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Are we still in Europe? [1]

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Have you noticed how quiet the government has been on the EU since the election? An unwritten part of the Coalition Agreement, perhaps even the glue in the Agreement, is that neither party will pursue its pre-election ambitions for the UK?s relationship with Europe. David Lidington, our brilliant but shy Minister for Europe, has a mission to stay out of the headlines. T S Eliot?s Mister Macavity could take lessons from him.

For example, the Coalition has been fierce on regulation with plans for one in, one out, budgets, committees and deregulation but all these apply to Whitehall regulation not Brussels. Yet the EU contributes two thirds of UK regulation in terms of burden. We have not had a whisper about that.

It is especially odd that the Chancellor has said nothing about the transfer to Brussels of financial sector regulation.

The EU Work plan has about 30 proposed new laws (directives and regulations) for 2011/12. We should now be seeing the impact assessments as part of the consultation process which should, but usually does not, take place before legislation is finalized.

Given this Vacuum, should business, and notably the financial sector, now create its own mechanism for reviewing future EU legislation and publishing its conclusions?

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