

## **PNR treaty with the USA approved ("Passenger Name Recognition")**

Yesterday, the parliament voted to approve the transatlantic data-sharing agreement with the USA. There had been a legal vacuum since 2007 although airlines continued to fly and to hand over your private data to the US authorities. Now the Americans promise only to use the data about us for detection of terrorists and not for other purposes such as customs or immigration, but not all Europeans are confident that their promise will be kept. And we object to unequal treatment of American and European data. Liberals wanted more guarantees from Washington which the EU could verify afterwards. The treaty was approved by 409 to 266 but I was among the 33 who abstained.

## **Telephone Roaming charges down again**

Parliament and Council have achieved a breakthrough in their talks to reduce the costs of using mobile phones abroad.

Business travellers and holidaymakers will benefit in particular from a cap on data roaming which, from July this year, will be limited to 70 cents (around 60p) and fall to 20 cents per MB (around 17p) in 2014. Until now there has been no cap on the cost for using mobile internet options while abroad, causing a shock for many on their return home.

The cost of making a call using a mobile phone abroad will be capped at 29 cents a minute (24p) this July and fall to 19 cents (16p) in 2014.

Texting abroad will be cut to 9cents (7p) this year and 6 cents (5p) in 2014.

## **New Organised Crime committee.**

The new committee has started work - I am a full member and will lead for the Liberals - with a mandate to get an assessment of international organised criminal operations, and then to make recommendations for action. We shall cover trafficking of drugs, of illegal immigrants, of counterfeit goods, online crime, corruption, and money laundering.

The chair is an Italian liberal from Sicily, Sonia Alfano. The vice-chair who was nominated by the socialists is another Sicilian, who already receives police protection from the Mafia. The "rapporteur", who will coordinate the committee's report, was nominated by the Christian-Democrat party and is another Italian from Sicily, but who has no police protection from the Mafia and is said to be a close friend of Berlusconi. The rest of us, from the rest of Europe, will be working hard to make the committee's focus Europe-wide and not only anti-Mafia.

## **ACTA, the proposed multilateral Anti Counterfeiting Trade Agreement**

It was drafted between many western countries in order to give greater protection for owners of intellectual property. It is proving to be very controversial. The parliament is now expected to vote to approve or reject it in June or July.

## **Regulation of Motorcycles**

The First Reading on the EU motorcycle regulation is delayed while a First Reading agreement is sought between the two legislative chambers, Parliament and Council. It is not possible, therefore, to predict when the vote in the parliament will take place.

The Commission proposal is to consolidate many existing EU laws about motorcycling into one regulation and to bring it up to date with new aspects. It is a Regulation, so there will be no vote by MPs in the Commons. The proposal contains good parts such as requiring manufacturers to advertise the carbon dioxide emissions of their bikes, and also to give bikers immediate access to repair and maintenance information (which they do not have at present), so they can go to any garage in future and reduce their costs.

In the other 26 member states of the EU, the proposal raises little controversy and therefore is highly likely to pass into law throughout the EU including the UK.

### **The contentious aspects are**

a. the anti-tampering proposals : the parliament's committee wants to extend the Commission's proposal so that there would be no illegal tampering with motorbikes at any time in the bike's life. I understand that many UK bikes are tampered with by their owners in order to increase their speed above what the manufacturer intended and in some cases above what the law allows.

b. the ABS requirement to stop locking of brakes. It would add several hundred pounds to the cost of each motorbike but make them safer.

c. the possibility of unknown later additions to the regulation (which the parliament would have the right to approve or reject).

This proposal is becoming an interesting case study in how to lobby and how not to lobby. In the UK, motorcyclists tend to join one of two groupings. The BMF gave me a calm and personal briefing, but the other group MAG triggered its members to ride in mass demonstrations and to send hundreds of identical anxious emails to MEPs (to every single one of which I have replied personally). MAG refuse to send experts to explain their objections to UK and continental MEP questions and to answer questions in the parliament. Instead a minority of MAG members now send email abuse and in one case a threat to me ("do you want to live?". The contrast is striking: one grouping understands that to persuade elected representatives it is wise to explain their view by a calm personal approach: the other grouping prefers aggression to try to get its view across, but it is being advised by UKIP, which explains why that group's approach is so detrimental to its own members' interests and its message is not being heard successfully in the parliament. Fascinating is the UKIP leader's letter to MAG supporters. He writes in his reply (I have a copy) that "UKIP MEPs in the European Parliament have taken a relatively high level of interest in this issue...". But officials say that no UKIP MEP has attended the responsible committee, nor spoken there nor tabled an amendment there nor voted there. If that is what UKIP calls taking a high level of interest, then they are simply pulling wool over the public's eyes.

I hope this is clear. If not, please get back to me.

All the best, Bill