

# Brussels blog round up for 31 March – 6 April 2012: Unemployment reaches 25 million, all quiet on the Brussels front over Easter, and will the new Citizens Initiative help solve the EU's 'democratic deficit'?

Apr 6 2012

Chris Gilson and [Julian Kirchherr](#) take a look at the week in Brussels blogging.

## The EU Centre

This week, the [European Citizens' Initiative \(ECI\)](#) was launched, a new democratic instrument that lets one million citizens propose new legislation for the European Union (EU). *Debating Europe* discusses with Maroš Šefčovič, EU Commissioner for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration, whether this will be the [solution to the EU's so-called "democratic deficit"](#). *The New Federalist* thinks so, arguing that citizens can now [challenge the EU institutions](#) to build a better Europe. *The European Citizen* advise us to pay much more attention to the [European Parliament](#), given that it is there to represent the citizens of Europe who can use it to call European institutions to account. *Protesilaos Stavrou* thinks that more people would be interested in the EU if they were [directly taxed](#) by Brussels.

On a more general note, *Polscieu* wonders whether those who pass EU law, whether in the form of treaties or of normal legislation, always know [what they are actually doing](#). Meanwhile *Eurosearch* reports on former European Commission President Jacques Delors' comments that some current European leaders want to ['kill Europe'](#). As the week draws to close *Reuniting Europe* at BlogActiv.eu [comments](#) on the quiet calm of the Belgeway as civil servants take their Easter holidays against the backdrop of financial turmoil across the continent.

Meanwhile, unemployment in the EU reached its highest level in fifteen years this February. According to the Eurostat, 10.2% of Europeans are unemployed or 24.55 million people. *Presseurop* comments on [these latest figures](#), and *Writing for y(EU)* says that it causing a [forced emigration of young people](#) who must try their luck abroad.

## EU Foreign policy and the European neighbourhood

Can the 'reset' between Washington and Moscow survive Vladimir Putin's return to the Russian presidency in May? For the time being, Putin appears to view the United States hegemony as a greater danger than the rise of Chinese power, argues the [Centre for European Reform](#). Tough times might be ahead.



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Varga at BlogActiv.eu warns that Asia's [defence spending](#) will soon surpass Europe's, and that despite peace on the continent, there is instability in its neighbourhood, and that Europe should not let its defence capabilities erode. *Debating Europe* looks at the continued use of the [death penalty in Belarus](#), and wonders how (and if) Europe should respond.

The *German Marshall Fund* blog says that the '[litmus test](#)' for Turkey's regional leadership ambitions is how it deals with Syria and the regime of Bashar al Assad.

## The Euro Crisis and Greece

Is there any solution to the Euro crisis and to Greece's financial woes? The FT's *Brussels Blog* published two confidential economic analyses prepared for European finance ministers in Copenhagen which paint [a less-than-confident picture](#) of the Eurozone crisis.

*The New Federalist* argues that the current handling of the Euro crisis by the European and Greek leaders is disastrous. Supposedly, [many more investments](#) are needed in Greece to boost economic growth; austerity will only deepen Greece's recession. Meanwhile, *Coulistes de Bruxelles* explains how the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) will [operate](#) when it begins on 1 July. *Florian Pantazi* at BlogActiv.eu reckons that a one-off issue of [Eurobonds](#) might be a way to kick start flagging growth, while *Eurosearch* looks at a new report that gives Europe a '[B](#)' for growth, and also says that an '[A](#)' is within reach.

*Oxfam* on BlogActiv.eu believes that [hopes for a European financial transaction \(FTT\) tax are not dead](#) because Germany has not given up on the tax yet. The FTT could be [a new source of revenue](#) for debt-ridden governments in Europe. Not only the FTT, but also the Alternative Investment Fund Managers (AIFM) directive aims at taxing the financial sector: The AIFM Directive is a European Commission proposal aiming regulating hedge fund managers, private equity firms, investment trusts and other so-called "alternative investment" funds. *Open Europe Blog* explores [what the directive means](#) and what its implications could be.

*Open Europe Blog* explores the [implications of a bail-out](#) for Spain, while *NPT* calls upon European leaders [to lower immigration walls](#) to boost economic growth. The *OFCE blog* wonders if France's [government expenditure](#) is too high, concluding that it makes no sense to cut government spending simply because it might be higher than that of other countries.

## Across Europe

*Croatia, the War, and the future* [ponders](#) whether or not former Croatian president Stjepan Mesic may be prosecuted for perjury over a row about a journalist's comments in a book critical of him. Later, the same blog remembers the '[Bloody Easter](#)' of 1991, which marked the beginning of the 'Homeland War'. *European Ideas* says that it is time for Croats to start [trusting their own judgement](#) and resist the temptation to look for solutions and guidance outside of their own country.

Writing at BlogActiv.eu, *EU Logos* [applauds](#) the Dutch parliament's condemnation of Party for Freedom leader Geert Wilders' website which refers to Easter Europeans in the Netherlands as 'undesirable'.

## And finally...

*Polscieu* posted on April 1<sup>st</sup> that he has been [waiting for an EU document](#) now for more than eight months. Unfortunately, that is no April Fools' Day joke. And he tries to [keep the debate on EU blogging](#) alive.

*Kaj Embrén* on BlogActiv.eu explores [waste, waste, waste](#) in the EU, while *Rhein on Energy and*

*Climate Change* looks at how the transport sector in Europe can [reduce emissions](#) by 60 percent between now and 2050.

*Nada es Gratis* looks at the potentially negative effects of being born in [December](#) on students' academic performance, and offers some ways to mitigate them.

Related posts:

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