



Geoffrey Van Orden's eDispatch

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

June 2014



"I didn't become an MEP in order to promote the EU - I want us to govern our own country. I go to Brussels to speak up for British interests and for the people of the East of England. My priorities are the prosperity and security of the United Kingdom." **Geoffrey Van Orden MEP**

THANK YOU

A big personal thank you to all of you that held firm and voted Conservative in the European Elections on 22 May. And a special thank you to all the many activists that came out to help in what was a tough campaign.

THE ELECTION IN THE EAST OF ENGLAND

446,569 people across the East of England voted Conservative, enabling us to hold our 3 seats. That was no mean achievement in the face of weeks of sustained and massive national media publicity for UKIP. In our region, they got 35% of the vote and won 3 seats – the highest proportion in any of the UK's 12 electoral regions.

Clearly there was a lot of tactical voting to defeat the Tories. The count took place across 47 district council areas in the East. Conservatives came top in just 12 of these (mainly Herts and East and South Cambs), and Labour in just 3 (Watford, Norwich and Luton). In the rest, UKIP came top.

On the streets, there was a lot of support but also a lot of anger. Immigration was the predominant theme. 'Get out of Europe' was a sub-set of this. People felt that nothing was being done. They weren't interested in anything negative about UKIP or in the fact that UKIP couldn't deliver anything except Miliband to Downing Street.

Nationally, Labour increased its vote by 10% but failed to take the lead. The LibDems were reduced to one seat (previously 12) and the BNP lost its 2 seats.

UK EUROPEAN ELECTION RESULTS

PARTY	% VOTE	MEPs	+/-
Conservative	23.93	19	-7
UKIP	27.49	24	+11
Labour	25.40	20	+7
Liberal Democrat	6.87	1	-10
Green	7.87	3	+1
Scottish National Party	2.46	2	0
Ulster Unionist Party	-	1	0
Democratic Unionist Party	-	1	0
Sinn Fein	-	1	0
Plaid Cymru	0.71	1	0
British National Party	1.14	0	-2
TURN OUT	31.19%		

WHAT NEXT

The irony was that the Conservative MEPs are the strongest euro-sceptics (that doesn't mean we want to rush for the EU exit door – but we do want radical and substantive change and a referendum).

It seems to me that, between now and May 2015, we must help define clearly the changes that Conservatives want to achieve in our EU relationship, and we must press hard for these changes. The Prime Minister will, I feel sure, clarify the timetable for negotiation, leading up to the referendum. At the moment, people don't get it. And clearly, further measures have to be introduced to bring about a dramatic drop in the numbers of migrants coming to our country.

THE JUNCKER ARGUMENT

There are three top jobs to be filled in the EU institutions – President of the European Commission; President of the European Council; and the High Representative ('Foreign Minister'). The nominations need to take account of experience, Party, country, and even gender.

The most powerful position is President of the European Commission. Before the elections, the federalists in the Parliament decided to make a power grab based on their self-serving interpretation of the Lisbon Treaty. This says that the European Council (where the national Prime Ministers sit) shall propose a candidate "Taking into account the elections to the European Parliament". The federalists have read this to mean that the Council has to choose the candidate from whichever 'political group' comes out best in the elections. And to help this process, each of the major groups chose their candidate before the elections. The centre-right (which gathers as the federalist European Peoples Party (EPP) in the Parliament) is deemed to have come out best across Europe and their candidate is former Luxembourg Prime Minister, arrogant arch-federalist, and fully paid-up member of the EU nomenclatura, Jean-Claude Juncker.

We interpret the Treaty rather differently. To my mind the biggest message from the elections was that people are not content with the EU's direction of travel – they want change. There needs to be a mind-set in the EU institutions to bring this about. 'Taking account' of the election results means appointing a Commission President who will help deliver change, not block it. The Juncker candidacy would be a reversion to the 1950s, not looking towards the 2050s. But he is just the visible symbol. It is important that too much political capital isn't used up in blocking him. More important is the need for change in economic policy; in 'free movement' rules; in supporting vital national interests - and in cutting the costs of the EU.

OUR POLITICAL GROUP – THE EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVES & REFORMISTS (ECR)

The power in the Parliament rests with the political groups. Most MEPs sit in a political group - there are a few MEPs who no-one wants and they sit together as 'non-attached' members. To form a group you need a minimum of 25 MEPs from 7 nations. In the last Parliament there were 7 groups including our own group of European Conservatives & Reformists (ECR). You will recall that we broke from the EPP in 2009 because of its deeply federalist policies.

The leader of each group sits on the 'Conference of Presidents' where the key decisions about the Parliament's business are taken. Numbers count. The size of the group determines the order in which you speak, your speaking time, your voting power and how many committees and delegations you can control.

We are now in process of forming our political groups for the new Parliamentary session. We aim to maximise the ECR position. Already we have over 63 members (up from 57 in the last parliament) making it currently the third largest political group in the Parliament with members from 13 countries including Germany, Netherlands, Poland, and Denmark. The decision, taken by a majority in the ECR group, to admit the German AfD party was controversial. I should emphasise that, in terms of its values and political aims, the AfD are a near perfect fit for us. Their MEPs are serious people, including a former head of the German equivalent of the CBI. But they think the Euro, as presently organised, is wrong for Germany. Chancellor Merkel therefore doesn't like them – and they took 7 seats from her CDU/CSU party. David Cameron needs Mrs Merkel on board if he is to block Juncker and deliver the changes that Britain wants, so he doesn't want to upset her. British MEPs were therefore encouraged to oppose the entry of AfD into the ECR, but others clearly took a different view.

The fact is, we are now a much stronger force in the Parliament. I look forward to taking my seat on 1 July.

Please do not hesitate to ask for more information on any of the many topics on which I am engaged.

I welcome invitations to speak throughout the East of England

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