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## Kristalina Georgieva voted European of the Year Cameron, Clegg, Trichet also honoured

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**Kristalina Georgieva**, who at the start of 2010 was only second choice as Bulgaria's European commissioner, was tonight named European of the Year at European Voice's annual awards ceremony. The 57-year-old former World Bank official who was also voted European commissioner of the year said "Winning the European of the year award is both an honour and an obligation. I dedicate this award to all humanitarian workers in the field, whose efforts and dedication help the most vulnerable, and those most in need of our solidarity."

The readers of European Voice, a newspaper specialising in coverage of the EU, voted **Jean-Claude Trichet**, president of the European Central Bank, as their EU Official of the Year. He had been nominated for preserving the ECB's reputation for independence, despite the pressures from politicians during the eurozone's sovereign debt crisis.

The joint winners of the category of National Politician of the Year were **David Cameron and Nick Clegg**, the prime minister and deputy prime minister of the United Kingdom. Their decision in May to form a coalition government had won them inclusion in the shortlist that was drawn up by a panel of experts, for breaking with the UK's entrenched habits and adopting a more European style of government.

**Jeanine Hennis-Plaschaert** was voted MEP of the Year. Even though she left the European Parliament halfway through the year to join the Dutch national parliament, the impact that she had made in February was sufficient to win her award. She had led the European Parliament to reject a deal struck by the European Commission and the national governments with the United States government about transferring information on bank transfers. She sought greater protection for individuals and more accountability to the Parliament, which she said should use powers newly acquired under the Lisbon treaty to strike down the deal.

The winner of the category of Inspiration of the Year was **Spain's national football team**, which won the World Cup in July and asserted European supremacy in the world's most popular sport.



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Georgieva was nominated for the post of European commissioner only when the European Parliament threatened in January to withhold approval for the new college of commissioners because they were not happy with Rumiana Jeleva, Bulgaria's first choice as commissioner. Georgieva was drafted in at the last minute as a replacement, taking over the portfolio of international co-operation, humanitarian aid and crisis response. She led the European Union's response to humanitarian disasters in Haiti and Pakistan.

Tim King, the editor of European Voice, said: "Mrs Georgieva became a European commissioner almost by accident, but since February she has clearly impressed many people.

"The confidence expressed in Mr Trichet is significant in view of the tensions that have persisted for the last eight months between the European Central Bank and some eurozone governments.

"The vote for Ms Hennis-Plasschaert emphasises how important are the powers given by the Lisbon treaty to the European Parliament.

"David Cameron might not welcome our voters drawing attention to how the coalition agreement wrong-footed the most Europhobic of his party colleagues, but Nick Clegg could probably do with some kind of affirmation that he made the right decision.

"Most of our readers (though not the Dutch) clearly enjoyed the Spanish football team's triumph, which established Europe ahead of Latin America. However, I suspect that what matters now in Madrid is whether Spain and Portugal win the nomination for hosting the 2018 World Cup."

The EVawards were presented during a gala dinner at the stock exchange of Brussels, attended by more than 120 leading legislators, policymakers and members of the EU community.

The organisers of the EVawards, which is supported by Burson-Marsteller, Digital Europe and Euronews, made a donation to Missing Children Europe, the European Federation for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children. It was accepted on behalf of MCE by one of the charity's directors, Margarida Sousa Uva Barroso, the wife of the president of the European Commission. MCE represents 24 NGOs active in 16 EU member states and Switzerland. For more information, visit: [www.missingchildreneurope.eu](http://www.missingchildreneurope.eu)

The 24 nominees were announced in early October, having been selected by a panel of experts. Voting was carried out during October, online and in the newspaper. A full list of the nominees appears below and can be found online at:

<http://www.europeanvoice.com/page/evawards-nominees-and-voting/2755.aspx>

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A list of the previous years' winners can be found at:

<http://www.europeanvoice.com/page/evawards-europeans-of-the-year-previous-years/2778.aspx>

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2010 EV Awards nominees – and why they were selected:

## NATIONAL POLITICIAN OF THE YEAR:

- **George Papaconstantinou**, Greece's finance minister  
Papaconstantinou has won the respect of his fellow finance ministers and of the markets, as he battles with Greece's sovereign debt problems. Without him, the plight of Greece and of the eurozone would have suffered even more than it has.
- **Andrus Ansip**, Estonia's prime minister  
Despite the economic difficulties, Ansip's government has brought Estonia to the point that it can join the eurozone and will do so on 1 January 2011. At a time when the credibility of the eurozone has been called into question, Estonia's application to join is important.
- **David Cameron and Nick Clegg**, the UK's prime minister and deputy prime minister.  
The decision by the leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties to form a coalition government freed Cameron from his Eurosceptic right-wing and put the UK in step with the norm in Europe.
- **Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg**, Germany's defence minister  
Guttenberg is modernising Germany's military and is modernising attitudes to the military. He described Germany's presence in Afghanistan as a war, which confronted national sensibilities and suspended conscription in a bid to professionalise the military.
- **Anders Borg**, Sweden's finance minister  
Borg's influence in the council of finance ministers has grown. Sweden decided to contribute to the European Financial Stability Facility, despite being outside the single currency; it has pioneered a model for dealing with failing banks and has extended support to banks of the Baltic countries.

## EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER OF THE YEAR:

- **Kristalina Georgieva**, European commissioner for co-operation, humanitarian aid and crisis response  
Last to be nominated, Georgieva has outperformed many of her fellow commissioners. She has mastered her dossier and proved authoritative and competent. Her humanitarian aid office has had to respond to disasters in Haiti and Pakistan.
- **Siim Kallas**, European commissioner for transport  
The Spanish government, which chaired the Council of Ministers at the time, was slow to respond when air traffic in northern Europe was grounded by a cloud of volcanic ash from Iceland. Kallas stepped in to co-ordinate the response of national transport ministries and air traffic controllers.
- **Cecilia Malmström**, European commissioner for home affairs  
When the Parliament voted down temporary arrangements allowing the US authorities to see bank transfer data, it fell to Malmström to put in place a workable replacement. She navigated the imperative for good relations with the United States and demands for data protection.



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- **Viviane Reding**, European commissioner for justice and fundamental rights. Her outspoken attack on France's treatment of Roma provoked a fierce backlash, but Reding made the plight of the Roma an issue that the European Council could no longer ignore.

## **MEP OF THE YEAR:**

- **Jean-Paul Gauzès**, French centre-right  
Gauzès drafted the Parliament's response to the proposal to regulate hedge funds, the alternative investment fund managers directive. He has improved what was initially a poor draft and hammered out a common Parliament position on a controversial issue.
- **Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, Dutch liberal  
Before she left to join the Dutch national parliament, Hennis-Plasschaert was the MEP taking the lead on the SWIFT dossier about the use of data on bank transfers. Her report, critical of the lack of safeguards for EU citizens, led the Parliament to use the powers given by the Lisbon treaty and vote down the temporary arrangements between the EU and US.
- **Eva Joly**, French Green  
A newcomer to the European Parliament, the Norwegian-born Joly led the Parliament to victory over the member states and Commission. She chairs the Parliament's development committee and presided over the ill-fated hearing for Rumiana Jeleva, Bulgaria's nominee for European commissioner. MEPs refused to accept the candidacy of Jeleva and Barroso was forced to ask Bulgaria for another candidate.
- **Guy Verhofstadt**, Belgian liberal  
Under his leadership, the liberal (ALDE) group in the European Parliament, is punching effectively. Verhofstadt has been influential on a number of inter-institutional questions – the reappointment of the Commission president, the agreement between Barroso and the Parliament and the EU's diplomatic service - and helped the Liberals secure important portfolios in the new Commission.

## **EU OFFICIAL OF THE YEAR:**

- **Poul Skytte Christoffersen**, adviser to Catherine Ashton  
The construction of the European External Action Service was going badly until Christoffersen was brought on board. He had reserves of experience and trust which Ashton, the foreign policy chief, badly needed. The negotiations took a turn for the better soon afterwards.
- **Jean-Claude Piris**, former head of the legal service of the Council of Ministers  
Piris stepped down this summer, having made two notable contributions to the year. One was his book explaining the Lisbon treaty; the other was his advice at the height of the sovereign-debt crisis, on what was and was not legally possible.
- **Jean-Claude Trichet**, president of the European Central Bank  
The meeting of EU finance ministers of 9 May that created a eurozone emergency loan vehicle – and bought some time for the eurozone governments - was accompanied by a change of policy by the European Central Bank. But Trichet has preserved the ECB's reputation for independence, even though it has been under great political pressure.



- **Herman Van Rompuy**, president of the European Council

The role of Council president was for Van Rompuy to define. He has increased the importance of the European Council (and the frequency of meetings), established a taskforce on economic governance (which he chairs) and not seriously put a foot wrong.

- **Maarten Verwey**, director of international co-operation, Dutch finance ministry

Verwey is credited with helping the EU's finance ministers achieve their breakthrough on the night of 9-10 May to protect the eurozone. He came up with the proposal that became the European Financial Stability Facility, which met the German objections to a Commission-led loan.

## INSPIRATION OF THE YEAR:

- **Herta Müller**, the Nobel laureate from Germany

Müller has confronted both Germans and Romanians with her merciless depiction of fascism among her own ethnic German community in Romania, and Communism under Ceauşescu. She has used the Nobel prize for literature as a platform to continue her fight for human dignity.

- **Bertrand Piccard**, leader of the Solar Impulse project

In July 2010, Solar Impulse achieved the first-ever night flight by a solar-powered plane, which was also the longest and highest flight in the history of solar-powered aviation. Piccard's aim is to fly around the earth in a solar airplane "to promote the immense potential of renewable energies and their new technologies".

- **Spain's national football team**, winners of the World Cup

For four weeks in the summer, the EU's eyes were diverted to football's World Cup tournament being held in South Africa. In its closing stages, the contest was dominated by European teams. Although the final was not the best advertisement for the game of football, Spain triumphed.

- **The bond market**

The bond market had lain dormant for a long time – arguably the first decade of the eurozone - but in 2010 it forced the EU to confront flaws in the eurozone's construction. It has exerted influence over the eurozone in a way that the EU's finance ministers and the Stability and Growth Pact had previously failed to do.

- **Aurélie Valtat**, website editor, Eurocontrol.

When a volcanic ash cloud was ruining the travel plans of many Europeans, they turned in growing numbers to Valtat for information and advice. Part of Eurocontrol's press team, she made Eurocontrol into an information hub, providing a striking example of how the instruments of new media, particularly Twitter, could be mobilised to beneficial effect.

## The European Voice awards selection panel comprised:

**Josep Borrell Fontelles** became president of the European University Institute in Florence on 1 January 2010. He was president of the European Parliament in 2004-06 and chaired the development committee in 2006-09. He was Spain's minister for public works, transport, environment, housing and telecoms in 1991-96 and budget minister before that. He chaired the European affairs committee of the Spanish national parliament between 1999 and 2004 and served on the European Convention.



**John Micklethwait** has been editor-in-chief of The Economist since 2006. He had previously edited the newspaper's US and business sections. He is the author of books on religion, globalisation and the company.

**Alina Mungiu-Pippidi** is professor of democracy studies at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin. She is a board member of the International Forum of Democracy Studies and Journal of Democracy. She founded the Romanian Academic Society, a think-tank that promotes good governance in Romania.

**Helen Wallace** became a Centennial professor in the European Institute at the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2007. She had previously headed the Robert Schuman centre at the European University Institute, and held teaching posts at the University of Sussex and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, among others.

**Tim King** has been editor of European Voice since July 2009, having joined the newspaper as deputy editor in 2004. His 23-year career in journalism began with the *Bath Evening Chronicle* in the west of England. Later he worked for the *Daily Telegraph* and came to Brussels with *the European* in 1998.

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