum on the proposed Constitution.

Ian Hudghton commented: *"The recent enlargement of the EU has seen a huge leap in linguistic diversity. Scotland's indigenous languages are part of that diversity and are an important part of the rich cultural tapestry of Europe. The European Commission has confirmed to me that the proposed Constitution can be translated into Scotland's languages - if the UK requests it. Such a step would mark a significant commitment to the future well-being of Gaelic and Scots. We congratulate the Welsh on securing a commitment from the government for a translation to be made in their language. However, if it's good enough for Wales, it's good enough for Scotland. The government must rethink its stance and show full respect for Scotland's culture."*



*Representatives of Latvia's Russian speaking minority hand out information at the EP in Strasbourg. 9.3.05*

- **Alyn highlights Scotland's Green Energy Potential (8.3.05)**

Alyn raised Scotland's energy potential in the European Parliament, and called on the European Commission to provide political leadership where the Scottish Executive is failing. He spoke of research by Universities Scotland which found that Scotland could provide 1% of the global renewable energy market, worth some 14 billion pounds a year. In the debate, Alyn said: *"We have just over 5 million people, yet with all our natural assets Universities Scotland has calculated that we could contribute 1% of the world's renewable energy needs. That would be worth some 14 billion pounds. Green Energy is not a loss leader. To achieve this we'll need leadership, and sadly the Scottish government is not providing it. We in Scotland need a coherent National Energy Plan. We in Europe need likewise."*

- **EFA call for more women in politics (8.3.05)**

On International Women's Day Euro-MP Jill Evans and European Free Alliance President Nelly Maes called for more action to increase the number of women involved in political and public life. The politicians want Europe to consider introducing new measures to facilitate the participation of women in political and public life. Jill said: *"It's not simply a question of upping the numbers of women in public life, we also need to make sure they get the help they need to stay involved and that we continue to develop new ways of helping women break into what has traditionally been a male dominated club. I would like to see the European Commission bring forward new proposals for consultation on fresh funding streams for helping break down the barriers women face to participate fully in public life."*

- **Criticism for ministers' blow to small software developers (7.3.05)**

Ian Hudgton criticised European Economics Ministers who backed controversial new rules on software patents that many fear could have a severely detrimental effect on independent software developers. There are concerns that the new rules will favour large multinational companies such as Microsoft who have the financial means to exploit the new regime. At present, computer software is subject to copyright legislation in Europe but the new plans would make software patentable. Ian said: *"I've been contacted by a number of constituents who are very concerned about these proposals. I share their concerns and we've been demanding changes to the new rules before they come into force. The decision by European ministers is disappointing but at least it means the plans will come back before the European Parliament where they'll face strong opposition."*

- **Regret at Latvian President's Comments (4.3.05)**

Tatjana Zdanoka expressed regret that Latvian President Vike-Freiberga chose to try to draw the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, into the President's attempts to re-write history. Now in a written answer to a Parliamentary question by Ms Zdanoka, the European Commission has cast doubt on the Latvian President's claim that Sr Barroso supported her point of view.

Tatjana said: *"The President of Latvia claimed that she had Mr Barroso's support for her controversial statement claiming that the Second World War only ended for Latvia after independence in 1990. This kind of revisionism is unhelpful in building a peaceful and just society that recognises the rights of everyone who lives in Latvia. It is unfortunate that Ms Vike-Freiberga should choose to claim the support of Mr Barroso in this way. The answer to my Parliamentary question clearly shows that Mr Barroso's comments were nowhere near as unequivocal as she earlier suggested. This is regrettable and unhelpful to Latvia's position in the European Union."*

- **French Referendum announcement puts pressure on Blair (4.3.05)**

Commenting on reports that France is to hold a referendum on the proposed European Constitution on 29 May, Ian Hudghton called on UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to 'stop hiding and set a date'. The SNP is opposed to the European Constitution since it cedes control of fisheries policy to Brussels as an 'exclusive competence'. Ian said: *"Blair must stop running away from this difficult issue and set a date for the referendum. The news of the French referendum will undoubtedly add to the pressure Mr Blair faces. If he's hoping that opposition will ebb away over time then I fear he's gravely mistaken."*

- **Plaid Cymru launch Euro funding campaign (1.3.05)**

Plaid Cymru launched a campaign to stop New Labour wrecking Wales' chance of receiving European Objective One funding and to secure another seven years of top level funding for West Wales and the Valleys. Plaid Cymru's deputy president and Euro-MP, Jill Evans, wrote to key organisations and individuals warning them of the risk to the future of Objective One funding in Wales and encouraging them to join in the campaign to secure a second round of Objective One funding. She said: *"As key discussions get under way within the European Union and with the 25 Member State governments, we have to re-iterate that Objective One has not been the success that it could have been. We must make sure that this second chance is not lost."*



**Jill backs daffodil cancer appeal (1.3.05)**

*Jill Evans backed the Marie Curie St David's Day Daffodil Appeal in aid of cancer care. Jill and other Welsh MEPs joined forces at the European Parliament in Brussels to wear specially made daffodils and distribute them to colleagues from across the European Union. She said: "Cancer is a disease that touches the lives of so many people either directly or indirectly and that's why the wonderful work of Marie Curie Cancer Care is so important. On our national day it's very fitting that we should be able to mark the occasion by backing the work of this excellent charity."*

## February 2005

- **Tatjana welcomes visitors from Latvia to Intergroup Hearing (24.2.05)**

At Tatjana Zdanoka's initiative, the European Parliament's Intergroup for Traditional National Minorities, Constitutional Regions and Regional Languages held a hearing on the status of Russian Speaking Minorities in Latvia. The meeting, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, focussed on issues related to education and culture and heard from a representative of the Latvian Human Rights Committee on behalf of the country's Russian speaking minority. Representatives of the Latvian State also participated.

- **Ian welcomes rethink on Tsunami aid (24.2.05)**

The SNP's Ian Hudghton MEP welcomed a vote in the European Parliament which demanded a rethink on the European Commission's proposal to send decommissioned fishing boats to tsunami hit countries. A series of amendments to the Commission's proposal - including key paragraphs proposed by the SNP - were adopted by the parliament. The amendments allow for the transfer of fishing boats to South East Asia - but only as a part of a wider aid package and only if affected countries request it.

- **SNP Euro-MP backs 'Jim Baxter Bridge' at Wembley Stadium (23.2.05)**

SNP Euro-MP Alyn Smith backed a campaign by Scotland's football supporters - the Tartan Army - to name part of the new Wembley Stadium after Scottish football legend Jim Baxter. In an online vote the London Development Agency asked people to choose a name for the new foot bridge at the new Wembley Stadium. Their website asks the question: "What's the most significant name or moment in Wembley's history?" Alyn Smith wrote to the Chief Executive of the London Development Agency backing the Tartan Army's campaign. He said: *"As a Scottish MEP I was delighted to support Jim Baxter, and the Tartan Army's campaign to have the bridge named after him. Already in the Wembley Hall of Fame, his keepie-uppie routine in 1967 still evokes fond memories in Scots."*

- **EU Health Privatisation Threat condemned (22.2.05)**

Proposals for new EU rules that could threaten government funding for hospitals and council housing were strongly opposed by the SNP's Ian Hudghton MEP. MEPs in Strasbourg were debating new plans to restrict the kind of industries and services that could be eligible to receive government financial assistance in the future and there were concerns that this could lead to the privatisation of hospitals and council housing by the back door. Speaking in the debate, Ian said: *"We support an approach, which clearly exempts these kind of local services that do not affect the development of trade or conflict with the interests of the European Union, from any new legislation. It is important to strike the right balance between the economic interest and the public interest, by leaving public service providers more free to respond to the needs and wishes of their populations."*



- **EURO-MPs denounce closure of Basque newspaper (23.2.05)**

*Politicians from a variety of countries and political traditions, including EFA's Bernat Joan, Ian Hudghton and Gorka Knorr, joined forces in Strasbourg to protest at the ongoing closure of Egunkaria - the only newspaper in the Basque language. At a press conference held in the European Parliament, they published a declaration signed by a variety of MEPs denouncing the ongoing closure of the paper and protesting at the implications for press freedom. The newspaper was shut down two years ago. Bernat Joan said: "As we see with this appalling case of the closure of the Basque daily paper Egunkaria, the Spanish state does not respect the fundamental principle of freedom of speech which happens to be a pillar of the EU."*

- **Ian backs rethink on software patents (17.2.05)**

Ian Hudghton welcomed the news that the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents demanded that the European Commission rethink its position on software patents. The Commission's proposal has caused widespread concern in the open-source software community amid fears that multinational companies such as Microsoft could effectively monopolise the software market. Ian said: *"The European Parliament is demanding at the very highest level that the Commission rethink its flawed strategy in the field of computer software. The Commission's proposal would spell disaster for Europe's software programmers - an area in which Scotland has built a reputation for expertise."*



- **EFA MEPs in climate change demo (16.2.05)**

*EFA MEPs Ian Hudghton, Jill Evans and Tatjana Zdanoka and former MEP Gorka Knorr joined colleagues from across Europe in Brussels in a colourful display to welcome the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change. They marched to the European Commission building under specially made green coloured umbrellas carrying the slogan 'Stop Climate Change'.*

- **Jill and Ian call for progress on translating the EU Constitution (15.2.05)**

Jill Evans and Ian Hudghton urged the UK Government to get a move on if the proposed EU constitution is to be translated into Welsh and Scots Gaelic ahead of any referendum. Both parties want to see the draft treaty available in Welsh and Gaelic, as well as English, to ensure an informed debate in the referendum campaign. They were speaking after it was revealed that the Rome conference which agreed the treaty last October set a six month deadline for governments to decide in which languages translations of the treaty would be provided.

- **Jill wins key concession from European Commission (14.2.05)**

Jill Evans welcomed the European Commission's climbdown after she highlighted how a new scheme snubbed Wales and the Welsh language. The 'Europass' scheme, hailed as a new European jobseekers passport when it was launched at the beginning of February, ignored the existence of Welsh when it came to recognising linguistic skills. Jill immediately took up the matter with Europe's Education Commissioner Jan Figel. Mr Figel has since apologised for the snub and the omission has been corrected. Jill said: *"I welcome Mr Figel's swift action and his mature decision to apologise for this snub to Wales. I accept his apology and his explanation that the omission was due to a test version of the website being put up rather than the final version."*

- **Alyn welcomes key vote on EU funding (1.2.05)**



SNP MEP Alyn Smith welcomed a vote in the European Parliament's Regional Development Committee on the future of EU funding across Europe which strengthened the position of the Highlands and Islands in the ongoing negotiations. The vote recognised the special position of areas like the Highlands and Islands, which the European Commission has proposed continue to receive funds even after the enlargement of the EU to the East. A further amendment put forward by Mr Smith, called on the Commission to recognise that state aid rules in areas like the Highlands and Islands are of crucial importance. Alyn said: *"I'm delighted that we managed to reach a majority on these crucial issues. The Highlands and Islands are looked after in the Commission proposals, which the Committee has today endorsed, that is a weight off my mind."*

- **Jill backs Natura 2000 plans (1.2.05)**

Jill Evans backed proposals to make European funding available for a network of special conservation sites across the EU. In her report on plans for funding the Natura 2000 network of protected conservation sites, she backed EU Commission plans to make the 'Natura 2000' programme eligible for EU funding - a move that would open up access to millions in financial support for the scheme. The Natura 2000 network was set up by the EU to help safeguard Europe's most rare habitats and species. There are 18,000 Natura 2000 sites covering 56 million hectares of land throughout Europe, supporting 125,000 jobs and incorporating Special Areas of Conservation in the UK.

## January 2005

- **Scotland trailing in EU wealth figures - SNP Concerned (26.1.05)**

Commenting on the publication of the latest EU wealth figures, the SNP's Ian Hudghton highlighted the poor performance of Scotland compared with other similarly sized European nations. The GDP per capita figures show Scotland trailing behind other small countries such as Ireland, Denmark and Finland. GDP per capita in the Highlands and Islands was particularly low - falling behind even parts of Eastern Europe. Ian commented, *"These new EU figures are just the latest to show that the Scottish economy is seriously under-performing. Small countries such as Ireland, Denmark and Finland yet again overtake Scotland in terms of wealth. The key element lacking in the Scottish economy is the power to make real decisions - independence is the missing ingredient."*

- **Plaid fight for ongoing EU funding for Wales (26.1.05)**

Following the release of GDP figures showing that West Wales and the Valleys has actually got poorer under Labour's management of the Objective One European aid scheme, Plaid's Jill Evans said her party would launch a campaign to save Objective One for Wales. Jill said: *"Labour's incompetence in managing to squander this funding beggars belief. This was meant to transform the economy of West Wales and the Valleys - instead the situation's got worse. Now we have a small window of opportunity to secure another period of European funding."*

- **Europe urged to take up Tsunami Help Offer (24.1.05)**

Responding to the meeting of EU agriculture and fisheries ministers in Brussels which was looking at the situation in countries affected by the recent Tsunami disaster, the SNP's Ian Hudghton called on ministers to take up Scots fishermen's offers of assistance. Ian said: *"The response from Scotland's fishing communities to appeals for help in dealing with the aftermath of the Tsunami disaster has been magnificent. In the medium to longer term, assistance will be needed in terms of rebuilding devastated fishing fleets and getting the fishing industry back up and running in affected areas. The Scottish fishing community has the expertise needed to play a vital role in this reconstruction work and I urge Europe's fisheries ministers to take up their generous offers of help."*

- **Bernat protests about Greek Human Rights Abuses (20.1.05)**

Catalan Euro-MP Bernat Joan protested to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg about ongoing human rights abuses in Greece. Bernat is concerned about ongoing state backed intolerance and discrimination particularly against the country's Macedonian and Turkish minorities. This follows the recent Greek Supreme Court ruling dissolving the Turkish Union of Xanthi. Bernat commented: *"I was very concerned to hear this news of ongoing intolerance by Greek authorities. It seems to me a flagrant abuse of basic human rights, not to mention treaty"*

commitments. Greece has fallen foul of the European Court of Human Rights in the past yet this seems to have had little impact on the attitude of the Greek authorities."



- **Bernat launches his book on the EU Constitution (19.1.04)**

Bernat Joan published his book on the proposed EU Constitution, entitled *'The Catalans Before the European Constitution'*. The book analyses the proposed European Constitution from a Catalan perspective and poses the question for Catalans 'How should we act before an EU that doesn't recognise us?' The publication came ahead of the EU Constitution referendum in Spain where Bernat Joan's party called for a 'no' vote. Bernat said: *"With this publication I want to make it very clear that ours is a pro-European 'no' to the constitution. We do not have a problem with the European Constitution in principle - it's this text which fails to recognise the existence and rights of the Catalan people that we reject. The sensible approach would be to go back to the drawing board. Better no constitution than a bad one!"*

- **Jill welcomes Hiroshima Mayor to the EP (19.1.05)**

Jill welcomed Hiroshima Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba's visit to the European Parliament. She is backing his Mayors for Peace Campaign for the total elimination of nuclear weapons by 2010. Jill said: *"I am very pleased that Mayor Akiba has been able to find the time to address MEPs as part of his visit. Nuclear weapons make the world more insecure and more dangerous. The International Court of Justice ruled in 1996 that their use or even threatened use was unlawful. All of this makes the strengthening of the NPT extremely urgent. We are talking here about real weapons of mass destruction and an opportunity to destroy them in the most effective way - through binding international agreements."*



*The campaign for tough new rules to regulate potentially hazardous chemicals that are present in everyday household products continued in Brussels where Jill Evans welcomed three representatives (Enid Jones, Irene Perkins, Enid Brown) of the NFWI (National Federation of the Women's Institute) in Wales to Brussels for a hearing of the European Parliament's Petitions Committee. 18.1.05*

- **SNP Euro-MPs vote no on EU Constitution (12.1.05)**

SNP MEPs Ian Hudghton MEP and Alyn Smith MEP voted against the European Parliament's report on the draft EU Constitution. Ian Hudghton and Alyn Smith were the only two out of seven Scots Euro-MPs to take part in the debate. Both condemned the London-led parties for voting in favour of giving complete control of fisheries to Brussels. During a European Parliament vote on the proposed EU Constitution, the UK Tory, Lib Dem and Labour members voted against an SNP-backed proposal which would have removed fisheries management from the list of exclusive EU powers. Commenting on the outcome of the vote, Alyn Smith said: *"The Scottish Parliament is the only body responsible for Justice, the Environment, Education, Health and many other areas of Scottish life, yet the provisions in the treaty to bring it into the EU law making process are wholly inadequate. This constitution will not sufficiently improve EU law making for Scotland. More to the point this constitution does not take account of the dignity of my country and we will therefore vote against."*

- **Jill hails Luxembourg's example (12.1.05)**

Plaid Cymru's Jill Evans hailed Luxembourg's Presidency of the European Union as an example of what an independent Wales could achieve. She was speaking in Parliament's debate on the EU's priorities for the next six months when Luxembourg, a small country of around four hundred thousand people, holds the EU Presidency. Jill said: *"I am pleased to see a small successful independent country leading the Union. Luxembourg is one of the six member states smaller than my country, Wales, and an example of what an independent Wales could achieve."*

- **Alyn seeks backing for Blair impeachment bid (10.1.05)**



The SNP's Alyn Smith called on the President of the European Parliament to decide if he would allow a written declaration calling on the Parliament to back the impeachment of Tony Blair to go forward. Mr Smith and other EFA MEPs tabled the Written Declaration (similar to an early day motion at Westminster) on 23 November, yet it has been referred to the President for approval. The SNP/Plaid Cymru group at Westminster has set in motion an impeachment process of the Prime Minister on charges of misleading Parliament over the war in Iraq and the non-existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The written declaration will allow MEPs from other countries to recognise and lend their support to the impeachment process. Alyn commented: *"The impeachment process is of major importance and it is right that this house should be aware of it and support it."*

- **Bernat launches his campaign for a 'no' vote (11.1.05)**

Bernat Joan presented at a press conference at the European Parliament in Strasbourg his party's reasons for calling for a 'no' vote in Spain's referendum on the European Constitution. Joan was flanked at the press conference by fellow MEPs Ian Hudghton (Scottish National Party) and Miquel Portas (Portugese Left Block). The Catalan Euro-MP highlighted the Treaty's weaknesses as regards social, democratic and defence issues and emphasised the lack of official recognition of the Catalan nation and language. Joan commented that *"ours is a pro-European 'no', for it is perfectly legitimate to say that the text that is being put to us falls short in many areas where we would have liked it to have gone further"*.



*Bernat, with Ian Hudghton and Miquel Portas, launches his 'no' campaign.*

**European Free Alliance Group  
in the European Parliament**

**For more information, contact:**

**José Luis Linazasoro  
jllinazasoro@europarl.eu.int**