



Welcome to the latest edition of my regular e-newsletter.

This month in Brussels I hosted a reception with the **Prime Minister of New Zealand, John Key**, to launch the Friends of New Zealand (FONZ) group in the European Parliament. Wales and New Zealand have always had a lot in common and I was delighted to be asked to host this event with the Prime Minister. The FONZ will look at creating better links between the European Parliament and New Zealand on issues such as trade and agriculture and I'm looking forward to getting the group off the ground with our first meeting soon.

I visited Leipzig this month as part of a **Regional Development Committee** delegation. The visit included trips to many excellent projects that have benefited from European funding, including projects focusing on urban development and the automotive industry. I always enjoy the opportunity to visit different regions in the EU to see how European funding is making a difference and speaking to the different regional representatives about how their region uses the funding they receive.

To coincide with the UK Government's Equal Marriage consultation the **Labour Campaign for Equal Marriage** has been launched for members of the public and the party who want to demonstrate their support for equal marriage. I have joined this campaign, which is aimed at lifting the ban on same-sex marriage and mixed-sex civil partnership and make equal marriage a reality in the UK.



Votes

This month in Strasbourg MEPs voted to support a call for a legal framework and clearer rules for the volunteering sector. Volunteers make an essential contribution to our society and it's important that support continues to be given to the volunteering sector through cohesion policy. The **European Parliament resolution**, which passed with a large majority, also looks at ensuring that the skills gained through volunteering are recognised in order to help volunteers as they look for employment.

The European Commission recently published a policy paper on a job rich recovery, aimed at focusing on creating jobs and growth. This formed the basis of a resolution, which I voted in favour of, this month. Among the proposals in the resolution were setting proper minimum wages across Europe to help the working poor, the **European Youth Guarantee** scheme to tackle youth unemployment, and a call for more investment in SMEs and microenterprises. These initiatives will all work towards creating a strong jobs market to increase growth in the EU.



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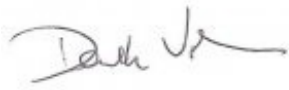
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I hope that you have found this update useful.

If you require any further information on any of the issues raised or need to get in touch on an EU issue then please do not hesitate to contact my office

Best Wishes



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