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MEP Contact Newsletter

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Conservatives forge new alliance for EU reform



Rt Hon David Cameron MP and Timothy Kirkhope MEP

Following the European Elections in June 2009, Conservative MEPs have delivered on David Cameron's pledge to form a new alliance of MEPs in the European Parliament.

Conservative MEPs are now proud to sit as members of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Group, with allies from seven other EU countries.

The ECR has Members from Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Belgium.

It is an anti-federalist, centre and centre-right mainstream grouping and with 54 MEPs will hold the balance of power in some key issues in the European Parliament.

All of the parties have signed up to a declaration, originally negotiated in Prague, which sets out the aims and values of the new grouping.

Commenting on the establishment of the new European Conservatives and Reformists Group, Timothy Kirkhope MEP, Leader of the Conservatives in the European Parliament and Deputy Chairman of the ECR said:

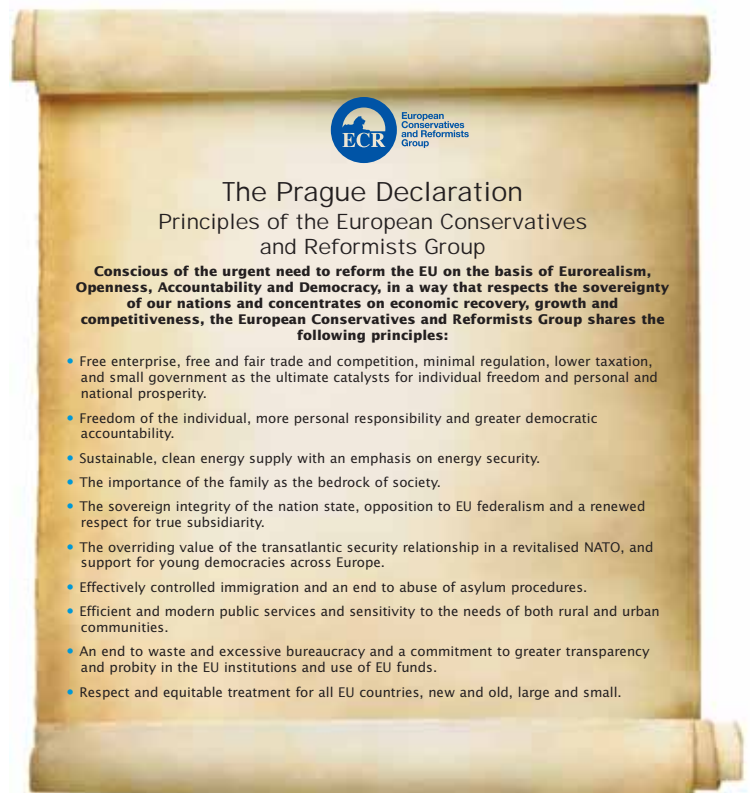
"We are very excited about this important new development in European politics. Our new group will make a strong case for a centre/centre-right but non-federalist future for the EU."

Polish MEP Michał Kamiński was unanimously elected as Chairman of the ECR group at a meeting in July.

"When David Cameron first promised to end the Conservatives' alliance with the EPP and set up a new, non-federalist group in the European Parliament some did not believe he would keep his pledge. Others doubted whether it could be done. With the establishment of the European Conservatives and Reformists we have proved them wrong."

The European Conservatives and Reformists are now a major force in the European Parliament. They are already a powerful voice for the centre-right in the EU. More importantly, for the first time there is now a mainstream group in the European Parliament dedicated to championing our vision of a Europe of Nation States, not a United States of Europe."

Rt Hon William Hague MP, Shadow Foreign Secretary



Boris in Brussels



Vicky Ford MEP with Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London and Kay Swinburne MEP

Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London visited Brussels recently to warn of the threat to the City posed by the planned EU AIFM Directive aimed at regulating the alternative investment market.

In meetings with EU Commissioner Charlie McCreevy and with MEPs, Boris Johnson said: “The directive as it is currently drafted will have enormously damaging consequences for London, and for the UK, if businesses relocate away from Europe. There is no suggestion or evidence that investment funds were in any way to blame for the financial crisis and it is difficult to see the justification for this level of regulation.”

Kay Swinburne MEP, Economic Committee coordinator for the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, said: “The AIFM Directive has laudable intentions but the EU has not thought through the full consequences of this knee-jerk response to the financial crisis.



Boris Johnson talking to journalists in Brussels

“Rebuilding our economy post credit crunch is not easy but we cannot afford for European businesses or investors to be put at a competitive disadvantage. Of course there

is a need for better regulation of financial services but this directive in its current form has the potential to reduce the availability of risk capital and seed finance to European businesses at a time when our economies need it most.”

Vicky Ford MEP, British Conservative spokesman on Economic Affairs said: “It is important that we work with other European countries and across the world to secure better regulation of global financial services. There is a myth that this directive only has implications for financial institutions operating in the City of London – that is simply not true. The devil is in the detail and the impact on the real economy across Europe is far reaching.

“We have been given many examples of how European companies, large and small, will be put at a competitive disadvantage when trying to finance their futures. People trying to rebuild their savings or pensions will find their options to invest both within the EU or overseas are severely curtailed.

“As it stands the current directive would hand a major victory to the financial centres outside the European Union.” ■

Barroso wins second term

At its September session, the European Parliament voted by 382 votes in favour, 219 against and 117 abstentions in a vote held by secret ballot to approve José Manuel Barroso as President of the European Commission for a second five-year term.

Mr Barroso was opposed by left-wing MEPs, including the British Labour MEPs, who viewed him as too pro-market. However, his election was welcomed by the European Conservatives and Reformists Group, which includes the British Conservatives.



Timothy Kirkhope MEP with José Manuel Barroso

King for Reform in Europe



Michał Kamiński MEP

ECR Chairman, Michał Kamiński MEP, said: “President Barroso has presented an ambitious agenda for the next five years and much of it, such as his focus on completing the single market, is welcome.

“In the European elections the voters clearly rejected the outdated policies of the socialists. The victory of centre-right

parties must not only be reflected in the election of a centre-right politician but also the implementation of a centre-right agenda at the Commission.

“We do not agree with President Barroso on everything, but he is by far the most credible and the only electable candidate. President Barroso’s task now is to build a coalition of centre-right parties that want Europe to focus on those areas where it can play a role such as energy security, the financial crisis, the environment and relations with the EU’s neighbours, whilst respecting the sovereignty of the nation state.”

In the debate on Mr Barroso’s appointment, the Leader of the Conservative MEPs, Timothy Kirkhope, welcomed Mr Barroso’s commitment to promoting free-market economic policies and to cutting unnecessary red tape and bureaucracy. He also drew attention to Mr Barroso’s pledge to make the EU anti-fraud office fully independent of the Commission – a move Conservative MEPs have long campaigned for.

However, he warned Mr Barroso that Conservative MEPs would oppose the Commission’s plans for an EU asylum and immigration policy and would fiercely resist the Lisbon Treaty.

Mr Kirkhope concluded by quoting a paragraph from Mr Barroso’s Manifesto: “The EU works best when it focuses on its core business. I want to concentrate our limited resources on where we can have most effect, and where we can bring most added value.”

Mr Kirkhope said that if the new Commission President would be guided by the principle that the EU should do less, and do it better, he would have support from Conservative MEPs. ■

Safe Harbour



Malcolm Harbour MEP visiting Westfield Sportscars

Conservative MEP Malcolm Harbour will be chairman of the European Parliament’s powerful Internal Market Committee until 2012.

Mr Harbour has served on the committee for ten years and is recognised as an expert in his field, especially on new technologies and the automotive industry. The Internal Market plays a vital role in setting the rules by which companies are regulated.

Other Conservative MEPs have also taken on influential roles on important European Parliament committees at the start of the new parliamentary term.

London MEP Syed Kamall has become a Vice Chairman of the Constitutional Affairs Committee, which will provide an excellent platform for Conservative opposition to the Lisbon Treaty.

South East MEP Nirj Deva is a Vice Chairman of the Development Committee, which will provide important opportunities to drive forward David Cameron’s agenda for tackling global poverty.



Syed Kamall MEP



Nirj Deva MEP



Robert Sturdy MEP

As a Vice Chairman of the International Trade Committee, Eastern Region MEP Robert Sturdy will also be able to make a telling contribution to the fight against global poverty, as well as scrutinising international trade deals with British firms in mind.

Scottish MEP Struan Stevenson is a Vice Chairman of the Committee on Fisheries at a time when an overhaul of the EU's disastrous Common Fisheries Policy at last seems to be a real possibility.



Struan Stevenson MEP

Timothy Kirkhope MEP, Leader of the Conservatives in the European Parliament, said: "These appointments clearly demonstrate that, although our Delegation is just 25 out of 718 MEPs, we are clearly punching above our weight. I am delighted to have been able to negotiate these posts and appoint British Conservative MEPs to them." ■



Timothy Kirkhope MEP

New MEPs welcomed

Conservative MEPs have welcomed seven new colleagues to their European Parliament Delegation following the European elections in June.

The new MEPs bring with them a wealth of experience and expertise and have already got down to work bringing this to bear in the interests of their constituents.

Ashley Fox MEP is a solicitor and Conservative councillor from Bristol and represents the South West. He has been appointed ECR Co-ordinator on the Constitutional Affairs Committee.



Ashley Fox MEP

Emma McClarkin MEP is a former parliamentary assistant to Roger Helmer MEP and has



Emma McClarkin MEP

worked in public affairs. She represents the East Midlands and has been appointed Conservative Spokesman for Culture and Education.

Jacqueline Foster MEP worked for British Airways for more than 20 years before serving as an MEP from 1999-2004 and is returning to represent the North West. She has been appointed Conservative Spokesman for Transport.



Jacqueline Foster MEP

Julie Girling MEP has worked in management for a number of prominent national retailers including Dixons, Boots and Halfords. She was a Leader of Cotswold District Council and represents the South West. She has been appointed Deputy Whip of the UK Delegation.



Julie Girling MEP

Kay Swinburne MEP has worked in both the healthcare and international finance sectors and served as a Conservative councillor in Hereford. She represents Wales and has been appointed as ECR Co-ordinator on the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee.



Kay Swinburne MEP

Vicky Ford MEP worked in the City as an investment banker and was a Conservative councillor in Cambridgeshire. She represents the Eastern Region and has been appointed Conservative Spokesman on Economic and Monetary Affairs.



Vicky Ford MEP

Marina Yannakoudakis MEP is a businesswoman and former Conservative councillor in Barnet and represents London. She has been appointed Conservative Spokesman on the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. ■



Marina Yannakoudakis MEP