

Brussels blog round up: Everyone in the EU is under fire, pressure on Europe's last dictator, and more of the same from Van Rompuy? 25 February – 2 March, 2012

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Chris Gilson and **Julian Kirchherr** take a look at the week in Brussels blogging.

The EU Centre

In his weekly round-up, Ron at *Bloggingportal.eu* says that everyone in the EU is under fire, citing attacks on the European Parliament by former UK Labour Minister, Jack Straw (for more on which see Simon Hix here on EUROPP on Monday 5 March). There have also been strong criticisms of the European Council for its indecisiveness and of pro-ACTA supporters (backing the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreements aimed to enforce international intellectual property rights) for their lack of transparency. However, Ron also judges that this week 'no-one got killed'.

Finnish lawyer Ralf Grahn at *Grahnlaw* chimes in, surmising that the European Council has been "gutted" by the Euro crisis and by its own design, suggesting that the last informal summits of the Council have been relatively insubstantial

Open Europe looks at a new report into the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (the EU's €50 billion annual direct subsidy scheme for its farmers), and proposes further liberalisation. Subsidies should be linked in future just to measurable environmental benefits, while allowing productive farmers to opt in or out of the scheme. Meanwhile, *Edward Rhein on Energy and Climate* suggests that the EU needs to phase out biofuels in favour of more stringent fuel efficiency standards for cars.

On Friday, Dan Luca at *BlogActiv.eu* looks at the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy's likely reappointment, while *Grahnlaw* says that the reappointment likely means more of the same.

EU Foreign policy and the European neighbourhood

On her blog EU Commissioner, *Kristalina Georgieva* looks at the launch of the campaign against hunger, focussed on the Sahel region of Africa and supported by Real Madrid player Raúl González.

The *FRIDE Blog*, which joins EUROPP in starting off this week, examines how the Euro crisis will affect the EU's global presence. A better vision of how EU foreign policy will back up the aims of its international economic policy is needed.

European Geostrategy looks at a new report from the Spanish think-tank, the Alternatives Foundation, on the relationship between the Atlantic Alliance and the EU, and considers how the defence policy of both might be better integrated.

The Euro Crisis and Greece

Blogactiv.eu reckons that the second Greek bailout, announced over last weekend is 'another perverse short term fix'. The numbers simply do not add up, and it is wildly optimistic to think that Greece will be able to achieve a debt level of under 121 per cent of GDP by 2020. *Open Europe* covers how Germany's largest tabloid, *Bildzeitung* greeted the bailout its Monday edition lead with the simple headline – STOP! Protesilaos Stavrou rejects the notion that bailouts are acts of

solidarity between EU member states, saying that they are a means to maintain the established system, rather than being altruistic acts.

NPThinking warns against those in “glass economies throwing stones”, and that it’s easy for some countries to boast of their prosperity when their competitiveness is enhanced by their proximity to key European markets.

The *Centre for European Reform* says that fiscal policy in Europe is being tightened too quickly, leading to a problem of too much supply and no demand, which is impeding growth in the region.

On Wednesday, *Open Europe* reports on the Irish government’s decision to hold a referendum on the Euro fiscal compact, the new treaty signed on 2 March, which requires member states to have a balanced budget and to carry out structural reforms to reduce deficits. The outcome of the vote will determine Ireland’s access to future bailout funds. *Debating Europe* invites its readers to discuss with Frank Engel, a Luxembourg member of the European Parliament, whether this fiscal compact is a step in the right direction.

According to *Carp*, Friday’s economic summit in Brussels to approve the latest Greek rescue plan ignores the easiest solution – a new system of Eurobonds, where the bond holders have the risk, rather than EU taxpayers.

Across Europe

Croatia, the War, and the Future looks at the recent deal between Serbia and Kosovo on regional cooperation – meaning that Kosovo can now represent itself at regional forums without risking a Serbian walkout. And it argues that Serbia has received the status of candidate for EU accession with unjustifiable ease. (Catch our blog examining these issues on Monday).

On the eve of a leadership election, *PlaceLux.eu* looks at the next steps for Dutch Labour, given its poor recent poll rankings.

NPThinking muses on which country now has the most conservative government in the EU today.

And finally...

On her blog, *NeelieKroes*, the European Data Commissioner discusses a single European open data licence, saying that any amendments to the current system must first be agreed by the European Parliament and Council of Ministers. (See our blog yesterday from Viviane Reding, Vice President of the Commission’s plan on data privacy).

Charlemagne’s Notebook looks at EU pressure on Europe’s last dictator, Belarus’ leader, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, and the ‘lurking suspicion’ that Slovenia may be defending the interests of one of his supporters.

Writing for (y)EU wonders what can be done to raise citizen’s awareness of the 112 emergency phone number, which gives access to emergency services across the EU, but which relatively few citizens know about.

Related posts:

1. The political and economic crisis in Europe has meant a step back for the EU’s major institutions. Solutions in 2012 must not come at the expense of democracy.