

## A week in the life of Marta Andreasen

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[By Marta Andreasen](#) | [PSEurope \(Seven Days series\)](#)

The MEP and former EU chief accountant laments the loss of old-fashioned party ideology, gives the Irish some friendly advice for their referendum on the fiscal stability treaty, and heads to UKIP's spring conference in Skegness

â€¢ **Monday:** I learn of the death of a friend in my constituency, also a member of the United Kingdom Independence Party. She was a real party stalwart, eager to help in all she could. I make last minute arrangements to be at her funeral on Wednesday. Lunch is for wimps so I pass on it and prepare for the multi-committee meeting with national parliamentarians in the plenary chamber. The meeting deals largely with the new fiscal compact and the role of member states in the process. The two big guns are present, European Commission President JosÃ© Manuel Barroso and European Council President Herman Van Rompuy. It is the usual mind-numbing stuff where they re-iterate their democratic credentials to speak on behalf of the citizens of Europe and how the fiscal compact and semester strategy for 2012 can help steer the EU out of its current choppy waters.

But Van Rompuy makes me sit up in my chair as he says something I have not heard before. I quote him verbatim: "National parliaments keep their budgetary sovereignty, at least as long as national policies do not threaten the financial stability of the whole." I am more disturbed when a colleague points me in the direction of a blog that quotes Mr Brezhnev shortly after the Prague Spring in 1968 saying: "The peoples of the socialist countries and communist parties certainly do have and should have freedom for determining the ways of advance of their respective countries. However, none of their decisions should damage either socialism in their country or the fundamental interests of other socialist countries, and the whole working class movement."

### Tuesday

The budget committee is discussing the general guidelines for the 2013 budget, where at the moment MEPs and the European Parliament management, known as the bureau, are calling for a 3 per cent rise on the 2012 budget. Unbelievable. It seems austerity applies to everyone except them. My view is that a cut of at least 10 per cent is required and I have begun a campaign to bring this to the attention of members of the Houses of Commons and Lords in Westminster.

In the economic and monetary affairs committee there is a discussion on the strengthening of economic and budgetary surveillance of member states. The report being discussed is put forward by the largest pro-European group in the parliament: the centre-right European People's Party. They have decided to team up with the second largest group, the Socialists and Democrats, who have also authored a report on common provisions for monitoring and assessing draft budgetary plans and ensuring the correction of excessive deficit of the member states. What happened to good old fashioned political ideology, I ask myself, when Christian Democrats and socialists are singing off the same hymn sheet when it comes to the fiscal compact? They have bought into the whole notion that nation states come second to the needs of the EU and its institutions. Depressing stuff.

I am surprised at the news that Ireland is to hold referendum on the fiscal compact; to my mind the choice is simple: either retain some large vestige of nation-statehood by voting no, or vote yes and become a satellite of the EU, having your economic future and fiscal policies set by Brussels and Frankfurt. It is a no-brainer as far as I am concerned.

### Wednesday

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I come into the office ready to vote at the budgetary control committee: approval of European Investment Bank annual report. Then, the 2010 discharge is on the agenda. Timely, given that British chancellor George Osborne said he would not sign off on 2010 EU budget due to multi-billion holes in the accounts. I took a similar approach when I was chief EU accountant and it cost me my job. However I think this a weak position. If Osborne was really keen to send a message to Brussels he should just say he is cutting UK contributions in line with the errors. I won't hold my breath on this.

At midday I head for the UK to attend the funeral which is very moving. Eulogies abound of how wonderful this lady was and I really feel the pain of her nearest and dearest. After the funeral I head back to Heathrow for a flight back to Brussels arriving at 11pm. Before I go to sleep I prepare for the meeting next morning and check my email once more. After a chat by phone with my husband I turn in for the night thinking how quickly time goes.

## Thursday

I attend a trilogue, a meeting of the council, commission and parliament representatives, to discuss the financial regulation "rules that govern the way the EU budget should be managed and spent. These are the subject of a reform. A delicate subject, financial instruments, is being dealt with. The council seems to disagree with the views of the commission and the parliament. I have to say I feel closer to the position of the former than to that of the two latter.

I dip briefly into a committee where the European Globalisation Fund is being discussed. In short this fund is designed to help re-train workers who have lost jobs in the EU in industries such as the automotive industry. Of course nobody apart from me asks the question about what evidence we have that the money is effectively reaching the workers to retrain themselves and if they have been able to find another job. This apart from the fact that in many cases we are paying for staff laid off by companies who are moving their facilities to another member state that gets EU funding to establish the factory there. It is like robbing Peter to pay Paul.

I get a call from my political advisor in the UK who indicates that my office has received a request from Russia Today for me to be interviewed about the Greek bail-out. I need to go to their studios in Brussels at 5pm. I like Russia Today, they always take a bigger picture view and allow ample time to discuss the matter in hand in length and in depth. So I agree. I sit with my staff to go over lines to take. My view is that I should major on why a Greek exit from the euro is still likely. My key points are that the last bail out was acrimonious, and that politicians across the eurozone are getting bail-out fatigue; the Greeks themselves are tired too, and cannot face much less tolerate the savage cuts they are being asked to make in jobs, public services and pensions provision; a 70 per cent cut in bond yields is already tantamount to a default anyway; and the billions will not help as they are a drop in the ocean of the money that Greece really needs.

I head off to the studios with our press officer. It goes well and I get my points across. We have a quick drink before heading back to the office to deal with some pending matters: amendments for some reports.

## Friday

I come in to finalise and sign the amendments as we are on the deadline, and plan next week's agenda with my staff: again a busy week with committee meetings and a public meeting in Woking on Tuesday evening. Then I head back to the UK but this time to sunny Skegness for the UKIP spring conference. A bit tired after the long journey I check into my hotel and head to the venue where I meet all my party colleagues and grass roots activists for a catch up and to mull over policy ideas and initiatives. Oh, and maybe have a glass of wine.

## Saturday

It is always good to be able to meet with party members and colleagues from across the country to get feedback and

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hear their stories. I dip in and out of the main hall to hear speeches. At the conference I have a stall so that members can come and talk to me, read newspaper cuttings of what I have been up to as well as take copies of my monthly newsletter which gives a digest of my work. The conference also gives me the opportunity to have a meeting with my local media and political advisor to discuss on-going constituency matters. After a long day on my feet I leave I leave for London where I am meeting some friends.

### **Sunday**

London: after lunch with my friends I head back to my Woking office to do a bit of work and pick up some papers. Late in the evening I am off to Brussels again. I make use of the journey to read the Sunday newspapers and catch up on emails from constituents. I get back to Brussels late.

### **Marta Andreasen is a UK Independence Party MEP for south east England**

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