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EU Health Supplement: An EU-Wide Diabetes Strategy
Trust and Confidence in Politics and Turnout

By Sir Graham Watson MEP, Editor, Government Gazette

I am a politician. That is what I do – that is my job. And often when I get into a cab and get into a conversation with the driver and tell them what I do, I brace myself for the glee, mistrust or abuse, and in the United Kingdom the fear of the EU, that follows. I would imagine that civil servants get similar treatment. Government and politics, it’s all one and the same.

Confidence and trust in politics is at an all time low. It has been sliding for years. Across Europe almost three quarters of the population do not trust their national government or parliament.

People don’t think their political establishment will tell them the truth, look after their interests or put the country before party.

And yet only 58% of EU citizens say they do not trust the EU, lower than the average level of confidence in national institutions. This might come as a surprise for those of us who are used to the European Union being a scapegoat for everything under the sun.

But I would speculate that rather than this relative trust being a glowing endorsement of the EU, it is more a reflection of endemic corruption and maladministration in many of the bloc’s newer member states - the EU is at least more credible than the national government.

If I had to name one recent development that has led people to (justifiably) become ever more suspicious of their rulers it’s the Snowden revelations. And that is why this issue includes a section which has dedicated its attention to those allegations, the legality of the activity and what it means for society.

The revelations concerning the PRISM programme which intercepts transatlantic email, telephone and text message traffic on a massive scale, and the network of alleged intercept data sharing between Australia, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and Israel is staggering.

It raises questions about the very basics of civil liberties, and suggests a fundamental lack of respect from governments for normal people and their private lives.

If ever there was a time for mistrust of governments, it is now.

It is therefore unsurprising that turnout is so low – and declining – in so many Western democracies. This year will see European Parliament elections across the European Union. Average turnout in European Parliament elections fell from 61.9% in 1979 to 43% in 2009. Less than half of all eligible Europeans bothered to go out and vote at the 2009 elections.

So the Government Gazette has done an investigation into one of the more extreme ways of countering low turnout: compulsory voting. Belgium, Australia, Greece, Bolivia – in total 22 countries worldwide have some form of compulsory voting.

It is not exactly the most liberal of remedies for political apathy, but I can see how it could prevent the disenfranchisement of the indifferent and socially disadvantaged groups often under-represented and therefore ignored simply because they stay at home.

Will the three decade long decline in turnout continue for this year’s European Parliament elections? I am hopeful that it won’t. And the reason is the twin crises of unsustainable public debt and undercapitalised private lenders. The crisis has wreaked economic havoc across the bloc, but the one thing it has shown is that Europe has a direct impact on everyday lives across the continent, that Europe really matters.

And people know that if it weren’t for the huge amounts of cash that Jean-Claude Trichet and his people at the European Central Bank were injecting into the markets night after night in September 2008, to calm the speculators, and for the action that EU leaders took in subsequent years to create a permanent rescue fund, things could have been much worse.

And yet, while voters stay at home across Europe, while people have to be forced to go to the polls as far afield as Australia and Brazil, thousands of people across the globe in Kiev, Damascus, Beijing and Bangkok, are protesting, fighting, dying for their right to vote and to live under a democratically elected government that respects the rule of law. If anyone has a reason to mistrust their government, it is those people.
MICROPOL – Revitalizing rural Europe

Rural Europe is facing major challenges; young, qualified people are leaving for jobs in the knowledge economy in urban areas leaving behind higher rates of unskilled people and less opportunity for growth and prosperity. The inward migration of qualified professionals, well connected with markets in the core regions, only mitigates to a degree the impact on socioeconomic activity in the periphery.

There is however an opportunity for rural areas to revitalize and renew their identity; we are online all the time, using today’s technology we can work whenever – wherever. ICT can serve as an important tool to reduce the isolation of rural areas and take advantage of their human resources. Moreover, the economy is changing towards a more creative conceptual age. Routine tasks are being replaced by creative and flexible activities, which allow employees and their tasks to be situated away from central, physical business locations.

What is a SWC?

A Smart Work Centre – special premises for smart workers considerably nearer the person’s living place – allows people to stay in rural areas while maintaining a high skilled job for often urban-based companies or customers. This can lead to a better work-life-balance and rural areas to evolve into ‘micropols’, attracting high-earners who enhance the economic and cultural fabric of the locality. Moreover, smartwork/co-working reduces commuting time and consequently transport costs and environmental pollution. Employers can reduce personnel and operating costs and recruit better motivated employees. Local municipalities and communities can offer improved quality of life, increase economic activity and consequently local tax revenue. Data proves that the potential of smartwork/co-work has not been fully realised. In 2010 more than 740 million people migrated within their country, almost four times the extent of international migration.

Smart Work Centres in rural France

In Murat their territorial promotion strategy has focused on SWCs to increase local employment and income; boost entrepreneurship and welcome qualified people looking for a professional working environment and a high quality of life. This is integrated into a wider territorial strategy to promote the area and attract new inhabitants, organising annual forums and events to promote smart working, using visual media, and becoming a leading smart work/co-working training hub. Most importantly SWC development goes hand in hand with an effective strategy and actions to regenerate wider social and economic life in the local community.

Berwick Workspaces, Northumberland, United Kingdom

Conceived to attract and nurture higher value jobs in a town suffering from the lowest wages in England, Berwick Workspace took a derelict site in the town centre and transformed it into a 31 unit workspace with superfast broadband and a high quality environment for business. Supplemented by in-situ bespoke business support and mentoring for the SMEs and a proactive approach to engaging the wider town in enterprise. In addition to the rooms occupied by SMEs there are high quality conference facilities, meeting areas co-working spaces and Open Access high speed WiFi.

For further information, please visit: www.micropol-interreg.eu or email Ms. Jane Ribergaard Holm jarh@rn.dk

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MICROPOL is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and made possible by the INTERREG IVC programme.
Danish agriculture has a large and efficient production of animal products such as dairy, pork, and poultry with internationally renowned quality and export to many different countries worldwide. Competitiveness is the result of heavy investment in animal stable systems, optimization of animals through breeding and nutrition. Animal products from Denmark are based on an intensive agricultural feed production, mainly wheat and barley for pigs and poultry, maize, grass and clover for dairy cows. Denmark is well suited for plant starch covered with crops on approximately half of the country's surface. The temperate humid climate is well suited for plant starch production but less so for proteins, so large amounts of soy protein are imported to supply the animal diet.

**A price of sustainability**

Such intensive agriculture does not proceed without environmental fingerprints and public debate. From what used to be everyone’s livelihood just 60 years ago, with almost half of the population engaged in agriculture, the profession has turned into a highly specialized industrial activity employing only about three percent of the Danes and economically controlled by even fewer. The previous farmer life involving most people and thus democratically protected against serious critics has turned into an industrial minority activity.

The Danish media are flooded on a daily basis with articles critical towards greening of their agriculture, and people and thus democratically protected against serious critics has turned into an industrial minority activity. The Danish media are flooded on a daily basis with articles critical towards greening of their agriculture, and public statements, does not in general meet any such future external demands, but they face problems from domestic pressure.

**European local perspectives**

Conflicts between an agricultural business, economically incited to produce more and better quality food for a hungry world market and the interests from society in reduced environmental imprints are not unique to Danes.

A debate about greening of European agriculture has spread all over the continent, particularly in relation to the European common agricultural policy, the subsidies of which make up a major part of the common EU budget. It is almost like Margaret Thatcher’s words, this time from environmental groups “we want our money back”, or at least we want something for subsidies with regard to wild life, biodiversity and environment in addition to stable food supply.

Being already pushed for two decades towards greening of their agriculture, Danish farmers would seem to be well prepared to meet future global food demand.

**Global solutions**

On a global scale reduced agricultural intensity and lower food supply would not seem to be a sustainable solution to such conflicts of interest between industrial agriculture and surrounding populations. Many developed countries have relatively low population densities and large productive areas of arable land suitable for efficient agriculture, which should be used to meet future global food demand.

For this to be realistic, however, a new wave of innovation and technology development is needed to intensify future food production with less environmental imprint and more local support. More efficient application of fertilizer and much better recycling of nutrients in animal manure as well as weed and plant disease control less based on chemicals are urgently needed.

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*By Sven Bode Andersen, Professor of Plant Breeding, Copenhagen University*
In the rural and sparsely populated areas of Europe, communities can produce their energy by renewables. In our Common Power network, based on Northern Periphery Programme strategic project SECRE, we serve these remote communities. We have created a service to help communities believe in their future and the vitality of their home regions. The benefits of community owned renewable energy business are tangible. Maintaining the quality of a living environment and local culture by the profit generated from wind turbine or woodchip boilers, also means savings in fossil fuels. Reducing the carbon footprint of the European periphery may not be a global priority, but when making profit in renewable energy production, communities have hope for a vital future.

In the Common Power network, we have been working for two and a half years in different kinds of environments. The rural areas of Eastern Finland have a strong forest-based energy sector and the Scots living in the archipelago of the Atlantic Ocean have the knowledge to utilise wind as a sustainable energy source. In the Westfjords valleys in Iceland, farmers utilise hydroenergy to power their dairy farms and in Sognadal Norway, community members enjoy opera in a building heated by fjord heat. Also, the Northern Ireland linen and miller heritage has got a modern form in the hands of Upperlands and Cloughmills communities. Although there are active people willing to treasure the local way of life, rural communities are getting more and more fragile.

Local renewable energy production does not only provide heat and electricity for the community. It is also a key for the continuity and a way to preserve the vitality of a unique local milieu. Consequently, people are able to decide who provides the energy and what the price is. Communities can be energy independent when utilising the local resources of clean energy, and use the profit for the better future of the community.

We help communities flourish by providing knowledge and expertise on community renewable energy. People living on the same island or in the same village are the owners of the energy cooperative or social enterprise. They decide how they want their heat and electricity to be produced and who collects the profits. The most important value of our transnational network is to be sustainable, from the viewpoint of both the environment and the local economy. Within the network, we inspire people help others to utilise the resources of the nature and the local energy potential.

In the SECRE network we have understood that change, both in communities and in policymaking, requires trust. We aim at helping communities find their own channels of interacting with the right stakeholders. When dealing with hundreds of years of community histories and the strong will of rural people, we must respect the local way of living.

Changing the decision-making process and policies in northern periphery is not going to happen in one night. Changes will happen, when employees of the public sector, politicians and people living in rural communities are willing to collaborate for a common aim. We want rural communities to utilise local renewable energy by providing the knowledge needed.
In the Swedish Forestry Model, two overriding goals, production and environmental protection are of equal importance. The increased and often conflicting demands on the Swedish forests are a permanent challenge for the forest sector, researchers and decision makers. Is it possible for forest owners to conserve biodiversity, enhance recreational needs and still have sustainable forest production?

Sweden – a forest dominated country

More than half of the land area in Sweden, 23.1 million hectares, is productive forest land. The forest area almost corresponds to the size of Great Britain. The Swedish forests are dominated by conifers, Norway spruce and Scots pine, making up about 85% of the total standing volume. Amongst broad-leaved trees, birch is the most common. In the southern part of Sweden, noble trees such as oak, beech, ash and elm make up 25% of the growing stock.

About half of the Swedish forest area is owned by private, small-scale, forest owners, often called "family forestry". In total there are about 350 000 private forest-owners in Sweden, of which 70% live on their properties. The average forest area in family forestry is 47 hectares. One third of the private forest-owners are women, the amount of female forest ownership has increased during the last years. Private forest companies own 25% of the forest land while the State and other public organizations own the remaining 24%.

During recent years much of the State-owned forest has been reorganized into companies. Moreover, a massive rationalization of agriculture has resulted in a decrease in the number of farms with combined forestry and agriculture since the mid 1950s.

About 10% of the total land area, equaling 4.3 million hectares, is protected land- and water areas in Sweden. Of that amount, about 800 000 hectares, consists of legally protected productive forest land as national park and nature reserves etc. Forest land voluntarily set aside for conservation comprises 1.1 million hectares in sub mountain areas.

The primary reason for protection is to protect habitats for rare and/or threatened species. Cultural heritage values and recreation and outdoor values are other aims for protection. The State provides the finances and is responsible for protection. The forest owners are expected to pay careful consideration to nature and voluntarily set aside forest land in order to promote and protect different environmental values.

Forests host a wide range of values

Forests play a vital role in maintaining a stable global climate and environment. It’s also a place for recreation, a source of food and for many people an income. Forestry and the forest industry employ more than 100 000 people. Many more have indirect connections to forests, such as those employed in the transport and tourism sectors.

Ever since the 1920s the growing stock in the Swedish forest has increased by over 60%. Forestry provides by far the largest net export income, USD 17.5 billion. In fact, Swedish forests provide approximately seven percent, USD 189 billion, of the world’s sawn timber, pulp and paper and are therefore of high importance both to the EU and globally. In 2012 the value of Swedish exports of forestry and forest industry was SEK 122 billion. The forestry and forest industry sectors, providing products from fuel and paper to furniture, housing and packaging accounted for 10% of the total export value (all goods).

Appreciation of forest values is deeply rooted in Sweden. Recreation in the forest is facilitated by The Right of Public Access (Swedish: "Allemansrätten"), which has very strong standing in Sweden. It gives the public the right to access, walk and cycle on any land except for private grounds and where such access itself may cause damage. There are also restrictions concerning nature reserves and protected areas. The Right of Public Access also includes the right to pick wildflowers, mushrooms and berries, provided they are not legally protected.

Freedom under responsibility – the Swedish forest policy

Two overriding goals, production and environmental protection, are according to national legislation, on an equal footing in Swedish forestry. In 1994, the policy structure for forestry changed, and informative means of control was emphasized in a system with "freedom under responsibility".

The main section of law affecting forest policy is the Swedish Forestry Act which sets a minimum standard for forest management. Also other acts such as the Swedish Environmental Code and the Cultural
Heritage Act, affect forestry. In addition, voluntary standards in the form of different certification systems are important to oversee compliance with the legislation.

Swedish forest policy has to be implemented by those who own and manage the forests. The main function of the Swedish Forest Agency, the national forest authority, is to promote the forest policy. The Swedish Forest Agency supervises compliance with the Swedish Forestry Act. Other tasks include advising and providing services to forest owners and other forest stakeholders, to support nature conservation efforts and to administer subsidies to forest owners. The work is often field-based, with inventories, site visits and contacts with forest owners. The local anchoring through the districts-offices all over the country and their personal contacts and local knowledge is therefore of fundamental value for the Swedish Forest Agency.

In 1995, Sweden joined the European Union. Within the EU, the Treaty does not include a common forest policy. However, several forest related policy areas, such as environment, climate, energy, trade and rural development, are covered by EU common policies. Sweden also plays an active role in international and regional forest co-operation and in development-aid related projects.

**Sustainable forests?**

The Swedish Parliament has adopted several environmental quality objectives and interim targets for sustainable development. The objectives define the quality and state of Sweden's environment and of its natural and cultural resources. National agencies, among them the Swedish Forest Agency, follow up and evaluate the objectives. Regional county administrative boards co-ordinate the work and the municipalities translate national and regional objectives into local politics, aims and actions.

“Sustainable Forests” is one of the Swedish environmental quality objectives. One aim among several others is to maintain forest ecosystem services and conserve forest biodiversity so species are able to spread within their natural ranges as part of a green infrastructure. The achievement of Sustainable Forests is followed up continuously. According to the overall assessment in 2013, several sub-goals of Sustainable Forests are not possible to achieve by 2020 with today’s actual or planned instruments. Obviously, various efforts are required such as an improved environmental consideration at clear-cutting and increased areas of protected and voluntarily set aside forests with more habitat management. Also, increased efforts for endangered species, and action plans, are needed.

The official national Red List is an important barometer in the Swedish environmental quality objectives and in international agreements. The Red List, prepared by the Swedish Species Information Centre, lists Sweden’s threatened species and describes current status, threats and trends in the species population.

According to the Red List, more than half of the 4,127 red listed species in Sweden are forest dwellers. Especially in Northern Sweden, vast areas of old forest with long continuity are being cleared which affect many fungi, mosses, lichens and wood-living insects. Forest habitats are affected by forest practices, and natural disturbances such as fire and flooding are scarce. According to the report under Article 17 of the EU Habitats Directive in 2013, sixteen of the seventeen assessed designated forest types in Sweden and several species do not have a favorable conservation status.

**Possible ways ahead**

The Swedish forestry model is obviously a brain teaser in Sweden. There seems to be a consensus that the multiple uses and the increasing demands of the Swedish forests leads to considerable conflicts, and that various actions therefore are needed fairly promptly to obtain a sustainable forestry. There are however a wide range of opinions among policy makers, the forestry sector and environmental organizations on how to define and consequently to achieve a sustainable forestry.

Research plays an important role in providing knowledge on synergies, trade-offs and conflicts concerning different forest management options. Future Forest is an extensive interdisciplinary research programme in Sweden and with a large stakeholder involvement. The main objective of Future Forests is to provide knowledge enabling an increased and sustainable provision of ecosystem services from boreal forests. Models for science based decision support are developed to resolve goal conflicts aggravating the multiple uses of forest landscapes. One of several topical research areas is to improve the capacity of the forest sector to adapt to global changes. Such changes are driven by, for example, altered markets for forest goods and services and by climate change. For instance, changes in pests, diseases and catastrophic weather events in relation to forest management adaptation strategies are a particularly urgent research area.

Also another large research area in forestry is just round the corner. The development of a bio-based economy is proceeding with an increasing rate at a global scale. To tackle this important issue, the Swedish Research council Formas will make a special effort to support forest research that generates new knowledge concerning the production, use, and further refining of renewable biomass.

In order to achieve the Swedish Forestry Model, the Swedish Forest Agency has several urgent tasks ahead. The number of controls to monitor the compliance with the statutory requirements needs to increase, as do the efforts to protect forest living species, in particular those with an unfavorable conservation status. Besides, a continued dialogue and collaboration with the forest stakeholders will hopefully clarify their roles and responsibility in the Swedish Forestry Model. Moreover, in collaboration with the forestry sector, the Swedish Forest Agency has recently developed a number of "target images" in order to achieve sound environmental considerations. The next step for the forestry sector is consequently to implement these target images in their work, amend governing documents in line with the targets and offer further training to their staff.

Despite the uncertainties on how to achieve a sustainable forestry, one thing is certain: The efforts and willingness among all parties involved to find solid and long-term solutions will continue. There is a consensus that it is of great importance for society that forests resources are used without being used up. In this way, future generations will hopefully benefit from the many assets of the Swedish forests.
Integrated Flood-Risk Management in Sweden

By Åse Johannessen and Jakob Granit, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)

Even though catastrophic flood events, like those experienced in downstream countries such as Bangladesh or the Netherlands, do not happen in Sweden, not investing in flood preparedness does carry significant socioeconomic risks. A range of factors, including changes in rainfall patterns, rising sea levels in the southern part of the country, and ongoing development of coastal infrastructure, mean that Sweden is becoming more vulnerable to floods. Sweden lacks a preventive and comprehensive approach to flood management, and as a result is missing out on the win-win opportunities offered by integrated flood-risk management. This integrated approach not only addresses flood risk, but also other linked issues, including eutrophication and environmental degradation of watersheds and the Baltic Sea. The Swedish Water House and SEI set up a stakeholder group on water and disaster risk reduction, supported by the Swedish Government, which has worked for three years to explore integrated management and governance approaches to managing flood risk. This article reviews the current situation in Sweden, and outlines the conclusions of the group.

In Sweden, county administrators have observed a slow but steady tendency to build housing and other infrastructure in low-lying locations that are prone to occasional flooding.

Although municipal planning experts are aware that development should be avoided on floodplains and vulnerable coastal zones, the practice and tendency continues because there is a demand from the public to build in attractive areas. These development pressures make it difficult to adopt a preventive approach that recognizes that water flows and floods need space. Instead, loss and damage to consequently exposed infrastructure triggers calls for controlling measures, which may contribute to ecosystem degradation.

Also, other types of land use which are not suitable on flood prone areas are protected by a strong tradition of land ownership rights in the country as a whole. Floodplains in Sweden are used for agriculture and have been heavily developed and drained during the 20th century.

During flooding events diffuse pollution and destruction of agricultural embankments can leak substantial amounts of nutrients into the water bodies, which results in eutrophication and degraded ecosystems. But because of strong local stakeholder interests (e.g. in agriculture) flood risk reduction in Sweden is not prioritized, and is often strongly challenged.

Ongoing development could be better managed through improvements in two key areas: First, there needs to be a different approach to municipal planning that takes into account river flows and river basin management. And indeed, technical experts and institutions around the world have for a long time promoted such principles – one example is the European framework for water governance (The EU Water Framework Directive) initiated in 2000. In Sweden the Directive is co-ordinated by The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (HaV). Five water authorities have been established under the responsibility of the county boards, and binding action plans to reach the goal in the EU Directive have been put in place. However, this framework is mostly aligned towards water quality and environmental policies, and does not focus on broader flood risks and linked socio-economic impacts.

Second, there is a need to raise awareness of how better integrated management of flooding can reduce risk and increase long term societal and ecosystem resilience. The European framework for flood risk governance (the 2007 EU Flood Directive) was triggered by the devastating floods in central Europe in 2002, and in Sweden it is currently implemented by the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency (MSB). MSB’s mandate is focused on the entire spectrum of threats and risks, from everyday accidents to major disasters. It also has a mandate to co-ordinate across sectors and jurisdictional boundaries. MSB has, as a first step to implementing the Flood Directive in Sweden, identified 18 geographical areas with potential significant flood risk. It is hoped that these maps of flood risk will create awareness and trigger action to reduce flood risk in these areas. However, MSB does not have the mandate to enforce action on flood risk, which instead falls to the individual municipalities.

What efforts the MSB’s work will trigger is not yet known, and there is no guidance on how to integrate action on floods with water quality considerations under the Water Framework Directive, because these issues are, for now, not part of the planning under the Water Authorities.

Meanwhile, Sweden’s traditional approach to managing water for multiple uses, such as drainage and hydropower, still prevails. This approach is based on outdated legislation originating from 1918, including customary practices, developed during a time when there was limited awareness of how rivers and ecosystems functioned.

Land drainage structures, ditches and dykes are traditionally owned by joint property societies established at a time when Swedish society was still mainly agrarian. Membership of these societies is determined by who uses or gains advantage from one or a number of given structures, which is often a group of several landowners who have agreed to collaborate. These societies usually focus on economic objectives and are based on permits for water use that are indefinitely long. As the built environment has developed over time and land use has changed, the amount and speed of stormwater runoff has increased, resulting in localized flooding. Joint property societies are often not made aware of changes until they are a reality, and have no prior information on how actions upstream will influence the flows they are legally bound to manage.

In order to change the management objectives of these joint property societies, the consent of the majority of the property owners is required. Swedish legislation is set up to require action by each joint society, in isolation; but the issue is that there are many of them – about 50,000 are responsible for drainage and about 1000 for hydropower – so it takes decades to implement change. Because there is a dire need for swift change and concerted action, more centralized
governance would be desirable, and a change in legislation could immediately change the conditions for all these joint property societies.

Long-term climate change forecasts indicate that major precipitation events are likely to increase 20–25% by 2100. Extreme events are also likely to increase, and are arguably already doing so: The “monster rain” that hit Copenhagen on 2 July 2011 saw 150 mm of rain fall in 2 hours, resulting in large-scale flooding and linked economic damage. Swedish urban areas are not prepared for such extreme surface water flows. Even today the capacity of the urban drainage systems is at its limit, resulting in flooding of basements and overflows of untreated sewage water.

The stakeholder group for water and disaster risk reduction identified some key measures for integrating river basin planning and flood risk reduction. It is becoming a more acceptable idea that water needs space or “room”, and that there is a limit to how far water flows can be controlled. “Making room” for water in both rural and urban areas has proven to be a best practice in the most flood prone areas. For example, the serious flood risks in the Netherlands in 1993 and 1995 led to a realization that the focus on dikes as flood protection was not sufficient, which triggered the Room for the River programme. Under this programme, rivers had to be given more room to flow in a natural way, an approach that has provided additional benefits for recreation, culture, and ecosystem services.

For example in Nijmegen an additional river arm is being directed through the town, and different water-level scenarios are becoming part of the physical planning process, resulting in both improved flood control and opportunities for recreation.

The role of physical planning at the level of municipalities is strong in Sweden. However, as noted, water flows beyond municipal borders, and requires a large physical planning framework to provide “room for the river”, something which is missing in Sweden. Also, socio-economic objectives may take precedence at the local level, and upstream or downstream management of water resources may not be a priority for the concerned municipality.

There are, though, examples of how this principle has prevented downstream floods. In Sweden, An accidental breakage of an embankment in the upstream area of River Svartån in 2009 prevented flooding in the downstream city of Västerås. This illustrates the potential of converting low-lying fields upstream to wetlands that provide floodwater storage and prevent flooding of downstream urban areas, while at the same time increasing ecosystem services such as biodiversity.

Some stakeholders in the group argued that Sweden lacks adequate tools to combine the views of all stakeholders under a single framework that guides a multi stakeholder process for river basin planning that integrates water flows with water quality issues. For example, in order to open up the dialogue around flood risk prevention and physical planning objectives, there is a need for better communication between joint property societies at the municipality level.

Also, farmers need to be involved in a legitimate bottom up process, to realize the benefits or tradeoffs of collaborative water management. A representative of the Farmers’ Association describes the dialogue as not being specific enough, even in the water councils that are established as the collaborative platforms for partly implementing the plans issued by the Water Authorities. A more specific, local and professionally facilitated dialogue is sought that includes all the key stakeholders.

Generally, farmers are positive towards collaborative activities, but to gain their support (and the support of other groups) it is important to identify societal and economic benefits in order to balance ecological and economic incentives.

At the urban scale, some stakeholders argued that proper planning tools do exist but are not used. For example, municipalities can use the national digital elevation database free of charge to determine bottlenecks in urban hydrology and to adapt streets and neighborhood drainage systems. Water flows must be included in the detailed municipal plan, and one way to do that is to make it compulsory to integrate Surface Water Management Plans into the planning process in order to mitigate risk and damages. Such measures are best integrated with water quality considerations, including aesthetic objectives in storm water management practices. Good practices in this area are found in Härbyda, Malmö and the city of Helsingborg, where open systems for storm water have been prioritized which can combine aesthetics and environmental benefits with effective infiltration and runoff.

Costs may be an issue in implementing flood management measures. In The Netherlands, a sense of urgency helped to raise the finance for the “Make Room for the River” programme, but Sweden is more complacent about flood risk than other European countries. However, stakeholders in the group generally indicated that “prevention is better than cure”, and that investigation is needed to find out where potential flood risks can occur and where adequate measures might be taken.

In many European countries the Flood Directive and the Water Framework Directive are co-ordinated by the same agency. This helps to achieve synergies between socio-economic and environmental objectives. In Sweden, where multiple agencies and institutions have specific and sometimes overlapping management mandates, it is a complex task to co-ordinate joint action. Municipalities, the traffic authorities, the county and state authorities – all have some responsibility for managing water resources. There are many barriers that prevent co-ordinated action including costs, legal principles, environmental concerns and politics.

The stakeholder consultation process on water and disaster risk reduction demonstrated challenges in Sweden, but also identified many positive measures that can be taken to address the increasing risks of flooding. There is clearly an interest and demand among many stakeholders for co-ordinated action and clarity in the governance framework.
Marine Littering

By Rebecca Harms MEP, President of the Greens/EFA Group

I come from the German region of Lower Saxony which has a long beautiful coastline and several islands in the North Sea. When we think of marine littering, pictures from far away places in the Pacific or Indian Ocean come to mind. But you don’t need to go that far to observe the consequences of plastic waste that is being dumped into the seas and oceans.

Plastic does not decompose in the environment and will float in our seas and oceans for decades and centuries. It breaks down into small pieces and is swallowed by marine animals. It is devastating to hear that for example 94% of some bird species living in the North Sea hold plastic in their stomachs. The birds might starve to death with full stomachs or get weak and vulnerable to diseases. Animals also get caught in discarded plastic waste and die.

Marine littering also causes additional costs for the local fishermen as their nets get damaged by the waste. And plastic pollution on the beaches of the North Sea coast causes problems for the tourism in the area. Last but not least the clean-up creates considerable costs for local communities.

The environment ministry of Lower Saxony recently started the programme "Fishing for litter" together with the fishermen of the region. The fishermen collect the trash that gets caught in their nets and bring it to the shore and the regional government pays for the disposal of the waste. This is a great initiative, but it can only have a small impact considering the scale of the problem. It can only be a first step. Much more decisive action is necessary to stop the litter pollution.

Marine littering is an enormous problem, not only in my home region. Every year about 10 million tonnes of plastic waste end up in the marine environment and cause tremendous problems.

Though plastic bags only make up a fraction of the plastic waste in the oceans, the numbers are still staggering. In the EU we use nearly 100 billion plastic bags every year. 89% are single-use bags and around 8 billion plastic bags end up in our nature and oceans each year.

While some Member States like Denmark and Finland have taken action and have reduced consumption to as little as four bags per person per year, in other countries little has been done to decrease plastic bag consumption and 450 single-use plastic bags are used per person every year.

Though Germany lies with the yearly consumption of approximately 70 bags per person well below EU average, there still is a lot of room for improvement. The differences are astonishing, but they also show that ambitious policies to reduce the use of plastic bags can be extremely effective, without causing major inconveniences for citizens.

Regardless of the different levels of consumption, single-use plastic bags are a common problem to all EU member states, and we therefore need a common EU approach. It is good that the Commission brought forward a proposal to reduce the use of plastic bags. Sadly the Commission did not propose any reduction targets or binding measures. The proposal is currently being discussed in the European Parliament. My Danish green colleague Margrete Auken MEP is the rapporteur on this file and she is suggesting an 80% reduction target and mandatory charging.

Making consumers pay for their carrier bags has proven very effective, for example in Ireland. Here plastic bag consumption dropped by 90% after a charge was introduced.

There are many alternatives available for single-use plastic bags like reusable bags made out of fabric, backpacks or shopping baskets.

Single-use plastic bags are a clear example of our unsustainable consumer-society where we throw away rather than reuse or recycle. Littering is not the only problem caused by this thoughtless approach. The production of the bags and other package waste uses resources and energy and in the end the plastic waste fills our waste dumps.

We need to re-think our consumption patterns in general. We need to avoid unnecessary resource use and focus on reducing and avoiding unnecessary packaging and rather re-use and re-cycle materials and products than throwing them away.

Getting rid of the enormous amount of unnecessary single-use plastic bags can only be the beginning. By reducing plastic waste we can save energy and resources and protect the environment without asking too much from consumers. So what are we waiting for?
Innovation has become a dynamic and complex process, and research has expanded beyond the realm of private enterprise. Business development now depends on researchers and cutting-edge firms sharing knowledge.

Open innovation is therefore essential for firms seeking to capitalise on new ideas and technologies. Partners in business and research must collaborate to develop new products and to encourage transfer of technology from the lab to the market. That is why stimulating an open innovation approach is one of the key aims of the Central Community project. Companies benefit from sharing their discoveries with others and taking advantage of synergies. While individual innovators can make important discoveries by themselves, when they look at what others are doing they can avoid unneeded duplication and benefit from knowing the state of the art in their field. And companies and researcher can benefit from sharing: researchers have new ideas and companies have the means to monetise them.

Innovation, product development and diffusion of innovative ideas can be carried out in parallel – and involve different communities of actors, such as suppliers, end users, researchers and the public. All these stakeholders can collaborate with the same final aim: bringing innovation from an idea to the market.

The Central Community project is setting up an online platform, specifically devoted to life science. The platform encourages collaboration, and provides an online meeting place where anyone involved in the life sciences can find partners to develop new products, processes and services. The platform facilitates commercial, technical and research collaboration, using both public and private funds. The Central Community platform makes the situation in the life sciences field more transparent, which can be a big help for small- and medium-sized enterprises seeking partners who can work with them in mutually beneficial collaboration.

The platform can answer requests from life science companies, which are always looking for new contacts to develop their business and their products. It allows operators to easily get in touch with companies with the same development needs and with the same desire for expansion.

The international approach of the project means that those using the platform can take advantage of the expertise and experiences of life-science sectors in different countries – where business support and business development policies are different. The platform will be promoted to life-science clusters and other organisations in Europe, but partners have the ambition to spread the project everywhere, eventually making it possible to address innovation in the life sciences as a worldwide endeavor.

www.central-community.eu
Disposing of Hazardous Waste Safely

By Professor Dr Orhan Ince, Istanbul Technical University

Is it possible to dispose of hazardous wastes while protecting the richest flora and fauna of Europe?

Turkey is a country that has critical, natural and biological reserves at the global level which has various kinds of ecosystems such as wetland, mountain, forest, coastal and marine.

Due to having geographical regions differ in climate and soil characteristics, our country has a high level of biodiversity richness and is a host of numerous types of flora and fauna. If it is compared with Europe, the fauna richness of Turkey can be understood better. It is known that, Europe has almost 12,500 plant species while only Anatolian Peninsula has about 11,000 plant species.

In addition, our country is characterized as one of the richest countries for endemic species in the Mediterranean region which has almost one third of this rich flora is endemic species.

Moreover, flora of Turkey has a substantial amount of medical and aromatic plants. Besides this, our country attracts attention through being a host for different kinds of animal population. After awareness of nature conservation started to pervade through the world in the 1960s, systematic studies have been started for nature protection in our country.

As it is known that Turkey is a developing country, and industrial activities have been raised in last 30-40 years. Preparation of development plans has caused the development of industries in a planned manner and given the priority to industrialization since 1963.

Because of an increasing population, rapid urbanization and industrialization, human activities cause pressure on environmental compartments. Thus, amount of wastes are increasing day by day and threatening the unique ecosystem of our country.

A material becomes waste when it is discarded and it may have a potential hazard to the human health or the ecosystem when improperly treated, stored, transported or disposed off. Unlike regular wastes, hazardous wastes are much more dangerous for ecosystems, due to their features such as toxicity, corrosivity, ignitability or reactivity.

Briefly, hazardous waste is a waste with characteristics that make it dangerous or potentially harmful to human health or the environment.

It should be managed all together with the social, political and economical aspects of the ecosystem instead of conventional treatment and disposal techniques because of its composition, constituents, physical form, fate and transport in the environment.

The total amount of hazardous wastes, which are produced from several industrial, commercial, agricultural or even from domestic activities, generated in Turkey was estimated as around 1 million tons per year. Waste materials have an increasing impact on the environment and this is due to the rapid growth in industry.

Disposal of hazardous wastes without giving harm to nature and to human health is the main aim of waste management. So, the treatment and elimination of hazardous pollutants is an important issue in Turkey and management of hazardous wastes including their disposal in environmental friendly ways is the first priority for protecting and preserving the ecology and biodiversity.

In our country, waste management has been the subject of a number of legal arrangements starting from the 1930s. According to the data obtained from Turkish Statistical Institute, only 7% of hazardous waste incinerated or land filled properly by İZAYDAŞ, which is the unique hazardous waste treatment facility in Turkey and 40% of the hazardous waste is recovered. Besides, rest of these types of wastes are dumped to the ecosystem and threaten not only natural habitat but also human health.

Environmental issues are being more important in Turkey as a result of increasing environmental awareness and legislations which are stricter nowadays, owing to the accession process of Turkey to the European Union (EU).

In this context, many arrangements about waste management as parts of environmental legislations are available for the protection and improvement of environment. Turkey has been party to the Basel Convention on Control of Trans-boundary Movement of Waste since 1994. The Regulation on the Control of Hazardous Wastes was prepared, based on the Environmental Law and the Basel Agreement with a view to establishing a hazardous waste management system, and it came into effect in 1995, and this Regulation was rearranged and harmonized with the EU Acquis in 2005.

So, waste problems are accepted and acknowledged as a priority for Turkey, and policies are being developed to overcome this problem.

Pollution both on land and at sea has been dangerous for biological reserves. In our country, increasing environmental sensitivity and applying proper legislation have been envisaged to solve these kinds of possible waste problems.

Also, in spite of the financing of waste disposal facilities requiring high costs, the Turkish government supports and encourages the private sector by means of built-operate, and built-operate-transfer methods.

Consequently, on one hand, high levels of biodiversity richness offers important opportunities for our country. On the other hand they impose great responsibility. Thus, it should be noted that, protecting this richness means protecting of natural resources. Particular importance must be given to this issue, so as to successfully convert this cultural richness into economic interests.

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Will the Marmara Sea Survive?  
The Struggle against Pollution

By Professor Dr Derin Orhon, Professor Emeritus, Istanbul Technical University, Turkey

On the border of two continents, Europe and Asia, the Marmara Sea is undeniably one of the most picturesque marine environments in the world. It offers unique natural attractions with many islands including the famous Princes’ Islands, tourist resorts and historical sites. Unfortunately, it is also under severe threat of pollution. Not so long ago, the shores of the Marmara Sea were decorated with quiet coves, beaches, small fishing villages and clusters of summer homes. During the last few decades, the rapid growth in Istanbul extended to the entire shoreline as residential areas, industrial zones, plants, and shipyards. The water body is now critically affected and subject to a multitude of wastewater discharges from all land-based sources, including the Istanbul Metropolitan area.

Alarming signals of eutrophication were given as early as 1995, in a modeling study carried out by the Water Quality Institute of Denmark. The findings of the study suggested that the quality of surface water could only be improved by advanced treatment securing effective control of nutrients in wastewaters. Similarly, in a comprehensive report prepared by a group of scientists for the Turkish Bar Association in 2007, it was argued that the Marmara Sea should not be used for wastewater discharges, due to rapid depletion of dissolved oxygen in the water body. Indeed, water quality measurements indicate now severe signs of pollution and eutrophication problems, causing more than 50 marine species to nearly become extinct. According to Yalçın Güven, representative of a local aquaculture co-operative, the number of fish species lost to pollution may be as high as 113. Turkish scientists recommend strict measures across the Marmara Sea to protect fish stocks and prevent more species from going extinct. Bayram Öztürk, president of the Turkish Marine Foundation further requests that the Marmara Sea and in particular, Princes’ Islands should have protection zones.

Marmara is the smallest sea in the world, in active exchange in the north with the Black Sea through the Bosphorus and in the south with the Aegean Sea through the historical Dardanelles. It is permanently and strongly stratified with totally different characteristics between the euphotic layer in the upper 30 m and the lower layer showing the typical properties of the Mediterranean. The Bosphorus, a romantic waterway, is also a strongly stratified narrow channel, with the upper layer carrying the low salinity outflow from the Black Sea and the bottom denser layer generated by the northerly, highly saline flow from the Mediterranean. Appreciable mixing occurs between the two layers along the Bosphorus. The mixing intensifies in the junction zone between the Bosphorus and the Marmara Sea, taking away a significant portion of the lower layer into the upper flow. This way, the lower layer is estimated to lose more than 40% of its flow back to the Marmara Sea while passing through the Bosphorus. This is critically important for evaluating the impact of pollution associated with Istanbul and the Black Sea.

Istanbul, a unique historical landmark and a major tourist destination in the world, is perhaps the oldest city in the world, in the light of 8000 year-old remains discovered during the excavations of the Marmaray tunnel underneath the Marmara Sea. Located along the northern shores of the Marmara Sea and the Bosphorus, it is also the largest city in Turkey, currently housing close to 14 million people, 18% of the total population in Turkey. The conceptual approach for wastewater management for Istanbul was first set forth, solely based on the significance attached to the mixing conditions of the receiving waters. Historically, the mixing and dilution potential was considered as a significant remedy for wastewater management; in the early 1970s, on the basis of the limited scientific data available at that time, a series of master plan studies concluded that all discharges made to the lower layer of the Bosphorus and the Marmara Sea would be transported to the Black Sea, without significant mixing and interference with the upper layer and consequently, with no detrimental effect on the water quality of the Marmara Sea. Accordingly, the metropolitan area was subdivided into separate wastewater drainage and collection zones ending at different discharge points with deep marine outfalls.

Deep sea outfalls for wastewater discharges, once quite popular in the US and in Europe, are all abandoned now in favor of appropriate treatment plants, also involving nutrient removal where necessary. Surprisingly, Istanbul still insists on keeping this obsolete practice. At present, the daily volume of wastewater generation in Istanbul is 3.1 million m3, according to the official
records; more than 70% of this wastewater flow is discharged to the Marmara Sea or to the Bosphorus through deep outfalls, without being subject to any treatment. This way, the lower layer of coastal marine environment receives on daily basis around 1100 tons of organic matter, 130 tons of nitrogen and 20 tons of phosphorus, aside from a wide spectrum of settleable solids, chemicals and hazardous materials, enough to incite and sustain a considerable level of pollution. A significant portion of this pollution load reaches the upper layer of the Marmara Sea by means of effective mixing between the upper and lower layers. From a scientific perspective, the most unsuitable location for wastewater disposal would undoubtedly be the mixing zone between the Bosphorus and the Marmara Sea. However, two major discharges with no treatment – Kadiköy and Yenikapi outfalls– accounting for around 40% of the total wastewater load in Istanbul are directly located in this mixing zone. They inevitably act as major contributors of pollution in the Marmara sea.

The Black Sea is also a significant polluter for the Marmara Sea. Consequently, the relative impact of the pollutant loads in the upper current in the Bosphorus as compared to local wastewater discharges should be given serious consideration for appropriate wastewater management programs. Monitoring studies indicated more than 30 tons of nitrogen and 9 tons of phosphorus are carried from the Black Sea on a daily basis in the upper current of the Bosphorus. However, the net input to the Marmara Sea is excessively higher, mainly because at least twice the volume of pollutants are imparted from the bottom layer, a mechanism triggered by intensive internal mixing at the Bosphorus-Marmara junction. This is a clear indication of nutrient accumulation in the bottom layer, presumably due to raw wastewater discharges in the mixing zone. In this way, a significant portion of pollutants are re-circulated back to the upper layer, explaining the alarming state of the water body, especially for lower oxygen profiles and high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus, the basic ingredients of eutrophication.

Nowadays, Istanbul and Turkey also discuss the “crazy and magnificent” project, involving a second Istanbul Channel between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea with the main purpose of diverting the extensive tanker traffic away from the Bosphorus. The major claim is to return the Bosphorus to its natural splendor without the risk and congestion of marine traffic. Although, the exact location is yet to be disclosed, the artificial canal will be around 45-50 km long, 400 m wide and 25 m deep and split the European side of Istanbul in two, creating this way a West Istanbul Island.

There is a great deal of controversy about this project: Most people argue that the project should not be regarded as a mere channel but as a massive infrastructure likely to attract people and create a smaller version of a new Istanbul. Melis Alpan, a journalist at Milliyet, calls the project a “disaster madness” likely to create unplanned growth with an urban development of at least 2.5 to 3 million people, exploiting the 30,000 hectares of adjacent land reserved for this purpose. It is also underlined that the project has no legal basis, mainly because the Metropolitan Plan promulgated in 2006 and slightly amended with the same basic framework in 2009 does not have any provision for it. It is further argued that the project will open the way for exceeding the population limit of 16 million people set by the same plan on the basis of environmentally sustainable land use planning for the city.

The scientific attitude toward the project is also overwhelmingly negative. Prof Cemal Saydam, a hydrobiologist at Hacettepe University, claims that the project will indeed be an ecological disaster for the Marmara Sea. He says that the channel will be another outlet for the polluted waters of the Black Sea. Its waters, rich in nutrients and dissolved oxygen will mix with the Marmara Sea water, accelerate primary growth, which will eventually sink, disintegrate and ultimately, disturb the oxygen balance in the water body, further reducing the existing critically low dissolved oxygen levels.

Obviously, a project of such magnitude with debatable consequences not only for the Marmara Sea but also for regional environment, should be thoroughly evaluated, also including social, economical and political aspects together with environmental and ecological issues. Environmental impact assessment (EIA) is clearly the most appropriate instrument for this comprehensive evaluation. While certainly a legal and scientific prerequisite, it is not clear whether a study of the EIA status will be implemented, in view of a recent controversial modification in the related regulation providing selected large projects exemptions from environmental impact evaluations. Regardless of all speculations, it is certain that the canal project cannot afford to remain “crazy”; it should prove itself environmentally sustainable beyond any scientific doubt, especially for the future of the Marmara Sea, before any further moves can be taken for its implementation.

In short, the Marmara Sea is suffocating and urgently needs an intelligent move for an effective action plan of pollution prevention to ensure its revival. Perhaps, the plan should primarily focus on growth management in view of the fact that environmental, ecological or social problems in the region will be easier to solve with fewer people. It should also prescribe a new wastewater management strategy for Istanbul as well as for other coastal areas also contributing to the pollution of the Marmara Sea. The existence of the two layer current system should no longer be considered as a major asset for future disposal strategy. The massive wastewater volumes discharged, should be also regarded as a resource for reuse and energy recovery.

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Air Pollution – the Importance of Information for Implementing Policies

By Hans Bruyninckx, Director, European Environment Agency

Air-related legislation in the EU aims to protect human health and the environment from pollution. But this legislation is not always fully implemented, or when it is implemented it may not always deliver the desired benefits.

The reasons behind such ‘implementation gaps’ were the subject of the Air Implementation Pilot project, an EEA study published last year which looked into the implementation of air quality legislation at a local level.

Air pollution remains an important issue in Europe. More than nine out of 10 city-dwellers in Europe are exposed to air pollutants above World Health Organization guidelines, according to our most recent Air Quality report. Several air quality standards are still regularly exceeded in Europe, even though some of these limits were established more than a decade ago. The most problematic pollutants are particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxides (NO2) and ozone (O3), which affect people’s life expectancy and quality of life.

Moreover, there is a growing body of scientific evidence that suggests air pollution is more harmful than previously thought. This was reinforced by a statement in October from the International Agency for Research on Cancer, which classified air pollution as carcinogenic. So the need to reduce the implementation gap is clear.

Better data informing better implementation

What could help close implementation gaps? This is the question we asked in 2012, when we initiated the Air Implementation Pilot project with the European Commission and 12 participating cities: Antwerp (Belgium), Berlin (Germany), Dublin (Ireland), Madrid (Spain), Malmö (Sweden), Milan (Italy), Paris (France), Ploiesti (Romania), Plovdiv (Bulgaria), Prague (Czech Republic), Vienna (Austria), and Vilnius (Lithuania).

Our findings demonstrate that information is at the centre of addressing the air pollution problem. The project looked at several areas of work, from keeping data on local emission sources and quantities (known as ‘emission inventories’), to administrative measures to manage air pollution, to the methods authorities use to inform the public. All stages depend on high quality air pollution data which can inform the decision-making by local authorities and policy-makers.

For instance, when compiling emission inventories some cities struggled with incomplete data. This has a knock-on effect on air quality modelling, which uses this data to build a better understanding of the impacts and effects of pollution. In some cases, modelling was also hampered by issues with other input data, for example meteorological data or city topography.

Ideally, cities and regions can learn from the successes of others in addressing air pollution, which would be easier if data was comparable. The study found that almost all cities participating in the study kept emissions inventories, but compiled them using different methodologies. Resolving this requires further exchange of experiences, better input data and more training and guidance, according to the experts we consulted.

Better information is not just useful for taking action in the future, but also for understanding the impact of actions already taken. For example, some city representatives said they were uncertain about how to evaluate the effectiveness of measures, and their costs and benefits – a situation which could be improved with better tools and guidance.

Of course, local administrations are not the only actors when it comes to air quality – the public can also make choices which have an effect on air quality and their exposure to pollutants. Here too, accessible, high quality information is crucial. The study found that most cities provide information on air quality to the public as required by legislation, mostly via dedicated air quality websites. However, these cities generally made little use of mass media, social media and new technologies such as smartphone applications, so there is a potential to increase engagement.

Taken as a whole, the results of this study underline the importance of having access to accurate information in addressing a dynamic, local issue like air pollution. Improving these processes may therefore improve air quality, ultimately leading to longer, healthier lives for many Europeans.

Moreover, air is not the only environmental issue which depends on high quality information – consider water quality, biodiversity or land use. Therefore the findings of this study may also be useful in addressing other areas of environmental governance.

Changing policies

The results of the EEA Air Pilot Implementation study fed into the European Commission’s review of air policy, which concluded late last year. The resulting European Clean Air Policy Package proposed by the Commission aims to ensure that countries comply with existing legislation by 2020. For the years beyond 2020, it proposes tighter limits to existing laws and new legislation. One focus of the package is improving air quality in cities and supporting research and innovation through the EU’s LIFE+ programme.

The European Commission estimates that the policy package will avoid 58,000 premature deaths and prevent nitrogen pollution in an area half the size of Romania, including a large swathe of protected areas. For these ambitious aims to become a reality, Europe will need to implement both current and new laws – and accurate information will continue to play a big part in this.
NOSTRA, towards a cross-border and sustainable governance of European Straits.

The NOSTRA project (Network Of Straits) brings together authorities around 8 European Straits; the project is led by Pas-de-Calais County Council and is funded by the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) within the INTERREG IVC program.

Based on the exchange of experiences and best practices, the project aims to analyze the governance tools necessary to ensure the sustainable development of eight straits (in France, England, Italy, Albania, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Estonia) and develop their functions as “bridges” between land and sea, around various themes such as economic development, transport, maritime safety and tourism.

Seeking to improve cross-border governance of straits, the objective is to enable local communities to improve their public policies at various levels (local, national and European) allowing both economic development and the conservation of biodiversity of these shared marine areas.

An exchange of practices to face common challenges

Straits combine different geographical characteristics; both terrestrial and marine areas, they are traffic junctions between two banks and all European straits, share certain common issues.

To cope with these challenges, some straits have implemented various innovative tools and experiences: three straits have established binational entities, others have signed agreements to give a formal framework for cooperation.

The NOSTRA project allows the sharing of these experiences among 16 partners who wish their territories to continue developing economically while respecting the marine and terrestrial environment and biodiversity.

Three phases are being undertaken:

• 2012: "See and learn"
The first year of the project was devoted to several study visits to be aware of various existing initiatives for the cross-border governance of straits.

• 2013: "Analyze and study"
Four workshops were held in order to identify and analyze innovative practices for sustainable development of the straits around four major themes: seascape characterization, sustainable tourism, transport / maritime security and economic development.

• 2014: "Think and act"
Three seminars will be organized to highlight the link between all the themes and identified good practices. A closing conference will be held in Brussels to present the recommendations and implementations plans based on the project results for each strait and for the whole partnership.

The year 2014, the last year of the project, however is not the end of the cooperation between the partners.

Born from the "European straits Initiative" launched jointly by the Pas-de-Calais County Council and the Kent County Council, the NOSTRA project is only the first step towards the recognition of the territorial specificities and challenges within the European Straits.

All information and identified good practices are available on the project website: http://www.nostraproject.eu/
The Problem with Environmental Policies built on Scientific Sand

By Christa Klaß MEP, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

European environmental politics is increasingly affected by ideology-driven debates. Nowhere else is this as clear as at the European Parliament. The impact of scientific findings on political decisions plays a key role in these debates. In the context of various topics, different parties refer to different arguments and sources. Unfortunately they increasingly abuse these arguments and sources for their own purposes and misinterpret them.

In particular, in environmental politics it is essential to include the people in the reasoning behind political decisions. The people are at the core of those decisions. As decision-makers we want to maintain our credibility and take the peoples’ concerns and needs seriously.

Therefore, we should only include those scientific findings in our decisions which completely fulfil two criteria: They must come from an objective research organization. And they must be well-founded and generally accepted among scientists. I would like to illustrate this challenge by three recent examples from the Environment Committee of the European Parliament.

Indirect land-use change – a contested formula

During the current legislative term, EU institutions discussed the phenomenon of indirect land-use change (iLUC) as a result of an increased demand for bio-fuels in Europe. It is based on the assumption that the increasing land-use change in Europe – more cultivable surface for the production of bio-fuels – leads to the clearance of rainforests in other parts of the globe in order to meet the food demand. This is said to have a negative impact on the global greenhouse gas emissions balance. Upon proposal by the European Commission, this complex phenomenon is supposed to be calculated by a scientifically highly contested and hypothetical formula (IIFPRI formula).

Even the authors of the underlying scientific study have admitted that the results of their research should currently not inform any far-reaching political decisions. Investments in bio-fuel production which have already been made would largely be put into question.

Only a few years ago, we had politically supported these investments in the context of European efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We would thus turn back the hands of time based on a contested formula.

This, however, is not compatible with the standards of a moderate and reliable environmental policy.

Biodegradable plastic bags – really biodegradable?

The directive to reduce the use of lightweight plastic bags is the second example. Here as well, we are building our environmental policy on shaky scientific grounds. In March, the European Parliament’s Environment Committee adopted a preferential treatment of so-called biodegradable materials although the actual degradability of these bags in a marine environment or in garden compost is scientifically highly contested.

There are researchers who state that, on the one hand, these bags don’t degrade faster than other bags and, on the other hand, they are not recyclable. The committee decided that biodegradable bags may be sold to the consumer for a considerably lower price than other plastic bags. This questionable political decision for a preferential treatment of such bags can have far-reaching consequences for investments in other plastics and in recycling technologies.

If it turns out that biodegradable bags are not more environmentally friendly than conventional plastic bags, whole branches of business would have been damaged for no reason. At the same time, it is self-evident that the environment will be affected. At the end of the day, we mustn’t forget the original aim of this piece of legislation: We want to reduce the quantity of plastic bags in our environment, notwithstanding their material.

Engineered nanomaterials – which concentration is measurable?

The third example is taken from the field of food labelling. The European Parliament recently dealt with the labelling of engineered nanomaterials.

One of the questions was, which percentage of food additives in nano format within food these additives must be labelled accordingly. This is called the threshold for the number size distribution regarding labelling requirements. Different research institutions came to different results and recommendations. Certain research bodies classified the proposed level of ten per cent as not measurable. Instead they pleaded for a threshold of 50 per cent.

Once more, different scientific findings contradicted each other. In this case, however, the European Parliament decided in a quite clever way. The members of the environment committee reacted to the uncertainty around the ten per cent threshold and agreed on the safer approach of a 50 per cent threshold. In the event of more stable scientific evidence, further political decisions can be made at a later stage. This would be rather problematic the other way round.

The examples demonstrate how dangerous it is to build political decisions on scientific sand. It is very difficult to reverse the economic and ecological consequences of over-hasty decisions.

In any case, our citizens are the sufferers of wrong decisions – whether it concerns their lifestyle in general, their health and not least their jobs and additional costs. This conclusion, however, does not mean that I call for more reluctance when it comes to decision-making. Yet in a more and more technically complex living environment we need to proceed politically in a highly sensible way.

More than ever before, we should build our environmental policies on a stable foundation. This also means that we should take the time we need. Legislation that builds on scientific findings which turns out not to be sustainable is poison for the faith of all stakeholders in our work.

We politicians aren’t experts ourselves. But one should expect that we let correct and objective evidence inform our work and that we don’t fall for ideologists. Science itself should never be the object of policies, but only the backbone.
The HerMan-Project: Moving from conservation to management

Moving from conservation to management is the main purpose of the EU project called HerMan. HerMan? What does it stand for? It is the acronym for “Management of Cultural Heritage in the Central Europe Area”. This project takes place then in the centre of Europe, involving nine cities, regions and knowledge institutions from four different countries. It is part of the Central Europe Programme (www.central2013.eu), which partly funds it with the European Regional Development Fund. The total budget reaches about 2 million euros. The project partners are working together during two and a half years, from July 2012 until December 2014.

The Central Europe reveals a rich and diverse cultural heritage. “Moving from conservation to Management” captures the main intention of the HerMan Project: to increase the bases of knowledge and expertise in the cultural heritage management of the Central Europe Region. Concurrently, the Project Partners have defined three different objectives that facilitate the principal goal of improving the management and valorisation of representative cultural heritage. The first objective is to jointly develop and test management strategies, models, procedures, and financial schemes. The second objective is to identify, adapt, and create innovative services and functions for under-exploited cultural heritage assets. These services and functions are to protect and promote the assets. Finally, the third objective is to strengthen the management capacities of the partner organisations.

Who are the HerMan partners? To complete the Project successfully, the Lead Partner, represented by the Municipality of Eger (Hungary), is assisted by the Municipalities of Lublin (Poland), Ravenna (Italy) and Regensburg (Germany); by the Provinces of Ferrara and Treviso (Italy); and by the organisations of Gyula Forster National Centre for Cultural Heritage Management in Budapest (Hungary), IRM Institute of Urban Development in Cracow (Poland) and Marco Polo System in Venice (Italy).

The outputs and the experience of the HerMan Project concern in the first place the project partners. Nevertheless, HerMan intends also to provide solutions to other European cities. The project’s final conference will take place in Regensburg at the end of 2014.

All official outputs and background information as well as contact details are to be found at the project website www.herman-project.eu. There you can also subscribe to the project’s newsletter.
Climate Change Issues and the Need for Growth in Greece

By Yannis Maniatis, Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate Change

Climate change has been impacting on a number of weather conditions, ranging from dangerous global warming to rising sea levels, as a result of melting polar glaciers, while the results of temperatures increasing are quite evident with more frequent storms and floods.

The factors mentioned above are believed to seriously affect the integrity of ecosystems and biodiversity in general, and more specifically water resources, agricultural crops and food supply, as well as a number of vital sectors such as industry, transport, public health and infrastructure. Data from the most recent scientific findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirm negative effects on various vital sectors of our societies.

Regarding Greece, tackling climate change and planning towards a sustainable low-carbon economy is one of the key priorities of the government and our Ministry.

Climate change is predicted to have significant negative impacts on many fields of activities in the country, and on various aspects of the natural ecosystems and socio-economic system of Greece; for example on biodiversity loss, species and habitat range shifts, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, transport, activities in coastal areas and the built environment in urban centers, mainly due to increased temperature, drought, extreme weather events and rising sea levels.

According to specific climate change studies reported for Greece, the effects will lead to reductions in productivity, capital loss and additional costs as a damage repair. The cost of reducing emissions and adapting to climate change for the Greek economy is estimated to be around 500 billion euros by 2100, which, if no measures are taken, may rise to almost 700 billion euros.

A cost-benefit analysis indicates a clear necessity for mitigation policy versus no action, and benefit from an adaptation policy. The findings also support the case for action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the objectives of the EU and the need to initiate procedures to determine long-term strategy for adaptation. As long as future examples of extreme climate impacts are excluded, both mitigation and adaptation policies warrant a positive result against such eventualities and therefore, their feasibility is justified.

Shipping and tourism sectors are of paramount significance for our country and thus, Greece focuses on “Blue Growth”, which is the long-term strategy to support integrated sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors. It recognizes that seas and oceans are drivers for both Greece and the EU, possessing great potential for innovation and growth. Integrated Maritime Policy contributes to achieving the goals of the “Europe 2020” strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The Hellenic Presidency will explore ways to address the EU “Limassol Declaration” and implement appropriate suitable management, prevention and adaptation practices, in order to enhance the resilience of coastal areas, marine ecosystems and maritime activities, which can result both in growth and employment.

The Mediterranean region, where Greece is situated, is bordered by over twenty countries and a large part of the Mediterranean Sea remains outside national jurisdiction. As a result, co-operation on issues such as climate change and environment is vital in order to manage maritime activities, tackle climate impacts, protect the marine environment and fight pollution in the Mediterranean Sea region. During the Hellenic Presidency, we are striving for an international ministerial meeting for the Environment & Climate Change, in Athens, in co-operation with the “Union for the Mediterranean”.

The current difficult economic period seems prima facie to create obstacles for securing the funds required to implement mitigation and adaptation policies. However, the pace at which these policies are utilized could accelerate a faster exit from the economic crisis and lead to a new model of development. Its adoption, rather than getting stalled by the current acute financial problem, could substantially contribute to its solution.

The social dimension of climate change impacts deserves further study, particularly in relation to issues of increasing poverty and migration, since the effects of climate change and policy responses will be more pronounced for low-income groups of citizens, due to the fact that the latter do not have the necessary resources to address problems generated by climate change, nor to fund emission reduction measures and adaptation.

For Greece, actions to address climate change must involve a change of the current growth model towards a sustainable, green and low-carbon economy, through the use of renewable resources, energy efficiency, and innovative technology. The development of this model should be based on the horizontal co-ordination of mitigation policies and adaptation in all fields but mainly into those of energy, clean technology, industry, biodiversity agriculture, tourism and transport.
Cleantech Incubation Europe
In Cleantech Incubation Europe (CIE) we bring together best practices of supporting policies on clean tech incubation across Europe: what policies (strategies, structures and processes) are most effective in enabling and supporting cleantech incubation at a regional level?

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Water as a Human Right and Economic Good: Policy Challenges for Europe

By Philippe Cullet, Professor of Environmental Law, SOAS, University of London

Europe has historically been at the forefront of providing sufficient safe water to every person. From the second half of the nineteenth century, the state progressively took over much of responsibility to provide water and sanitation services. One of the primary rationales for the massive investments in the necessary infrastructure to deliver water was public health improvement but this happens to coincide with what we would expect states to do to realise the human right to water.

Over the past few decades, an increasing number of international legal instruments have included the human right to water, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 and the UN General Assembly Resolution 64/292 of 2010. Further, at the national level, a number of countries in the South have recognised either judicially or constitutionally the existence of the right that is now firmly enshrined in their legal frameworks. The leadership position of these countries is yet to be reflected effectively in Europe. This is not to say that pressure has not been building in Europe in this direction. Recently, the 2014 European Citizens’ Initiative signed by nearly 1.9 million persons has called on the European Commission to implement the human right to water and sanitation in European law.

It is also a human right and public water argument that captured the imagination of Italian voters who voted against water privatisation in the 2011 referendum. While Europe has not acted with much haste to implement the human right to water, it has been involved in much policy development in the water sector over the past two decades. These policy reforms are multi-pronged but revolve around certain key basic principles. The starting point is that water is scarce. This environmental concern for scarcity provides the basis for suggesting that water needs to be used more ‘efficiently’. This has provided the basis for suggesting a new understanding of the nature of water. While water was seen until the 1980s mostly as a common resource held by states in trust for humankind in view of its link with human survival and as a source of life in general, the mainstream policy consensus has been since then that water must be seen as an economic good.

One of the consequences of regarding water as a commodity is that it needs to be priced for all its uses. This is, for instance, reflected at Article 9 of the Water Directive (2000/60/EC). The consequence of this policy shift has been an increasing focus on the contribution of private sector actors in water management, in particular towards privatisation of water services.

In practice, there have thus been two separate trends in the water sector in the past two decades. On the one hand, the human right to water has been increasingly formalised. On the other hand, Europe has pushed at home and abroad for a complete change of perspective on water that turns it primarily into an economic good. In a context where hardly anyone would openly argue that there is no human right to water, many initiatives have been taken to try to reconcile the human right to water with the conception of water as a privately held economic good. This has led to the mainstreaming of the view that the human right to water is a right to ‘access’ water that is ‘affordable’.

The link between affordability and the human right to water ensures that the same water that is seen as a commodity also contributes to the realisation of the human right to water. The limits of this strategy are becoming increasingly evident in Europe and in the South.

In the South, the inappropriateness of policies that try to link privatisation with the human right to water is being increasingly challenged. India provides an interesting example since the human right to water has been firmly recognised by the higher judiciary while a multiplicity of attempts to commercialise or privatise water services have also been proposed. In Delhi, where pilot privatisation projects have been implemented since 2012, the new government elected in December 2013 decided that it was time to break new ground. It decided to abandon policies that are based on the idea everyone must pay for water apart from the very poor who can be granted ‘lifeline tariffs’. Rather, starting from the idea that the right to water is a universal entitlement and in a context where the majority of the population is poor, the government provided that everyone should get 166 litres per day of free water. This fits with a human right commitment that calls on government to provide ‘sufficient’ water, not just for survival but also for a decent life.

Europe led the way for many decades in providing the realisation of a sufficient amount of safe water for everyone to lead a decent life. It must neither foster policies that may threaten such gains at home nor promote policies abroad that are not in tune with the realities on the ground in the South. Water is too fundamental a human right for policymakers to experiment with it.
Nine European organizations from five European countries have launched the project “URBAN_WFTP – Introduction of the Water Footprint (WFTP) approach in urban areas to monitor, evaluate and improve the water use”.

This CENTRAL EUROPE project focuses on local water management in urban areas in order to improve currently used technologies and to integrate innovative tools for monitoring and managing citizens’ water use, water networks and wastewater treatment systems.

To achieve these goals the Water Footprint approach represents an opportunity for better water management and use of water. The Water Footprint approach in urban areas is structured in three levels. The first one describes the water flows into and out of the city and thus allows a global assessment of the city’s Water Footprint. On the second level the city is subdivided into areas of similar land use types. This level allows identifying Water Footprint hotspots. The third and most detailed level assesses the Water Footprint on the basis of separate buildings. This final model supports a better understanding of the influence of local policies on water use. Additionally the Virtual Water of products which are consumed in the city will be addressed. In so called Urban Water Footprint Labs this Water Footprint approach will be tested in three urban areas in Vicenza (Italy), Innsbruck (Austria) and Wroclaw (Poland). This enables an assessment of the effectiveness of the approach, the comparison of the achieved results and the creation of a Central Europe area which pays special attention to urban water management.

The URBAN_WFTP project anticipates results on how the Water Footprint approach will enable municipalities to better define environmentally friendly policies, plans and strategies.

For additional information: www.urban-wftp.eu

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Project Partnership

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The Swedish Maritime Code and the Implementation of International Treaties

By Måns Jacobsson, Former Director, International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds

Swedish legislation in the field of maritime law has since the late 1900s been developed in close co-operation with the other Nordic countries. As a result, there is a considerable degree of uniformity between the Maritime Codes of Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway. The parts of the Codes that govern the carriage of goods and chartering of vessels are actually practically identical.

As a result of the similarity of maritime legislation between the Nordic countries, judgements rendered by the courts in one of these countries are normally taken into account by the courts in the other countries. Important judgements are reported in an annual publication, Nordic judgements in maritime matters (Nordiske Dommer i sjøfartsanliggender).

The present Swedish legislation in this field is contained in the Maritime Code of 1994, as amended (sjölagen). This Code, which is divided into 23 chapters and contains some 400 sections, does not only comprise provisions of a civil or commercial law character, but also provisions in the field of administrative, procedural, criminal and public international law. The Code deals inter alia with registry of ships, ship mortgages, arrest of vessels, responsibility and competence of ship masters, civil liability in general and limitation of liability, collision liability, liability for oil pollution, carriage of goods and passengers, salvage, general average and maritime courts as well as criminal liability for negligence in sea traffic and for navigation of vessels under the influence of alcoholic beverages. Some areas are, however, dealt with in separate acts, for example, legislation concerning the crew, maritime safety and marine insurance.

Maritime law is of an international character and, as is the case for many other countries, in most areas, Swedish legislation is based on international treaties developed within the United Nations system, mainly under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). In recent years legislative acts adopted by the European Community/ European Union have also had an impact on Swedish maritime law.

Contrary to what is the case in most countries in continental Europe, Swedish ratification of an international treaty does not result in the treaty becoming part of Swedish domestic law, but it must be incorporated into national law by a legislative act to have effect domestically. Those parts of a treaty which affect individuals, legal persons or Swedish authorities are then in most cases rewritten in a Swedish statute using the technique in respect of systematics and language normally used in Swedish domestic legislation. This is also the case as regards treaties in the field of maritime law to which Sweden is a party. Examples of how certain maritime treaties have been implemented in Sweden are given below.

The 1976 Convention on Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims, as amended by the 1996 Protocol thereto, has been implemented through Chapters 9 and 12 and the 1989 Convention on Salvage through Chapter 16. Chapter 4 on Arrest of Vessels in International Legal Relations is implementing the 1952 Convention for the unification of certain rules relating to arrest of sea-going ships.

The International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage, 1992 (1992 Civil Liability Convention) and the International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage, 2001 (Bunkers Convention) have been implemented by the insertion of substantive provisions corresponding to those in the respective Convention in Chapters 10 and 10a of the Maritime Code.

An important part of the Maritime Code is Chapter 13 on Carriage of General Cargo. Sweden is a party to the International Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules relating to Bills of Lading as amended by the 1968 Protocol thereto (the Hague-Visby Rules), and previous Swedish legislation was based on these Rules. In the Bill relating to the new (1994) Maritime Code, the Government proposed that Sweden should ratify the United Nations Convention on the Carriage of Goods by Sea, 1978 (Hamburg Rules), but that the ratification should not take place until the Hamburg Rules had received a relatively wide ratification of Sweden’s main trading partners. The Government was authorised by the Swedish parliament to decide when ratification should take place. The content of Chapter 13 was brought in line with the Hamburg Rules to the extent possible without bringing the legislation in conflict with the Hague-Visby Rules. Since the condition of ratification of the Hamburg Rules by Sweden’s main trading partners has not been fulfilled, Sweden has not ratified the Hamburg Rules, and Sweden remains a party to the Hague-Visby Rules.

It should be noted that Sweden can no longer become a party to the Hamburg Rules, since they contain provisions relating to jurisdiction and enforcement of judgements, and such matters fall within the exclusive competence of the European Union after the adoption of Regulation No 44/2001/EC on jurisdiction and enforcement of judgements in civil and commercial matters.

As regards the carriage of passengers and their luggage, Sweden is not a party to the 1974 Athens Convention on the subject, or to the Convention as amended
by the Protocols of 1990 or 2002 thereto. However, Chapter 15 of the Maritime Code is to a large extent based on the 1974 Athens Convention, and the limitation of liability of the carrier is under the Chapter set at the amounts laid down in the 1990 Protocol. It should be noted that the 1990 Protocol is not in force and that the 2002 Protocol will enter into force on 23 April 2014.

Although Sweden has not ratified the 1974 Athens Convention as amended by the 2002 Protocol (2002 Athens Convention), the 2002 Convention has de facto largely become part of the Swedish legal system through EU Regulation No 392/2009 on the liability of carriers of passengers by sea in the event of accidents, which applies from 31 December 2012. This Regulation implements the 2002 Athens Convention and the (non-binding) Reservations and Guidelines for the Implementation of the Athens Convention adopted by the IMO Legal Committee on 19 October 2006 (cf. IMO Assembly Resolution A.24/Res.988). The Regulation differs from Chapter 15 of the Maritime Code mainly by imposing a more onerous liability on the carrier and providing for higher limitation amounts. Where Chapter 15 is at variance with the Regulation, the Regulation will prevail.

The Swedish Government is considering a proposal that Sweden should ratify the 2002 Athens Convention and is in that context examining the amendments to Chapter 15 required in the light of the 2009 Regulation and the Convention.

Directive 2009/20/EC on insurance of shipowners for maritime claims was implemented into Swedish domestic law by provisions in Chapter 7 of the Maritime Code which contains general provisions on liability and on compulsory insurance.

Two treaties adopted under the auspices of IMO have been implemented in a different manner outside the Maritime Code, namely the International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage, 1992 (1992 Fund Convention) and the 2003 Protocol thereto establishing a Supplementary Fund. In a separate act, the Act on Compensation from the International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds, it is provided that the substantive articles of these treaties apply directly in Sweden, and the relevant articles are annexed to the Act.

A special concept in maritime law is that of general average, which in simple terms is a form of mutual insurance whereby all those who have a financial risk in a maritime adventure contribute proportionally to the loss sustained by one or more of the interested parties in the event that a sacrifice is made or an expenditure is incurred in order to safeguard the maritime adventure for the remaining participants. The distribution of the losses are dealt with in the York-Antwerp Rules, a set of provisions adopted by the Comité Maritime International (CMI), an international non-governmental organisation. Chapter 17 of the Maritime Code implements the 1994 version of the York-Antwerp Rules by a provision to the effect that the significance and importance of general average is governed by those Rules unless otherwise agreed.

The future development of the Swedish maritime legislation will to a large extent depend on external factors. It is possible that the present high degree of similarity between the legislation in the Nordic countries will gradually diminish for several reasons. It appears that Nordic co-operation in the field of maritime law is not nowadays given the same political importance as previously. The European Union has in recent years become more active in that field of law, and the fact that three of the Nordic countries are members of the Union whereas the forth is not may play a role in this regard. It should also be recognised that today the maritime policy interests of the Nordic countries may not always coincide.

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Navigating Through Stormy Waters

The Greek Ship-Financing Market:

By Dr Ilias Visvikis and Ioannis Alexopoulos

In December 2013, according to Lloyd’s List Intelligence, Greek shipowners maintained a leading position in the international maritime industry controlling a fleet with a total Deadweight (Dwt) capacity of 243 million tonnes. Japanese, Chinese and German interests followed the ranking, controlling 240, 152 and 134 million Dwt, respectively. According to the latest data by the Greek Shipping Co-operation Committee, Greek shipowners control 3,677 vessels, representing 22.2% of tanker and 16.4% of dry-bulk global Dwt capacity, whilst the average age of the Greek controlled fleet stands at 10.2 years, as against 20.3 years in 2000. The above figures clearly indicate that over the last decade, the Greek shipping community’s needs for financial resources and capital have increased tremendously as the Greek controlled fleet has expanded, modernized and diversified into new specialised maritime sectors.

During the period 2000 to 2008, the Greek shipowners’ capital needs were largely catered for by European shipping banks. UK, German, French, Dutch and Greek banks largely supported Greek shipowners’ activities in the international shipping arena. Notable examples are Royal Bank of Scotland, Deutsche Schiffsbank, HSH Nordbank and other European banks, which set up offices in Athens and built up sizeable Greek shipping portfolios. Since September 2008, however, events such as Lehman Brothers’ collapse, the sub-prime crisis and the on-going sovereign debt crisis in Europe, created severe liquidity problems in the European banking system. Furthermore, European shipping banks were also faced with sharply deteriorating conditions in the shipping markets.

During these past five years (the post-Lehman collapse period), the Greek shipowning community found itself in a challenging ship-financing environment. European shipping banks, which traditionally supported the Greek shipowners, initiated a significant deleveraging, as most of these did not have adequate capital to properly support the capital-intensive shipping business. A number of well known, traditional lenders to the Greek shipping market are in the process of either sharply reducing their shipping portfolio or exiting the ship-financing market. Regrettably, the resulting gap in the ship-financing market has not been adequately covered, as there have been few new shipping banks entering the market.

In addition to the challenges in the ship-financing front, Greek shipowners, in the same way as all the other players in the industry, were faced with a sharp (and prolonged) correction in freight rates and asset values in the traditional shipping sectors. Greek principals were quick to respond, either by committing additional capital or by successfully entering into debt restructuring agreements with their lenders, or a combination of the two. With bank lending becoming extremely difficult and more expensive to obtain, Greek shipowners investigated and successfully tapped a number of alternative capital sources for their shipping projects.

On the debt side, a number of Greek shipowners relied on Export Credit Agencies (ECA), such as Korea Trade Insurance Corporation (KSure), Garanti Institututet for Eksportkredit (GIEK) of Norway, the Export-Import Bank of Korea (KEXIM) and other agencies. Other Greek shipping companies with a solid corporate structure, such as Navios, Gas Log and Eletson, successfully tapped the US high yield bond market whilst others, such as Ocean Rig, tapped the US Term Loan B market (senior term loans extended by institutional investors in the US).

On the public equity side, the US capital markets played an important role as Greek shipping companies that were already listed, successfully raised additional capital through repeated follow-on offerings. Furthermore, Dynagas successfully completed its IPO in the US in 2013. The Norwegian Over-the-Counter (OTC) market also attracted interest for Greek shipping companies and Dorian LPG successfully raised capital from this financing environment.

On the private equity side, Greek shipowners witnessed the “invasion” of private equity funds, primarily from the US. A number of these funds joined forces with shipowners to form Joint Ventures (JVs), which have invested money in modern tonnage at attractive prices. The timing for a number these JVs (such as Oceanbulk – Oaktree, Costamare – York Capital, Poseidon – Kelso) is rather appropriate.

Overall, maybe because of the sheer size of the Greek market or the traditional and conservative Greek shipping (family) approach, Greek shipowners fared well. Many of them took advantage of the attractive, historically low ship asset values to expand and renew their fleet and, in a growing number of cases, to enter into specialised shipping sectors, such as the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), drill ships, offshore, and other. Especially in the LNG sector, Greek shipowners are already playing a leading role controlling a considerable share the global LNG fleet.

The problem with the prevailing Greek ship-financing environment is that most shipping banks that are still able to lend, tend to go after the same (large) Greek shipowners, who as a result also enjoy decent margins. The small and medium sized shipowners, on the other hand, irrespective of their track record, find it increasingly more difficult to raise financing for their projects. The fact that the Greek banks that used to cater to the mid-sized / smaller owners, have effectively stepped out of the market (due to their liquidity issues) has not helped matters.

As a summary, the difficulties in the European banking industry have had a transformational impact on Greek shipping. In view of this new reality, a number of Greek shipowners transformed their traditional shipping set-ups into well structured, transparent and investor friendly shipping corporate entities. This has allowed them to tap alternative capital sources for their long-term ship-financing needs and successfully adapt to the challenging ship-financing landscape.

Dr. Ilias Visvikis is Associate Professor and Director of Executive and Professional Development at the World Maritime University. Ioannis Alexopoulos is Director of Shipping Financier, Eurofin S.A.
Accessible Tourism – the Future of Tourism in Europe

By Ivor Ambrose, Managing Director, European Network for Accessible Tourism – ENAT

Everyone enjoys a holiday – you would think – but it is unfortunately still the case that many would-be tourists in Europe don’t get the chance and freedom of choice to go where they please, due to the simple fact that tourism offers, venues and transportation are not made to be accessible for all.

The world is changing and a large numbers of visitors are getting older. Let’s face it: there are 150 million senior citizens in Europe and many want to travel with their families and friends. Meanwhile, the majority of tourism providers are falling behind, both in terms of fulfilling their statutory obligations to provide accessible environments and but also by missing the new business opportunities in the growing accessible tourism market.

80 million people in Europe have a disability and with people living longer, this number will continue to rise, despite healthcare improvements. The accessible tourism market in Europe has an estimated worth of around 89 Billion Euros. Tourism destinations, suppliers and transport providers need to gear up.

Travel is made difficult – or even impossible – firstly, by a lack of information about the accessibility one can expect at the destination. Most travel websites don’t carry information about roll-in showers, accessible rooms, access to attractions and where to find the nearest accessible toilet. It may sound a bit basic and simple – and to some extent, it is!

In the UK, there are 8,000 hotels and B & Bs that publish standardised accessibility information on their websites. Amazingly, they get 26% more bookings than websites that do not carry this kind of information. But think about it. Many visitors want to be better informed about access before they book. It shows respect from the owner and it gives confidence to the customer.

ENAT – the European Network for Accessible Tourism was founded in 2008 as a non-profit association of tourism businesses, public agencies, NGOs and educational institutes to help identify and promote best practices in accessible tourism. We give our members guidance and support to help them to become accessible for all. From our Head Office in Brussels and Secretariat in Athens we are active throughout Europe and in other continents as the only tourism support association dedicated to developing and promoting tourism accessibility at the international level.


With 200 members in over 30 countries we are working with key players including the UNWTO, European Commission, the International Social Tourism Organisation, Sustainable Tourism International and progressive National Tourist Boards such as Catalonia Tourism, Cyprus Tourism Organisation, Tourism Flanders, VisitEngland, Veneto Region and VisitParisRegion to share good practice and develop market intelligence, policies and training tools for the tourism sector. Fundamentally, we are helping to bring about a change of attitude in the tourism industry, showing that guests of all ages and abilities can be part of every tourism segment and that Accessible Tourism for All is vital to any socially responsible and sustainable tourism destination.

To find out more, please visit our website at: www.accessibletourism.org or email us at: enat@accessibletourism.org

ENAT – Working together to make Tourism in Europe Accessible for All
Clean Shipping: Things are Moving

By Gesine Meissner MEP, Member, Committee on Transport and Tourism

The main issue for ships operating in German waters will be as from next year the extremely low sulphur limits of 0.10% as these waters are part of the Sulphur Emission Control Areas (SECAs). Heavy fuel oil which is used for international shipping contains 2,700 times more sulphur than road fuel. Sulphur emissions have a major health impact for humans living at the coast and they also cause environmental problems as acid rain affecting soil and water. Therefore the International Maritime Organization (IMO) introduced SECAs for the densely populated areas of the North Sea, the English Channel and the Baltic.

Ship owners warned that there won’t be viable alternatives to heavy fuel oil available to comply with the low sulphur limits required in SECAs. The use of low sulphur fuel is the easiest solution although shipowners fear there won’t be enough of such fuel on the market. And it is more expensive than heavy fuel oil.

Ships could also filter the sulphur emissions by using so-called scrubbers which chemically bond sulphur dioxide. But this technology is disputed as there have been incidents with scrubbers catching fire. There are also concerns about the weight of the system and problems of retrofitting ships. But it might become a cost-effective alternative to low sulphur fuel.

The most promising solution, though, are ships not propelled by oil anymore. Methanol is tested as an alternative but mostly Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) is described to be the ship fuel of the future. LNG reduces sulphur emissions by between 90 and 95%.

Also nitrogen oxide emissions are extremely low and LNG’s lower carbon content leads to a reduction CO2 emissions by 20 to 25%. Current LNG prices in Europe and the USA suggest that LNG could be offered at a price comparable to heavy fuel oil.

In the European Parliament we intensively discuss LNG as a cleaner fuel for shipping. I very much welcomed at the beginning of last year the Commission’s proposal on the deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure which was accompanied by an LNG action plan. This legislation is crucial to break the current chicken and egg situation. Ship owners don’t invest in LNG-ships because there are only few ports with LNG bunkering facilities. Ports don’t invest in LNG infrastructure as there is only little customer demand.

Although the Council was very reluctant on binding infrastructure targets in general we found an agreement which will allow circulation of LNG-fueled ships throughout the TEN-T Core Network within the next decade. The Trans-European Transport Core Network comprises 329 key seaports in the EU. But not every port must build its proper infrastructure.

We should consider actual market needs and existing bunkering points to build up the LNG network. We need a flexible and market-driven approach also taking into account mobile supply solutions by LNG-trucks.

Apart from the legislative work in the European Parliament on cleaner shipping I also saw some creative initiatives in my North-German constituency. Beluga Skysails, a shipping company from Bremen, attracted some attention by operating the world’s first commercial container cargo ship co-powered by wind energy. MS Beluga Skysails was partially powered by a 160-square-metre, computer-controlled kite. It was launched in 2007 with a first passage from the northern German port of Bremerhaven to Guanta in Venezuela. While the kite was in use, the ship saved an estimated 10-15% of fuel. The kite did not become widely accepted and Beluga Shipping went bankrupt a few years later.

But we need to think out of the box for innovation in shipping.

Ship owners are still suffering from the economic crisis, as amounts of cargo transported around the world remain lower than before 2008. Therefore they are less likely to invest into alternative propulsion systems.

Nevertheless Scandlines, a ferry company operating in the Baltic Sea, is thinking about a Zero-Emission Ship. It has been designed by FutureShip, a subsidiary of the German-Norwegian classification company DNV-GL. The Zero-Emission Ship could be deployed by 2017 on the ferry service linking Puttgarden (Germany) and Rødby (Denmark). This service transports passengers, cars and trains on a 19km long passage over the Fehmarn Belt with departures every 30 minutes.

The propulsion of the Zero-Emission ferry is based on liquid hydrogen. On-board wind turbines can also contribute to propulsion when possible. Solar panels on the roof feed additional electricity into the electrical board system. Excess on-board electricity is stored in batteries for peak demand. Total energy needs are reduced by optimizing hull lines, propeller shape, ship weight and procedures in port. This ship would produce neither CO2 nor sulphur and nitrogen emissions. Maybe too good to be true?
Unlocking growth through local and regional rail

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www.citizensrail.org/potential

LANCASHIRE (UK)
Local authorities have created a new station building in Burnley as a hub for the community. “Ambassadors” based at the station undertake outreach work to introduce students, ethnic minorities and socially excluded groups to traveling by rail – broadening their economic prospects.

PAYS DE LA LOIRE (FR)
Citizens’ Rail is helping to rescue a line blighted by infrequent trains and very low passenger numbers. A “beach train” on summer weekends in 2013 took passengers from rural inland areas to the coast, improving people’s quality of life and boosting tourism revenue. The concept proved hugely popular, leading to more than 5,000 extra journeys being made. The “Beach train” returns for an extended 2014 season.

DEVON (UK)
Through additional services, large scale marketing campaigns, community engagement and improvements to stations, Citizens’ Rail is helping the storm-struck Riviera Line to bounce back stronger than ever. The aim is to replicate the success of other branch lines in Devon and Cornwall, where similar tactics have increased passenger numbers by 90%.
Making Sure the New EU Ship Recycling Regulation Works

By Ingvild Jannsen, Policy Advisor and Founder of the NGO Shipbreaking Platform

The NGO Shipbreaking Platform has actively contributed to the legislative process which in June 2013 ended with an agreed text for a new EU Regulation on Ship Recycling. The Regulation entered-into-force on 30 December last year and will be applicable within five years. However, unless an economic incentive is added to it, the registration of European ships under flags of convenience (FOCs) will allow ship owners to easily circumvent the new rules and continue dumping their toxic ships in substandard facilities. Reflagging has always been a convenient way for ship owners to circumvent laws enforced by flag states and a regulation based only on the voluntary registration under a European flag will not have the promised impact.

Each year, the NGO Shipbreaking Platform publishes a list of ships dismantled globally. In 2013, we recorded 1,213 scrapped vessels. More than half of these were sold to substandard beaching facilities in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. South Asia has become a preferred dumping ground for end-of-life ships as environmental, safety and labour rights standards are poorly enforced there. In South Asia, ships full of toxics such as asbestos, lead, PCBs and heavy metals are broken down on tidal mudflats by unskilled migrant workers, many of them children. The number of fatal accidents due to explosions or falling iron plates prompted the ILO to label shipbreaking in South Asia one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. Many more workers die of cancer related diseases due to the lack of adequate protective equipment. The hazardous wastes also ravage coastal ecosystems and have killed or devastated dozens of aquatic species, destroying with this the livelihoods of surrounding fishing communities.

Cheap labour and serious infrastructural deficiencies are what drives the toxic ships to developing countries. Ship owners sell their vessels to South Asian breakers for considerably greater profit than if they were to sell to clean and safe recycling facilities. Last year, approximately 40 percent of the ships scrapped on beaches in South Asia were EU-owned. Greece remains the worst European toxic ship dumper, closely followed by Germany. Owners in these countries disposed a record-high 80 percent of their end-of-life ships in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Comparatively, Japanese owners sent 43 percent of their ships to South Asia, whilst Chinese owners in vast majority opted for nationally available ship recycling capacity.

Once applicable, the EU Ship Recycling Regulation will only allow ships registered under the flag of an EU Member State to be dismantled in facilities that meet the requirements set out in the Regulation. It will be the responsibility of the European Commission to list these facilities. The Regulation disqualifies the beaching method and will only allow for downstream waste management that effectively meets European standards. Shipbreaking yards in South Asia will clearly not appear on the EU list of approved facilities. Still, selling a vessel or changing its flag prior to dismantling is not outlawed by the Regulation and will allow easy circumvention of the new rules. Only ships sailing under the flag of an EU Member State when heading for a dismantling yard will be covered by the new Regulation.

Already, of all the European owned ships that were scrapped last year more than two thirds were not registered under an EU flag. Flags of convenience (FOCs) such as Comoros, Tuvalu, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Togo and Sierra Leone, that are less favoured during operational use, were excessively popular flags for the end-of-life ships broken in South Asia. Unscrupulous ship owners have long used FOCs to evade tax rules, license regulations, safety and environmental standards and social requirements for the treatment of crew. Similarly, end-of-life vessels can re-flag several times before reaching the dismantling yard, a practice known as “flag hopping”, with the aim of avoiding stricter rules on ship recycling.

Backed by shell companies, joint-ventures and hidden owners, FOCs are considerable constraints to combating illegal toxic waste dumping as they make it extremely difficult to locate and penalise the real owners of the vessels. With the new Regulation being a further incentive to flag out, vessels still registered under a flag of an EU Member State at end-of-life is likely to decline to a disillusioning number of ships, rendering the impact of the Ship Recycling Regulation non-existent for the purpose of improving ship recycling practices and even negative with regards to EU policies aimed at strengthening the EU fleet. Without a strong incentive to ensure proper enforcement the new EU Regulation will in effect rid the EU with its responsibility – and opportunity – to provide solutions to the ship breaking crisis.

Taking stock of lessons learnt on waste policies related to other products, such as end-of-life vehicles and electronic equipment, the success of the new Ship Recycling Regulation will depend on the introduction of a financial incentive which holds the beneficiaries of shipping accountable for the costs and liabilities of their vessels at end-of-life. Several studies, also those issued by the European institutions, have stressed that a financial mechanism would be legally and economically practicable, and, more importantly, necessary for the effective implementation of the law.

Proposals for an economic incentive have included the obligation for all ships calling at European ports to either provide input to a ship recycling fund or bond; give evidence of a dedicated recycling savings account; or hold a compulsory insurance. Redistribution of the collected funds would then be made conditional to safe and environmentally sound recycling and would close the financial gap between substandard and safe and green recycling facilities. By involving all ships that use EU ports or enter EU waters – regardless of flag – in a mandatory financial scheme, the playing field will be levelled globally as most large commercial vessels – regardless of flag – travel to the EU during their operational lives.

Whilst the European Parliament Rapporteur MEP Carl Schlyter received strong support for his proposal to introduce a port fee for ship recycling by members of the European Parliament Environment Committee, the scheme was rejected in plenary by only seven votes. Prior to the plenary vote the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) surprisingly strongly lobbied against MEP Schlyter’s proposal, basing their arguments on misconceived calculations of the costs involved. Ship owners categorically oppose themselves to any regional regulation on ship recycling, as they do for all shipping matters, and strongly reject any financial instrument that would hold them liable for their end-of-life vessels as they still do not consider ship recycling to be an issue of hazardous waste management.

A mandatory financial mechanism that ensures the internalisation of costs based on an individual ship owner scheme; discourages reflogging prior to dismantling; and promotes green design and pre-cleaning during the operational life of a ship will significantly increase the chances for successful implementation of the new Regulation. It will also reward those ship recycling facilities that have already invested in better practices. The European Commission is to report on the possibilities for a financial incentive by 2015, accompanied if appropriate by a legislative proposal.

We urge the European Commission and Member States to support the implementation of the polluter pays principle. We also urge ESPO to provide input that will help develop a workable scheme similar to existing port dues related to the reduction of emissions from ships. Without an economic incentive, circumvention of European law covering end-of-life vessels will persist and the European shipping industry will continue to be at the heart of scandals involving severe pollution of coastal zones and exploitation of vulnerable workers in developing countries.

The NGO Shipbreaking Platform is a global coalition of environmental, human rights and labour organisations that works for the safe and environmentally sound recycling and disposal of end-of-life vessels.
Involving the Private Sector in Mobility Management: Exchange of Experience and Transfer of Good Practices

INVOLVE is a three-year project (2012-2014) co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and made possible by the INTERREG IVC programme. Its central issue is how local and regional authorities can increase co-operation with the private sector to extend the use of mobility management. The project aims to improve sustainable transport policies through the exchange of experience and the transfer of good practices between the 11 partners. This will be achieved mainly through a number of study visits and import workshops on the one hand and through four pilot projects on the other hand.

The phase of study visits has been completed successfully. From October 2012 to May 2013, 32 study visits between the partners took place and an impressive amount of knowledge has been exchanged:

- 46 different good practices have been studied.
- More than 170 local stakeholders have been involved. More than 70 amongst them belong to non-partner organisations.
- 83 key decision makers have participated in the study visits. Among them five mayors, two vice mayors, four deputy mayors, nine councillors, five politicians and 32 directors of units or departments.
- Madrid, Centro (Birmingham), Reggio Emilia, Roermond (NL) and Erasmus University Rotterdam attracted the most visits.

The good practices observed all focus on the involvement of the private sector in mobility management projects. They range from co-financing schemes of public transport by private companies to the promotion of travel plans for enterprises and from public transport in industrial areas to cycling and walking in commercial areas.

The next step will be to import selected good practices to the own region. This comprises a couple of actions. First partners will select the good practices they want to transfer to their own region. Then, between September 2013 and March 2014, all regions will hold an import workshop where experts from the export-region will assist the regional stakeholders to import their good practices. Finally the findings of the import workshop will be documented in a Regional Implementation Plan for each region. In this plan partners commit to introduce the selected good practices in their own regions.

In parallel with the adoption of good practices, four pilot projects will run. They will serve as laboratories to test the transferability of selected good practices. The following pilot projects are planned:

- Madrid will develop a vocational training for mobility managers.
- Reggio Emilia will share information for home-work travel plans.
- Podravje will introduce mobility management in the business zone Cona Tezno in Maribor.
- Centro will engage "new enterprise zones" in mobility management programmes.

Each pilot will hold an observation workshop attended, on average, by six regions. The pilot projects will demonstrate how specific and targeted activities can enable workers and visitors to travel more sustainably. The results of the pilot projects will be new knowledge, lessons learned and experiences gained. Another important task is to transfer the best practices between the partners, involved regions and countries and to spread them to other EU countries. The results of the pilot projects will be presented on the website and in the media.

To learn more about INVOLVE and its partners, the good practices and the presentations held during the study visits please visit the project website:

www.involve-project.eu
Lithuanian Trade and Exports

By the Ministry of Economy, Lithuania

How does trade factor into the development of the economy in Lithuania?

Every year the Lithuanian economy is increasingly oriented to foreign markets. Exports of goods and services increase profitability of economic entities, promote business development and also influences the faster payback of investments, creation of new jobs, which directly influence the growth of the country’s economy. In recent years, Lithuania’s export growth rate was faster than the average rate in the EU Member States. In 2012, Lithuanian exports was the main factor of economic growth, its share in the GDP accounted for 84.1%. It should be noted that the export of Lithuania is influenced not only by the macro-economic situation of other countries, but also by the competitiveness of Lithuanian business.

2012 was remarkably good for Lithuanian exporters. Despite worsened economic situation in our main export markets as compared to 2011, total export of goods and services amounted to €27.7 billion. Export of services amounted to €4.6 billion and increased by 22.8%. Export of goods amounted to €23.1 billion and increased by 14.5%. The most stable export growth was observed in the sector of furniture manufacturing. The exports of refined petroleum products, machinery and equipment, grain, furniture, plastics, electrical machinery and appliances have also grown. In 2012, Lithuanian companies were active in foreign markets and increased their sales, moreover, they were looking for new partners in other countries. In 2012, exports of goods augmented in all target markets for export.

Based on current macro-economic conditions, the most attractive markets are the neighbouring Baltic States – Latvia and Estonia, the Scandinavian countries, Germany and the CIS markets. The traditional markets are the main export markets for SMEs. We are seeking to not only hold current positions in increasing export in our basic markets but also to penetrate to new markets in other Continents.

Lithuania’s export priorities are traditional industries with clustering opportunities and sustainable competitive advantages, high value added products and services securing long term growth.

Due to the much bigger share in the structure of the economy, even growth of the small traditional manufacturing (as well as exports) due to the innovation, efficiency, managerial skills, and otherwise exploiting the scientific potential of Lithuania, business and scientific co-operation, can have a positive effect on the whole economy of the country and create conditions for Lithuania to become an innovative high-tech country.

What could be done to further increase trade?

FDI and DI in general have a positive impact on Lithuania’s export performance and its export-promoting effect is usually even higher than anticipated.

In 2012, as well as in the 2013, the Lithuanian economy demonstrated its resistance to negative external and internal factors, and remains among the most rapidly growing economies in the EU. The assessment of the FDI in Lithuania’s export performance is very important. Direct investment (local or foreign) promotes exports in Lithuania by augmenting domestic capital for exports, helping to transfer new technology and new products, facilitating access to new markets, upgrading technical and management skills.

The efficiency and success of the Lithuanian economy depends on the added value of enterprises. In order to increase competitive advantage, Lithuania is open to international competition, which encourages enterprises to invest, install innovations and new technologies into production, to improve the quality of products and reduce costs as well as to invest in employee skills development.

Slow economic recovery in Lithuania’s main export markets is not the only challenge we are facing today. The Government makes every effort to solve issues related to decreasing of export risks in the CIS markets, unemployment, emigration and others and increasing of export diversification, productivity, competitiveness, etc.

According to the statistics, Lithuanian businesses are looking for alternative markets and successfully find niches for the realization of their products in other distant markets as well.

Are there any adverse effects of trade on the economy?

Notwithstanding that export of goods of the Lithuanian origin as well as re-export increased during the last five years, the share of re-export in total export of goods increased due to the fact that the growth of re-export was faster than the export of goods of Lithuanian origin.

As a result the share of export of the goods of Lithuanian origin has decreased which causes concern.

However, re-export of goods gives also possibilities for companies to establish international contacts, which help them internationalize.

What sorts of policies are implemented to promote or discourage trade?

Lithuania’s export promotion policy follows the principles set by the EU Common Commercial Policy. The Export Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania for 2009-2013 and the Action Plan for implementation thereof are the main documents adopted by the Government of Lithuania aimed to establish export promotion policy and its measures.

Lithuania is also preparing the Guidelines of Export Development for 2014-2020 providing directions for export development.

The Ministry of Economy of Lithuania and other state institutions along with Enterprise Lithuania implement measures and projects seeking to promote entrepreneurship of Lithuanian companies, increase their competitiveness, help Lithuanian companies penetrate international markets, as well as provide public services to businesses, especially SMEs to enhance competitiveness and promote the internationalization of business. Implementation of these measures is financed from the national budget and from the European Union’s structural funds.
Unemployment is on the increase throughout Europe, generating a need for new, unconventional solutions. Researchers from across Europe now believe that volunteers can make a valuable contribution in the battle against unemployment. The VERSO development project (Volunteers for European Employment) is supported by the EU's development fund, INTERREG IVC and has been developed by universities and regional authorities from eight different European countries.

“Youth unemployment in the EU as a whole is approaching 25 per cent, and in the countries that are worst affected (Spain and Greece) the level of youth unemployment is now well over 50 per cent. Even though there are differences from one region to the next, it is clear that the problems cannot be solved within the frameworks of the existing systems alone,” says Niels Rosendal Jensen from Aarhus University, Denmark, lead partner of the VERSO project.

Rosendal Jensen believes there is a need to solve the problems and suggests that European politicians take a closer look at the many voluntary initiatives that have been launched across Europe. To effectively combat current youth employment and the risks of social exclusion demands an understanding of young people's motivations to participate in education, and training or to find a job.

“The challenge is to use voluntary work as a spearhead to recognize subjectivities as a part of social realities. Young people are not a homogeneous group. Their experiences, needs and orientations do not necessarily match the expectations of policy makers. Often, single policies – like education, or training, or labour market policies - are not connected with one another. This implies a compartmentalized perspective. Based on the good practices identified by the VERSO project, we might turn policies upside down by bringing voluntary work in,” explains Rosendal Jensen.

Examples of Good Practice

The VERSO project presents its findings and policy recommendations at the final Interregional Conference, 23-25 September 2014, in Zalaegerszeg, Hungary.  Examples of 16 good practices have already been collected and analysed and are to be published in a Good Practice Catalogue. These examples demonstrate that many good initiatives have already been launched – for instance volunteers offering their services as mentors for the unemployed.

“For example in Catalonia they have enjoyed success with a coaching project, with a group of volunteers from various companies helping marginalised young people to establish initial contact with the labour market. The project has generated new knowledge and new understanding of the company’s CSR policy (Corporate Social Responsibility, ed.), thereby giving something back to the company as well,” reports Jensen.

Another example comes from Detmold in Germany, where a group of volunteers have formed a mentor network, training the members to act as mentors for young people from an immigrant background.

“One of the things these projects have achieved is to strengthen the social skills and self-confidence of the young people involved. Other mentors in the network have also enjoyed success with a language café for refugees, where mentors help with administrative tasks. It’s all designed to help the young people get closer to the labour market and to a better quality of life,” explains Rosendal Jensen.

Countries learning from one another

Once the examples of good practice have been identified, the researchers will start the process of analysing them and determining how they can be shared by the various countries and regions taking part in the project.

“The partnership between research institutions and regional political authorities makes it possible to carry out comparative analyses and cost-benefit calculations across Europe. This will enable us to supply independent research-based knowledge to the regional political authorities about what works in the fight against unemployment and how these good practices can be transferred from one national context to another,” Niels Rosendal Jensen, concludes.

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Read more about VERSO on the project homepage:  
www.versonet.eu
Springing back after the global financial crisis, Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania are the fastest growing EU economies, with macroeconomic forecasts projecting steady GDP growth of 4% or better in the upcoming years. Bilateral trade amongst the three Baltic States is vigorous, and will remain high due to geography and customary business links. For small open economies, competitive exports are the optimal driving force behind a sustainable economy. Moreover, the broader Baltic Sea area is arguably the part of the European Union which has consistently provided globally competitive goods over time, and Latvia finds itself in the midst of this strategic neighbourhood which is, in itself, a source of innovation and productivity. As an expression of the national priority for trade between Northern Europe and commercially-attractive transport networks on exports, Latvia is working to tap new markets. Latvia’s transport infrastructure – located in the centre of the Baltic Sea – offers pricing to beat the competition. Latvia can boast of three major ice-free ports. And Riga International Airport is the fastest growing airport facility in the Northern European region, providing both passenger and cargo transportation, and the opportunity to conveniently transfer shipments to and from the nearby port. The Northern distribution network from Baltic ports, initially established in 2009 as a supply route for NATO operations in Afghanistan, could serve as a main transport artery between Europe and Asia also after 2014, bringing in also partners further South. The block container train corridor projects such as ZUBR and Baltika-Transit are an environmentally sound and efficient means for connecting Nordic countries with the Black Sea and Central Asia by rail. For further integration of the Baltic States in the common European transport infrastructure, the Rail Baltica project presents the prospect of connecting Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany along one railway. The project will provide a higher level of mobility between the Baltic States, also contributing to more intensive Baltic State co-operation in the promotion of tourism in external markets. Travel is a significant aspect of Latvia’s bilateral trade in services. In 2012, bilateral trade in services with Estonia travel constituted 12.8% of the total service trade turnover, while with Lithuania the figure was 35.5% (source: Bank of Latvia). In addition, two thirds of the first-time tourists that visited Latvia in 2012, also travelled to Estonia and Lithuania. The Baltic States together are becoming a brand. We have combined our efforts to promote the Baltic States as common tourist destination. Understanding the flow of tourists could be increased on a national basis by acting together with our neighbours rather than separately, the three governments signed a protocol on co-operation in the field of tourism. The identity-building and joint marketing are incorporated in the EU’s Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Further integration of the Baltic state markets is predictable with Latvia becoming the 18th member of the Eurozone in January 2014. When Lithuania joins the euro, it will complete the picture of a region benefitting from an improved investment environment. Nevertheless, for export-based growth to be sustainable the Baltic States must have the capacity to compete in the global market. Competitive export-based growth is at the heart of the “economic breakthrough” proposed in the National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014-2020. And smart, sustainable, inclusive growth is a main thrust in the overarching Europe 2020 strategy.

Baltic State Interdependence is a Salient Feature of the Economic Landscape

Trade itself, with trade promotion in targeted markets, is playing the central role in Latvia’s dramatic come-from-behind performance. Already by the end of 2010, Latvia’s export volume had exceeded the pre-crisis level, and the third quarter of 2013 was the thirteenth consecutive quarter with a positive growth rate. In the same period, the share of exports in the external trade balance had reached 44.6% (whereas exports accounted for only 37% in 2008). Latvia exports to Lithuania and Estonia made up over 27% of the total external trade turnover for Latvia in 2012. Lithuania is Latvia’s most important export and import partner. Estonia is the third largest trade partner. The leading category of exported goods to both countries is machinery, electrical devices, and components of such equipment (25% of all goods exported to Lithuania and 18.5% those going to Estonia). Latvia exports substantial quantities of mineral products (12.6%) and livestock and related products (10.4%) to Lithuania, while transport vehicles (10.2%) and foods (9.7%) are the major categories of goods exported to Estonia. Meanwhile, looking from the other side, mineral products make up 38.3% of Lithuanian exports to Latvia followed by food products (8.7%) and then machinery and electrical devices (8.4%). Estonia’s chief exports to Latvia are machinery and electrical devices (16.6%); metal and raw materials for metal are 11.1% of exports. Regarding Latvia’s trade in services, the transport sector has always been the most important imported and exported service – with Estonia transport services are 36.6% of Latvia’s exports and 47.5% of its imports, and with Lithuania, transport is 21.9% of Latvia’s exports and 21.5% of its imports. The Baltic co-operation in development of a common transport infrastructure is increasing.

Fostering Competitiveness

The Latvian government recognizes that real and lasting economic resilience in the context of global economic fluctuations depends on Latvia’s ability to develop exports with value-added and ever-enhancing quality. Latvia’s “Sustainable Development Strategy 2030” sets a target of achieving an innovative and eco-efficient economy; and these are guiding principles for future national development. The Baltic Sea region is the EU innovation leader and Latvian small-and-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups are actively co-operating with their Baltic Sea region counterparts. Latvian entrepreneurs have achieved world-wide recognition for excellence in such areas as innovative woodworking technologies, LCD 3D technologies, pharmaceuticals and modern

By Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Latvia

Shipping and Trade

Latvia and the Baltic States: Establishing the Basis for Long-Term Competitiveness

By Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Latvia
wireless data transmission technology. These are cases where the "Made in Latvia" label with support from regional investors has carried the name of Latvia into markets in Asia and Latin America.

Multi-national funds are supporting bilateral trade and sharing of best practices amongst the SMEs in the Baltic States. For example, the joint Baltic Innovation Fund was launched in 2012 by the European Investment Fund in close co-operation with the three Baltic State governments. This Fund makes available EUR 200 million to "boost equity investments for Baltic SMEs with high growth potential over four years through private equity and venture capital."

Export Diversification

For the sake of market reliability, Latvia assigns major importance to export market diversification, aiming for all five continents and thereby lowering exposure to fluctuations in demand for various goods. The Baltic market itself with 6.5 million inhabitants is an insufficient catalyst for the economies of the three Baltic States. Currently 87% of Latvian exports go to 20 countries within the EU and Commonwealth of Independent States.

To maintain growth patterns seen in the past years of recovery from recession, we are putting effort into accessing the rising consumer economies in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. To cater to the needs of Latvian businesses, next year we are opening an embassy in India, and new Latvian embassies will be opened in the Gulf Countries and Eastern Asia in the next couple of years. In addition to the 44 existing embassies, the network of Latvian Honorary Consuls covers 69 countries today and is expanding rapidly, especially in the emerging markets.

Sustainable trade goes hand-in-hand with development of a sound infrastructure, connectivity and co-operation. The Baltic countries have enormous potential to play a crucial role in connecting the European Union market with the East. Fostering co-operation within the Baltic Sea region (Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, Sweden) contributes to overall EU competitiveness in the global economy.

Future Prospects

For the Baltic Sea region, the world is shrinking and expanding at the same time. Through the development of our transportation and logistics sector, the Baltics are beginning to gain access to the large markets outside of the EU. Untapped markets offer opportunities for our export-oriented companies. Active regional co-operation, integration, networking and innovation are putting Latvia on course to enjoy long-term competitive advantages in global markets.

(1) October 17, 2013
(2) figures in this section were sourced from the Bank of Latvia
“Baltic Bird” improves Economic and Social Integration through Air Transport

The Baltic Sea Region counts roughly 85 million inhabitants – that accounts for about 17 per cent of the EU’s population. Yet Eastern and Northern parts of the area are too often isolated and cut off from the rest of the European Union.

Reasons therefore are varied and poor accessibility has proven to be a key obstacle. Since 2012, however, a pilot project is attempting to change all this: BALTI BIRD set out to improve the accessibility of the Baltic Sea Region by air transport.

Built on the belief that this objective can only be achieved with all relevant players involved to combine resources and knowledge, the initiators formed a transnational cooperation between 21 partners and 13 associated organisations such as regional authorities, airports, economic development agencies and transport institutes from 8 countries, as well as 5 international airlines.

Hoping to further their competitiveness, BALTI BIRD aims to develop efficient and viable flight connections for peripheral Baltic Sea regions. New routes will mean faster accessibility to and from Europe’s economic centres. The project partners expect that better accessibility will ultimately lead to an increase in economic and social integration, which will be measurable by GDP growth and the number of additional jobs.

The BALTI BIRD partners see their project as both test and implementing ground and intend to set off an on-going process. This is the reason they started to compile a toolbox for stakeholders consisting of several different outputs:

• Route-specific passenger (PAX) potential analyses to approach airlines leading to new flight connections from partner airports to national or international airports,
• Innovative public transport system concepts aiming to improve airport interconnectivity,
• Airport marketing toolbox (to attract airlines, passengers and further customer groups),
• Transnational tourism destination development concepts to utilise partners’ local attractions in order to increase the number of incoming tourists,
• Application guideline and implementation of Public Service Obligations (PSO) or Route Development Fund (RDF) at selected participating airports,
• Investigation of regional economic effects of Route Development and PSO/RDF

In 2013 the partner group has finalized the elaboration of passenger market potential analyses integrating best practice experiences, ideas and requirements from airports, airlines and partner regions. The analyses can now be used by the project partners for approaching airlines to set up new flight connections. In another working field of the project best practices of airport interconnectivity in peripheral and agglomerated Baltic Sea Regions have been identified. Together with the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOTs) they have been integrated into the development of strategic options for innovative public transport service (PTS) solutions to enhance airport interconnectivity.

BALTI BIRD is currently developing a comprehensive strategy toolbox providing suitable instruments for regions and their airports to stimulate the introduction of routes to/from the BSR with medium or low PAX potentials. A pilot-project was executed to work on innovative marketing strategies to attract airlines to set up new flight routes. Besides airport marketing relating issues the elaboration of guidelines for tourism destination development is part of the toolbox exploring the relationship between national and local tourism development and promotion interests, relevant airports, air operators, relevant national and EU policy, and tour operators with relevance to the BSR. In addition to that BSR and their airports will be provided with sufficient knowledge on how to encourage airlines to operate non-economically viable flight routes by using application guidelines for Public Service Obligations and Route Development Funds.

The project leaders aim to publish a joint policy framework paper, which could be the basis for future territorial development strategies. BALTI BIRD, which is headed by the Ministry of Economics and European Affairs of the Region Brandenburg and partly financed within the EU’s INTERREG IV B Baltic Sea Region Programme, will continue its work until September 2014.

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EU HEALTH SPECIAL

Improving Prostate Cancer Treatment and Care
Improving Prostate Cancer Treatment and Care

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Europe has a privileged position when it comes to prostate cancer research and treatment. Not only when looking at the variability of the incidence of prostate cancer over the countries within the union, that shows a higher incidence in the north compared to the south of Europe. Also when we look at the results of the epidemiological research performed over the last two decades. Population based screening proved that early detection of prostate cancer, even when performed with simple protocols that stratified men for biopsies based on their serum PSA only, reduce the cancer mortality with at least 20%.

Even better, it reduces the number of men with metastatic disease with 40%, which means a tremendous benefit in quality of life for men in Europe, next to a reduction of health care costs. While we are starting to appreciate the advantage of this privileged position, Europe can work on making individualised screening available to every citizen. Those men who understand the currently available balanced study information well, will be able to pick up the responsibility for their own health, and may choose for screening for prostate cancer based on their individual risk assessment. Patient organisations may support the distribution of adequate information in the various European languages by new mobile technology, improving E-health by their network under the umbrella of Europa Uomo.

So prostate cancer can be recognised early, resulting in cure, but we need this personalised approach. Prostate cancer may be diagnosed with better methods, but we need better stratification upfront of men with harmless indolent cancers in contrast with aggressive cancers. Europe has the frontline industries in imaging and marker technology to support this development. While MRI and ultrasonography are becoming better, their fusion is more than 1+1=2. It enhances the above mentioned stratification, reducing overdiagnosis of harmless cancers.

Further development of objective parameters within images might eliminate the problem of standardisation between centres and manufacturers across Europe. As the EU is also home base of industries developing proteomic and genomic markers, stimulation of marker research will provide chances for products with worldwide implementation. Homing a number of biorepositories with long follow-up (registries have been raised in academic institutions as well as in pharmaceutical companies), Europe might support the fast validation of candidate markers for stratification of patients for screening and treatment in clinical networks, and test those prospectively in small cohorts distributed from north to south, and from west to east.

Prostate cancer can be cured, but experts are needed. In various European countries Prostate Units have been initiated that guarantee better quality based on multidisciplinary approaches in which professionals are audited on a daily base by their counterparts. Urologists, radiotherapists, oncologists, and nursing specialists decide on the best management of cancer patients when building on the expertise of dedicated pathologists, radiologists, and clinical chemists. While minimal treatment volumes can be accomplished, care will never be far from the patients’ home, as prostate cancer remains a high frequent disease for the decades to come. Umbrella organisations will play a major role to accomplish the networks of the best that perform research next to treatment.

Which are the likely facts and challenges?
1 of 10 European men are facing prostate cancer during their life: we can do better.
200,000 men are diagnosed annually in the EU with indolent cancers: we can reduce that and avoid overtreatment.
30% of men treated with curative intent face serious side effects: we may focus treatment.
Treatments for metastatic disease are invented but slowly validated: we can speed it up by designing new study endpoints that allow for drug reimbursements.
Most of all: we can involve European men to build the databases and repositories that are needed to make these developments. When motivated to participate in open access biobanks for biodata, images, and biomaterials we involve our most important stakeholders to provide the tools for successful and leading European research.
Prostate cancer remains a paradoxical disease. On the one hand, it remains the second-most frequently diagnosed cancer and one of the leading causes of cancer-related death in men around the world, according to the International Agency for Cancer Research. On the other hand, there is evidence that it is frequently over-diagnosed and that men who have indolent disease are often put through unnecessary interventions with attendant toxicities, including incontinence and impotence. The avoidance of these two extremes, painful death from a terrible disease versus unnecessary overtreatment and complications are to be avoided at all costs, and yet are not at this point in time. This clearly remains an unmet medical need in the Western world.

The goal of cancer therapy, and one to which Janssen is fully committed, is transforming cancer to a preventable, chronic, or curable disease by pursuing oncology innovation. To that end, the first step is to be able to understand and diagnose the heterogeneity of cancers, particularly prostate cancer, which shows tremendous biological diversity. Various biomarkers, and the correct combination of these biomarkers in panels, provide a unique opportunity to fashion tools that will begin to transform the diagnosis of prostate cancer and to differentiate subgroups of tumors that need localized therapy from those that do not.

In a significant number of those patients who undergo localized therapy, their disease will reoccur. In the future, it is the goal that biomarkers will help predict which patients are at risk for further reoccurrence, either locally or in the development of metastatic disease. This will assist us in combating the devastating effect of this disease. Reoccurrence of prostate cancer, once it has progressed to metastatic disease or castration resistant prostate cancer is ultimately a fatal disease.

The recent discovery and approval of novel agents effective in metastatic prostate cancer therapy provides an opportunity to test these agents and others earlier in the disease and begin to explore ways to combat the disease in those men who are at very high risk for either local reoccurrence or development of metastatic disease.

Use of novel agents earlier in the disease before it becomes castration resistant may provide an opportunity to cure men that are currently destined to progress and die of this disease. The use of novel agents before, during and/or immediately after local therapy may provide pathological and ultimately survival benefit.

To enable such a change in clinical usage will not be without challenge and will involve close dialogue and pragmatism from key external stakeholders, including health authorities and payers.

Janssen is committed to the development of novel therapies for prostate cancer and to collaborate with multiple partners to address the challenges and shift the paradigm in terms of prostate cancer therapy.
Male cancer patterns in the European Union are changing; lung cancer is declining but prostate cancer is increasing, affecting around one million men. Despite significant advances in the treatment of prostate cancer, it remains a problem for men’s health. The crude annual incidence of prostate cancer in the European Union is 110.8 per 100,000 men with 360,000 new cases per year. The mortality in the EU is 30.6 per 100,000 men per year. Though the incidence and survival rates vary widely between different EU States, mortality rates are similar.

The Council Recommendation on cancer screening was adopted in 2003, setting out the fundamental principles of best practice in early detection of cancer. Based on the accepted scientific criteria, population-based screening programmes for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer are currently promoted at EU level. In order to be recommended for population-based screening, malignant tumours must meet certain scientific criteria: the disease must be common, sensitive to safe and uncomplicated detection and more easily and effectively treated if diagnosed at an early stage. Breast, cervical and colorectal cancer meets these criteria. Current evidence does not yet point to an appropriate balance between benefit and harm of population-based screening when it comes to prostate cancer. The population-based screening of healthy men between 55 and 69 years old using prostate specific antigen (PSA) would increase the diagnosis of asymptomatic cancers that will not emerge during life. For these reasons the European Commission prefers to continue the scientific discussion on this issue.

In 2014 a new Joint Action CANCON (European Guide on Quality Improvement in Comprehensive Cancer Control), was approved under the Work Plan 2013 for the Implementation of the Second Health Programme and will be in place during the period 2014-2016. The main deliverable of this Joint Action will be the European Guide on Quality Improvement in Comprehensive Cancer Control, as well as a Member States Platform, which will provide space for discussions on cancer topics. The Chapters in this Guideline will provide an extraordinary opportunity to address topics directly related to prostate and other specific cancers: Quality-based cancer screening programmes, Comprehensive Cancer Network organisation, Community-based cancer care and Survivorship. The active participation of prostate cancer stakeholders in these discussions will constitute an extraordinary input to respond to the needs of patients in a broad and co-operative European context. Comprehensive cancer control policy should be organised taking into account the general aspects of cancer control but also those that specifically corresponds to the different cancer sites.

Member States will receive guidance on various aspects of high quality screening programmes in line with the existing European guidelines for quality assurance in cervical, breast and colorectal cancer but also guidance on other potential screening programmes, if the necessary consensus between Member States and scientific partners are obtained.

The launch of the 4th version of the European Code Against Cancer is currently being prepared by the European Commission in close collaboration with the IARC (International Agency for Research on Cancer) and will be delivered in 2014. The Code is a key communication tool in the prevention of cancer, addressing the public at large in a citizen-friendly format, and should constitute the major tool for disseminating preventive measures and contributing to change definitively the perception of cancer.

The code promotes two very clear messages: certain cancers may be avoided – and health in general can be improved – by adopting healthier lifestyles; and cancers may be cured, or the prospects of cure greatly increased, if they are detected at an early stage. These messages are also essential to prevent prostate cancer: a healthy diet low in fat and high in fruits and vegetables may reduce your risk of prostate cancer, and a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher and a low level of exercise may increase the risk of prostate cancer. The active involvement of prostate cancer stakeholders in the promotion and dissemination of the Code will be essential.

Research is also essential in understanding better the mechanisms of prostate cancer. The FP7 - the European Union Programme for Research- supports large European initiatives as PROMARK (Genetic prostate cancer variants as biomarkers of disease progression) which permitted, using genome-wide association analysis, to identify 4 distinct common genetic variants that increase the risk of prostate cancer, or PROSPER (Prostate cancer: Profiling and evaluation of ncRNA) proposed to explore the role of ncRNAs (regulators of key cellular mechanisms) in prostate cancer. Project members will also evaluate the potential use of ncRNAs in diagnostic and prognostic tools as well as therapy targets.

Large and ambitious initiatives can only be implemented in a large European co-operation basis and the existing European Programmes offer that framework.

Prostate cancer is a European challenge that should mobilize common resources and expertise of European, national and regional authorities as well as scientific partners and patients’ organizations. To organize the efficient and appropriate co-ordination of these efforts at European level it’s our challenge and our commitment.
Improving Prostate Cancer Treatment and Care

Management of Prostate Cancer in Europe: a Call to Action

Viewpoint from Sanofi

Prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in men in Europe and represents the third most common cause of male mortality due to cancer, after lung and colon [1]. However, there are important discrepancies in cancer incidence and mortality among European countries; Eastern Europe showing lower cancer incidence and higher cancer mortality rates than Western Europe [1-2]. In fact, cancer outcomes appear directly correlated to health care expenditure, with lower mortality rates being observed in countries with the highest health care expenditure [2].

These discrepancies in prostate cancer mortality may be attributed to differences in early diagnosis – at a stage where cancer is still curable - and availability of effective therapies able to prolong survival between European countries [2]. However, there is also an obvious suboptimal management of older men with prostate cancer, due to the fact that physicians are not adequately trained to manage an ageing population:

• Prostate cancer is a disease of older men. Median age at diagnosis is of 66 years and two out of every three deaths due to prostate cancer occur in men aged ≥75 years [3].

• Screening and early detection of prostate cancer can certainly identify and cure men with ‘high risk’ cancer who would have died of it, but it also results in overdetection and overtreatment of indolent tumours which would probably never have killed the patient in a significant number of others [4].

• On the other hand, there is evidence that men aged ≥70 years are more likely to have larger tumours of higher grade but only a minority receive curative therapy (i.e. radical prostatectomy, radiation therapy or brachytherapy) for it, either in USA [5-7] or in Europe [8-9] (figure). At a more advanced stage of the disease, a similar issue is observed since patients with rapid cancer progression and/or high disease burden may be denied chemotherapy based on the belief that this treatment may be ‘too toxic’ for their age [10].

The consensus of the SIOG Prostate Cancer Task Force is that senior men with prostate cancer should be managed according to their individual health status, which is mainly driven by the severity of associated comorbid conditions, and not according to chronological age [13]. Recommendations from the 2013 European Association of Urology (EAU) guidelines are in line with the SIOG recommendations [14]. EAU also denounces the undertreatment of senior adults, the importance of considering health status and comorbidities instead of chronological age in treatment-decision making process and also recommends prostate-specific antigen (PSA) screening to be offered to men with a life expectancy of ≥10 years [15]. It is important that such guidelines are widely implemented in Europe through a multidisciplinary approach of prostate cancer management. Multidisciplinary team (MDT) meetings are unanimously recognized as an integral part of cancer care. By providing a team approach to care, they are able to improve cancer outcomes by ensuring high-quality diagnosis, evidence-based decision making with high level of adherence to guidelines, optimum treatment planning, and delivery of care [16-17]. The importance of MDT was clearly highlighted during a round-table focusing on national cancer plans, population-based cancer registries and cancer screening programs in Europe which was held in Lisbon in July 2007, under the Portuguese Presidency [18]: “A multidisciplinary approach to cancer care is required to make the best decisions about each patient’s diagnosis, treatment and support”.

As of today, many European countries are still lacking MDT approach to manage prostate cancer patients and many men with high risk localized disease are still denied curative therapy and just offered androgen deprivation therapy because of their chronological age. It is also important that at more advanced stage of the disease they get access to all available drugs able to prolong their life since prostate cancer is a heterogeneous disease and not all the patients respond to a given therapy. We very much hope that this ‘call to action’ will go some way to improve the care and survival of the very many men who develop high risk prostate cancer.

References
Improving Prostate Cancer Treatment and Care

Prostate Cancer

By Professor Hein Van Poppel

The EAU represents the leading authority within Europe on urological practice, research and education. Over 16,000 medical professionals have joined our ranks and help to create forward-looking solutions for continuous improvement, professional growth and knowledge sharing. Our mission is to raise the level of urological care throughout Europe and beyond.

The EAU has the largest network of health care professionals in this field, and a special EAU Section on Oncologic Urology (ESOU) takes care of all scientific aspects, research issues and patient centered care aspects of urological cancers.

From 2001, the EAU has published its own guidelines on prostate cancer (and all other urological diseases), elaborated by carefully-selected expert panels from all involved specialties (urologists, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, …) while at the same time interacting with nurses and patient coalitions. The EAU Guidelines are the most-used and established urological guidelines used all over Europe and beyond in many countries all over the world.


This paper summarizes the best evidence available today on how early detection of prostate cancer should be organized in Europe.

The EAU has set up a pan-European, collaborative patient information initiative. Extensive information on kidney stones and benign prostatic enlargement is available on a multilingual website which has been translated into 9 languages, with more forthcoming.

We plan to publish information on genitourinary cancers in 2014, starting with renal cell carcinoma. Prostate cancer is another priority for us to address in the near future.

Without going into further detail on the achievement and ambitions of our association, we hope that Members of the European Parliament may realize that we are willing to become a collaborative partner when it comes to innovations and improvement of prostate cancer detection and treatment.

The most important research must be focusing on the identification of low-risk and high-risk prostate cancer and it is in this field that intensive (and expensive) research is most urgently needed.

For patient information, funding is mostly needed to draft and afterwards translate these for patients understandable aspects about the disease detection and treatment.

For screening and early detection, the role of MRI cannot be denied any longer, and this expensive diagnostic modality is not uniformly available in most European countries.

Finally, newly-released drugs that prolong life without impacting too much on the quality of life must be further researched, and there is an important role in guaranteeing easier patient access once the drugs get EMA approval.

This health issue is one that so many European men will be faced with during their life, and for whom personalized and individualized care should be provided in commonly-recognized expert centres throughout Europe.

We are very much looking forward to further co-operation on approaches for prostate cancer treatment.

Hein Van Poppel was Director of the Education Office of the EAU, the European School of Urology, for 8 years before becoming EAU Executive Member. He is also currently Chairman of the Scientific Office of the European Patient Coalition (Europa Uomo) since its foundation, and Faculty Member of the European Society of Medical Oncology (ESMO).
Bayer HealthCare is a global company with a strong commitment to developing and delivering new treatments in cancer. In particular, it is active in the development of new innovative compounds for prostate cancer exemplified by Xofigo (Radium 223 chloride). Xofigo is a novel alpha-particle emitting nuclide with a unique mode of action, used in the treatment of men whose prostate cancer has spread to their bones. A significant number of men with advanced prostate cancer will face this complication which leads to bone pain, fracture and other complications that are the main cause of disability and significantly increase the risk of early death. Xofigo has been demonstrated to delay symptoms of bone disease and to improve overall survival.

Prostate cancer is common: currently, there are over 3 million men living with prostate cancer in Europe. (White A et al. State of Men’s Health in Europe. European Union report. 2011). This figure is expected to rise as the number of new cases is anticipated to reach around 450,000 in 2020, with the greatest increase to date having been seen in men aged 45-64. (Cancer incidence, mortality, prevalence and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) worldwide. Globocan; 2008). The disease kills at least one man every six minutes, resulting in more than 90,000 deaths every year. (Ferlay J et al. Cancer incidence and mortality patterns in Europe: Estimates for 40 countries in 2012. Eur J Can. 2013;49:1374–1403).

As part of the company’s commitment to cancer, Bayer works in partnerships with a number of patient organizations to support their efforts on behalf of patients and their caregivers. One such organization is Europa Uomo, the European Prostate Cancer Coalition which is a pan-European advocacy movement for the fight against prostate cancer. Europa Uomo’s objectives are to increase awareness of prostate cancer in Europe, to promote information about and access to high quality diagnoses and treatment, and to improve the quality of life of patients and their families. At present, Europa Uomo is represented in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

Recognizing that if outcomes in prostate cancer are to improve the disease needs to be higher up the political agenda, Europa Uomo brought together a working group of experts from various disciplines in the field to review the current situation and to identify priorities for action by policymakers. The resulting white paper was launched in the European Parliament in July 2012 under the sponsorship of Mrs Nessa Childers, MEP.

The white paper recommendations were developed during a meeting of the working group and refined by consultation over a period of several months. The overall goal of the initiative is to ensure that all men with prostate cancer in Europe receive high quality care in order to reduce the death rate and growing burden of prostate cancer on individuals and society. To achieve this, the working group defined a number of key action points which must be implemented if outcomes in prostate cancer are to be improved. These recommendations – the ‘Call to Action’ - are evidence-based and outlined below:

- Risk assessment and PSA testing for prostate cancer should be available ‘free of charge’ if requested by men or their healthcare team
- Improved education and information about risk factors and symptoms of prostate cancer should be provided to the public and healthcare professionals
- Prostate cancer care should be co-ordinated and managed by a multi-professional team within a certified centre or network of excellence
- Care plans should be comprehensive and tailored to the individual patient
- A personalised care plan for each patient should be decided by the multi-professional team Prostate cancer funding and research should be adequately funded to improve optimal care

Bayer Healthcare is firmly convinced that treatment care for patients can only be improved when the various stakeholder groups are working closely together. Thus, Bayer Healthcare is proud to have supported this initiative and hopes that the European Parliament will take note of the recommendations. As Mrs Nessa Childers MEP noted: ‘If we are to tackle the growing problem of prostate cancer and improve the lives of our brothers, fathers and sons now and in the future, we must work together’. Europa Uomo has shown how it can be done.

**New Initiative on Prostate Cancer in Europe**

*By Gunnar Schroefel, Bayer Pharma AG, Global Advocacy Lead Oncology*

**Members of Working Group**

- Hans Randsdorp, patient advocate and Chairman Europa Uomo
- Christian Arnold, patient advocate, ANAMACAP, France
- Erik Briere, patient advocate, Europa Uomo
- Günter Feick, patient advocate, BPS, Germany
- Tom Hudson, patient advocate, Europa Uomo
- Ken Mastris, patient advocate, Prostate Cancer Support Federation, UK
- Professor Malcolm Mason, Cardiff University, Wales, UK
- Dr Martin Spahn, University Hospital Bern, Switzerland
- Willem de Blok, Netherlands Cancer Institute, The Netherlands
- Dr Riccardo Valdagni, Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori di Milano, Italy
- Dr Juan Antonio Blasco, Unidad de Evaluación de Tecnologías Sanitarias, Madrid, Spain
- Professor Sten Nilsson, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden
- Dr Lara Bellardita, Fondazione IRCCS Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori di Milano, Italy
- Professor Val Lewington, Guy’s & St Thomas’, London, UK
- Professor Elis McCaughan, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland, UK
- Dr Caroline Moore, University College London Hospitals Trust, UK
- Dr Chris Parker, The Royal Marsden, London, UK
- Professor Hendrik Van Poppel, Department of Urology, University Hospitals Leuven, Belgium
EurSafety Health-net: Assuring quality of care in crossborder patient mobility

Euregional Dutch-German Network for Patient Safety and Infection Prevention

By Prof. Dr. Alex W. Friedrich, Leadpartner of EurSafety, Department of Medical Microbiology and Infection Prevention, University Medical Center Groningen, The Netherlands, alex.friedrich@umcg.nl

European patient mobility and crossborder health care are of highest priority for Europe with opening borders for ambulatory and stationary healthcare since Member states adapted the directive on crossborder patient mobility in 2013. Since primary obstacles for crossborder healthcare, such as divergent social funding and insurance systems have been tried to overcome by mutual agreements, differences in quality of care is nowadays one of the most important factors limiting regular crossborder health care. In this context especially the protection from healthcare associated infections (HAI) and infections caused by antibiotic-resistant microorganisms as MRSA and Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) stand in the focus. Recent studies have shown major differences in the prevalence of these infections between members states, where MRSA e.g are up to 30 times more frequent in Germany than in the Netherlands.

The principle goal of the Dutch-German EurSafety Health-net-project is assuring highest patient safety in medical healthcare and therefore assuring comparable and excellent quality of care, the basis for crossborder healthcare. On this basis 12 coordinating partners and more than 950 project participants alongside the Dutch-German border developed since 2009 three activity lines,

• euregional network building,
• euregional research and innovation,
• communication and training.

The communication and training activities assure the training of health care providers in infection prevention and inform regularly the public. Three EurSafety-academies in Oldenburg, Groningen and Düsseldorf assure the training and continuous education of healthcare workers.

The euregional network building has the task to harmonize quality of healthcare on both sides of the border with respect to healthcare-associated infections. Prevention of these infections and therefore improvement of patient safety need to be addressed in a structured way by the synergistic efforts of the actors of the healthcare systems on both sides of the border. The major goal is therefore the creation of a crossborder network of the healthcare services alongside the whole Dutch-German border in order to protect patients seeking healthcare from infections.

The crossborder research focuses on understanding the success factors of the good practice examples in the Euregio and formulating measurable quality indicators. Here, “regional healthcare communities” (RHC) are identified comprising acute care hospitals, nursing homes, GPs and revalidation clinics who care for a common healthcare population. These RHC’s are brought together in euregional networks and good practice in infection prevention is implemented by terms of a euregional quality system (EQS), consisting of quality indicators that have proven to be effective against infections with antimicrobial resistance.

The EQS allows the hospitals, nursing homes and revalidation clinics to achieve up to 5 Euregional Transparency and Quality Certificates (see picture). For each of the certificates specific quality indicators have to be implemented and external cross-border audits are done. Importantly, healthcare providers can achieve the certificate only together with the other healthcare providers of their “regional healthcare community”, comparing each others efforts. In mean, 2 years are necessary for a healthcare provider to reach the goals and to get one EQS-certificate. The ECS-certificates are valid for 2 years. Patients and the public can follow on the eursafety.eu website which hospitals have already which quality certificate. Up to now 129 acute care hospitals and about 300 nursing homes already received the first certificate, 50 the second certificate.

Improving the quality of healthcare by enhancing patient safety, strengthening quality of care guarantees that crossborder patient care will grow and opens to patients in Europe the best possible treatment of their wish facilitating at the same time the European integration process.

Project Info: www.eursafety.eu

August 2013: 49 hospitals in the Ems-Dollart region received the first EurSafety Transparency and Quality Certificate.
Turkey in early 2014 should be a paradise for opposition parties. The governing AK Party has been struggling with a graft probe, is criticized for interfering into the independence of the judiciary and since the summer 2013 has the image of an authoritarian party. However, Turkey does not seem to be this paradise, because as long as the economy does not deteriorate, Turkey’s electorate doesn’t see the opposition as an alternative and will therefore stick to the least worst option, the governing AKP.

In mid December 2013, the Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto visited Turkey to celebrate 83 years of bilateral diplomatic relations. It was also the first visit of a Mexican president since 1928, when diplomatic relations were established. The satirical webzine Zaytung made Nieto comment on 17 December during a press conference in Ankara: “If we had known how it is here, we would have come more often. In one day some 30 bomb-like arrests, two crashed helicopters, one kidnapped journalists. A country like a cocktail.”

And this was not an exaggeration. On 17 December, police arrested in three different investigations concerning graft and corruption more than 50 persons, among them three sons of ministers, an AKP district mayor and the director of a state bank. The arrested are charged with illegal gold-for oil trade with Iran, bribery concerning state tenders and real estate deals.

Prime Minister Erdoğan called these arrests a “judicial coup attempt” by the Islamic movement of Fethullah Gülen, a former state employed Imam who has been living in Pennsylvania since 1999. Erdoğan reacted to the investigations by replacing the prosecutors and police officers in charge and later by moving thousands of police officers from their posts to less important ones who are supposed to be Gülen supporters. By the end of January 2014 more than 5,000 police officers were relocated.

This was nothing less than a political earthquake. The ruling AKP and the Gülen movement collaborated from 2002 when the AKP was elected for the first time until about 2011 to break the dominance of the Armed Forces and increase their share of the growing economic cake. However, since the AKP won the upper hand against the Armed Forces, it has tried to drive out former allies from strategic positions in the state and economy. The Gülen sympathizers are in many of these strategic positions also because the AKP supported and helped them to get there.

The Gülen movement is especially active in the field of education with numerous private schools, prep schools, dormitories and universities in Turkey and abroad. Their graduates were also employed by the AKP as advisors and were successful in entrance exams to ministries, the police and other state institutions. Journalists who accused them of infiltrating the police and judiciary, like Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener, were arrested under (falsified) charges of belonging to a terrorist organization. Now the AKP adopted exactly this argumentation and accused the Gülen followers of forming a parallel state, as one AKP MP called it, something “as dangerous as a terrorist organization.”

In such a situation one would expect that the governing party would be in deep trouble concerning the regional elections held nation-wide on 30 March 2014. In a “normal” democratic country, the electorate would punish the governing party, not only because of the recent corruption charges and the criticism of interfering into the independence of the judiciary.

The AKP recently had to face numerous criticism and protests, the heaviest ones in summer 2013 when protests spread from the central Gezi Park in Istanbul to 80 of the 81 provinces. Whereas the protests started because of construction plans of a park, the criticism quickly became more general against the growing authoritarianism of the ruling party, the destruction of the environment for shopping centres, airports and luxury real estate projects and the curtailing of freedoms.

During the protests the government was criticized for the disproportional use of violence against peaceful protestors not only in Turkey, but by the EU and the international community. However, both after the summer protests and now with the corruption charges, the AKP does not seem to be losing much of their support, which in 2011 was almost 50 percent at national elections. One reason for this phenomenon is the professional AK party organization and its control of large parts of the media, which allows it to strike back by accusing both the Gezi protestors and the Gülen movement of collaborating with foreign powers, which are uncomfortable with a strong Turkey and therefore initiate plots to weaken it. The AKP-affiliated media repeats this view anyway, but even the non-affiliated media, whose owners are also active in other fields, which is the majority and therefore are dependent on good relations with the government, prefer to show penguin documentaries instead of anti-government protests. This leaves only little room for criticism.

A second reason why this all is not significantly harming the AKP, is the lack of political alternatives. The average voter does not believe that Turkey will be more democratic, less corrupt, freer and more tolerant with any of the two main opposition parties be it the Kemalist CHP or the right-wing MHP.

The disturbing fact for Turkey’s democracy is that the voter is by and far right. While the AKP did actually democratize and Europeanize Turkey from 2002 until 2007, the CHP and MHP opposed most of the legal changes be it more rights for Christians, Kurds or reducing the influence of the Armed Forces.

Maybe some aspects were opposition for the sake of opposition, but in many of the tricky questions like the definition of citizenship, language rights, decentralization or a more secular system in the Western sense, these opposition parties are far behind the ruling AKP.

This explains why the Kurdish BDP, also represented in parliament, did refrain from harsh criticism both during the Gezi protests and the corruption and judiciary scandal. The majority of Kurds still believe that the best they can get from the Turkish side is the AKP under Erdoğan. In the same
vein argued also Armenian journalist Hayko Bağdat who is in no way close to the AKP, but stated that any of the two big Turkish opposition parties (CHP, MHP) would be worse for non-Muslim minorities.

The third opposition party in the national parliament, the Kurdish BDP, is from its party organization more democratic than the other opposition parties and a better choice for minorities and decentralization, but it has never succeeded in becoming a Turkey-wide party and being seen as having competence in other topics than the Kurdish issue. What we therefore see is that the AKP currently loses some support to about 43 percent, but the opposition parties do not gain much, the camp that gets bigger are those who declare that they are undecided or won't vote.

Additionally, most voters remember how Turkey was before 2002. A decade of short-lived coalition governments, a high level of political violence, state of emergencies and political instability that culminated in 2001 in a devastating economic and banking crisis.

That is why those voters who are not core voters of the CHP or MHP, some 20 and 14 percent of the electorate, will stick to the AKP as long as the economy and their wallets are not getting into trouble. There are signs that the economy might be negatively affected by the graft probe and the legal insecurity, but so far only the Turkish currency suffered from the ongoing crisis losing some 20 percent in exchange to the Euro.

Even if the AKP is still in a rather comfortable situation, the race in the most important cities Istanbul and Ankara is closer than in 2009 or 2004, because even if national topics dominate the debate, there are also regional issues at stake and the current AKP mayors of Istanbul and Ankara have been criticized for their urban policies, traffic problems and lacking infrastructure and for their reactions to the summer protests. Especially in Ankara, mayor Gökçek’s verbal attacks against protesters and journalists, also shocked AKP voters.

However, since the difference between the AKP and the biggest opposition party CHP is at least 20 percent, it is not easy to breach this gap for any CHP candidate. Should the AKP lose any of the big cities, this would make them even more nervous and further encourage the Gülen movement, which would be seen as the real winner, not the opposition party which won the mayorship.

Turkish citizens by a majority don’t believe that this is a confrontation between good and evil, but between two evils. A recent survey by Metropol from 31 January 2014 showed that a clear majority of those interviewed believe that the corruption charges are founded (60 percent) and 57.3 percent believe that the Gülen movement aims at a parallel structure. In the current confrontation more than 45 percent of the interviewed believed that both sides are wrong, 28.5 percent thought that the AKP was right and only 6.3 percent that the Gülen movement was right.

This is a rather uncomfortable result for an EU candidate, a wannabe regional power and until recently “the model” for the Arab world. But unfortunately also here, the citizens are right and just confirm the poor state of Turkish democracy.

It doesn’t matter who wins this battle, neither outcome will make Turkey more democratic. Turkey will either be dominated by an ever more authoritarian, one-man party or by an un-transparent Islamic movement with ultra-conservative Islamic views, which acts clandestinely.

Since there is little hope with the existing opposition parties to democratize Turkey, the only hope seems to be the breaking-up of the AKP into two or three parties. This still sounds utopian and so far there are only a few defectors from the party who were all outsiders within the AKP.

However, there will come a post-Erdoğan period for the AKP, maybe already in the summer of 2014 when he runs for president. Erdoğan is the force who holds the different fractions of a party together, which is also characterized as a platform of several political traditions.

If some at the edges break-up, then a kind of liberal AKP might emerge, joined by some liberal CHP affiliates and Gezi protest sympathizers. This new party won’t be able to win an absolute majority, but more than 10 percent to be represented in parliament and become a coalition partner, which then could be again a driving force for democratization. Or, the economy collapses. A functioning democracy is something else.
Building the future on 50+ generation

Ageing is an increasing challenge Europe has to face. The rate of the 50+ age group has been constantly growing and only 50% of the population older than 55 is employed. Senior Capital project treats this demographic trend towards ageing as an economic opportunity. Through transnational cooperation, the project encourages investment in seniors and aims to reach a positive change in society’s attitude towards the increased economic role of seniors, their knowledge and experience.

The Senior Capital project – initiated by Újbuda (the Municipality of 11th District of Budapest, Hungary) with partners from Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Poland and Germany – originates from the recently closed Q-Ageing Central Europe project. Stepping forward from Q-Ageing to Senior Capital is considered as shifting from promoting active ageing per se to establishing a stronger economic role of senior citizens.

Increasing costs

Ageing increases costs for the society, especially related to social & healthcare that is, on the long run, not affordable for local/national public budgets. On the other hand, shrinking labor force decreases the productivity of the economy. The burden of (re-)involvement of seniors into labor is the lack of competencies, skills and competitive knowledge. Seniors are also considered and stigmatized by employers as less productive and more expensive. The increase of the age of retirement cannot be the solution if the disconnection between the demand & supply remains unchanged.

The question therefore is how to turn this problem into an opportunity: how to make use of knowledge and experience of elderly people, how to get them economically more active by preparing them better for the changing needs of the labor market and how to use their potential to bridge gaps in public (care) services.

Finding successful solutions

Effective solutions cannot be found without direct involvement of stakeholders and thorough analysis. The project thus produces studies keeping the eye on 50+ education and employment solutions successfully applied in the EU. Local market and needs analysis as well as mapping of the barriers on the institutional, legal and financial environment will recommend destinations for the implementation of pilot actions where recommendations are tested as possible solutions. The results of pilot actions and the outcomes of stakeholder consultations will be channeled into transnational documents (Central European portfolio and Central European strategy) serving as valuable assets to support policy making.

Expected results

- New methodologies for senior education will be created.
- The local/regional authorities’ role as facilitators promoting seniors’ integration into education and work will be re-defined.
- A better labor demand/supply balance is expected to be achieved in under-financed sectors lacking workforce where knowledge and capacities of seniors can best be exploited.

16 percentage of elderly people qualify themselves elderly
40 percentage of elderly people consider themselves as young
2 billion people will be over 60 years by 2050

Project name: Senior Capital – Develop Human Capital of Seniors to Increase their Economic and Social Value in a Knowledge Based and Competitive Economy
Project acronym: Senior Capital
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www.seniorcapital.eu

“Being a student again is an opportunity given to keep my job or to get a new job. I don’t feel old enough to retire.”
– Újbuda rezident.
Turkey-EU Relations after Gezi Protests and Corruption Investigations in Turkey

By Emine Bademci, PhD Researcher, Political Science Department, University of Gothenburg

Turkey’s EU accession talks reached an impasse in 2006 - soon after their start in 2005 - apparently due to the Cyprus issue. So far 14 chapters out of 35 have been opened and only one of them has been provisionally closed. Mostly Cyprus, France and Germany have blocked the opening of or progress on chapters. In the meantime, the EU has criticized the AKP government on a number of issues related to democracy, rule of law and freedom of expression. The government, in turn, has not shown willingness to accept criticism, let alone acting in a way to eliminate them, and PM Erdogan has occasionally expressed enthusiasm for joining other organizations such as the Shanghai Co-operation Organization to find relief from the pain the EU gives. Beginning from May 2012, the EU had expressed intentions to put the accession process back on track, besides positive messages from both France and Germany “to give new impetus” to the talks. Nonetheless, the stalemate had lasted until November 2013.

In late May 2013, Gezi protests against the demolition of Gezi Park within an urban development project started and the AKP government and PM Erdogan had had the most difficult times of their political careers. Due to excessive police force against the demonstrators six people died, thousands were injured, tens of them permanently disabled, and 15-year-old Berkin Elvan has been in coma since early June. All this was a shock to the EU along with PM Erdogan’s uncompromising and polarizing attitude towards the protests and in June Germany delayed the restart of talks pointing to this issue.

In its 2013 progress report on Turkey, the European Commission stressed the general peacefulness of the demonstrations and the need to bring Turkish laws and implementation concerning the right to assembly and intervention by law enforcement officers in line with European standards. In November the accession talks restarted with the opening of a new chapter, more than three years after the last one, and on 16 December visa liberalization talks were launched following the readmission agreement.

The very next day, on 17 December, Turkey woke up to a huge graft and corruption investigation which included the minister for European Union affairs and chief negotiator, Egemen Bagis, the sons of the ministers for interior, economy and environment, the CEO of the largest state bank, Halkbank, an Iranian businessman with Turkish citizenship, the owner of one of the largest construction companies, and AKP mayor of Istanbul’s Fatih district. This has been a big shock to the government and PM Erdogan and soon it became clear that Gezi protests were not at all the most difficult episode for them. The investigations were said to be undertaken by the followers of Fethullah Gulen within the police and the judiciary. PM Erdogan has denied the allegations and condemned the probes as a foreign plot and an attempted civilian coup against the government by a parallel structure within the state led by Gulen and backed by foreign powers who aim to destroy Turkey’s growing economy and regional power.

AKP and the Gulen Community had been in alliance especially since when Abdullah Gul’s candidacy for presidential elections was confronted with resistance from the military in 2007. They allied against the military as a common enemy that wished to keep its say on politics. Nevertheless, after eliminating the common enemy through the prosecution and arrests of many from the retired and active military personnel, from civil society organizations and media over alleged coup attempts, conflicts and thereby a power struggle between the allies came to the surface. The peak was the AKP’s plan to close private preparatory courses for university entrance examinations, at least one quarter of which is owned by the Gulen Community, providing both financial and human resources to it for many years.

Immediately after the dawn operations on 17 December, the AKP government has reassigned hundreds of police and judiciary personnel, removing them from investigation files, implicitly on account of being affiliated to the parallel structure within the state – for which we can read the Gulen Community. It has also amended the judiciary police regulation and obliged the police officers to inform the chiefs of their units of the details of legal investigations kept secret for the safety of the case. The regulation was immediately annulled by the Council of State. Having followed the events closely and expressed concerns for the rule of law and separation of powers in Turkey as early as 19 December, the EU welcomed this decision and urged Turkey to take all the necessary measures to ensure allegations of wrongdoing are addressed without discrimination.

Then came the government’s proposal to curb the power of the Higher Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) and to exert more control on the council via the Ministry of Justice, causing criticism and concern from the EU over the functioning of democracy, particularly the independence of the judiciary. Amid this turmoil, PM Erdogan visited Brussels on 21 January 2014 to hold talks with EU leaders, the first in five years and planned even before Gezi protests. The day before his visit, Germany’s foreign minister Steinmeier said that it is a must for Turkey to return to the rule of law, implying that ‘Turkey has dropped behind Copenhagen political criteria. By the same token, there have been calls from the EU for freezing talks with Turkey and for an independent international investigation into the rule of law in the country.

During Erdogan’s recent visit, the EU leaders have most probably expressed their growing unease at the state of democracy and rule of law in Turkey behind closed doors and stated in public that Turkish PM gave them reassurances about their concerns. On 24 January the government suspended the HSYK bill, giving rise to claims that EU leaders’ advice in Brussels and Stefan File’s two letters to Ankara have been effective on this decision. Both the opposition and the EU appreciated the suspension of the bill, assuming that it was shelved permanently. Nevertheless it was carried down from the shelf before very long and the Parliament has passed the bill on 15 February, eliciting reaction from the EU that this law represents a regression of judicial independence.

Only one week before passing this bill, the Parliament had adopted another controversial legislation which limits the freedom of expression via restrictions on internet use. European Parliament President Martin Schulz described the bill as a step back in an already suffocating environment for media freedom, and European Commission’s spokesman on enlargement, Peter Stano, stated that this law needs to be revised in line with European standards.
In parallel with this, Human Rights Watch, in a recent report warns about the Turkish government’s growing intolerance of political opposition, public protest and critical media. Turkey is also on the Risk List of Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), which designates the spots where CPJ documented the most significant deterioration of the media climate during 2013.

The AKP government has so far seemed to be concerned with punishing the investigators and critiques instead of rooting out corruption. Besides, Erdogan’s war against the so-called parallel structure is far from being convincing in the face of numerous surfaced of the Gulen Community’s influence over the police and the judiciary way before these graft probes. Thus, the question arises as to whether or not the AKP and PM Erdogan would be bothered to intervene in such unlawful actions as long as they do not target themselves.

In this period of deep crisis, the AKP has received the support of the Kurdish political actors, particularly PKK and its jailed leader Abdullah Ocalan because they think that the peace process initiated by the AKP might come to a stop without an AKP government led by PM Erdogan. Hence, they take sides with the AKP against the Gulen Community which is known to be against these peace negotiations carried out in co-operation with Ocalan. The EU welcomes AKP’s bid for peace and urges it to do more on this issue by going beyond the reforms in the democratisation package PM Erdogan announced on 30 September 2013, which eased the usage of the Kurdish language in education, political propaganda and daily life.

In addition, the AKP still retains the support of almost all of its voters, even though it might lose a considerable amount of vote in the local elections. The previous local elections were the only case where the AKP did not increase but lost votes during its eleven years in power. It was due both to the electoral system which does not favour the first party in local elections as much as it does in the general elections and to the economic crisis which did not affect Turkey severely. However, at present the economy is more fragile after the graft scandal and the consequent political turmoil which has apparently spooked investors, giving rise to Turkish Lira’s record laws.

According to Nils Muiznieks, the Council of Europe’s commissioner for human rights, the AKP sends contradictory signals to the EU, reaffirming its enthusiasm for joining the EU discursively and dropping behind the EU’s democratization criteria in practice. The EU, which perhaps is as good as the AKP government in sending mixed signals to Turkey, could use its most effective instrument, that is negotiations, to urge Turkey to address such issues of democracy as the rule of law, independence of the judiciary and the media, separation of powers, and fundamental freedoms and rights. Not unexpectedly it seems it will take quite a long time before this instrument is used effectively not only because of the European Parliament elections in May but also because of both local and presidential elections in Turkey in 2014. On the eve of both elections, more files and tapes of corruption are likely to be leaked to the media, which might in turn urge the AKP to keep a firmer hand on everything and PM Erdogan to act in an increasingly authoritarian manner, making it difficult for 2014 to be the year of the EU for Turkey.

In the longer term, however, the recent momentum given to the solution to the Cyprus issue might pave the way for the opening of Chapter 23 on rights and freedoms and Chapter 24 on justice and security, and the EU’s most effective instrument might contribute to democratization in Turkey, as was the case before the start of the accession talks in 2005. More generally, the current power struggle in Turkey within the ruling bloc and among the two most influential Islamist groups might open space for more democracy, especially if those segments of the society who demand more democracy and freedom raise their voice and mobilize a strong opposition.
Demographic change is apparent across Europe and exerts a significant influence on planning and economics, creating a major challenge for the continued development of our ageing society. Two major questions have to be answered: What can be done to support local care networks across Europe? How can the EU strengthen its social capital with regard to the elderly and thereby reduce social costs at the local and regional levels? SeNS can help provide answers to these questions.

The SeNS project is strengthening networks for seniors, bringing better lives to all older people and creating networks able to relieve the increasingly overworked welfare systems operating in our ageing (North West) European society.

SeNS is a transnational project, funded by the EU’s Interreg IVB North West Europe Programme (www.nweurope.eu) and has 7 partners: Genk (Belgium), Cambridge, Leeds and Stockport (UK), Iserlohn and Nuremberg (Germany) and Luxembourg (Luxembourg).

The SeNS project Mission Statement highlights the aims of the partners clearly:

SeNS will, by strengthening senior networks, enable a self-determined satisfying life for every senior, use the social capital of these networks for the ageing North West European society, and thus relieve welfare systems

SeNS will develop a viable and sustainable model for Seniors Network Support, with support available to assist the relevant institutions in assessing:

• whether the required networks in a district, city or region are present and if they are sufficient
• what strategies are required to create the sufficient degree of cross-linking in terms of social capital
• what measures, instruments and tools are appropriate and necessary to support Seniors Network Support
• how Seniors Network Support can be promoted to local communities and, particularly at the European level, that it will have a sustainable and durable lobby.

Each SeNS partner is delivering pilot activities to trial the concepts of the SeNS model in their local areas, further details of these pilots are available on the project website at www.sens-project.eu. The Free University of Brussels (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium) is the academic partner of the SeNS project. VUB will guide and ensure the development of a transnational model across all seven partners. It will be scalable and transferable to other projects and locations across Europe. Further details on the model and local actions are available at www.sens-project.eu.

To further enable transferability and the sharing of best practice within networks of European decision makers, SeNS will create a sustainable and durable lobby, to be formed around a core of SeNS partners and other cities, academic institutions, seniors and volunteer organisations.

How can SeNS help the government sector across Europe?

SeNS is delivering a range of evaluated test cases in the analysis, strategy and implementation of networks for older people. These test cases will cover different territorial dimensions, intercultural aspects, intra- and intergenerational factors and will have long-lasting effects in the partner areas. Most importantly for government decision makers in the European public sector are the evaluated and transferable results of the SeNS project, ready to stimulate government organisations across Europe to establish sustainable senior networks able to reduce the social costs and overworked welfare systems being managed by local government.

ENSuSeNS in particular will give governmental bodies a network of experts in the field from which to draw advice and guidance on solving the demographic issues SeNS has worked to challenge.

Full details of the SeNS project and its progress can be found at www.sens-project.eu and on its Twitter account @SeNS_Interreg.

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SeNS – stronger senior networks, better lives for seniors
A
nd here we are again: the groundhog greets time and again, disguised as xenophobic nostalgia: just in time for the realization of free movement in the European Union for all EU citizens we encounter again the xenophobic voices that enter public debates in nearly, probably all Western European states: they shout that free movement will lead to an influx of the poor from East Europe into the cosy zones of West European welfare systems; this needs to be stopped and prevented.

In the UK, the present government, particularly on the Conservative side creates – maybe addresses – vulgar fears that might pre-exist in their electorate; in Germany it’s again the reactionary circles from Bavaria that cannot restrain from jingoistic insinuation, accompanied by the construction of a scapegoat that serves nothing but frenetic laughter and hate-drunk raucous bawling in crowded beer tents. And, what is worse: German chancellor Angela Merkel, as usual, does let things go, does not interrupt these noises resolutely, but rather awaits self-healing spirits, even accommodates such Southern cacophonies by installing a working group on poverty immigration. It seems to have fallen into oblivion that ultimately politics is, or should be, about human beings and not about patting the back of provincial illusions of ‘we are we’ or about complacency, paired with ignorance.

Empirical evidence suggests that above-portrayed discourses have no rational substance or foundation whatsoever, but what needs to be acknowledged, understood, and analysed is their complete disconnect from experienced reality and their neurotic portrayal of future scenarios. What causes such portrayals is another question: maybe xenophobic nostalgia: just accidental, individual, and occasional those utterances and the question of why could potentially close the gap between the consciousness of the xenophobic debaters, and the related lack of awareness and consciousness of the xenophobic propaganda that pervades current discourses on free movement and immigration and related jingoistic roaring, that would justify the alerts of poverty migration have been voiced. The groundhog greets (again), but has (of course) no new message.

To sum up: there is no empirical evidence that would justify the alerts of poverty immigration and related jingoistic roaring, nor here when it comes to free movement in the EU, nor in any other instance because, even if contemporary politics is inexpert in and disconnected from political ethics beyond the maximal morality of ‘national (and selfish) interest’ in times and in the legacies of the nation state, politics ought to be about humans, dignity, and humanity; the latter would leave no room for the xenophobic propaganda that pervades current discourses on free movement and migration in Germany (and elsewhere in the EU). Because of this lack of evidence and the related lack of awareness and consciousness of the xenophobic debates, three theses might be offered here. These could potentially close the gap between those utterances and the question of why they occur even though there is no, or just accidental, individual, and occasional evidence of the aspects of the constructed and propagated anxieties.

1. A first pattern of explanation, and a commonly applied one, partly disregards the gravity of these xenophobic discourses and describes them as cheap propaganda with regard to upcoming elections. Accordingly, politicians would play with emotions and anxieties pre-existing in their (potential) electorate, confirm them and beef them up, and thus secure votes. In view of this explanation, politicians would try to resonate with popular feelings and fears and utilize them for their own ambitions to stay or come to power respectively. Here, personal ambitions dominate over political
responsibility. Further, the channels of an institutionally democratic system are being used on the back of parts of the population that is being scapegoated for individual ambitions.

One could argue that this is a misuse of the democratic system, not in terms of its institutions, but certainly in terms of its spirit; the latter being a more profound and sincere violation of democracy than any institutional misuse. In this context, this kind of cheap propaganda is utterly irresponsible in that it fancies personal ambitions and interests over evidence, truth, and humaneness of the body politics. It seems just to be true what Plato emphasizes in his famous treatment of politics, in his Politeia, that the best politician would not be the one who aspires to a political mandate, but the one who needs to be urged and can be urged because of his/her awareness of responsibility for the commonwealth.

2. A second explanation refers to an old problem of republicanism, i.e. that of the relation between the 'ethnos' and the 'demos', in other words between an ethnically imagined body of people and a political body. A strict republican understanding suggests the consequent separation between both, thus a political body free from ethnic considerations. This is why human rights, and the natural rights tradition, grant distinct rights irrespective of individual origin, religion, gender, etc. Indeed, however, it is difficult to find a political author and a political system who ultimately upholds such separation, either in theory or practice.

For example, even an author as celebrated for his republicanism as Jean-Jacques Rousseau concedes several times, most prominently in his constitutional draft for Corse, that a republican system would operate much more smoothly in a body politic that would be ethnically homogenous; and as an important body of literature, especially on immigration politics, emphasizes, many, if not all nation-states and their past and present political practices (such as the US, France, the UK, Germany, Italy, Japan etc) inflate the 'political' with an 'ethnical' dimension, the latter indeed referring to an arbitrary and only imagined community. In conclusion, such political practices which the above-portrayed discourses are part of, are non-republic and belong to a bygone era of nationalism and their violent nostalgias.

3. Thirdly, such practices can be explained as the product of imperial and hegemonic thinking as we know it from the histories of empires. Imperial features and discourses become more and more popular in an enlarged EU, on its supranational and member states levels. As it is typical for empires, a stark perception of an imperial centre and of less powerful, less prosperous, and less developed peripheries is dominating political imaginations and practices. Such peripheries are in asymmetric power relation towards the centre, and as much as these peripheries are needed as territories of an enlarged market, of cheap labour, and of the exploitation of raw material, the centre develops a multitude of practices to keep these peripheries out. These peripheries are subjugated to the centre powers (to which, in this case, undoubtedly Germany belongs, but also France, Benelux, and the UK), subject of exploitation and gate-keeping. If there are imaginations, practices, and discourses of empire at work in the EU, and there is evidence of this, then those discourses and practices have not yet embraced positive aspects of empire (such as mutual responsibility, co-operation, and loyalties as well as the centre being a harbour for refugees from the peripheries, as Cicero writes with regard to the city of Rome as the centre of the Roman empire), but are about mis-developing into subordination, gate-keeping and power asymmetries.

None of these explanations and theses might be exclusively right. But each contributes to our understanding of the current debates and together they help us to make sense of political discourses that have no empirical reference, but are rather born out of certain imaginations and constructions, and their traditions; imaginations and constructions that are insane in the sense of unhealthy for humane politics and sociability (because they stigmatize and create friend-foe distinctions and scapegoats) and in the sense of unaccountable to actual experience. The question thus remains when German political consciousness – and I here generalize across parties because the jingoistic creation of xenophobic anxieties should reason a wide outcry among all politicians, hence those who are not indignant of this become conspiring of these attitudes – will manage to overcome nationalist and hegemonic thinking and related practices.

When will it begin to understand the positive power of cultural differences; embrace the public livelihood and articulation of differences; and subsequently treat 'cultural others' not as persona non grata and simply as guests (implying ‘they’ will return 'home' at some point in the near future), but as human beings that try to build and sustain a life, family, friends, have desires and longings, wishes and needs? Unfortunately, however, this problem of transforming national identity and related political practices of violence, i.e. of defeating human potentials, into a politics of difference is not exclusively a German issue, but appears and reappears in most Western and hence EU-countries, ultimately, too, on the supranational level of EU-politics and an ethnic identity construction, here just between EU-ropean and non-EU-uropean peoples.
During the last quarter century Europe has changed tremendously. The most striking transformation has naturally occurred in the former Socialist one party states in Central and Eastern Europe, of which eleven by now are members of the European Union and thus regarded as fully fledged democracies with functioning market economies.

Hence, it has become less and less relevant to talk about Central Europe as something distinctly different from Western Europe. If one looks a little bit closer, one still finds important differences, however, not least in terms of how the relationship between voters and parties works, which I would argue is a result of the Communist legacy and its consequences for the economic transformation.

The severe initial economic downturn in the early 1990s, in combination with high levels of perceived corruption created a massive popular discontent with political institutions in general, but above all with political parties and resulted in a continuous change of governments, which almost always fell short of living up to people’s expectations.

Naturally, party system turbulence is to be expected in newly democratized countries, but the levels in electoral volatility were unprecedented historically and were also different in kind than in previous processes of democratization.

Party system stability is usually measured in terms of electoral volatility, i.e. the sum of the net gains or losses for parties contesting the election. The sum is divided by two, which makes the scale run from 0 (all parties get exactly the same share of the votes as in the previous election) to 100 (the parties that got votes in the previous election did not get a single vote in the next). In the EU-15 between 1979 and 2010, the average figure was 11.2, for the newly democratized Spain, Portugal and Greece, 12.5 (1974-1996), but a staggering 27.2 (1990-2012) in the ten Central European countries that became EU-members 2004 and 2007 respectively.

What is even more remarkable, and contrary to most predictions, is the fact that the party system instability not only remains high after almost 25 years, but actually is increasing. In the 7th elections held the volatility score was close to 30.

In countries like the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Bulgaria the instability has increased, and in Latvia, Lithuania it has persisted on a high level, whereas Poland and Estonia are the only examples of a more predicted stabilizing pattern.

Electoral volatility can have two sources, either from voters switching between the same set of parties, which by far is the most common in Western Europe, or from switches from established parties to new parties, which has almost become the trade mark of the Central European party systems by now. In old democracies, new parties usually have a hard time to become successful and when they are their vote share is most often counted in single digits.

It took most Green and Radical right parties many attempts before they managed to clear the electoral thresholds and when they did it was only by a whisker. The established parties remain firmly in control.

In Central Europe by contrast, completely new parties – often created only months before the election, often by individuals with no previous political experience, but known to the public for their competence in other areas, such as media (journalists and entertainers), business and the bureaucracy (civil servants) – have been immensely successful, winning several elections and taking the position as prime minister.

Bulgaria offers two of the most stunning examples; the former king Simeon II, who returned from his life-long exile in Spain in 2001, started a new party and won almost 43 percent of the votes a few months later. In 2009, Simeon’s former bodyguard, Boyko Borisov, formed a new party (GERB), which won 39 per cent of the votes and exactly half the seats in the Bulgarian parliament.

All the three Baltic States have experienced similar electoral “earthquakes”. In 2002, New Era, formed by the head of the Central Bank, Eiinars Repse, got 24 per cent in the Latvian parliamentary elections and the year after Res Publica, formed by young politically interested youths, but headed first by political science professor Rein Taagepera and then State Auditor Juhani Parts, won almost 25 per cent of the votes in the Estonian election.

Both Repse and Parts became prime ministers. In 2004, Lithuania followed suit, when the likewise new Labour Party, led by the millionaire businessman Victor Uspaskich, won the election with 28 per cent of the votes. In 2011, another new party, created by the outgoing Latvian president, Valdis Zatlers, managed to win over 20 per cent of the votes. Similar but less spectacular successes have occurred in all the other Central European countries as well.

Interestingly enough, these new successful parties have more things in common, namely their focus on corruption. Corruption is naturally an easy issue to politicize in countries where corruption is regarded as a serious problem and widespread and where corruption scandals frequently are exposed in the media, often involving top level politicians. It thus becomes very difficult for the established parties to fend of these new challengers, who by definition have no dirty legacy.

Quite on the contrary they can use their political inexperience as an asset and instead point at their performances in other areas, thus implying that they are more competent and honest and therefore more trustworthy in their anti-corruption rhetoric than is the old guard.

One may therefore think that these parties are just populist appeals to frustrated voters who have no one else to trust and nowhere else to turn, and who will hardly make the lives of the people any better once in power. Preliminary results show, however, that quite a few of these parties which have been in a position to influence policy making, actually have made sincere efforts to curb corruption and in some instances been at least partly successful.

The fact that New Era and Res Publica not only are still around but actually also been
incumbents for longer periods of time, is one indication that they have retained their popular appeal more than ten years after their breakthrough. For others things have turned less well. Simeon’s party left the parliament in 2009 with some 3 per cent of the votes and the Czech Public Affairs party did not even stand in the last elections, due to involvement in corruption scandals.

What we are witnessing in Central Europe is thus a continuous turbulence, both in terms of voters switching allegiances between the established parties, but also a constant supply of new parties, which over and over again manage to upset the party systems.

The fact that corruption is still perceived to be more widespread in those countries than in most West European ones and the fact that the living standard in many of the countries is far below that in the West, are naturally two reasons why voters continue to distrust parties and politicians, vote for newly established parties or, which is sadly enough an increasing trend, to refrain from voting altogether.

A third reason why this turbulence is continuing despite the amount of time that has passed since democracy was restored and despite the fact that most countries are slowly catching up with the west, has arguably to do with the incentive structures created at an early stage of the formation of the party systems and which now are self-reinforcing, implying that they will remain even after the original source of the turbulence has ceased to be important.

In short the argument can be summarized as follows; instability breeds further instability as, on the one hand, voters get used to cast their ballots for new parties, knowing that the risk of wasting the vote is quite small and political entrepreneurs, on the other, realize that it may be worth the effort to start a new party, as the electorate is so volatile and prone to test new alternatives.

There is thus always a supply to satisfy the demand of the voters, which naturally also makes a stable and strong party identification by the voters, which is one of the reasons most West European countries continue to be so stable, much more difficult to establish in the East, as established parties disappear or become irrelevant after only a few elections.

So even when the new member states have reached the some economic standard as in the old ones and when they have successfully curbed corruption, i.e. when the most obvious causes for voter dissatisfaction have disappeared or at least are heavily reduced, there is still good reasons to believe that party system instability will persist in most countries.

Party system stability is usually assumed to be preferable to instability, but so far very few studies have looked at the consequences, so whether such a development is good or bad is hard to tell. It is obviously a good thing that frustrated voters have alternatives with real prospects to make it all the way to the parliament to vote for.

That parties emerge as responses to the established parties’ perceived failure to deliver what has been promised and what the voters expect, is vitalizing the democracies and is arguably one way to prevent voter apathy and further distrust. It also puts pressure on the incumbents to do their very best, unless they want to be abandoned forever. In a more closed party system, the established parties are not taking the same risk, as they know that no credible new alternative will emerge and if they do, voters will not risk to waste their votes unless it is absolutely clear the new party has a good chance to make it. On the other hand there is an obvious risk that this particular lack of stabilization will also have some negative consequences in terms of more fragmented politics with shorter time horizons and to an increasing extent lure unserious political luck seekers to politics.

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ump Scotland and save Ireland! Sounds a harsh concept, but events on the Emerald Isle in the past few weeks have fuelled the perception the British Government would rather see all of Ireland back in a new Union, especially if the Scots vote ‘Yes’ to independence.

The undeniable fact is that Scottish nationalists have managed to seize control of their parliament through entirely democratic means, unlike Sinn Fein in Ireland which has a lengthy track record of being associated with terrorism since the movement was formed in 1905.

At the end of February, the Irish peace process was thrown into turmoil when the Stormont First Minister Peter Robinson of the Democratic Unionists threatened to resign if he did not receive assurances from British Prime Minister David Cameron about letters reportedly sent to over 180 republican suspects known as ‘On The Runs’ (OTRs).

Unionists interpreted these letters as an amnesty for people suspected of being wanted for questioning in relation to alleged terrorist incidents. Robinson had demanded a judicial review into the letters, otherwise he would quit as First Minister of the power-sharing Executive in Belfast – a move that would have tossed the entire peace process and Assembly into chaos.

Within 24 hours of the Robinson ultimatum, Cameron granted the DUP leader his wish of a probe into the so-called IRA ‘get out of jail free’ letters, and devolution in Northern Ireland was saved.

However, in May, the DUP has still to go before the electorate for the European poll as well as elections for the proposed new ‘super councils’ in Northern Ireland, which will see local government reduced from the current 26 to 11 authorities.

Although the DUP has been the majority unionist movement in Northern Ireland for more than a decade, its power-sharing experiences with Sinn Fein since 2007 do not sit easy with an increasingly volatile Protestant working class who feel that nationalists have benefited more from the peace process than unionism.

While Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland finds itself as a major player in the Stormont partnership government, in the Republic of Ireland under the guidance of party president and former West Belfast Westminster MP Gerry Adams Sinn Fein is perfectly poised to become a significant minority party in a future Dail parliament based in Dublin’s Leinster House.

In the past, the Dail has conceived coalition governments of Fianna Fail and the Green Party; even the current coalition is an amalgamation of the Right-wing Fine Gael party and Irish Labour. So it is not entirely inconceivable that a future Dail government could comprise Fine Gael and Sinn Fein. Irish politics is the art of the impossible.

In Northern Ireland, too, Sinn Fein has been able to hold on firmly to its position as the leading nationalist party and has maintained its dominance over the moderate Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party. Robinson’s party is not as electorally fortunate; it faces poll threats from a range of existing and new parties in the pro-Union community.

The fact that Downing Street moved so fast to placate Robinson is proof of how seriously the British Government views the stability of the peace process and the development of the best Anglo-Irish relations for a century.

It is hard to imagine Cameron moving so swiftly had Scottish First Minister and leader of the majority Scottish National Party Alex Salmond threatened to quit his post in the Holyrood Parliament.

The British administration now has a situation in Ireland which is seeing the island going through its most stable political era since partition in the 1920s – the mainstream republican and loyalist terror groups are largely silent; disdient republican activity has been reduced to a minimum; the so-called dissident loyalist movement has failed to materialise; Queen Elizabeth has been to Dublin on an official visit, and Irish President Michael D Higgins is preparing for an official trip to Buckingham Palace.

The Republic of Ireland’s once thriving economy – dubbed the Celtic Tiger – went bust, but is now showing signs of a meaningful recovery. This has prompted a growing movement in the South of Ireland to encourage the 26 Counties to have a more formal political arrangement with the United Kingdom through the Commonwealth.

Like all Irish politics over the centuries, what is impossible in one decade becomes reality in another. In 1985, DUP founder and firebrand fundamentalist preacher Ian Paisley senior – now Lord Bannside – launched his party’s local election campaign under the banner ‘Smash Sinn Fein’. But in 2007, he led his party into a power-sharing Executive with Sinn Fein.

In 1982, Sinn Fein won a handful of seats in the then Assembly poll on an abstentionist ticket. Now it operates Executive ministries in a partitionist parliament at Stormont. Bearing all these supposed u-turns in mind, could the British Government seriously be considering the option of allowing Scotland to effectively leave the Union, but getting Southern Ireland to renegotiate its republic status and become part of the increasingly influential Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)?

In mainland Britain, particularly in England, the Conservative/Liberal Democrat alliance is preparing itself to take a massive ‘hit’ in the European poll with the staunchly euro sceptic United Kingdom Independence Party the hot tip to become the largest British party in the European Parliament.

This is not the case in Ireland. UKIP will obviously not be contesting any of the Southern Irish seats, and is a rank outsider to return one of Northern Ireland’s three MEPs. The most UKIP can hope to achieve is to influence which of the two big unionist parties – the DUP, or the election-battered Ulster Unionists – finishes runner up to Sinn Fein.

Given its standing in Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein is odds on to not only hold its MEP, but again top the poll. Long gone are the days when the DUP’s Ian Paisley senior romped back to Europe on count one! Protestant voter apathy could even place unionism’s second MEP seat in jeopardy depending on transfers from Sinn Fein.

Under Adams’ leadership, Sinn Fein in the Republic is in a commanding position to regain its MEP. While Sinn Fein still operates its abstentionist policy for House of Commons seats where it has five MPs,
the party has completely abandoned its historical position of not taking seats in the Dail and Stormont.

Indeed, since the first Provisional IRA ceasefire in 1994, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, and the 2006 St Andrews Agreement, Sinn Fein has developed into a new millennium version of the now defunct 1960s Irish Nationalist Party in Stormont.

It was the Officer Commanding of the PIRA inmates in the Maze Prison, Bobby Sands MP, who as a hunger striker before he died propelled Sinn Fein into the modern day democratic process by winning the Fermanagh and South Tyrone Westminster seat in 1981.

In the early 1980s, the republican movement adopted the maxim, the ‘Armalite rifle in one hand and the ballot paper in the other.’ The PIRA terror campaign ran hand in glove with the Sinn Fein election strategy, with the perception that most Sinn Fein candidates had to serve ‘a political apprenticeship’ in the IRA.

But as senior republicans who built the Sinn Fein peace process, such as Adams and the current Stormont Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, reach pensioner age, a new generation of young republicans is emerging under the maxim – ‘the ballot paper in one hand and an honours degree in the other’.

The number of former IRA prisoners standing as Sinn Fein candidates is decreasing accompanied by a rise in the number of university-educated graduates with no connections to the IRA. Likewise, while unionism in Northern Ireland has witnessed more political fragmentations and new parties in the past decade, dissident republicans have so far been unable to mount a credible or serious challenge to Sinn Fein’s dominance in the nationalist community.

While Alex Salmond has guided the SNP into becoming a majority government in a devolved Scottish Parliament with a much sought after referendum on independence in September, all this has been gained through purely democratic means. Sinn Fein, on the other hand, has consistently dangled the threat of renewed IRA violence as a political Sword of Damocles to wring more concessions for republicanism from both the British and Irish governments.

Practically, what can Salmond use as his Sword of Damocles to ensure a Yes to independence victory in September? Could an independent Scotland turn off the North Sea oil tap to what is left of the UK? Would an independent Scotland act as a boost to both Irish and Welsh nationalism? Which is the lesser of the two evils – an independent Scotland, or Home Rule for Ireland?

It should not be forgotten that when the CPA was launched in 1911 as the Empire Parliamentary Association, Ireland was one of its founder members. When founder Arthur Griffith launched his Sinn Fein movement, it was a separatist organisation, not a full blown republican party. Commemorations this year to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 have largely now overshadowed events to mark the 100th anniversary of attempts to either resist or implement Home Rule for Ireland.

However, when the implications of the so-called ‘Devo Max’ – or Maximum Devolution – solution for Scotland should the Yes campaign lose, are considered, Devo Max is really Home Rule under another political packaging.

Scottish nationalists are effectively in a ‘win, win’ situation. A Yes victory guarantees independence; a No victory – especially by a very narrow margin – will inevitably trigger Devo Max to keep Scottish nationalism from turning violent as has happened in Ireland over the centuries, particularly with the centenary of the failed Dublin Easter Rising looming in 2016.

The 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966 came only four years after the IRA’s failed Border terror campaign of 1956-62 and sparked fears in the unionist community of renewed IRA violence. Both the British and Irish governments will want to ensure that any modern day plans for Irish Home Rule are well and truly implemented in case the 2016 Rising commemorations give a fresh impetus to any new generation of young, violent republicans.

The outcomes of the European poll and Scottish referendum will decide if the concept of the United Kingdom becoming a federation of devolved parliaments is a runner in the short term. For example, a significant UKIP victory in May will force Cameron into a commitment for a referendum on the UK’s future in the EU.

Whatever the outcome of the Scottish September vote, Devo Max or Home Rule is a runner; all that needs to be decided is the speed with which it is implemented. What could then emerge is a united Ireland back in the Commonwealth run jointly by Stormont and Leinster House; with fully devolved parliaments implementing Home Rule in Scotland, Wales and England, leaving a numerically reduced House of Commons and reformed House of Lords at Westminster to legislate on national security and foreign policy.

Provided there was no violent backlash from either republican or loyalist dissidents, the new Home Rule scenario for Ireland could even include provincial parliaments in each of the island’s four provinces, with the guarantee that Ireland would return to a 1911 situation where the whole island came under the Commonwealth with the British monarch as the head of state.

The role of Irish President would be dissolved in return for the island being politically united. Sterling would become the national currency of Ireland replacing the eurp in the South. The strengthening of the CPA as a viable alternative to the EU would give the enlarged UK the financial and political clout it required to either quit the EU altogether, or renegotiate its role similar to that of the pre-1975 EEC.

The question is then posed, would the new global powers, such as the United States, Brazil, Japan, China and India join with the UK and CPA in a new global bloc to rival the re-emerging Russian New Empire under Putin, or a world federation of Islamic states headed by Iran, Syria and Egypt?

Whatever the outcome, UKIP boss Nigel Farage and the caber-tossing Highland Scottish nationalists will have a major say in 2014 about the pace at which this inevitable scenario develops. Militant Scottish nationalist battle victories at Bannockburn in 1314 and Stirling in 1297 may yet come back to haunt Cameron and his deputy Nick Clegg.
The Inexorable March of Technology: How Governments Can Keep Up

By Samira Saba, Communications Director, Smartmatic

“The times, they are a-changin’”, sang Bob Dylan in 1964. It’s as true now as it was then.

Citizens all over the world have put their governments on notice: they want better services – and they want them now.

Citizens have possibly always realized that, as tax payers, they’re also consumers – and as such are entitled to demand more from one of their biggest vendors – their own government.

What’s changed is people’s power to communicate and share information even with those hundreds and thousands of miles away – beyond their own countries’ borders.

Governments are increasingly open to the outside world. Many people with a PC or a smartphone have direct access – and enjoy unprecedented opportunities to ask officials questions and to air grievances.

Smart governments are also realizing they can harness technology to win back the trust and confidence of their people. It lends itself to numerous areas of governance, including elections.

Just as technology helps citizens share information and demand more from their leaders, it can also help governments become more efficient, more transparent and provide better services.

Better elections help

This is particularly true in the area of elections, which, when held properly, offer people the chance to elect the government they need to have their voices heard.

Since 2004, we have been at the forefront of electronic voting, introducing technology that ensures the transparency, auditability and efficiency of election processes, regardless of the size and complexity of the exercise.

During the last ten years, we’ve assisted nations cast, count and transmit 2.3 billion votes worldwide. We’ve been involved in more large-scale elections than any other organization – around 3,500. We are proud to have helped government electoral commissions around the world run the most transparent and efficient elections with unmatched speed, accuracy and security.

Our clients and their countries are reaping the benefits of the efficient and credible elections that we provide, enjoying status as global references for best electoral practices.

The ‘best system in the world’

Jimmy Carter, whose Carter Center has observed 96 elections, has called the Smartmatic-designed Venezuelan electoral system ‘the best in the world’. Despite an unavoidably tight electoral schedule for the past presidential election, all parties involved were able to audit the voting platform no less than 13 times. It helped the country have complete faith in the election results where the two main contenders were separated by just 1.4%.

How do you count 766 million votes?

Another client, the Philippines, has also seen election violence plummet and investment ratings soar in response to the automated midterm elections it held in 2013, with our help. The Filipino electoral commission, COMELEC, even picked up an International Electoral award for accessibility, for its efforts to include all members of society.

No small task when you consider the size of that society – 52 million voters – and the geographical challenges of serving them when they’re spread out over 7,000 separate islands.

What else can technology do for governments?

In general, governments are lagging behind the private sector in the adoption of technologies that help them fulfill their objectives. They’ll only reduce their massive debts and start providing the quality of services their citizens need by becoming more efficient.

This efficiency can only be accomplished with intensive use of technology. Only this approach will help reengineer key government processes.

There are enormous opportunities lying ahead for companies like ours. That is why we plan to continue investing in our R&D centres in Taiwan, Panama and Venezuela.

Just in the election industry, we invested more than the rest of the industry combined in the last five years. We will extend this to other areas were technology can help governments provide the quality of services their citizens need, efficiently and cost-effectively.
The world is experiencing a data explosion. Huge stockpiles of information are being amassed online at an unprecedented rate. According to Cisco, global internet traffic will hit 1.4 zettabytes of data by 2017, 12 times the amount generated in 2008. To put that in layman’s terms, if one gigabyte is the equivalent of a cup of coffee, 1.4 zettabytes equates to the Great Wall of China. If someone took it upon themselves to watch all the video crossing the web, it would take them approximately five million years to do so.

There is now so much data stored in the world that we’re running out of language to describe it. The only quantity bigger than a zettabyte is a yottabyte, a figure with 24 zeroes. After that, we’re on our own. Yet how many people know how much of this data is theirs or where it is being stored? Or who is protecting it? Or what rights they have to access or remove it? The answer, it appears, is not many: more than two-thirds of consumers have ‘little idea’ what happens to their personal information, according to research by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG). The global population is pouring more and more of its life online, into a bottomless pit it neither understands nor controls.

‘People have analogised that where we are with data is comparable to where they were in the industrial revolution with pollution,’ says Brian Hengesbaugh, partner and technology specialist at Baker & McKenzie, and former special counsel in the US Department of Commerce. ‘Pollution was coming out all over the place and was not really controlled. That is the environment we are in with data generation right now.’

If people realised the true worth of their data, however, they may try harder to get a handle on it. Described by the World Economic Forum in 2011 as ‘the new oil’, personal information has emerged as a distinct asset class with huge untapped value; the ‘currency of the digital economy’, according to Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship. It could, says the BCG, amount to around eight per cent of the EU-27 GDP by 2020.

Yet while technology sprints unshackled into the future, old data protection laws struggle to keep pace. It is currently unclear who owns the rights over personal information and clarification is urgently needed, says Taylor Wessing IT-specialist partner Chris Rees, Co-Chair of a new IBA Working Group on Digital Identity. ‘If you start from the position that information is the “new oil”, then what lawyers need to do is recognise that the law needs to change to adapt to that new reality. It needs to develop appropriate safeguards and economic redress for this new asset class.’

Benjamin Amaudric du Chaffaut, senior legal counsel at Google France, admits the sluggishness of the law means they are often forging the legislative path as they go. ‘We generally can’t really rely on existing legal provisions and case law because we often face new legal issues. We therefore have to convince the court that we are doing the right thing.’

Relinquishing rights

The recent leaking of the US National Security Agency’s Prism programme, which gave US authorities unprecedented access to personal data online, drew much-needed attention to consumer vulnerability. Suddenly, what material is held on the internet and how it is protected were questions not only being asked by NGOs and policymakers, but by internet users across the world.

While a growing number of countries are enacting data protection legislation, there remain significant inconsistencies across the world. The EU is due to bring in some of the toughest legislation in the world in 2014, while China and India – which will soon have more people online than Europe and the US have citizens – are in the process of updating their privacy laws. The US currently relies on a mixture of legislation, regulation and self-regulation for a patchwork of categories of information, but last year announced its intention to enact a privacy bill of rights for web users.

Differences in privacy laws act as a trade barrier and obstacle to innovation, as well as providing legal loopholes for savvy companies to exploit. Aware of the need for clarity on the issue, the IBA Working Group on Digital Identity has set about drafting a set of high-level principles to address concerns surrounding the collection and use of online information. Such data is not simply inputted by users, they point out, but comprises an entire ‘digital identity’ based on behavioural information, such as web-surfing, paying bills – or merely wandering around with a mobile phone, which continuously tracks your movements. Such information is stored by companies, often indefinitely, acting as a form of indelible, sprawling cyber-tattoo, a permanent digital footprint.

‘Until recently there was a general lack of appreciation about the amount of data being collected and stored in the online environment,’ says Sylvia Khatcherian, Managing Director and Global Head of Technology, Privacy and IP Law at Morgan Stanley and Co-Chair of the Working Group alongside Rees. ‘Many questions need to be asked, such as who has control over this information, how is it being used and how is it protected?’

Khatcherian stresses the principles are not intended to be critical of internet companies, but aim to provide a balanced perspective and ‘consider all stakeholder interests’.

Key issues under discussion include transparency (are terms and conditions clear and precise?); access (can users obtain or delete their information easily?); privacy (who else has access to this information?); security (are sufficient safeguards in place to prevent data misuse?); and accountability (are there obvious means of redress for data violations?).

Internet service providers (ISPs) currently have highly diverse data protection policies, many of which change regularly. Users of Facebook own the rights over the information they post, but grant Facebook a ‘non-exclusive, transferable, sub-licensable, royalty-free, worldwide licence’ over that content. Google, in a case currently being fought in California, has surprised many by stating that users of Gmail should have no ‘legitimate expectation’ that their emails will not be read by the company, ‘just as a sender of a letter to a business colleague cannot be surprised that the recipient’s assistant opens the letter’. In a recent interview, Google co-founder Eric Schmidt admitted he could...
How to protect your digital footprint

The digital version of yourself may be far bigger and uglier than you realise. But there are a few ways you can try to hone it into shape. Here is IBA Global Insight’s guide to controlling your privacy and security online.

The basics

- Review security and privacy settings on ISPs, and check regularly for updates.
- Choose secure passwords – containing numbers, letters and symbols – which are unique to each login and change them regularly.
- Only provide personal information where it is mandatory to do so.
- Check the security of any website where you are entering personal data: the ‘s’ after ‘http’ denotes the site is secure. Most browsers will also mark a secure site with a padlock icon.
- Be careful about comments posted on social media sites even if you have privacy settings engaged: the safest rule, until anyone says differently, is that everything on the internet is public.
- Hide your list of friends on your social networking sites.
- Be cautious about downloading free software; it may contain malicious spyware or include code that can report internet habits to third parties.
- Regularly update your operating system so you have the most up-to-date security settings in place.
- Use reputable antivirus software and check frequently for updates.

Shutting the blinds

- Disable geo-location and facial recognition services on your mobile phone and social networking sites.
- Avoid browsing the web while logged into your Google, Facebook, Yahoo! or equivalent accounts; this allows ISPs to track your activity and trace it to you.
- Avoid accessing online accounts at cyber cafes or shared computers, and never leave an account open.
- Regularly delete tracking cookies and browsing history from your computer.
- Use the ‘incognito’ setting on the browser menu to surf the web without your activity being monitored.

Elections and Governance
One particularly controversial provision of the EU draft law is the ‘right to be forgotten,’ whereby personal information must be deleted when consent is withdrawn – such as, for example, embarrassing childhood posts on Facebook. While the idea has many supporters, some believe such a right would be impractical and conflict irreconcilably with other rights, such as freedom of speech. It is also unclear whether search engines such as Google would be affected alongside original publishers of content. In a recent Spanish case, a claimant won the right to have a 15-year-old newspaper article removed from Google that referred to non-payment of social security contributions – despite the fact the newspaper itself was not obliged to remove the story. However, an advisor to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) disagreed, stating in June that Google is not obliged to delete ‘legitimate and legal information’ upon request (illegal or libellous information remains a moot point). The ECJ is yet to make a final decision in the case.

Chaffaut outlines Google’s position on the issue. ‘We are not the publisher, we are just a tool that helps users to find the content available on the web. If something is disclosed – legally, of course, and with their consent – we can’t just ask third parties to clean the web for them. It goes against many principles, such as freedom of information.’

Rees believes that one way to inject some clarity into the muddy legal framework surrounding digital identity would be for the law to recognise personal data as a form of property. While such a property right is already recognised in UK data protection laws, he says, it is yet to be sufficiently recognised by the courts. Should it do so, people could more easily assert their legal and economic rights over their digital assets, while having the option to transfer those rights to a third party. An internet company would therefore need to recompense the user for any profit derived from the use of their information – unless, says Rees, it was aggregated and anonymised with other data.

‘Google regards the information it is harvesting as being its own by virtue of the harvesting,’ Rees continues. ‘My proposition would be that this is an incorrect analysis akin to the argument made by colonial powers who took oil from the Middle East. They felt the whole of the profit was theirs, but as the economy developed, the countries from which the oil was being extracted asserted their rights to be paid for that commodity.’

Such a ‘law of information’ may not be far away. While not defined in explicit property terms, personal information is increasingly being interpreted as a commodity with monetary value. In a recent US case, Facebook agreed to pay a settlement of $20m to 614,000 users for using their data to promote products and services without asking permission or offering compensation – though the judge admitted it had not been established that Facebook ‘had undisputedly violated the law’.

Stifling innovation?

While Rees stresses that he does not wish to stifle innovation and ‘limit the capability of the information harvesting,’ others believe that asserting such a property right may do just that. Hogan Lovells partner Tim Tobin, a specialist in data security law, points out that there are already a number of laws in place to regulate the internet – including the Federal Trade Commission Act in the US, which imposes harsh penalties for companies engaging in unfair or deceptive trade practices. Anything more, he believes, could stifle innovation.

‘There are very thorny issues as to how you would value that particular property right,’ he says. ‘And I think we are already in a world where there is a trade-off that occurs when people are providing their information for various internet platforms. The trade-off is the interaction they obtain, the content that is made available to them.’

Indeed, ISPs would argue that handing over the keys to one’s digital identity in exchange for free email and web facilities is a fair exchange. After all, Google’s modus operandi helps it to generate targeted marketing to benefit its partners and also develop new products, fight fraud, filter spam, improve its geolocation services and far more. Google may have offered to put a ‘do not track’ button on its Chrome browser, but the consumer cannot expect to be getting something for nothing. It is a business, after all, not a charitable endeavour – and we are not only their customers, but their merchandise.

The key, it seems, is transparency. Until people know what and where data is being held, and exactly what is being done with it, neither they nor policymakers can make informed choices about this currency exchange being enacted on their behalf. If customers are not getting their money’s worth, they need to know about it. They could even be given the option of maintaining their privacy and paying for services the old-fashioned way – with cold, hard cash.

Data collection and storage, if done securely and transparently, should not necessarily be something to fear. Once clear access rights are agreed, such a wealth of information could prove as useful to consumers as to companies – and ultimately help to construct a more detailed and accurate picture of our lives than human memory could ever hope to replicate.

Indeed, Jeremy Bailenson, founding director of Stanford University’s Virtual Human Interaction Laboratory, believes big data analysis has immense potential to change society for the better. He has spent almost ten years assessing what knowledge can be determined from people’s non-verbal movements alone – knowledge, he claims, which is far more powerful than that.
garnered from other internet activity, such as web browsing. Many of his experiments are based around the Microsoft console Kinect, which continuously observes players’ behaviour and shares the information online. From this data alone, ‘there is nothing we haven’t been able to predict when we’ve tried,’ he says, from aspects of people’s personalities to their learning capabilities to their likelihood of crashing a car.

The concern, he says, is if such information falls into the wrong hands. ‘It’s easy to regulate a company like Microsoft because they are selling you these products and can be held accountable. What I’m worried about is that you have this device in your home that tracks your movements and others can easily access that.’ He adds: ‘When you’re online, you think you’re anonymous and that no-one is watching, but in reality you’re more identifiable and more telling than you are face-to-face.’

Poverty killer

Now that vast amounts of data are being shifted into the ubiquitous ‘cloud’ – an aptly nebulous haven, which means effectively a vast network of online servers – concerns over security are more pressing than ever.

‘The sharing and combination of data through cloud services will increase the locations and jurisdictions where personal data resides,’ says Olswang partner and technology specialist Blanca Escribano. ‘For machine-to-machine communication and the internet of things [communication devices connected via the internet communicating with each other and with the wider world], some concepts of traditional data protection rules have to be rethought. As stated by the EU Commission, the meaning of “personal” data, the purpose of this data, who is liable and what is “consent” have to be adapted to this new context.’

However, it would be extremely hard for a hacker to access cloud data, Chaffaut insists, because it is both encrypted and fragmented across multiple servers, and would only be readable when accessed on a local device. ‘Nowalmost everything is in the cloud, and this is something that cannot be changed,’ he says. ‘The challenge is to show that the whole of the infrastructure is secured and we support the highest security standards to protect our users’ data.’

Because any loss of social media data could have a devastating impact on users, Valgaeren believes ISPs could be called upon to sign up to a certification or ‘monitoring’ scheme that verifies data security and the overall health of the company. ‘For many people, the digital world is as important – or more important – as the real world,’ he says. ‘So the question is, can we leave it up to the market to take on this very significant role of being your digital identity provider, or should there be some government-regulated or self-regulated trust label for these companies?’

The need for greater trust online has prompted a series of innovative proposals for identity management systems from both the private and public sector. The emerging idea is to create a form of ‘identity ecosystem’, whereby users can store personal information across different identity providers. ‘Through this system, people’s identity could be verified without them necessarily having to reveal it publicly, as they could control how much information is disclosed in any one transaction. This way, users could more easily keep track of multiple accounts and passwords, while companies could help secure against fraud.

While any kind of identification system tends to be viewed with mistrust in Western countries, elsewhere this is not always the case. The World Bank recently announced its plan to provide digital identities to all 1.2 billion Indian citizens in order to fight fraud and help people access financial services. The scheme, according to World Bank President Jim Yong Kim, may prove to be a ‘poverty killer’.

What is clear is that this brave new world of big data has the potential both for greatness and for gross exploitation: ‘Like uranium,’ says Bailenson, ‘it can heat homes and it can destroy nations.’ Which direction it takes is ultimately up to us.

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Edward Snowden is the new Julian Assange, alarming both US and British intelligence agencies. With top secret information being leaked to the public through the media, the concern has arisen that national security is at stake. Snowden has revealed that Australia’s intelligence agency (DSD) has offered to share information about Australian citizens with its major intelligence partners. It has also come up, courtesy of Snowden, that Australia’s spy agencies had attempted to listen to the personal phone calls of Indonesian president Susilo Mambang Yudhoyono, which has caused strain to both countries’ diplomatic relations. Snowden was also responsible for stirring the waters of US-German diplomatic relations when he revealed that the US had been tapping Angela Merkel’s phone since 2002, and that President Obama may have known about it for three years. A more recent article has revealed, though, that Obama may not have known about the phone tapping at all. In addition, recent allegations against Britain’s GCHQ have indicated that individuals’ right to privacy may be jeopardized. Who is really to blame in all of this? Intelligence agencies? Snowden and Assange? Or the media?

A public evidence session of the UK’s Intelligence and Security Committee on the 7th of November 2013 examined some of the controversies surrounding three British intelligence services: GCHQ, MI5, and MI6. Sir Iain Lobban, Director of GCHQ, responded to a question regarding the agency’s collection of information through the tapping of fibre-optic cables:

“We do not spend our time listening to the telephone calls or reading the e-mails of the majority, of the vast majority. That would not be proportionate, it would not be legal. We do not do it... If you think of the internet as an enormous hay field, what we are trying to do is to collect hay from those parts of the field that we can get access to and which might be lucrative in terms of containing the needles or the fragments of the needles that we might be interested in, that might help our mission. When we gather the haystack...we are very, very well aware that within that haystack there is going to be plenty of hay which is innocent communications from innocent people...and so we design our queries against that data, to draw out the needles and we do not intrude upon, if you like, the surrounding hay.

He also denied any allegations about circumventing British law (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000) through the organization’s relationship with the US services.

Sir John Sawers, Chief of MI6, made a statement regarding the risk that the leaks and media exposure pose to intelligence:

“I am not sure that the journalists who are managing this very sensitive information are particularly well placed, actually, to make those judgements. What I can tell you is that the leaks from Snowden have been very damaging. They have put our operations at risk. It is clear that our adversaries are rubbing their hands with glee.

Sir David Omand, the former head of GCHQ expressed similar feelings when he claimed that “the leaks were the most ‘catastrophic loss to British intelligence ever.’” However, his views were dismissed by Lord Blencathra, the former Conservative Home Office minister, who said that the claim was “utter rubbish” and that comparisons with the leaks of secrets in the Cold War era were exaggerated: “The Cambridge spies were revealing information that could have brought down the whole British government, the western world, nuclear secrets, the whole shooting match. To try and paint Snowden into the same box as Philby, Burgess, Mclean, Blunt is just outrageous.”

During the Cold War the West had a known enemy: Communism. It is not so simple anymore. Terrorists can come in all forms and from all backgrounds. In the age of internet how do we find and protect ourselves from terrorism? The intelligence services we have entrusted with the job seem to think that gathering mass amounts of data and fishing through it for hints of terrorism is the way to do it. If the media reveal and endanger these operations, then, this begs the question: do the media pose a danger to intelligence operations, and if so, what can be done about it?

The protection of the media through freedom of speech and press in the US Constitution’s first amendment and freedom of expression in the UK’s Human Rights Act may be letting them get away with too much. The Washington Post and The Guardian have both pointed out that the US Department of Justice may not make formal charges against Julian Assange because of a “New York Times problem”—that is if they went after Assange they would also have to prosecute journalists from the New York Times, the Guardian and others who worked on the WikiLeaks revelations.” Should the right to free speech and expression protect journalists who have leaked top secret state information, which could be detrimental to national security and intelligence operations?

Alan Rusbridger, the editor of The Guardian, faced questioning from the House of Commons select committee on home affairs on 3rd December 2013. Conservative MP Julian Smith claimed that the editor could be prosecuted under section 58A of the Terrorism Act 2000, “Eliciting, publishing or communicating information about members of armed forces etc.” Subsection (1)(b) specifically states: “A person commits an offence who...publishes or communicates any such information.”

The media is in an uproar about this, claiming that it is their duty to expose possible government wrongdoing and cover-ups, especially when it concerns the population’s right to privacy. Rusbridger defended his actions, saying that: “A member of the Senate intelligence committee said to us: ‘I have been incredibly impressed by what you have done … I have seen nothing that you have done that has caused damage.’” He also criticized the appearance of the head of British Intelligence in front of the UK’s ISC: “If the three intelligence chiefs had previously faced anywhere near as rigorous cross-examination then perhaps we would not have been so dependent on the Guardian and other newspapers to learn just how out of control surveillance had become.”

Questions have been raised on whether the ISC has enough oversight of British Intelligence because the members of the committee are
appointed by the Prime Minister and come from intelligence, defence, or (necessarily) similar backgrounds.

If one examines Article 10, section 2 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, then freedom of expression does not protect people who have leaked state secrets. The Convention states:

The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.

On this basis, Edward Snowden could be prosecuted for disclosing information about GCHQ and operation Tempora. This same Article could also apply to the media, including The Guardian and any other bodies who participated in leaking or publishing confidential security information.

Ben Emmerson, the UN special rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights, has announced that he will be making an inquiry into the UK’s GCHQ and the US’s NSA. Emmerson defended Rusbridger and The Guardian, saying:

The astonishing suggestion that this sort of journalism can be equated with aiding and abetting terrorism needs to be scotched decisively. Attacking the Guardian is an attempt to do the bidding of the services themselves, by distracting attention from the real issues. It is the role of a free press to hold governments to account, and yet there have even been outrageous suggestions from some Conservative MPs that the Guardian should face a criminal investigation.

An inquiry made by the European Parliament’s civil liberties committee has determined that the activities of the NSA and GCHQ appear to be illegal “and that their operations have ‘profoundly shaken’ the trust between countries that considered themselves allies.” Cecilia Malmström, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, said in her blog:

The anger and frustration that many of us Europeans are feeling about the alleged surveillance activities by the NSA, are feelings shared with many Americans. We had a long discussion about the reforms currently debated in Congress, something that Obama has expressed his support for. However, it is still not clear what implications these reforms will have for Europeans. An important element in enhancing the confidence building in our relations would be to agree on a comprehensive data protection agreement. Our hope is that this framework, negotiated for several years now, can be presented next summer.

It seems that from a European standpoint people are ready to move on and begin rebuilding diplomatic ties and negotiations. Chairman Elmar Brok from the European Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs stated in a press release that the “EU and US need to find ways to restore their mutual trust so as to enable them to build a joint economic area under the Transatlantic Partnership agreement.” Australian Defence Minister David Johnston commented on the Snowden leaks and stressed the importance of moving forward:

We are watching with great acuity what is happening in the space. But we must assume the worst...There is no alternative for us. And as I said to the Secretary of Defence and the Secretary of State, we have invested far too much in this space to allow this event, and it could happen to any one of the members of the five eyes [intelligence community], a criminal act, someone going bad...we’ve invested far too much to even contemplate a backward step.

When former US Assistant Secretary of State Dr. Kurt Campbell was asked to comment on the Australian-Indonesian spying row, he said that Australia was collateral damage because of its close relation to US intelligence. Australian Liberal senator David Fawcett defended the intelligence agencies during a debate, saying:

There is a balance and another side to every concept and, when it comes to human rights, I have to say the right to privacy, whilst important, must be held in balance, must be held in tension with the other rights that Australians expect and should deserve to have protected by their government.

Fawcett also “suggested the ABC, because it was taxpayer-funded, should not have published top secret documents and pointed out the jail terms provided for in the Crimes Act for disseminating classified information.”

In an attempt to move forward and leave the intelligence scandals in the past, President Obama “is likely to call for new protections for foreigners from US spying”. However, Obama “is said to be convinced of the programme’s value.” A group known as the Review Group on Intelligence and Communications Technologies suggested that the FBI should go before a court in order to secure private data records, and that the government should stop collecting bulk data. In any case, groups from both sides of the argument are calling for some measure of reform in order to regain the public’s trust and to smooth over any disturbances these revelations have created internationally.

In this day and age, it is becoming more and more important to realize that people cannot simply say whatever they want about matters of national intelligence and security. If we want to remain protected by the agencies we pay for with taxes, we need to start taking responsibility for our own actions. If we want to be able to live in a world free of terrorism, we need to understand the concept of privacy may change slightly in order to accommodate innovations in communication technology. If that includes intelligence agencies searching through tons of information and communications on the internet to find evidence of terrorism, then so be it. At some point we need to trust in the system of checks that we have placed on those agencies to keep them from overstepping their boundaries, and let them do their jobs.
Some Observations about UK Whistleblowing Legislation

By Professor David Lewis, Middlesex University

Health and safety disasters (for example, the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise and the Piper Alpha explosion), financial scandals (for example, at Maxwell pensions, Barlow Clowes, Barings Bank and BCCI) and the work of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, all emphasised the need to provide greater protection for whistleblowers in the UK.

As a result, the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) inserted Part IVA into the Employment Rights Act 1996 (ERA 1996). This measure has the sole purpose of protecting “individuals who make certain disclosures of information in the public interest”.

After almost sixteen years on the statute book, one question that arises is whether our whistleblowing legislation needs to be amended in order to reflect more positive and broader objectives. For example, should Parliament aim to actively promote the reporting of concerns and should it try to ensure that allegations of wrongdoing are investigated?

Part IVA ERA 1996 acknowledges that those who report suspected wrongdoing may suffer retaliation.

Yet research shows that fear of victimisation is only one of the reasons why people choose not to disclose information. Another important factor is the belief that no remedial action will be taken if malpractice is established. Thus if we are serious about promoting whistleblowing in the public interest we need to focus more on the message than the messenger.

For example, employers should be obliged to: introduce and maintain a whistleblowing procedure that complies with the BSI Code of Practice 2008; ensure that concerns are investigated and provide feedback to disclosers. To those who might view such steps as unnecessary burdens on employers, it should be pointed out that such measures exist in other countries and are no more than enlightened self-interest.

If employers have a satisfactory internal procedure they may learn about problems early and can deal with them before they escalate. On the other hand, if an informant thinks that their concern has not been investigated properly or at all he or she may be inclined to report it externally.

In 2013 the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act replaced the good faith requirement for protected disclosures under Part IVA ERA 1996 with a public interest test and made employers vicariously liable for acts of retaliation inflicted by their staff.

The removal of the words “good faith” is to be welcomed as it will shift attention away from the motives of the discloser (although these may still affect any compensation awarded). However, the need to demonstrate that a qualifying disclosure is in the public interest may deter people from speaking up. Indeed, whistleblowers will only learn at an employment tribunal if the panel agree that a public rather than a private interest has been served.

In such circumstances it will be difficult for anyone to give potential whistleblowers reliable advice and many will choose to remain silent. To give one example, a report about alleged abuse in a care home is likely to be in the public interest but is a concern about bullying at the workplace? If only one person is adversely treated arguably they have a personal grievance but, if bullying is used generally as a management technique, is there a not a public interest in dealing with it?

In addition to the problem of uncertainty about protection, there is the practical problem of exercising rights. Workers who are dismissed or suffer a detriment as a result of making a protected disclosure can complain to an employment tribunal irrespective of their length of service. However, tribunal fees were introduced in 2013 and these are likely to deter people without resources.

Another aspect of the process that should be highlighted is that tribunals can only award compensation. They are not empowered to investigate a worker’s allegations or even order an employer to cease engaging in proven malpractice. Thus employers can continue to behave improperly so long as they do not victimise whistleblowers or are willing to compensate them!

Unsurprisingly, it has been suggested that mediation might be more attractive as a form of dispute resolution as this process might allow allegations to be investigated and recommendations made.

One radical suggestion is that a Public Interest Disclosure Agency should be established. This could ensure that allegations were investigated by appropriate persons, could advise potential and actual whistleblowers and provide assistance to those who believe they have been victimised. Although it seems unlikely that the Government would provide resources for such a body in the current climate of austerity, such a move would send out a very positive message about the importance of whistleblowing in a democratic society.

It is generally accepted that the promotion of whistleblowing requires a culture of openness and not just lip service to a paper policy or procedure. People need to feel confident that they are doing the right thing if they raise a concern and that it will be taken seriously.

This cannot be achieved by simply imposing a duty to report wrongdoing. However, if employers lead from the top and encourage reporting by having procedures with appropriate safeguards (and even rewards) it may be legitimate to expect people to disclose wrongdoing.

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Whistleblowing in Croatia

By Dr Snjezana Vasiljevic, M.Phil, Assistant Professor, University of Zagreb/Faculty of Law

"Zvizdać" is the Croatian expression for the term whistleblower. The term whistle blowing is a relatively new term in Croatia. The term whistleblower is widespread in public but people are still not familiar with the expression. The first whistleblower to gain great media attention was Ankica Lepej, an employee of the Zagrebacka Bank, who disclosed that Ankica Tudjman, the wife of the late Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, had made a 239,000 German Marks deposit and that her husband, Franjo Tudjman, had not mentioned the money in his property card. She got fired from the company.

Croatian legislation is still not focusing on whistle blowing in particular but there have been some intensions to amend the current legislation in order to improve protection for whistle blowing.

The Republic of Croatia, as a party to the Civil Law Convention on Corruption, is obliged to provide effective remedies for persons who have suffered damage as a result of acts of corruption. These remedies are ensured through the general provisions of the Civil Obligation Act on the compensation of damages as well as through provisions from other relevant legislation (The Civil Service Act, the Courts Act, the Act on the State Attorney’s Office, the Police Act and the Labour Act).

The Republic of Croatia has a developed legal framework guaranteeing the preconditions for success in the fight against corruption but a specific anti-corruption Act and specific legislation on whistleblowers do not exist.

In the past, there has not been the political will to insert the protection of whistleblowers into anti-corruption legislation, nor serious attempt to draft regulations in order to protect whistleblowers. The Witness Protection Act 2003 provides for whistleblower protection, although it is very vaguely formulated.

In December 2009, the Croatian Parliament passed the new Labour Act, which contains a provision securing whistleblower protection against dismissal for individuals who have reported an instance of corruption in good faith. According to the Civil Service Act 2005 (amended in 2007 and 2008), Article 4, Paragraph 2, also applies to civil servants, thus indirectly providing civil servants with whistleblower protection. In 2013, the draft Law on whistleblowers protection was sent to the parliamentary procedure but it is hard to predict its adoption in the upcoming period. There are no official figures on the incidence of whistle blowing specifically, nor is there research on this topic. There are only official figures on complaints on professional behaviour of civil servants.

The most common type of attitude towards whistle blowing in the press is positive and supportive, the press consider them as heroes, but most whistleblowers claim that they would never go through the same experience again.

The only discussion on whistle blowing cases and their reporting to the police is present in the media. Many laws recognize the importance of disclosure to the public including the media as a last worst case scenario. The media’s role in whistle blowing is also recognized by the generally accepted principle that they should have a special privilege to protect their source from disclosure. Thus, if the media have the possibility to hide the identity of its sources, then whistle blowing is possible.

On the other hand, if the source has to be disclosed, whistle blowing is not promoted. The national media is regularly reporting whistle blowing cases depending on sources available in each of the cases that show up in the public domain. The Association of Whistleblowers provides assistance for reporting corruption or malpractices. They are providing advice to assists victims and speak in public about concrete cases.

Transparency International is aiming at the suppression of corruption, and it provides advisory assistance for people who report corruption or malpractices and serves as an independent disclosure channel. In order to protect the privacy of the users of the services of the free of charge telephone line, citizens have the right to report a case anonymously.

The Association for the protection from bullying of victims, founded in 2005, is aimed at protection against discrimination and moral harassment at the workplace.

The Association for protection from bullying deals with victims on a daily basis who suffer from different forms of discrimination and moral harassment in the workplace and those who reveal corruption and malpractices in both the public and private sectors, or who are victimized because they reveal malpractices in the workplace. The Association for protection from bullying is providing advice to assist victims and speaks in public about concrete cases.

Protection for whistle-blowers can be found in the Croatian Criminal Code, Labour Act and Civil Service Act. Croatian legislation does not expressly define the concept of whistle blowing. In Croatia, the only existing provision regarding the protection of what could be likened to a whistleblower is linked to corruption-related offences.

The rights of whistleblowers in particular cases are impossible to analyze because there are no legally-binding verdicts on whistleblowers in Croatia.

It appears that there is insufficient awareness-raising in this regard. In 2013, the Croatian Parliament called for specific measures to raise the quality of whistleblower protection. The Ministry of Justice is currently working on an analysis of the implementation of the existing legal framework. It has also published guidelines on whistle blowing and the potential protection of whistleblowers.
Australia and South Africa: The Major Social Factors Influencing Voting Patterns

By Nawid Zaher, Editorial Researcher, Government Gazette

There are many social factors that influence voting patterns in federal elections. However, often there will be one dominant factor that can explain key patterns. Australia and South Africa are no exception to this theory and analysis of voting data reveals one or more major social factors that appear to correlate with the voting patterns of the electorate.

In Australia, level of income and wealth are the major social factors that appear to be dictating the voting patterns of certain electorates. In South Africa, race has been the major social factor that appears to be dictating the voting of the nation—“so much so that many have described South African elections as a racial census’ (Ferree 2006, p. 803).

This article will examine the relationship of these major social factors and their impact on voting in Australia and South Africa. For the purposes of Australia, historical data representing voting in federal elections is utilised to demonstrate a long and powerful history of voting in wealthy electorates.

For the purposes of South Africa, the relationship between race and class is discussed to highlight the significance of the relationship and the consequential impact of underlying social classes on voting patterns. Race census theory is established to offer a framework for understanding the political and voting landscape of the nation.

Overall, understanding these social characteristics can assist in predicting voting behaviour and this is a reflection of the impact such factors can have on the electorate.

Australia

There are 150 electorates in Australia and analysis of voting data from these electorates produces an obvious trend. Information from the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) indicates a number of electorates have never been held by certain political parties.

Thus, a stranglehold exists from one party as the electorate has voted in support of them for over a century of federal elections. This paper will identify similarities and patterns within these electorates to determine the major social factor influencing such voting patterns.

The AEC (2013) lists Wentworth, North Sydney, Curtin, Warringah and Bradfield as five federal electorates that have never been held by a non-conservative party since the first federal election in 1904.

This is a powerful statistic considering four of the aforementioned five are in the vicinity of one another in the dominant and influential districts of Sydney (the major and most populous city of Australia).

In another publication, the Sydney Morning Herald (2013) states the top five electorates in Australia by median family income per week as Wentworth, North Sydney, Curtin, Warringah and Bradfield.

These are the same electorates that have indeed never been held by the Labor party and always held by conservatives (AEC 2013).

Furthermore, to reinforce this relationship between wealth and voting, two out of the next five electorates from the Sydney Morning Herald's (2013) list of electorates by median family income per week have never been held by the Labor party either.

A significant voting pattern has been created by this data given the longevity of the voting tendencies of the citizens of these seats.

The major social factor in these key electorates is level of income and therefore wealth. This is obviously a fundamental feature and the historical data available supports this concept. It is difficult to argue that this is a coincidence when the pattern is consistent across a number of electorates and for the entirety of the electorate's existence.

Deeper analysis of the electorate supports the hypothesis that wealthier electorates vote for conservative political parties (the Liberal party in Australia) and this is a significant voting pattern of Australia.

The electorate of Wentworth, which records the highest median family income of any of the 150 electorates in the country, contains some of Sydney's richest and most established suburbs. This is reflected by the fact it has the highest proportion of high income families (Green, 2013).

The electorates of North Sydney and Warringah are in second and fourth place respectively according to highest median family income and both endure comparable characteristics. A feature of Warringah is that it records the second highest figure in relation to monthly mortgage repayments and weekly rent (Green, 2013); reflective of the fact it is indeed an expensive place to reside. Curtin in third place, which is the only electorate in the top five that is not within the vicinity of Sydney, is a mining electorate that benefits from the economic prosperity that Australia's natural resources offer.

Rounding out the top five is the electorate of Bradfield. The majority of voters in Bradfield are affluent and well educated. 'Bradfield contains a large proportion of families in big houses that they own and the highest proportion of residents attending school’ (Green, 2013). None of the aforementioned five electorates have ever been held by a non-conservative political party.

Understandably, citizens within these electorates who wish to cast a vote for a non-conservative party are an anomaly and are likely to feel that their vote will have little to no influence on the outcome of the election. This has the potential to breed the mentality of following the herd and create an environment of self-prophecy where the electorate continues to strengthen as a conservative stranglehold.
predictability in voting patterns blunts the potency of an individual’s vote in an election where he or she chooses to go against the trend.

Thus there is an overwhelming voting pattern in Australia that affluent, highly educated and white-collar electorates appear to be regions where conservatives such as the Liberal Party will hold perpetual power. This relationship between social factors such as wealth and voting patterns in Australia is consistent and highly correlated. In these significant electorates where the rich hold strong influence, the impact of your vote is superfluous if it is not for the conservative party. As a result, appreciating voting patterns is crucial for policy-makers as ‘better understanding as to what makes individuals support a left-wing or right-wing party can provide new insights into how each party’s policies affect different groups in the population’ (Leigh 2004, p. 30).

However, in South Africa it appears voters are not voting ‘left or right’ and instead are voting ‘black or white’.

**South Africa**

A number of theories exist to explain voting patterns within the political landscape of post-Apartheid South Africa, however the leading one is the race census theory. In South Africa, ‘race has been an overwhelming predictor of voting behaviour for most of the South African electorate’ (Ferree 2006, p. 803).

Scholars, who assert that race has been a major influence in the results of the four federal elections since the end of Apartheid, have largely supported this view. Understanding racial identity is thus central to understanding the relationship between the electorate and voting patterns. It is racial identity that drives voting patterns and these can be divided into four main categories according to Taylor (1996), ‘Whites’, ‘Coloureds’, ‘Indians’ and ‘Blacks’.

Race census theory is a school of thought that advances the view that voting patterns in South Africa resemble a prism of racialised politics because racial and ethnic political identities dominate the voting landscape. Therefore, blacks vote for ‘blacks parties’ and whites for ‘whites parties’ (Habib & Naidu 2006, p. 82). Historically, these have been the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party (NP) respectively. In analysing the voting statistics from the first post-apartheid election in regards to racial categories, such a correlation does appear to exist between racial groups and political parties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Category</th>
<th>Population (%)</th>
<th>(%) Votes for ANC</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above tables have been constructed from statistics in Taylor’s (1996) ‘Race and the transition to democracy in South Africa.’ It reports that 75% of the population constituted African and 13% of the population were labelled white and that this corresponds to statistics, which report that the African National Congress received 63% of the vote and the National Party received 20% of the vote.

The differences in this situation have been accounted for by the presence of other parties and in particular by the voting behaviour of those categorised Coloured and Indian, who are constituted as being 9% and 3% of the population respectively (Taylor 1996). These statistics from the first election post-apartheid reflect a rather strong correlation between race and voting patterns.

**Race and Class**

Aside from race alone, another important relationship to consider for the purposes of studying voting patterns in South Africa is that of race and class. Cohen (2012) summarises a report from Statistics South Africa by reporting the fact that even though incomes for black households have increased an average of almost 170 percent over the decade between 2002 – 2012, their annual earnings are still only a sixth of that for whites.

This issue is severely compounded by the fact that ‘about 80 percent of South Africa’s 51.8 million population is black’ (Cohen, 2012). This assists in advancing the racial census theory in South Africa as race continues to politically and economically segregate and influence citizens’ voting patterns. Such statistics are reflective of an environment where race is correlated to serious inequality in social classes.

Thus, when captured by racial categories, South African voting patterns appear to follow a predictable pattern. Indeed, as previously mentioned, it is dominated by the voting landscape of blacks voting for ‘blacks parties’ and whites for ‘whites parties’.

Furthermore, as a result of the serious social and economic inequality issues confronting South Africa, consistent voting patterns in regards to social classes emerge as the statistics indicate strong divides between social classes.

These classes (measured by level of income) ultimately offer an overlap between the voting patterns in Australia and South Africa.

Australia has retained a concentrated number of elite wealthy electorates where the result is consistently for the Liberal party whilst South Africa’s wealthier social class (‘whites’) vote for the National Party.

The underlying pattern in both countries is that poorer social classes vote for one party and the wealthier ones elect to vote for the other major political party and that this is the key driver for voting behaviour.
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Compulsory Voting

By Nawid Zaher, Editorial Researcher, Government Gazette

Upon turning 18 and being eligible to vote in my first federal election, I was given a ballot paper with a number of voting options. The one choice that I was not given was whether or not I could elect to attend a polling booth and actually vote. In Australia, compulsory voting has been integrated into politics for the best part of a century. The 1925 election between Stanley Bruce and Matthew Charlton marked the first Australian election with compulsory voting and the federal election between Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott in 2010 marked my first eligible election as well as 85 years of compulsory voting in the country. This paper briefly highlights key statistics in relation to compulsory voting before discussing the impacts and benefits of participating in compulsory voting as well as compulsory voting in other countries.

Key Statistics

The major driving force behind compulsory voting at federal elections appears to have been a decline in voter turnout. Evans (2006, p. 5) states the 1919 election recorded a turnout in excess of 71% before a major drop to less than 60% at the 1922 election. The potential of this trend was significant and ultimately triggered change by way of a private bill to amend the ‘Electorate Act.’ Needless to say, the impact was immediate as the next federal election in 1925 recorded voter turnout in excess of 91%. The next (almost) century of federal elections has seen voter turnout remain at similar levels, if not greater. On a qualitative level, ‘compulsory voting is claimed to encourage policies which collectively address the full spectrum of elector values, because all voters have to be appealed to by government and opposition parties in order to win, and maintain, a majority in Parliament’. (Evans 2006, p. 10). On a quantitative level, we can, by way of an example, compare Australia with the UK for some contrasting results. In the UK elections of May 2005, turnout varied from 74.6% in Dorset West to 41.5% in Liverpool Riverside. By contrast, the turnout of all but 2 electorates in the Australian elections in October 2004 was over 90%. The exceptions were Kalgoorlie with 83.53% and Lingiari with 77.71%, both covering remote areas with transient populations (Evans 2006, p. 11). The UK does not have compulsory voting and the implications of this are obvious against the statistics of Australia.

To summarise these statistics, it is obvious that voter turnout was declining, and implementing compulsory voting not only turned this around but has also kept it at levels above 90%. However, as a stand alone figure, this percentage offers little. Further assessment must be considered to determine the impact of such policy and the benefits compulsory voting attracts.

Compulsory Voting

Compulsory voting impacts on every eligible voter on the day of the election as per the legislation. Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, under section 245(1) states ‘it shall be the duty of every elector to vote at each election’. In reality, this means attending a polling booth on the indicated Saturday of ‘election day’ and casting your vote. The benefit of this mechanism of public policy is it keeps the electorate engaged, even if it is momentarily whilst casting their vote.

Discussion

A discussion paper administered by the Whitlam Institute in conjunction with the University of Western Sydney suggests, ‘there is a growing disconnection between formalised Politics and everyday politics’. This trend highlights how the areas of overlap between everyday life and formal Politics are becoming increasingly smaller, indicating that formal Political structures are becoming more remote in our everyday lives (Arvantikis & Marren 2009, p. 10). This growing gap between politics and society is not an ideal scenario and indicative of a changing socio-political landscape. In resolving these issues, it can be said that students at the academic level can have their curriculum manipulated to learn more about politics and this may increasingly trigger a higher level of engagement. However, this is a temporary fix as formal academia eventually ceases and the opportunity to learn about the importance of public policy and politics consequently diminishes. Interestingly, it is at this age where it is common for high school to finish and the opportunity to actually impact on politics begins. This is because the age of 18 often marks the age to be eligible to vote. However, from this age, there are few social instruments or pieces of legislation that direct people to take an interest in politics.

Compulsory voting is thus the fundamental policy instrument that ensures a reasonable level of political engagement between parliament and members of the electorate. Such policy ensures that every now and then, as members of an electorate, we are aware of our political landscape. This is important because politicians create our public, fiscal and social policies amongst other major areas of policy that substantially impact on our lives. Compulsory voting validates this desired level of engagement and offers the ability to track public sentiment on an overall basis.

Compulsory voting can also eliminate inequality and potential social injustices by way of abuses of political power. ‘Those who fail to vote in voluntary voting nations are typically those groups already experiencing one or more forms of deprivation, namely, the poor, the unemployed, the homeless, indigenous peoples, the isolated, new citizens and the young’ (Hill, 2011). This transfers greater voting power to the well-off and causes policies to be geared disproportionately to the interests of voters (Hill, 2011). Compulsory voting is critical in avoiding any opportunity for such an environment to exist. It instigates discussion and common ground amongst members of the electorate where otherwise there would be none, particularly in low socio-economic areas.

Compulsory voting can also be viewed as a civic duty comparable to other duties citizens perform, such as taxation, compulsory education and jury duty (Evans 2006, p. 12). In this sense, it is almost odd that compulsory voting is not widely accepted to the degree taxation and jury duty is and rather it is the topic of constant debate. For those living in nations with compulsory voting, it is in fact a patriotic day where every member of society engages with their representative democracy and affects their political landscape.

International Discussion

Compulsory voting has obviously had a tremendous and immediate impact on the Australian political landscape. It is important to also consider the impact compulsory voting has had on the other countries that currently have such a policy in existence. According to the CIA World Factbook (2013), the following 10 countries...
not only have compulsory voting, but enforce it too:

- Australia
- Uruguay
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Ecuador
- Nauru
- Peru
- Singapore
- Argentina
- Brazil
- Luxembourg

There are several other countries which have compulsory voting laws in place, but in which it is not actually enforced in practice.

The following paragraphs will briefly discuss compulsory voting in regards to Brazil to offer a contrast to Australia.

The compulsory voting legislation is taken seriously in Brazil. ‘Election dates are national holidays to facilitate compliance with the law’ (Power & Roberts 1995, p. 805) and similarly to Australia, those who are required by law to vote and don’t, face a punitive fine. Similarily again, both countries permit non-voters to provide a reasonable reason for not voting. However, if they do not do this and do not pay the fine, they become subject to a series of sanctions. Listed below from a case study by Leticia Calderon-Chelius (2007) for IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) are the sanctions for failing to vote in Brazil:

- They cannot apply for any public position or function.
- They cannot receive any remuneration or salary from a public post.
- There are restrictions on the types of loan they can obtain from federal or local government sources, or from any credit institution administered totally or partially by the government.
- There are restrictions on their obtaining a passport or identity card.
- There are restrictions on their renewing their teaching licences in public educational institutions or those that are controlled by the government.

Interestingly, measures for not voting are much broader in Brazil than in Australia. However, the impact of compulsory voting in relation to voter turn out is greater in Australia than in Brazil. Voter turn out in the 2010 Brazil election was at 82% (IDEA, 2013) in comparison to the 2010 Australian election which was 93% (AEC, 2013). It is worth mentioning that the population of Brazil, at 198 million, is significantly greater than Australia’s mere 23 million. Nevertheless, both countries employ compulsory voting and enforce it for great results in regards to high voter turnout levels.

Broadly speaking, most countries on the list above experience voter turnout levels similar to Australia; according to statistics from IDEA, with the obvious exception of DRC.

International comparisons such as Brazil offer us the chance to look at compulsory voting from the perspective of another country and this can aid the electoral evaluation process. Overall, the overwhelming statistic is that all countries that have enacted compulsory voting record high voter turnout levels roughly between the 80% and 95% figure(1)1. These levels of voter turnout are much higher than those for nations with voluntary voting and growing. This trend should be worrisome for parliaments of voluntary voting nations because it reflects a growing disconnect between politics and the public. This level of engagement cannot be healthy for representative democracies with voluntary voting. Perhaps compulsory voting could instigate a new era of engagement between politics and the electorate for their nations.

Conclusion

On a personal level, compulsory voting does not unduly worry me. Furthermore, an election study from a little over 15 years ago suggests it doesn’t faze most Australians either. The study posed the question to, ‘would you have voted in the election if voting had not been compulsory?’ Almost 70% of respondents said they ‘definitely would have’, with a further 18% adding to the category of ‘probably would have voted’ (Mackerras & McAllister 1999, p. 227). This is an enormous percentage of respondents that hardly appear to be pushing for electoral reform to dismiss compulsory voting. At the end of the day, it is one day every two to three years where you are required to enter a polling booth and cast your vote. Giving up a few minutes of your time every couple of years is not a significant issue and may produce greater levels of political engagement. However I can appreciate, my perspective is aided by fact that this policy of compulsory voting is the only one I have ever been exposed to. Irrespective, in a country such as Australia, where compulsory voting has been around for such a long period time, that the idea of voluntary voting will continue to remain foreign, unknown and unpopular.

(1)1 This data has been compiled from IDEA (http://www.idea.int/vt/) and is gathered from the most recent election held in that particular country.

References:


Democracies are characterised by a multiplicity of different factors, such as freedom of expression, the right to peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of association with others. As the Greek origin of the word democracy implies, its core is the rule of the people. Ancient Greece introduced the concept of elections as a participatory mean to implement the idea of "the rule of the people". Over the last century, the concept of elections has developed and there is broad international consensus that elections are the cornerstone of every democracy. However, it is not enough to carry out elections to be considered a real democracy. There are essential international principles that have to be fulfilled. Only free, fair, equal, safe and consistent elections which take place in a (preferably) peaceful environment and put citizens at the heart of the electoral process allow a democracy to be truly representative.

Around the globe, Electoral Commissions, International Institutions and Non Governmental Organisations work relentlessly to guarantee that elections meet these crucial international standards and that every citizen’s vote is valued and accepted. This is a herculean task because democracy as well as elections are fragile and perceived to never reach perfection. This is why international advocates and watchdogs in the form of the above described institutions are a necessary part of the process. They are able to point out systemic flaws, work against instrumentalisation and help to implement better electoral standards. For the most part, the efforts made by these institutions remain unseen and unheard.

Therefore, ICPS and ICEP have established an award exclusively for electoral stakeholders, in recognition of their work and to acknowledge their significant contribution to the democratic process beyond the community of electoral professionals, practitioners and experts.

The ICPS International Electoral Awards increase awareness of the work of the international electoral community by honouring their achievements, initiatives and dedication on an international level.

In 2013 the 1st International Electoral Awards were launched. Over several months an overwhelming amount of award nominations from all over the world were submitted. Participants could choose from eight award categories to make a nomination. In addition to these categories, awards were bestowed in four non-nomination categories honouring outstanding achievements in the electoral field.

The creation of the shortlist for each and every category and the subsequent selection of the awardees was the task of the International Electoral Award Committee. The Committee was comprised of nine members, all of them renowned experts in the field of international politics, elections and democracy who thoroughly assessed every nomination and engaged in long discussions to choose a winner.

The winners of the 2013 International Electoral Awards were announced at the official award ceremony that took place in December last year in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
The 2013 International Electoral Awards were awarded to the following:

**International Institutional Engagement Award**
Irfan Abdool Rahman, Electoral Commissioner of Mauritius for his extensive international engagement as an electoral observer and as an electoral expert for numerous international Institutions.

Recognition for outstanding achievements:
- Mareska Mantik – Independent Electoral Advisor
- Pradip Ghimire – National Election Monitoring Alliance

**Electoral Conflict Resolution Award**
Maj. General Md. Shafiq-ul Islam, Executive Director CRP for his lead in digitalising Bangladesh’s voter list and introducing a National-ID card

Recognition for outstanding achievements:
- Chairman Ahmed Issack Hassan – IEBC Kenya
- Chairman Afari-Gyan Kwadwo – Electoral Commission of Ghana

**Citizens’ Engagement Award**
Chairman Bruno Kaufmann, Election Commission of Falun/Sweden for his project to increase citizens’ active participation and introducing the unique “democracy passport”

Recognition for outstanding achievements:
- Jurado Nacional de Elecciones Perú
- Central Election Commission of the Republic of Moldova

**Electoral Management Award**
State Election Commission of the Republic of Slovenia for improving electoral proceedings and at the same time reducing the costs of holding elections.

Recognition for outstanding achievements:
- Irena Hadziabdic – Member of the CEC of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Chairman Prof. Attahiru Jega – INEC Nigeria

**Accessibility Award**
Republic of the Philippines Commission on Elections for their comprehensive undertakings to facilitate overseas absentee voting and voting for detainees, elderly and disabled people

Recognition for outstanding achievements:
- Election Commission of Pakistan
- Electoral Commission of South Africa

**Equality Award**
Electoral Commission of South Africa for introducing civil society initiatives to increase participation among minority groups and women.

Recognition for outstanding achievements:
- Republic of the Philippines Commission on Elections
- Jurado Nacional de Elecciones Perú

**First Time Voter Award**
Natia Zaalishvili, Director of the Center for Electoral Systems Development, Reform and Training from the CEC Georgia for their “First Vote” project.

Recognition for outstanding achievements:
- Permanent Electoral Authority Romania
- Jurado Nacional de Elecciones Perú

**Electoral Ergonomy Award**
Michael Ertel, Seminole County Supervisor of Elections for the implementation of the “Voter Trust Plan”

Recognition for outstanding achievements:
- Chairman Sodnomtseren Choinzon – General Election Commission of Mongolia

**Lifetime Achievement Award**
Madame Secretary Madeleine Albright

**Commissioner of the Year Award**
Chairman Prof. Attahiru Jega – Independent National Electoral Commission Nigeria

**Commission of the Year Award**
State Election Commission of the Republic of Slovenia

**ICPS Award for the promotion of international best practice**
Dr. Anil Seal - Director of the Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre

**ICPS Award for the promotion of democracy in Africa**
Hannah Forster, Executive Director, The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies

**ICPS Award for the innovative use of technology**
Election Commission of Pakistan

**ICPS Award for managing transition**
Supreme Election Council of Turkey

The International Electoral Awards 2013 were characterised by an overwhelming participation, international news coverage and recognition. With the awards ICPS managed to increase the visibility of the outstanding work of Electoral Management Bodies beyond the electoral world and stimulate electoral stakeholders to continue striving for excellence.

The nomination period for this year’s awards has recently opened. If you would like to make a nomination or learn more about the International Electoral Awards, please visit our website: www.awards.electoralnetwork.org
Greater TRANSPARENCY
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Implementing Transnational Telemedicine Solutions

About ITTS

‘Implementing Transnational Telemedicine Solutions’ (ITTS) is addressing the challenges of an ageing and geographically-dispersed population, encouraging the use of telemedicine in Europe’s Northern Periphery. Part-funded by the EU Northern Periphery Programme, this strategic project is led by the Centre for Rural Health, University of Aberdeen, and includes partners from Norway, Finland, Sweden, Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Having commenced in September 2011, the project ended with a final conference held in Scotland on 11-12 March 2014.

The aim of ITTS is to implement transnational telemedicine solutions, at scale, across the Northern Periphery region normalising the use of technology into everyday practice through transnational knowledge exchange to ultimately improve accessibility by situating services in local communities or in patients’ homes.

Ten demonstrator projects on the themes of video-consultation (VC), mobile self-management and home-based health services have been implemented across a wide range of clinical specialities:

- VC for speech therapy services (Ire, NI, Scot, Swed)
- VC for renal services (NI, Nor, Scot, Swed)
- VC for emergency psychiatry services (Nor, Scot)
- VC for remote diabetes services (NI, Scot)
- Smartphones for tracking physical activity (Ire, Nor, Scot)
- Smartphones and internet support for diabetes
- Smartphones for inflammatory bowel disease (Ire)
- Remote support in medical and social care emergencies (Fin)
- Remote exercise classes for rehabilitation (Fin, Ire, Scot, Swed)
- Home-based service delivery for Multimorbidity patients (Fin, Ire, Swed)

The strategy has been to learn from successful established telemedicine services in Northern Europe and to introduce these in other areas, to build sustainable solutions.

ITTS has supported the development of 48 sites and to date, more than 4000 patients have used these new services.

Common evaluation methods including health economics are being used to quantify the outputs. Project results will also be used to inform the publication of ‘Telemedicine into Everyday Practice’ – a guide (with an interactive checklist) for use by policymakers and service planners.

Transnational Knowledge Exchange

International knowledge exchange has been key to optimising the implementation and sustainability of these new services. Collaboration provides a mechanism for advancing telemedicine into everyday practice and creating professional networks. An International Telemedicine Advisory Service (ITAS) was created to advise on all elements of the project planning, implementation and analysis. Comprising telemedicine experts from all participating countries, ITAS has encouraged the growth of clinician networks within the project and, on a wider level, will link into developing the eHealth business sector across the region.

Benefits of ITTS implementations include:

- reducing clinician travel time, which can lead to increased appointment availability and cost reductions;
- reducing patient travel time;
- providing access to specialist services both within the region and at large national centres;
- improvements in the equality of care delivery, where rurality is a barrier to access;
- reduction in emergency transport and hospital admission through remotely delivered specialist assessments;
- supporting patient self-care and health management at home.

Project Partners

1. Centre for Rural Health (CRH), Inverness [Scotland, UK]
2. Norwegian Centre for Integrated Care and Telemedicine (NST) [Norway]
3. County Council of Västerbotten (VLL) [Sweden]
4. Oulu Arc Subregion [Finland]
5. National University of Ireland, Galway [Republic of Ireland, UK]
6. Centre for Connected Health and Social Care [Northern Ireland, UK]

In November, Diabetes Consultants, Nurses, patients, service providers, technology companies and academics came together from across northern Europe to plan for the future of Diabetes care using technology.

“Through the ITTS Project we have learnt the benefits of transnational knowledge exchange and we have made tangible results from the investment of bringing these people together.”

Dr David Heaney, ITTS Project Director

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EU HEALTH SPECIAL

An EU-Wide Diabetes Strategy
An EU-Wide Diabetes Strategy

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* Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson
Diabetes, particularly type 2, is reaching epidemic proportions across the world including European countries. Indeed if all those with diabetes across the world were put into one country, this would be the third largest country after China and India. There is a need in Europe to raise the profile and importance of diabetes amongst not only the general public but also health care providers and professionals. In my particular area of diabetic complications, the outlook in terms of morbidity and mortality for those patients on dialysis as a consequence of end-stage diabetic kidney disease, who also have foot problems, is worse than for most malignant diseases with the potential exception of lung and pancreas.

It is therefore essential in Europe that the seriousness and consequences of having diabetes be widely appreciated: no longer can this be regarded as “a touch of sugar” or “mild diabetes”. All patients with diabetes are at risk of later complications which can have devastating effects on health and quality of life.

It is not my view that national screening programmes will be helpful: rather it is important to focus screening on high risk groups which might include for example those from certain ethnic minorities, those with morbid obesity, those with a strong family history of diabetes, those with a history of gestational diabetes and so on.

Another high risk group is hospital inpatients who are not known to have diabetes: in most UK hospitals between one in four and one in five of the total inpatient population has diabetes whether they know it or not.

In other chronic diseases, for example heart disease, diabetes is also very common: only one out of five patients with established chronic cardiac failure will have normal glucose tolerance, the remainder having frank diabetes or impaired glucose tolerance.

There are a number of existing therapies for people with diabetes with proven efficacy and safety and many have been introduced in recent years: moreover there are a number of innovative new developments in the pipeline.

Europe should try and focus on prevention by not only education on healthy eating and physical activity, but also by taking action in areas such as advertising of fast foods, sponsorship of sports events and so on. It was certainly rather ironic that just prior to the Olympics held in London in 2012, McDonalds opened their largest ever store on site.

In many ways if one looks in 2014 at the food and beverage industries, we are now where tobacco promotion and advertising was 50 years ago. At that time it was emphasized that smoking may well be bad for you and you should not smoke if at all possible.

Similarly the UK Secretary of State for Health recently announced that all individuals should be involved in “national soul searching” and be more responsible with their diet. Some 50 years later, the banning of all advertising of tobacco products, restriction of sponsorship of sporting events and further legislation soon to come, has resulted in a significant reduction in smoking in the UK.

As pointed out in a letter to The Times on January 11 by Professor Sever from London, are we going to have to wait 50 years for similar activities to be taken on potentially harmful and obesity generating foods? Recent examples of promotion of supposedly “healthy” foods by manufacturers for example promoting cereals and other similar items as being healthy when they contain significant quantities of sugar and even salt, are not difficult to find. We can look west to the United States and the example of New York City where reducing the volume of “super-sized soda” drinks has had an impact and most restaurants are now compelled to reveal the calorific content of every item on the menu.

Much can be done across Europe and it behoves all of those involved to try and promote activities such as those listed above.

Professor Andrew JM Boulton MD, DSc (Hon), FICP, FACP, FRCP, President, European Association for the Study of Diabetes, Professor of Medicine, University of Manchester and Consultant Physician, Manchester Royal Infirmary, Manchester, UK; Visiting Professor of Medicine, University of Miami, FL, USA.
The rising prevalence of diabetes and its associated costs, including the management of complications represents an enormous healthcare challenge. There are currently nearly 56M people with diabetes in Europe and this number is expected to grow by 22% to nearly 69M by 2035. Despite the introduction of new therapies, more than half of patients still do not achieve glucose goals and remain uncontrolled. Sub-optimal control is associated with substantial clinical, human and economic implications.

Frequent glucose monitoring plays an important role in helping to achieve better glycemic control. This is achieved because the healthcare provider is provided with data to facilitate decision making when considering therapy intensification and also because it ensures the efficacy of a patients’ diabetes management plan. This also empowers patients to take control of their overall diabetes management plan, along with their healthcare team, as they feel responsible for managing their diabetes.

Currently, self-monitoring of blood glucose (SMBG) is widely appreciated and recommended as a core component of management in patients with diabetes. Benefits of patient SMBG include, monitoring, and managing hyper and hypoglycemia, providing feedback on lifestyle and drug treatments, providing information for treatment modifications and titrations, and increasing patient empowerment and adherence to treatment. Although SMBG is an important tool to achieve good glycemic control, many patients measure their glucose concentrations less often than is recommended by their healthcare providers, with up to 67% of patients failing to routinely monitor their blood glucose. This is due to a number of barriers to adherence with SMBG, which include challenges with current methods, cost, and patients’ knowledge levels. In particular, the conventional blood finger stick is painful and inconvenient due to disruption of daily life, and may be difficult to perform in long term diabetic patients due to calluses on the fingers and poor circulation. Some patients may also be hesitant to perform the test publicly due to embarrassment or stigma associated with their condition. Lastly, failure to regularly clean the skin or glucose monitors or apply an adequate blood specimen can lead to inaccuracy in monitoring blood glucose levels.

As an alternative to SMBG and in conjunction with use of insulin pumps, continuous glucose monitoring (CGM) methods have been introduced. There are two types of CGM devices commercially available: retrospective and real-time devices. Retrospective devices do not allow patients to react to glucose changes before they reach abnormal levels; in contrast, real-time devices provide current glucose levels, allowing the patient to take appropriate action to maintain glycemic control. However, finger stick calibration techniques and dense data interpretation issues result in complexities with this technology. Finally, the costs associated with CGM have led to minimal reimbursement by health insurers and limited availability of continuous glucose monitoring technologies for patients.

Abbott’s commitment to improving glucose monitoring:

As a result, alternatives to conventional SMBG and improvements on existing CGM technologies are needed. Abbott’s diabetes care business unit is committed to patients with diabetes and is working on improving key elements of its core technology to better address unmet needs in glucose monitoring. Abbott is designing a concept for Flash Glucose Monitoring which has been designed as an alternative to traditional SMBG; instead of requiring routine finger stick, with a simple scan, Abbott’s investigational Flash Glucose Monitoring is designed to automatically collect glucose data to enable generation of an advanced software report called the Ambulatory Glucose Profile (AGP). This visual report of a patient’s typical day using dense glucose data reveals hypoglycemic and hyperglycemic trends to facilitate better patient therapy and education. This visual snapshot thus empowers the clinician and the patient to see patterns and adjust therapy accordingly. Abbott’s investigational Flash Glucose Monitoring is also designed to empower and engage patients with glucose monitoring and provides simple and insightful data that is meaningful to the HCP and patient, and is intended to facilitate improved clinical outcomes. Lastly, Abbott’s investigational Flash Glucose Monitoring will provide payers with evidence designed to demonstrate the cost effectiveness of this new technology and to help reduce the burden of diabetes in the healthcare system.

In conclusion, Abbott is committed to the development of novel solutions to empower patients and HCPs to overcome unmet needs in glucose monitoring and to help manage their diabetes more effectively to achieve optimal outcomes.

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In conclusion, Abbott is committed to the development of novel solutions to empower patients and HCPs to overcome unmet needs in glucose monitoring and to help manage their diabetes more effectively to achieve optimal outcomes.

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Diabetes – a Disease with many Faces and Prime Representative of Chronic Care

By Professor Dr Cees J. Tack, Prof in Internal Medicine and Diabetology

Diabetes mellitus is highly prevalent across Europe but care for patients varies substantially across nations. Being a typical chronic disease, diabetes requires optimal organization of chronic care facilities. In this viewpoint I will highlight three key messages with a strong common element.

While many organizations lump all patients with diabetes together, this does not justify the many differences between individual patients. In fact, diabetes is a much more heterogeneous disease than the present subdivision into type 1 and type 2 assumes. A patient with childhood onset diabetes (≈type 1) and severe hypoglycaemic events differs greatly from an obese patient with adult-onset diabetes (≈type 2), fatty liver disease and chronic heart failure, and approaching these patients in the same way would really jeopardize individual treatment.

At the same time advocacy and policy making need simple, clear messages. The challenge is to generalize diabetes as one problem with common characteristics while at the same time acknowledging individual differences.

Diabetes in either form is a typical chronic disorder that carries a high price; both in terms of human suffering and in terms of costs, mainly due to long-term complications. Hence, optimal organization of chronic care is mandatory and can greatly contribute to better health care outcomes for individual patients.

Diabetes care is a classical example and can serve as a matrix for chronic disease care. Diabetes care was amongst the first diseases for which guidelines were developed, where substitution of care towards specialized nurses was instituted and where quality indicators were developed, measured and benchmarked.

Across Europe, various successful chronic diabetes care models exist, that can serve as an example for chronic care in general. These are generally characterized by a strong fundament in guidelines, delivered in a primary care setting, involving specialized nurses and with proper, defined specialist consultation.

Again, the challenge for the near future is to apply guidelines, but to individualize these to the unique patient. Often referred to as a shift from one-size fits all to tailor-made but still within a protocol. From disease-centred to patient-centred. Sometimes the term "mass individualization" is borrowed from industry. This trend is ongoing and reflected by recent adjustments of guidelines, but needs more emphasis, needs to be more developed and needs to be more supported by research. It does, however, fit perfectly with the trend in EU science towards personalized health care.

Finally, diabetes is typically a disease that strongly involves self management. Self management at the level of treatment and self management at the level of lifestyle.

For example, unstable, insulin-treated diabetes may require up to an hour a day of self care, consisting of measuring, adjusting insulin dose, adjusting meals and activities.

No wonder that modern intensive treatment on the one hand provides freedom to the individual with diabetes to cope with and to be engaged in whatever daily life activity, but on the other hand is perceived as a significant burden.

In a survey amongst patients with longstanding type 1 diabetes, we found severe fatigue listed as the most prevalent symptom. Additionally, for several forms of diabetes, significant lifelong adjustments in lifestyle are crucial.

Changing behaviors is notoriously difficult especially when societal influences partly counteract such changes. Concerted action, at the individual, interpersonal, community and public health policy level is needed. A Dutch contribution is the widespread build of cycle paths and the strong stimulation of daily use of the bicycle. Again, individualization – what works where in which individual – and collective measures – which policies and laws support life style adjustments most – need to be combined.

Optimal self management and behavioral change starts with proper education, but more is needed to change knowing into doing. Clearly, more research into optimal strategies for self management and behavioral changes are needed.

In summary, diabetes, a highly prevalent, serious, disorder can serve as the example where we must move away from a one-size-fits-all approach towards healthcare that is tailored to the needs and characteristics of the individual. This holds true at the level of the exact disease entity, the exact treatment algorithm and the level of self management and life style. The diversity of the EU can be used to optimally meet the diversity of the disease.
Managing chronic conditions is among the key priorities for European health policy. When the EU Commission launched a Reflection Process in 2011 on the back of the 2010 Council conclusions on chronic diseases, it invited stakeholders from across Europe to join the discussion about possible strategies for the prevention and management of chronic conditions.

A look at diabetes can be helpful in identifying appropriate action in the field of chronic disease management. Diabetes is one of the most common chronic conditions, affecting 53 million people in Europe\(^{(1)}\), including more and more children. Its most common form, type 2 diabetes is closely linked to lifestyle, i.e. unhealthy eating and lack of exercise. Diabetes presents very few symptoms in the beginning, but as the condition deteriorates it can cause severe complications ranging from heart disease to kidney failure or lower limb amputations. This makes diabetes a typical chronic condition, the management of which teaches instructive lessons for general chronic disease management.

First, patients need to be at the centre of diabetes management.

On average, chronic patients spend little time – down to a few hours per year – with their doctor or nurse. Most of the time, patients themselves hold responsibility for the day-to-day management of their condition. Experts are therefore seeking mechanisms to help people with diabetes take control of their condition as this can likely improve adherence to treatment, therapy outcome and overall the patient’s well-being.

In diabetes, patient self-management was back in the 1970s, when patients were enabled to monitor their blood glucose levels themselves without having to see a doctor or nurse. Many people with type 2 diabetes can control their condition without medication or insulin, by adapting their lifestyle, eating healthier, exercising enough and reducing stress. Self-monitoring of blood glucose can help people understand the impact of their behavioural changes on their condition; it is therefore a pillar of successful patient empowerment in diabetes management.

Second, diabetes management needs to become more individualised.\(^{(2)}\)

Even though people with diabetes have the tools and techniques available to self-manage their condition in everyday life, many still fail to reach their therapy targets. A key reason for this is the fact that we are all unique individuals with different clinical history and metabolism. Diabetes experts are beginning to understand how strongly this can influence our blood glucose levels. They are learning that to be more successful, therapy needs to be more personalised.

A diabetes management cycle as a blueprint for chronic disease management.

Diabetes care professionals are aiming to combine patient self-management with a more individual therapy approach. Thus, a team of experts has developed a Diabetes Management cycle which can serve as a blueprint for chronic disease management in general\(^{(3)}\). The six-step cycle combines self-monitoring of blood glucose with an algorithm for personalised therapy decisions \(^{(4)}\). A built-in feedback loop helps to ensure that patients stay motivated to implement the necessary lifestyle changes. The cycle is designed for an easy integration into daily routine, particularly in family practices where the majority of chronic patients are treated. Support staff can manage routines such as data read-out and analysis while patients can manage and transmit data remotely, which is particularly important in rural and remote areas where the doctor’s office may be far away.

This cycle, by centring the decision-making process on the specific needs of a patient, holds the potential for application in other chronic diseases. Approaches with the same principles have been implemented for obesity and pain in Germany; as a core element, these approaches offer an online patient support solution with the aim of helping patients achieve long term behavioural changes such as healthier eating or regular exercise. So far, these approaches have generated cost savings as well as positive outcomes for participating patients\(^{(5)}\).

So what does this mean for health policy-makers?

First, strategies for chronic disease management should build on experience in individual disease areas. Successful disease-specific approaches could be replicated in other diseases; and good practice cases can serve as a starting point for the exchange of learnings and experience.

Second, although the patient is at the centre, the focus of the chosen therapy should be on disease management processes rather than individual interventions. Patients and caretakers need training, support and tools to implement a daily routine of managing a chronic condition as well as for the required behavioural changes.

Third, chronic patients should be empowered to take responsibility for their condition in close co-operation with their doctor or caretaker. This can be accomplished by providing the tools and techniques for self-management, as well as by creating incentives to facilitate the successful implementation of the management process.

At the EU level, national efforts can be supported by providing a framework to encourage exchange of information and learnings. With the Joint Action that started this year, we can expect this kind of EU mechanism to be created to facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned. With the number of chronic patients in Europe set to rise further, the payoff could be significant for all of us.


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\(^{(5)}\) Oral information: REHASAN Konzept GmbH, anja.lichterfeld@rehasan.de

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**Diabetes as a Case Study for Chronic Disease Management**

*By Dr Dagmar Kownatka, Roche*
A Call for Legislation for Structured Self-Manage Education to Become Mandatory

By Trudi Deakin, CEO XPERT Health

“The only thing more expensive than education is ignorance”
Benjamin Franklin

The 56 countries and territories in the Europe Region comprise diverse populations with different levels of affluence. The number of people with diabetes in this vast Region is estimated to be 56.3 million – 8.5% of the adult population. Turkey has the highest prevalence (14.8%) and the Russian Federation has the greatest number of people with diabetes (10.9 million). By contrast, Azerbaijan has an estimated prevalence of diabetes of just 2.4%. The countries with the highest number of people with diabetes are for the most part in Western Europe, including Germany, Spain, Italy, France, and the UK. [1]

Age is an important risk factor for type 2 diabetes. In the Europe Region, 37% of the population are over 50 years of age, and this is expected to increase to over 44% by 2035. To a large degree, the high prevalence of type 2 diabetes and impaired glucose tolerance (IGT) are a consequence of the ageing of the Regions’ population. The ageing of the population in the Region will place increasing numbers of people at risk of diabetes, and consequently, place a greater cost burden on health systems. In the UK, 80% of National Health Service (NHS) spending on diabetes (£10billion) goes into managing avoidable complications.[2]

The efficacy of existing treatments for patients with diabetes and innovative new developments will not reach their full potential if people living with the condition do not develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to self-manage it. The decisions that people make on a day-to-day basis regarding what they eat, how active they are, what medication they take and how they manage stress have a far greater impact on what medication they take and how they regard their health. People are often expected to self-manage their diabetes without attendance at an accredited and structured programme of education.

People with diabetes attending a series of structured self-management education sessions has been shown to be both clinically[3] and cost effective[4] in the prevention and management of diabetes. For every seven people attending an evidence-based diabetes prevention programme, one person could be prevented from developing type 2 diabetes over one to five years[5] and for every seven people attending a diabetes self-management programme, one person could be expected to reduce their prescribed diabetes medication over 14 months.[6]

Developing environmental, food and consumer policies to lower risk and ensuring frequent collaboration with policy makers, healthcare professionals, patient groups and industry stakeholders will all help to improve the health of the population. People will be encouraged to participate in physical activity if the infrastructure is in place and purchase healthier food if the food packaging contains the nutritional information. However, unhealthy food and drivers for a sedentary lifestyle are not going to disappear and thus the public still need the education to dispel myths and understand: the benefits of physical activity; the nutritional information on packaging; why making healthier lifestyle choices are going to benefit them. Developing an understanding leads to motivation to change behaviour but this understanding does not emerge from clips of verbal advice followed by provision of information leaflets, it needs to be developed from engagement in person-centred, interaction and empowering education.

Why is it then that not everyone at risk of, or diagnosed with, diabetes is offered a place on an education programme that can demonstrate an improvement in clinical and psychosocial outcomes? Even where these programmes are in place, they are infrequently offered to people as an integral part of their treatment plan and therefore take up can be poor due to lack of awareness regarding their relevance and benefits. With the prevalence of diabetes increasing significantly it is time to act by developing legislation so that attendance on structured diabetes self-management programmes becomes mandatory for everyone. Only then will we see an improvement in the health and wellbeing of people with, or at risk of, diabetes.

The International Diabetes Federation estimates that in 2013, 56.3 million people were living with diabetes (type 1 and 2) in Europe growing to over 68.9 million in the next 20 years. The World Health Organization projects it will be the 7th leading cause of death by 2030. These statistics suggest it is time to take more assertive action to identify the future needs of health polices, to effectively address the issue of management and prevention of diabetes within the European Union.

Diabetes presents a significant challenge to governments across the European Union and the increasing prevalence is placing additional pressure on healthcare budgets, which are already under considerable stress. Spending on diabetes care, on average, is 10% of the European healthcare budget(1). Janssen recently commissioned the ‘Diabetes in the Downturn’ report which analysed the impact of the economic downturn on diabetes management in six core European countries and found that there was a strong association between lower incomes, reduced diabetes self-management and health outcomes(2). It could therefore be argued that it has never been more critical to invest in both the prevention and management of diabetes to avoid further significant increases in associated healthcare costs in the longer term.

It is well recognised that early intervention and the avoidance or delay of progression to type 2 diabetes provides significant benefit to patients, however, this remains a very complex issue to tackle. Despite the publicity over recent years around the impact that simple lifestyle changes can make in terms of dramatically lowering the chances of developing type 2 diabetes, the prevalence of diabetes continues to rise. Diabetes prevention is possible and there is excellent scientific, real world evidence that lifestyle interventions can halt, or at least delay, the onset of diabetes in people who are identified as having high risk(3). One area to address when considering diabetes management through health policy, is ensuring that discussions around possible interventions involve the right stakeholders. The Janssen Diabetes in the Downturn report found that there is a true need to educate European patients with type 2 diabetes, specifically in the areas of diet and exercise. Patients need to be made aware that healthy food is not always more expensive and that they can eat healthily on a budget. The food industries also have a role and responsibility to ensure that across Europe, food labeling contains clear information regarding the nutritional value of food, which is easy to understand. This should be supported by educational programmes on the importance of physical activity as a critical part of a healthy lifestyle choice. Consideration should be given to the communication channels used, especially given the increasing number of younger people diagnosed, or at risk of developing diabetes. Continuing to engage and educate a broader range of stakeholders in the development of policy on diabetes, would be a positive step and in turn, would help shape the strategy and future health policy to reflect the societal elements/ influences that are present in the lives of patients.

A crucial component in the fight against diabetes is ensuring that industry and healthcare systems work together to provide access to the right medicines, coupled with the right long term support programmes to optimise outcomes. It is clear there is an opportunity to focus on how treatment can be optimised to support patients in controlling their diabetes. This is highlighted by the fact that nearly half of adults with type 2 diabetes do not achieve recommended levels of glucose control(4). If left uncontrolled, type 2 diabetes can lead to serious complications including cardiovascular disease, deteriorating vision, and kidney disease(5), however, improved glycemic control has been demonstrated to reduce the onset and progression of these complications. There are many treatment options and combinations available, but patients are often not aware of the implications of not fully complying with their treatment programme. Diabetes is a complex disease and the education and support provided at diagnosis, and during ongoing treatment, is pivotal in enabling patients to sustain a better quality of life and level of independence, as well as reducing the longer term budget impact of diabetes.

In summary, the prevalence of diabetes continues to increase; therefore it is critical that a stronger emphasis is placed on continuing to develop health care policies that address both the prevention and management of this condition. Policy needs to be developed that reflects views and inputs from a broad range of stakeholders from all industries, members of healthcare systems, advocacy groups such as the IDF and governments, that have a role in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of patients with diabetes. More could be done to learn from successful policy in other healthcare areas such as cancer, where advocacy groups and governments have worked hand in hand to improve diagnosis and treatment in this disease area. It is important that diabetes policy reflects the individualised nature of the treatment, education, and support required by patients to successfully manage their condition. More consideration should be given to the communication channels used and role of technology in delivering this message to these patients. An emphasis should be put on the issue of access to medicines, devices and treatments as this still remains varied across the European Union and industry and the government need to continue to take a shared responsibility for this. The Johnson & Johnson family of diabetes companies are committed to developing integrated and sustainable healthcare solutions with the prevention and management of diabetes at heart. The Janssen ‘Diabetes in the Downturn’ report is available on http://www.janssen-emea.com/diabetes-in-the-downturn

I. The efficacy of existing treatments for patients with diabetes

The high BG is itself toxic and compromises the functionality of body tissues over a longer time scale. For type 1, insulin was the life-saving discovery almost a century ago in 1922, but today many children die of untreated DKA in poorer parts of the world. In addition, many pregnancies are affected by both main types of diabetes, gestational diabetes and rarer forms. Whether or not insulin is used, we already know that special precautions are required throughout pregnancy, otherwise mother and unborn child (who may not be diabetic, of course) may be permanently damaged.

Type 2 diabetes is also now recognised to comprise a progressive inflammatory stage that often begins, even in childhood, with obesity and involves inappropriate cell signalling. Breaking the cycle means strategies to arrest obesity and where lifestyle changes have been systematically researched and applied, we already know that the results are good even in the young.

Treatments

Insulin remains the only effective treatment for regulation of glucose levels in type 1 diabetes, although adjuncts include anti-hypertensives and statins (with anti-platelet therapy now in steep decline) to protect the cardiovascular system from the other biochemical abnormalities found with the primary glucose fault. For type 2, the combination of dietary control, metformin and sulphonylureas (such as glicazide) is common, again adding the ancillary preventive therapy for the metabolic derangement. Insulin is often added later in the progress of type 2 disease (or if there has been a heart attack) and many authorities believe this is often done too late (8). Relatively recently, incretins have been added to the type 2 armoury. With these medications diabetic people of both types can maintain good health providing they are vigilant about maintaining normal BG and are regularly screened for changes. However, it is worth noting that while the supposition is that anti-hyperglycaemic drugs are safe or at least a lesser risk than the diabetes, statistical studies are emerging to test the veracity of this assumption, in the light of the increased incidence of cancers among diabetic sufferers and thus more research will be needed.

Complications

Diabetes produces changes in body chemistry that lead to the loss of protein function throughout the tissues. Glucose at high blood concentration binds (glycates) inappropriately and permanently to the amine groups in protein and this leads to structural protein and enzyme changes in various tissues. Other biochemical dysfunctions and compensatory anomalies occur in concert. The result is a metabolic derangement of carbohydrate and lipid that underpins the development of some of the complications that develop in poorly controlled diabetes of either main type. These complications are mainly cardiovascular, renal, ophthalmic, and neurological but also include dental, infection-related and wound-healing difficulties, all of which are expensive. Ischaemia and the often consequent gangrene requiring lower limb amputation, add to the misery as well as the cost of diabetes. Management of diabetes of both major types concerns the provision of prophylaxis and therapeutic control of the underlying hyperglycaemia and also of the parallel developments to minimise risk of stroke and coronary involvement. However, at the present time, the incidence of these entirely preventable complications, in the UK for example, is worsening. Again in the UK, about 7 million people run the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and because of the insidious onset and the failure of screening initiatives, 50% of those diagnosed have already developed some sign of permanent damage. This is a pattern that is repeated worldwide as global reviews indicate.

Influencing the statistics with best practice

Even in the developed world, the outlook is much worse than it should be, given that the technology exists for it to be otherwise. Measurement of BG and the average glucose control as measured by glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) are the metrics of treatment outcomes in the short term. Regional and international figures are available that should guide and harmonise the therapeutic approach.
The best treatment for maintaining acceptable HbA1c values in type 1 and for type 2 diabetes (19) comes from very frequent testing and injection, known as "intensive control". The evidence for this has been available for more than twenty years but the uptake is far from universal. The methodology is usually a combination of calculated background long-acting (basal) and meal-associated insulin boost (short-acting bolus) doses and is characterised by the variation of dosing to allow a more normal diet than was once the case. The critical thing is to adjust frequently during the day to keep BG from chronically occurring excursions from normal. In many cases, the invasiveness of injection and finger-prick testing could be alleviated by use of an insulin infusion pump and eventually with the roll-out of accurate continuous glucose monitors. The investment in out-patient and community support staff, such as Diabetes Specialist Nurses (DSNs) and the provision of pumps (such as is much more common in the US) are failure points common to many health services globally. Despite the cost involved, these measures could improve the uptake of intensive control, change the outcomes and reduce the financial burden which in the UK amounts to £1 million per hour. Nevertheless, a wealth of evidence shows that across the world, it is common that neither children nor adults achieve optimum HbA1c levels eg only 16% UK paediatric cases lie inside the HbA1c recommended tolerance value of 7.8% (62mmol/mol), when we know reduction from 7.9 to 7.0% (63 to 53mmol/mol) lowers microvascular risk by 25% and that poorly controlled type 1 diabetes reduces lifespan by 20 years. Failure to treat successfully is therefore too often described in terms of the prevalence of complications. It therefore is essential to implement best practice.  

**Barriers**

Briefly, resistance to this strategy relates to several factors. These are first, the moving target of BG so that each insulin dose needs to be calculated on the basis of ambient BG levels and calorie balance, both of which are constantly changing. The calorie information comes from intended food intake and physical activity and both are often guesses. The approach has to be learned and reinforced. Second is the fear of hypoglycaemia when aiming for a low HbA1c level, since hypos are potentially dangerous and feel frightening, especially perhaps for children. However, this is no excuse for paediatric HbA1c values averaging above 8.5% (69mmol/mol) as is common in the UK and elsewhere. Third is a sense of unpredictability that many diabetic people have because routine does not necessarily result in reproducibly good outcomes. Fourth is a combination of disease and treatment attitudes in both young and old. Fifth is the failure to take long term and indirect costs of diabetes into account when considering funding best practice. Sixth is the failure of health providers to concur with evidence-based recommendations.

**Failures in the community**

The last point is important because it must surely influence the response of the individual sufferer who has to deal with this burden daily for life, in terms of calculating doses, eating within guidelines, maintaining normal blood levels and implementing lifestyle changes that may be challenging. In a recent European survey of physicians it was found that recommendations for low (<6.5% or 48mmol/mol) values were shared by about 80% of the respondents. However, fewer than 50% concurred in respect of all recommended treatment goals that included BG, BP and lipid profiles.

This freedom to deviate from best practice ought to change, as should the failure to offer screening universally for complications as part of an annual specialist clinic visit. This visit should include a retinal assessment using photographic recording and test for glaucoma. The feet and legs should be examined for damage, circulatory problems and evidence of neuropathy. Kidney function tests for evidence of microvascular involvement should be included. If cardiovascular damage has occurred this should be assessed by appropriate experts and then used to treat the patient in a coordinated manner. In the UK in 2012, however, only 77% of these examinations were found to have been done, with only 43% of type 1 diabetic people having been offered the eight checks recommended by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). The importance of these failures in imposing glycaemic control and offering the checks to all diabetics is perhaps best illustrated by the statistic that almost all type 1 people and 60% of type 2 people develop retinopathy to some extent and that diabetes is the biggest cause of blindness in the UK in those of working age. Similar data exist for the other complications.

**Failures in hospital**

In developed countries, standards exist for treating diabetic people in hospital, including for unrelated issues and surgery. A recent BMJ article reports, however, on the plight of the UK diabetic patient admitted to hospital for medical problems that may not automatically attract the automatic attention of their diabetologist and associated team. There may be no DSN and/or a poor knowledge base on the ward regarding diabetes, that can lead to accidental mis-dosing including the inappropriate withholding of diabetes medication or corrective glucose. Patients may be prevented from self-testing BG or from calculating and giving their own insulin. Their own regimen, including pump-delivered insulin may be replaced (through surgery, for example) for reasons that arguably might not be necessary or appropriate. Globally, there have been significant incidences of DKA, hypo and lack of preventive foot care during hospital stays, arising from failures of various types and resulting in harm. In addition, surgical and traumatic wound care may fail to account for special measures that are usually needed for diabetes patients.

**Expenditure**

About USD 465 billion spent on diabetes globally, accounting for 11% of world health costs. At least half and possibly as much as 80% of this is spent on treating complications and considered a wasteful consequence of preventive medicine.
failure. However, there are additional indirect costs such as lost days at work and the reduced productivity associated with those, plus premature pensions for those for whom repeated hypos or long term complications such as limb loss have made work impossible. Interventions and ongoing expert support of patients can make an impact on these direct and indirect costs, but as outlined above, these are failure points and may result from false economies, poor staffing, inadequate staff training, misunderstandings and lack of empathy.

2. Innovative new developments and expanded investment in clinical research

The way ahead for diabetes is to develop treatments that are closer to physiological control than is presently possible. Clearly prevention and total cure are goals but partial cure via cell replacement, for instance and tailored treatment including automated dosage (including responsive to feedback ie closed loop or “artificial pancreas”) would also make a large improvement to outcomes and to quality of life. So, for example, the “low glucose suspend” facility on sensor-informed pumps needs to be rolled out widely as soon as possible, because this stops a pump automatically if the continuous sensor detects an impending hypo. Since a significant number of diabetic people, including children, die in bed from an unknown cause but possibly triggered by hypoglycaemia, this would be an enormous benefit. An artificial pancreas would go a step beyond this and deal with post meal surges, a challenge that has been difficult to solve as yet, mainly because of the time delays in the skin based sensors and insulin delivery. The utility of continuous glucose sensors in experimental clinical work in the US, has been equivocal because of discomfort and patient perceptions (especially in the young) and so no-one can predict the acceptability of pump-based closed loop systems. The ultimate goal (other than cure) is probably an insulin delivery system that is totally invisible, dependable and thus forgettable, though this may be unattainable because of the medical engineering needed for delivery of such a potent drug. However, the approaches to expected improvements can be listed as follows:

» Screening genotypes for likely type 1 for prevention
  • Vaccination and gene therapy for T-cell suppression
  • Beta cell protection (immunosuppressed) and regeneration
» Beta cell replacement/implant, pancreatic transplant
» Hematopoietic, embryonic and induced stem cell regeneration
» Type 2
  • Screening to detect type 2 and propensity to type 2
  • New drugs and combination treatments for type 2
  • Surgery (bariatric) for type 2
  • Policy changes to implement insulin use earlier in type 2
» New delivery methods for insulin for type 1 and type 2
» Artificial pancreas
» New metrics and measurement systems, particularly for blood and tissue fluid glucose, but including glucose-sensitive contact lenses and other non-invasive methodology.

3. Screening programmes for diagnosis

Testing for type 1

Often in children and young people and will normally follow a relatively short period of rapidly worsening illness that prompted urgent hospital referral. The concept of screening does not therefore arise in the same ways as for the insidious onset of type 2 where the symptoms can often be ignored or wrongly attributed for a damaging length of time. The initial diagnosis of juvenile diabetes needs to be followed by a differential diagnosis that is immunologically-based and which has become increasingly sophisticated. These are relatively recently available antibody-based tests and are used because antibodies are markers, though not necessarily part of the cause, for the autoimmune destruction of the pancreatic, insulin-producing beta cells. This enables screening to distinguish amongst a variety of possible sub-types, to assess progress and to detect other autoimmunity:

» Autoimmune T1A from idiopathic types T1B (no antibodies) and from a fulminant form of type 1 in which complications develop more rapidly
» T1A from juvenile type 2 (no antibodies, obesity-linked)
» LADA (late onset T1A with antibodies but no urgent insulin need) from T2D
  • Autoantibodies (including recent ZnT8a) may eventually allow preventive treatments.
» Double diabetes (DD or T1.5D) with obesity, insulin resistance, autoimmunity (and therefore antibodies) and often a family history of either or both
» Screening for compliance with treatment and for the onset of complications has been dealt with above.
» Screening young T1A for other endocrine disorders

Screening for type 2

Can comprise a BG test, following up a random raised level with a fasting plasma level. The oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) was, until 2011 the gold standard test. A 75g glucose dose was given and the blood result taken after two hours. A value greater than 11.1mmol/L indicated a diabetic state, while other outcomes indicated pre-diabetic states. In some parts of the world, as reported by Grech for Malta, an oral glucose tolerance test might not have been attempted in general practice because of the two hour wait and might then have been neglected subsequently in view of oversubscribed specialist clinics. The position regarding OGTT has in any case changed with the more widespread use of alternative methods. In 2008, the American Diabetes Association (ADA), the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and the European Association for the Study of Diabetes appointed an expert committee that recommended the addition of HbA1c...
Values

Understanding and countering drivers for unhealthy choices

4. Education on healthy eating and physical activity for prevention

Understanding and countering drivers for unhealthy choices

Values

» Cultural choice
» Income
» Religious observance
» Family support
» Tradition

» Ideology
» Food placement in family life

Psychology

» False body image
» PROCRASTINATION
» Minimisation of effect and of danger

Education

» both girls and boys for nurturing next generation
» parents for preventive strategies and after diagnosis
• Information
• Interaction with reinforcement of ideas
• Age
• Gender

Counselling, misunderstandings and conflicting advice eg internet, professionals (56, 76-78) and poorly disseminated public understanding

» eg All fruit, juices, smoothies must be healthy
Hidden fat, salt, carbs in addition to hidden sugar

Taste preferences (easy calories, endothalmic mouth response, rheological pleasure, salt, sweet)

Perceptions of “natural”
• Locally or nationally grown
• Organic
• Genetically modified

5. Environmental, food and consumer policies to lower risk

Food placement in environment

• Work, play, learning, travel
• Ban on large pack, two for one sweets
• Discouragement of fat, batter, large portions

Support from/ via employers, educational establishments

• How far can and should policy-makers go to extend legal controls and regulation to curb harmful human behaviours (eg by increasing alcohol/cigarette/food taxes, banning ingredients) and how could they better engage the support and acceptance of the public?
• How can employers help support their employees with chronic conditions?

How much of the cost burden should fall on employers to adapt their working conditions to the needs of employees with chronic conditions?
• How can other agencies (government etc) help employers integrate employees with chronic conditions into their workforces?

Dissemination of effective training for diet advice and smoking cessation

• Schools & colleges
• GP pharmacies, walk-ins, specialised agencies
• Internet and social media... flagged as reliable and linked to other help
• TV ads, soaps, tabloids, leafleting
• Suppression of unreliable, misleading, wrong, expensive, myth-ridden information

Same for exercise

• Start-up programmes to ease people into low cost gym membership
• Support with personal trainers

6. The importance of collaboration and continued dialogue between policy makers, healthcare professionals, patient groups and industry stakeholders

Public Health

• eg Medical planning non-communicable disease strategies

Health experts – diabetology, paediatricians, cardiologists, psychologists etc

• eg Best practice dissemination and investment eg pumps, parent education, frequent and intense support
• eg Researching behavioural drivers (see above)

Advertising advocates (ie pro-healthy choices, policies, marketing)

Governments

• eg Health expenditure to include indirect costs
• eg Health and food research
• eg Agricultural policies
• eg Testing and putting policies in place

Collaboration among

• Food manufacturers
• Retail responsibility
• Media (journalist education and briefings for accuracy and currency)
• Self-help groups
Recruit and Retain is a Northern Periphery Programme (NPP) project supported by matched funding and the European Regional Development Fund. It sets out to find solutions for the persistent difficulties in recruiting and retaining high quality professional people to work in the public sector of the remote rural areas of Northern Europe. Eight partners from eight countries (Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Norway, Scotland and Sweden) having been working on the project since June 2011.

The project has two components:
• The core project which addresses issues related to health care workers
• A parallel and concomitant strategic component which identifies areas in the core project which may have application in the wider public sector

Recruit and Retain established its own database by getting information in three forms:
1. Obtaining status reports from each country which describe the geography, demography, the local health care organisation, training and education, recruitment and retention and provide information on an adjacent urban area for comparison
2. Responses to an online questionnaire exploring what attracts people to remote areas, what deters them and what causes them to leave. The questionnaire was completed by over 5,000 people working in rural and urban settings. It has been reported on by the RHA-University of Akureyri Research Centre.
3. From over 70 structured in depth interviews in seven of the partner countries.

Details of these are publicly available and can be found on the project website (www.recruitandretain.eu); the information from them is used as an evidence base to support the design and development of products and services to address ways of improving recruitment and supporting retention.

Once completed at the end of June 2014 Recruit and Retain will have produced a business model to be used as a whole or in part by managers and employers of the public sector in remote rural areas. The transnational, cooperative and synergistic approach to fashioning a coordinated collection of interlinked solutions will produce a unique package known as the Recruit and Retain Business Model.

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