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[By Nigel Farage MEP - De Standaard](#)

• Exercising one's right to free speech is, for all of us, a little more expensive today than it was yesterday, and I don't mean the €3000 fine that was imposed on me for representing my constituents.

If a parliament has to have any meaning, its members must be free to say what they think. Okay, there are some restrictions on free speech which are there for the public good: I should not be able to incite violence or hatred. But that is not what I did.

The European Parliament thinks I should make several apologies for my comments. To take them in order, the first apology should be to the 'Grey Mouse', Herman van Rompuy, because I apparently hurt his feelings.

Mr van Rompuy is probably as unknown to most Belgians as he is to the rest of Europe, but, despite this, horse-trading between the governments of the EU's member states ensured that he became President of the European Council. The original idea was to have as President a man who would stop the traffic in Washington and Beijing, dynamically representing Europe on the world stage. Mr van Rompuy would have difficulty stopping the traffic in Brussels.

Given the difference between how the idea was sold to the people, and what the people have ended up with, it is not unreasonable to point out the difference between the charismatic, high profile leader of 500 million Europeans that was promised, and Mr van Rompuy. Nobody elected him, he is answerable to nobody, there is no mechanism to get rid of him and his appointment overrode previous no votes in referendums in France, Holland and Ireland which rejected the creation of his post.

And let's be honest here. He isn't called the grey mouse for nothing: his public performances have amply demonstrated his lack of charisma, and his unassuming appearance is not, in honesty, unlike a second rate bank clerk.

Are his feelings hurt? Maybe. But should we not expect the unelected President of Europe to be made of sterner stuff? I have been called much worse in the European Parliament, including by those who are leading the manufactured outrage over my comments. The way to defeat what is really nothing more than parliamentary banter is by the strength of your arguments, not by restricting freedom of speech. This is not an even handed approach by the Parliament: nobody fined Mr Schulz for saying my support for no votes in referendums was opening the door to fascism, or Mr Cohn-Bendit for calling me mentally weak, and nor would I want them to. As we say in English, 'if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen'.

My second apology should, apparently, be to the people of Belgium for calling it a 'non-country'. There's no need for me to give a history lesson here, but I would simply remind readers of the remarks of Belgian Prime Minister Yves Leterme, who said in 2006 that Francophones were mentally incapable of learning Dutch, and that all that united Belgium was the King, football and certain beers. He couldn't explain what the National Day celebrated (the crowning of Leopold I in 1831), and thought the Marsellaise was the Belgian national anthem (it's the Brabançonne). Prime Minister Leterme is leading the calls for an apology for my 'insults'.

There is of course a deadly serious point to all this. The EFD Group, of which I am co-President, is the only opposition to this project which is creating a European superstate: just 32 MEPs out of a total of 736. I do not seek out controversy; I seek to expose the emperor's new clothes, to lay bare the lack of democracy, the lack of transparency and the lack of accountability which lie at the heart of the European project.

And so, I find that for pointing out the blindingly obvious, I am now censured and fined. It is apparently now a crime for

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an elected representative to point out that a man with the charisma of a damp rag and the appearance of a low grade bank clerk is just that, if he happens to be the President of the European Council. I am not allowed to point out that Belgium is a country in danger of fracturing into its constituent parts, even if the Prime Minister of Belgium has said far worse about his fellow countrymen.

Voltaire said several hundred years ago that he might disagree with what is said, but would defend to the death the right of the speaker to say it. Such lofty ambitions clearly now belong only to a bygone age. In the post democratic era which the EU seems determined to create, they prefer the words of H.L. Mencken: "Free speech is too dangerous to a democracy to be permitted".

[De Standaard - De wraak van de grijze muis](#) - "The revenge of the grey mouse"

('The price of free speech' is the original title in English)