



Members of European Parliament Preach Austerity, Practice Luxury

Marta Andreasen (left), the courageous former chief accountant of the European Union, will not give up. In 2002 she was fired for refusing to sign off on the European Commission's accounts. But she has continued to hold the EU politicians and eurocrats in Brussels to account, exposing fraud, waste and corruption on her website, <http://www.martaandreasen.com>. In 2009 she was elected as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) for United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), an office she uses to shine the light of exposure on the dark dealings of the EU's privileged politicians and civil "servants." In a January 26 article entitled "MEPs should hang heads in shame over 'jollies,'" published by Public ServiceEurope, Ms. Andreasen exposed recent records of lavish spending by the eurocrats for foreign junkets.



"Members of the European Parliament are happy to preach austerity, but do not expect them to cut back on luxurious foreign trips," she says. "The European Parliament's central office is notorious for being opaque when it comes to divulging costs for fear of bringing their Institution into disrepute," notes Andreasen. "Whatever possessed them to become so forthcoming when asked what were the most expensive delegation trips for 2010, we will never know. Delegations, for those of you that do not know, are groups of MEPs that travel to various points around the globe under the auspices of building better relations with parliamentarians and other political organisations."

"In reality," reports Andreasen, "and barring a small number of MEPs genuinely committed to a region or country's wellbeing, they are treated as a jolly by all and sundry. Some MEPs switch delegations in order to see as much of the world as possible. Fancy an all-expenses trip to the Seychelles? Join the African-Caribbean-Pacific Delegation. Rio or Buenos Aires more up your street? That would be Eurolat then. I am told that there is, of course, some work involved — but usually no more than a day or two. The rest is made up of trips around the country, visiting points of 'political' interest."

Let the Good Time Jollies Roll

Marta Andreasen's article provides a couple of accounting tables listing the delegation destination, number of days spent, number of MEPs, total cost, cost per MEP and cost per MEP and day. She reports:

The real cost of these jollies have finally been revealed. The figures came to light in a written response from the European Parliament central secretariat to members of the Budgetary Control



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Committee, of which I am a member. All the other political parties and groups were privy to the same information as I was, but I am the only MEP to date to raise the costs in public. Why? Because the UKIP is the only party in the EP that refuses to go on delegation trips as point of principle. I nearly choked on my coffee when I saw that one trip of the EP's African-Caribbean-Pacific delegation to Kinshasa over eight days cost taxpayers more than €1m for 50 MEPs, or a massive €20,000 [\$26,300] per MEP.

The same delegation took a trip to Tenerife, which cost €11,000 [\$14,469] per MEP over seven days for 64 MEPs. To illustrate the extravagance of these trips, an eight-night stay in a junior suite in the Ritz Hotel London is a snip at an eye-watering €5,400. Even as the financial crisis was starting to bite hard in 2010 — MEPs were rewarding themselves with self-serving and largely pointless delegation visits to Mexico, the Seychelles and the Democratic Republic of Congo. And even within the European Union, the costs of trips were astronomical. One can only imagine the opulence that greeted MEPs in Rome, where a seven-night trip broke down to each MEP spending €1,600 per day. Once again, it seems MEPs are happy to preach austerity to anyone but themselves. These figures are an appalling abuse of taxpayers' money. They should hang their heads in shame.

Shame, however, seems to be a foreign concept to the exalted political class in Brussels that run the EU, a constantly morphing and expanding entity referred to euphemistically by EU insiders as "The Project." Fraud, waste, corruption, and accounting "irregularities" are so endemic to EU institutions that the EU's own [Court of Auditors has refused for the past 17 years](#) to give the EU's books a clean bill of health. Repeated exposure of the problem and the resulting public outcry has brought repeated promises of reform — but little of substantive reforming action. Marta Andreassen's book, [Brussels Laid Bare](#), is a double-barreled, no-holds-barred exposé of the fraud and corruption she uncovered in the European Commission's books and the political buzz saw she ran into when she refused to turn a blind eye to the unethical and criminal conduct so rampant in the Brussels machine. (The full text of her book is available online [here](#).)

Ms. Andreassen is not the first, or last, whistleblower to call out the corruption in Brussels. Perhaps the most famous of the EU whistleblowers is Bernard Connolly, who was one of the EU's senior economists tasked with establishing the single currency, the euro. He was [sacked in 1995](#) for exposing the political corruption involved at the center of the push for the euro currency. His book, [The Rotten Heart of Europe: The Dirty War for Europe's Money](#), sent the eurocrats into apoplexy, with the EU's prosecutor infamously charging that Connolly's criticism of the EU was akin to blasphemy against the Deity.

In 1999 EU veteran auditor [Paul van Buitenen](#) caused a political earthquake with his revelations of financial misdeeds. The European Commission's 20 commissioners, including its President, Jacques Santer, resigned. More promises of reform. Van Buitenen's reward? He was demoted and his pay cut; some of the worst offenders he'd exposed were promoted and given bigger salaries and benefits. Finally, in 2002, after witnessing the EU's disgraceful treatment of Marta Andreassen and determining that his efforts at reform had proven futile, he resigned.

"Kremlin-style information"

In its 2010 ["Fight Against Fraud"](#) report, the European Commission admitted to losing €1.2 billion to fraud, an increase of 109 percent over the previous year. Marta Andreassen asked rhetorically: "Why does the EU allow this situation to continue?" Her answer: "Simple: the EU uses funding from the budget to buy support for the EU project." Stephen Booth of Open Europe, an anti-EU think tank, commented: "The fact that the amount of EU spending subject to fraud is actually on the increase is



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shocking in itself. But it makes the Commission and MEPs' demands for a bigger EU budget all the more outrageous."

Former MEP Chris Heaton-Harris, who is now an Member of Parliament in Britain, said of the fraud report:

Everyone reading this will rightly be disgusted. But no-one in the commission or in Whitehall will be remotely surprised. The EU's accounts have not been signed off for 15 years, the culture and attitude towards taxpayers' money is a disgrace, whistleblowers are sacked if they dare to tell the truth. But no-one is ever sacked over misspending or fraud.

The facts bear out this pessimistic outlook expressed by so many former EU insiders. Last year [Dutch auditor Maarten Engwirda resigned](#), protesting that rampant financial abuse was systematically swept under the rug. Engwirda, a 15-year veteran on the EU's Court of Auditors, said the "cover-up culture" endemic within the court and other EU institutions prevents disclosure of the actual extent of fraud taking place. "All these abuses never came out into the open because of the Kremlin-style information we provided. But it didn't enhance our reputation one bit," he said.

Taking exotic junket jollies at the taxpayers' expense is nothing new for the EU "royalty" in Brussels, but broader exposure of it will do much to reveal the hypocrisy of the EU's pampered princelings who call on citizens to support new austerity measures — while the princelings cavort at plush resorts. News of the high-flying lifestyles of the EU princelings is especially galling now, as eurozone unemployment rates have hit the highest levels since before the euro was introduced, with millions of people now out of work. In data released on January 31, the EU's statistics office Eurostat [reported](#) that joblessness among the 17 countries sharing the single currency rose to 10.4 percent in December, and the unemployment numbers are expected to continue trending higher. Unemployment in Greece is above 20 percent and in Spain it's at 23 percent. Unemployment among youth (those under 25) is an even worse picture: 22 percent in Britain; 24 percent in France; 30 percent in Italy; 31 percent in Portugal; 46 percent in Greece, and; 51 percent in Spain.

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