

Brussels blog round up for 3-9 March 2012: The European Commission discovers social networks, Greece survives in the Euro. And will Merkel get a majority?

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

The EU Centre

The *Open Europe Blog* welcomes the fact that Germany is now gearing up for a major debate about the future of Europe, as Germany's Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle calls for a European constitution and a directly elected European President. The blog argues that the United Kingdom should listen to these ideas and overcome its Euroscepticism. The *European Council on Foreign Relations* ponders why Berlin is so fixed on a German solution to the Eurozone crisis. *UK in Europe* looks at the levels and effectiveness of UK representation in the EU's institutions.

Rhein on Energy and Climate Change looks at corruption across the EU. The EU centre must take more interest in those countries that have the highest rates of corruption, especially because they may become a serious source of economic woes. *Grahnlaw* looks at how European leaders can breathe new life into the Europe 2020 agenda: failing divine inspiration, Europe's Presidents and Prime Ministers must first make the strategy work in their own countries.

On 2 March 2012 the European Council appointed Herman Van Rompuy as its President for a second two-and-a-half year term. Only one day later van Rompuy met Pál Schmitt, President of Hungary, and uploaded a video of the meeting on his blog.

Waltzing Matilda reports that the European Commission's social media experts are tightening their belts now, so that they are increasingly using free tools for monitoring online media activities. Ron at *Polscieu* says that 2011 is the year that the European Commission realised that online social networks existed. On her blog on International Women's Day, *Neelie Kroes*, Vice-President of the European Commission, looks at how to make information and communication technology (ICT) and women work for each other.

EU Foreign policy and the European neighbourhood

To not many observers' surprise, Vladimir Putin won the first round of Russian elections on 4 March. *BlogActiv.eu* argues that democracy has been humiliated in this election. In her blog, European Commissioner *Cecilia Malmström* calls upon Russia to listen to the accusations of election fraud that observers from OSCE reported. *Debating Europe* asks Renate Weber, a Member of the European Parliament from Romania, why the EU is not putting more pressure on Russia.

Danile Keohane at the new *Fride Blog* warns that the EU should not try and replicate the United Nations' defence policy. He says that the EU cannot always be neutral in crises, and should not confine its operations to humanitarian aid. The EU's international security policies should reflect the values, and protect the interests of Europeans.

The Euro Crisis and Greece

The Greece crisis entered a crucial week, with private investors deciding whether to participate in a €206 billion debt restructuring. With this new round of restructuring, *BlogActiv.eu* argues that Greece has become a failed state. Not only Greece, but also Germany is a core problem of the Euro crisis, according to *NPThinking*, with Germany's calls for austerity threatening the economic well-being of the Eurozone.

The NewFederalist observes a substantial loss of confidence in the European Union among its citizens since the beginning of the financial crisis in 2009. It recommends explaining the European idea, emphasizing common values such as human dignity, equality and the rule of law, and boosting foreign exchange programs as measures to tackle Euroscepticism.

Looking at the fiscal compact signed last week *NPThinking* examines whether or not Angela Merkel will need a two thirds majority to get the compact adopted in both German houses of parliament, the Bundesrat and the Bundestag. Given that Merkel conceived of, and has heavily promoted the compact, is it an 'own goal'? Or a clever plot on her part?

Protesilaos Stavrou looks at the European Central Bank's recent attempts at pumping more – €529 billion Euro – money into the European banking system, and (also covered by Paul de Grauwe on this blog yesterday). He gives three reasons why banks will still be unwilling to invest in sovereign bonds.

Across Europe

Charlemagne's Notebook speculates about the future of France's president Nicolas Sarkozy. If he should lose power in May's presidential elections, he might seek a job in the European Union. *NPThinking* looks at the likelihood that the left – in the form of France's Françoise Hollande and Germany's Greens and SPD might be able to raise a new flag for progressives in Europe, and help to reverse the 'conservative domination' of Eurozone politics. *Eurosearch* unpacks claims by the Dutch Freedom party that the Euro has cost the Dutch economy billions, and finds them to be 'highly misleading'.

Last week, Poland suffered its worst train crash in twenty years. *Beyond the Transition* blames the Polish government, claiming that its transport policy only focused on large infrastructural projects, but not on passenger safety. The *Open Europe* blog asks: 'Will Poland become the new North Korea of Europe?' The answer is a resounding no.

The NewFederalist looks at the scale of youth unemployment in Germany – it is far greater than the official figures actually suggest.

And finally...

Google's *European Public Policy Blog* presented its nominees for its Netizen Award of online freedom. Among this year's nominees is Grigory Melkonyants, who publishes an interactive map illustrating irregularities in Russian election campaigns.

EU Energy Policy Blog assesses new data published by the European Wind Energy Association (EWEA). According to their statisticians, renewable energy resources are poised to meet over half of EU's electricity demand by 2030. The EU's wind industry has had an average annual growth rate of 15.6% over the past 17 years.

Stanley Pignal at the *FT's Brussels blog* looks at a European Commission PR 'misfire'.

Related posts:

1. 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
2. Recent political developments mean that Greece is no longer on the brink of economic

collapse. But the European Commission, the ECB and the IMF will be keeping a close watch for some time to come.

3. The Brussels deal to save the Euro confounded its Anglo-Saxon doubters.

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