

# Blogs on European affairs are written by insiders. There is a need for these EU specialists and academics to bring their debates to the digital public.

Mar 13 2012

*What is the state of the blogosphere in Europe? Ronny Patz is an editor at Bloggingportal.eu, which aggregates the content of 904 blogs on European affairs. He argues that most blogs are written by insiders in the EU bubble and that a fresh look from the outside by more academic and citizen bloggers would enrich the EU blogosphere and provide a much needed way of holding the EU and its politicians to account.*



As part of the EU bubble, the EU blogosphere, very much like the EU institutions, is a sphere apart. This sphere, it seems, is very much focused on the narrow lines of Brussels activities, which do not really grasp the more Europe-wide debates that go beyond. The reason is that EU blogs are often written by direct or indirect EU insiders, people who either live in Brussels or whose bodies and brains are frequently travelling, at least virtually, to the hills and valleys of power of the Belgian capital.

In 2008, Nosemonkey, now a Euroblogging veteran of 9 years, produced a list of 110 EU blogs. Today, Bloggingportal.eu, a 3 year old EU blog platform of which I am one of the many editors, lists over 900 EU blogs, an estimated 200 of which are publishing at least one blog post every 1-2 weeks.

To my knowledge, this Euroblogosphere – EU-focussed blogs and blog posts on EU affairs written on non-EU-focussed blogs – has not been the subject of academic study. Fellow Euroblogger André's *Atomization overcome? The Case of the European Blogosphere in Fostering More European Democracy* is the only relevant publication one can come across through Google Scholar. Making any remarks on the state of EU blogging is thus quite subjective.



Yet, a systematic study on the current state of EU blogging would very likely find a sphere in which blogs written by EU journalists and European studies majors, Members of the European Parliament and EU Commissioners, EU lobbyists and anti-lobbyists, academics and lawyers, PR/PA people and EU officials, Euroenthusiasts and Eurosceptics mostly coexist without too much interaction (in the form of links and comments).

Most EU bloggers write about their preferred subjects and they stick to them, not too much influenced by what others write about the topic. Most write in English. Many EU blogs are generalist blogs covering a wide range of issues under certain angles. There are not many EU blogs with a meticulous focus on specific policy fields, although there are some. The most read Euroblogs are probably those written by journalists like Jean Quatremer, blogging on newspaper websites that already have a wide readership.

What is missing in my view – for the full argument see my post “Why there is no serious blogging scene in Brussels” – are genuine citizen blogs, watchdogs written by people without particular stakes in the EU systems, citizens who would follow certain politicians and certain developments as regular, independent, and critical voices. So far, there is nobody who regularly follows certain EU politicians and holds them accountable when they say one thing here and another thing there. There

are no policy geeks (or very, very few) who go to every public event in their favourite policy field to be able to tell when the tides are starting to turn, who regularly analyse the latest documents so that they become understandable for a wider public.

Furthermore – and I have to write this since I am blogging this on a newly founded academic blog – I also do not see a relevant EU-focussed academic blogging community. There is so much EU research out there, so many specialists on a wide range of EU topics, but they are not out here debating their research and their specialist topics, neither with each other nor with the rest of the world. They don't bring the academic debate on EU affairs to the digital public and they therefore miss the great chance of making academic research on EU matters more connected to reality and reality more connected to what we find out in often years long research process.

For me, the EUROPP blog is a chance to foster academic involvement online, in the EU blogosphere and beyond. This will only work if those writing here are aware what is written elsewhere in the digital sphere, if they react by linking and debating what was said by others, by going to other blogs, fora, Facebook discussion threads and if they involve in the discussions where they happen instead of just leaving self-sufficient texts here on this blog.

Good blogging is quite easy if one takes the time to do a little research and to understand the dynamics of these discussions. In this sense, blogging is like academic work: Cite others, add your own thoughts and knowledge – and once you know roughly what you have found or what you want to say, go to fora where the debate is already going on.

The EU blogosphere is like one of the academic conferences you can go to, and the state of this conference is not bad at all – but I'd say it could be much better with the involvement of more academics.

*Please read our comments policy before commenting.*

---

### **About the author**

#### **Ronny Patz** –University of Potsdam

Ronny Patz is a political scientist at the University of Potsdam (Germany) with a keen interest in European affairs and network theory. His PhD thesis examines information flows in the context of EU policy-making. Patz is a co-editor of [bloggingportal.eu](http://bloggingportal.eu) and in 2010 and 2011, he was a volunteer advisor to the EU office of Transparency International.



Related posts:

1. [Book Review: Social Movements, Public Spheres and the European Politics of the Environment](#)