

Brussels blog round up for 21-27 April 2012: Hollande comes out in front in France, 'ludicrous' spending on the EEAS, and should some of the EU's quangos get the chop?

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Chris Gilson takes a look at the week in Brussels blogging.

The EU Centre

After Argentina's recent expropriation of the Spanish energy firm, [YPF](#), *NpThinking*, looks at the policy issues and the European Parliament's response, while the *Fride Blog* maintains that the current Ibero-American rhetoric needs to be replaced with a [Spanish foreign policy towards Latin America](#).

This week, the Stockholm+40 conference took place in Sweden. Blogging at EurActiv.eu, *Kaj Embren*, wonders if the summit, with its focus on sustainable development, will provide any [meaningful messages](#) ahead of the Rio Earth summit in June. Meanwhile, *Martinned* says that the application of the new European Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) to airlines may well conflict with national rules about the [sovereignty of airspace](#). The *German Marshall Fund blog* is concerned that carbon prices under the ETS may continue to [remain low](#) because of the recession, further undermining the scheme.

Polscieu is worried that the EU Council is wasting its time with yet [another expert group](#) – this time on the innovative and creative potential of young people. *Open Europe* looks at the rise of the [EU's quangos](#) – the number has doubled since 2004, to 52 and cost €2.64 billion, and identifies ten that it thinks could be abolished. *Public Affairs 2.0* says that the European Commission is [struggling](#) to justify its 7 per cent budget increase against the backdrop of austerity in Europe.

EU Logos at BlogActiv.eu looks at the UK's [attempts to reform the European Court of Human Rights](#) this month at the Brighton Conference where the 47 members of the Council of Europe debated the issue. *The European Citizen reports* that the current Justice Commissioner (and contributor to EUROPP) [Viviane Reding](#), may be building up to run as the European People's Party candidate for the 2014 elections.

EU Foreign policy and the European neighbourhood

The *Fride Blog* looks at [Georgia's democratic reforms](#), saying that many core reforms still need to take root. Later, they look at the European External Action Service's ['ludicrous' budget](#) increase of 5.7% making a total of €517 million. But is it ludicrously small or large?

The Euro Crisis and Greece

Eva en Europa looks at the relative failure of the [Sarkozy/Merkel alliance](#) to keep up with the circumstances of the Euro crisis, saying that they have also fuelled political suspicion and economic uncertainty. The *New Federalist* says that the EU's continuing austerity plans for Spain are ['insanity'](#), and that there is little chance of the country getting through the crisis with an internal devaluation such as the one now being played out. *Nada es Gratis* took an in-depth look at [Spain's deficit](#), finding that the country needs greater flexibility from



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creditors in meeting its deficit. Later in the week, they say that [Spain has lost 15 per cent of its jobs](#), 3 million in fact, since the beginning of the financial crisis.

Protesilaos Stavrou looks at arguments for the [European Central Bank](#) to give money to states at 0% interest, but in the end finds that they cannot stand up to serious analysis.

After the [resignation of the Dutch government](#) this week over austerity policies, the *Open Europe* blog looks at the Netherlands' uncertain political future.

French elections

A Fistful of Euros has extensive coverage of the elections over the weekend, reviewing the candidates' [manifestos](#), profiling the far left candidate [Jean-Luc Mélenchon](#) and stating that socialist candidate François Hollande 'looks like a president'. From a Romanian point of view, Corina Crețu says a win for Hollande would help European integration to go [beyond austerity and crisis management](#).

After the first round over the weekend and Hollande's victory over Nicolas Sarkozy, and ahead of the second round in May, *Karpfenteich* at BlogActiv.eu looks at [Hollande's economic policy](#) – finding it to be at odds with the EU's current austerity regime. *Couliesses de Bruxelles* says that many European officials and diplomats will be [happy to see the back of Sarkozy](#) if he loses to Hollande in the second round. The *Honeyball Buzz* says that Hollande's win in the first round signals a revival in [support for the centre-left in Europe](#).

Open Europe looks at the reaction to the election in Germany, with some commentators saying that it is also a [defeat for German economic policy](#), while the *European Council on Foreign Relations* says that there is [much speculation](#) on the disruption that Hollande might bring to European and Eurozone politics.

Across Europe

Writing for y(EU) looks at Poland's [initiatives](#) to attract tourists in the lead up to the Euro 2012 football competition later this year.

Croatia, the war, and the future accuses the UK's BBC of bias towards Serbs in their recent coverage of the 20th [anniversary](#) of the siege of Sarajevo.

And finally...

The European Citizen is worried about [alien invaders](#).

Public Affairs 2.0 says that the upcoming French legislative elections in June will be partially electronic, and that this shows that [e-citizenship](#) is gaining ground quickly in Europe.

This week, President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy met with the [President of the EU/Japan business roundtable](#) Jean-Yves Legall, the [Secretary General of NATO](#) Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the [Hungarian Prime Minister](#), Victor Orban, [Italian Prime Minister](#), Mario Monti, the [President and Prime Minister of Romania](#), and also gave a [speech on populism](#) to the Romanian parliament.

Debating Europe [interviews](#) Maria Damanaki, EU Commissioner for Fisheries on potential reforms of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy.

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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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