

Brussels blog round up for 10-16 March 2012: Concern over the Ukraine, Sarkozy gets tough on Schengen, and how big is Greece's bailout?

Mar 17 2012

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

The EU Centre

How can the democratic deficit of the European Union be tackled? *The New Federalist* calls for the direct election of the European Commission's president as one potential solution. *Reuniting Europe* predicts that Anonymous, a group of hacktivists, could become the largest political group in the European Parliament in 2014. *Rhein on Energy and Climate Change* maintains that the EU most definitely does not need a new constitution now, given the relative newness of the Lisbon Treaty.

EU Foreign policy and the European neighbourhood

Croatia will most likely be the 28th Member State of the European Union, and this week the President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, visited the country to strengthen relationships, reporting on his video blog.

Is further enlargement of the European Union necessary? The European Commission believes so and has released a short YouTube clip to explain why such enlargement is profitable to the Member States as well the applicants. However, *Erkan's Field Diary* finds this video quite xenophobic.

Ukraine will most probably not join the European Union in the near future. However, European leaders are quite concerned with the country's development; *Victor Tkachuk on Democracy, Ukraine & the EU* praises the open letter the Foreign Ministers of Sweden, Czech Republic, Great Britain, Germany and Poland have written to Ukraine on the continuous deterioration of its democracy.

The *FRIDE Blog* makes the case that as attention is swinging towards Syria, the EU should ensure it makes North Africa and the Sahel their number one priority.

The Economy and the Euro Crisis

How to solve the Euro crisis? *Rhein on Energy and Climate* believes that more countries need to join the Euro to make the currency stronger, proposing that by 2020 the Euro zone should comprise all Member States. The *FT's Brussels blog* muses on the actual size of Greece's bailout.

Many believe an exit of Greece from the Euro and the EU would help Greece and the European



Credit: Éole Wind (Creative Commons BY NC SA)

Union. However, *Protesilaos Stavrou* argues that structural reforms in Greece can only be done within the EU and the Euro. In a related post, he explores the “fundamental fallacies” of Euro-exit advocates: “Exits from the euro that will supposedly produce more good than harm, are wild delusions at best and unbridled speculation at worst”, he argues.

NPThinking is concerned that the EU’s relative lack of trade barriers is undermining smaller, less competitive countries in Europe, and harming the single market. *Michael Berendt* looks at the proposals for a transaction tax in the EU, saying that the arguments over it exemplify the deep-seated antagonisms over the future of financial services within the EU.

Across Europe

Reuniting Europe believes that Nicolas Sarkozy wants to exclude Greece from the Schengen Agreement. However, the *Open Europe Blog* argues that Sarkozy’s tough talk on the Schengen Agreement is nothing but hot air to gain ground in the French presidential elections. *Public Affairs 2.0* fears that Sarkozy will fall for the temptation of protectionism within the next weeks. The German Marshall Fund Blog recommends that Sarkozy’s challenger, François Hollande needs to flex his muscles on foreign policy and defence, an area where Sarkozy currently has the advantage. *Karpfenteich* critically comments on Angela Merkel’s support for Sarkozy, while later in the week *Nucleus* looks at what might be the end of ‘Merkozy’.

Last week, Slovakia joined the small but growing club of European countries that elected a majority government despite using a proportional representation system. *Political Developments* assesses the outcomes of the election and its implications. *NPThinking* wonders if the spring will be a turning point for EU politics, with elections planned in France and in Germany at that time.

And finally...

This week *Polscieu* examined the EU blogosphere empirically. One core result: EU blogs “mostly coexist without too much interaction (in the form of links and comments)”. *Bloggportal.eu* is even more critical arguing on the state of EU blogging arguing that Eurobloggers are “just a bunch of self-referential, submissive twits who think they are better than the rest of the world”. Later *Polscieu* also argues that, in order to be authentic, blogs need space for mistakes. *Waltzing Matilda* reckons that social media will make you a god.

Writing for (y)EU explores the European war of bubble-gum.

Mary Honeyball from the *Honeyball Buzz* was interviewed by the BBC on the gender pay gap in Europe.

Related posts:

1. François Hollande is by no means certain to win the French Presidential election. He may yet fall foul of France’s well-known ‘Frontrunner Syndrome’, as Sarkozy’s fightback begins
2. 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?
3. 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

This entry was posted in Brussels Blog Round up and tagged blogging, Brussels, crisis, eu, Euro, François Hollande, Greece, Merkozy, Nicolas Sarkozy, social media, Ukraine. Bookmark the permalink.