

Brussels blog round up for 19 – 25 May 2012: The European Investment Bank is rediscovered, Europeans stay at home for their holidays, and are Eurobonds a winning bet?

May 25 2012

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

The EU Centre

“[Could travel abroad help to create some sense of European identity?](#)” asks *Debating Europe* this week. Should European cultural tourism be better promoted? A [Eurostat survey](#) shows that Europeans spend a staggering 77% of their holidays in their own countries.

Keeping in touch with your friends and family at home whilst travelling abroad but is now even easier: Last week, the European Parliament voted for new price reductions for roaming in the European Union (EU). This was a big success for the citizen-led campaign [Europeans for Fair Roaming](#) and will make using your mobile phone abroad a lot more affordable over the next two years. *Fairroaming* on BlogActiv.eu gives [an overview of the new EU roaming rules](#).

Efficiency1st at BlogActiv.eu says with its current EU Presidency, Denmark is ideally placed to steer the current negotiations on the draft [Energy Efficiency Directive](#) and critiques the country for ‘meekly’ accepting the most damaging national amendments.

Meanwhile, one of Great Britain’s most renowned bloggers will not enter EU politics as a politician: *Jon Worth* announced this week that “with some sadness in my heart, from now on [I will no longer be pursuing my aim](#) to be selected for the Labour Party for the European Parliament in 2014.”

EU Foreign policy and the European neighbourhood

The 2012 Eurovision Song Contest kicks off in Baku, Azerbaijan, today and the song contest’s glittering final will be held on Saturday night. With an anticipated audience of 300 million people, Azerbaijani authorities are working hard to promote a positive image of the country abroad. But [pro-democracy campaigners are arrested in Baku](#) as the song contest begins, reports *The New Federalist*. Can the 2012 Eurovision Song Contest really be [a tool for change](#) in Azerbaijan?

Children in European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries remain among the most socially and economically vulnerable groups in the region, reports *cafebabel.com*. An increasing number of children are susceptible to circumstances of violence, abuse and neglect. “For the European Union to achieve regional security, democracy and economic stability it must first [minimise the numbers of children vulnerable to extreme harm and lack of opportunity](#)”, recommends the blog.

Erkan’s Field Diary wonders if it is possible to [crowd source Turkey’s constitution](#), while *Rhein on Energy and Climate* at BlogActiv.eu says that the election of Tomislav Nikolic in Serbia (a politician with dubious credentials he says) means that the EU should [not rush into accession negotiations with Serbia](#).



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The German Marshall Fund blog says that tensions between Europe and the US over European defence spending have [cast a shadow](#) over this week's NATO summit in Chicago.

The Euro Crisis and Greece

Who can solve the Euro crisis, and can Greece be saved from an exit from the Euro? *Presseurop* calls for a 'grexit', a portmanteau of 'Greek' and 'exit' referring to the possibility that the country will be obliged to leave the Eurozone. *Protesilaos Stavrou* on BlogActiv.eu argues that the crisis in Greece is not cyclical, but [about absolute productive capacities](#). *A Fistful of Euros* wonders how Europe's 'high minded ideals' have led to the current situation and the strong possibility of a bleak future for Greece and the Euro, while *Coulisses de Bruxelles* say that in the upcoming elections, the Greek people have not only the future of their own country in their hands, but potentially [that of Europe as well](#).

Open Europe Blog reports that the United Kingdom wants Angela Merkel "[to move to fiscal union or else ...](#)", while *Nucleus* at BlogActiv.eu says that David Cameron now has the chance to be an 'honest broker' between Paris and Berlin over the debate on austerity and growth. Meanwhile, *Finnegan's Take* on BlogActiv.eu explores why EU leaders are [rediscovering the European Investment Bank \(EIB\)](#), and *Open Europe* looks at European leaders' stances on [Eurobonds](#). *Eva en Europa* reckons that Eurobonds would be a [winning bet for Europe](#). *Economics Intelligence* is concerned that the European Central Bank's recent lending of €1 trillion to banks (known as 'Big Bertha'), might have actually made things worse, with Spanish and Italian banks [buying too much of their government's own debt](#).

Across Europe

French President François Hollande made his debut on the international stage at the G8 and NATO summits in the US over the weekend. Perhaps a sign of the rocky road ahead of him, [he managed to upset at least three of his fellow leaders](#), reports *Open Europe*.

In the 1970s, the United Kingdom was in decline as a major power. Now this declinism is starting again, fears *European Geostrategy*. The blog recommends that "[Britain must work harder to re-establish its Asian connexions](#). It must maintain its ability to support Australia, Malaysia and Singapore in the face of potential Chinese aggression, while it simultaneously boosts its strategic and cultural ties to [Japan](#), India and Indonesia." But what about French-British relations?

Open Europe says that the [spat between the newly elected Pirate Party](#) and the other parties in the Nordrhein-Westfalen regional parliament over seating shows that the country's political structure is having trouble coming to terms with alternative political parties like the Pirates.

Nada es Gratis looks at how the [Spanish education system](#) can be improved, and later in the week, calls for the Spanish government to [increase its revenue](#) through tax reform.

And finally...

What has Herman been up to? This week, the President of the European Council [participated in the G8 Summit](#). In Camp David he [shook hands with Barack Obama](#) and [took a family photo](#). He then travelled [all the way to Chicago](#) to take part in NATO's 25th Summit. He also [met with Panagiotis Pikrammenos](#), the Prime Minister of the interim government of Greece.

Cyprus holds [the next presidency of the EU Council](#) from July to December 2012, and they would like to organise a meeting between the Presidency as well as Cypriot and other European bloggers. Interested? Find out more about the call [here](#).

The author of *Economics Intelligence* is – an economist. Last week, he predicted that "[based on my professional background I'm rather confident that Bayern Munich will beat Chelsea this weekend](#)." Well, Saturday's game showed that the economic approach to football has its limits. But luckily economics is a flexible discipline: After the match, *Economics Intelligence* then provides "[an economic explanation of Bayern's failure](#)". It's worth a read!

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of EUROPP – European Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

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