

Brussels blog round up for 7 – 13 July: Vaccine bonds under threat, Romania's referendum row, and will the UK become an EU free-rider?

Jul 13 2012

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

The EU Centre

EU Logos at Blogactiv.eu looks at the European Parliament's call for a [directive on basic banking services](#), as 30 million adult Europeans lack a bank account. Later, they discuss the creation of a European observatory for [cultural and religious pluralism](#), which will focus on the plight of religious minorities throughout the world.

Blogging at Blogactiv.eu, *Giovanni Pittella MEP* says that the [EU now needs to unite to fight financial speculation](#), especially in the form of High Frequency Trading, where investments are decided in microseconds.

Rhein on energy and climate looks ahead to the [EU in 2025](#). He says it will have 35 Member States, a stronger ECB, and possibly an elected President for the European Commission. *PolsciEU* looks at the [relaunch](#) of Votewatch.eu this week. Votewatch aims to make information about the European Parliament and the EU Council easily accessible to the public. He says "Votewatch.eu is doing a great job in making EU-level voting behaviour more transparent".

Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission, blogs about using ICT to make [smarter cities](#), while *EU Logos* at Blogactiv.eu says that the majority of Europeans are worried about [cyber-security](#), according to a recent Eurobarometer survey. 12 per cent of Europeans have been victims of online fraud, according to the survey.

EU Foreign policy and the European neighbourhood

The European Council on Foreign Relations says that the EU needs to rethink its strategic partnerships, [to reflect the importance of democracy](#), especially in the wake of the Arab Spring.

The Euro Crisis

On Monday the Euro Group – the Finance Ministers of Europe – met to discuss the crisis in Spain. *Open Europe* rounds up the results of the meeting, saying that Spain will soon be getting the [first €30billion](#) of the €100billion previously to help its ailing banks. *Nucleus at BlogActiv.eu* says that the meeting [failed to provide any clarity](#) – not even on who the Chairman might be after Jean-Claude Juncker, steps down later this year. *Coulisses des Bruxelles* reports that the ECB, in an effort to increase the flow of credit, this week [lowered its main interest rate](#) below 1% for the first time in the Euro's history.

A Fistful of Euros reviews the [reaction to the previous week's summit](#) saying that while it has confused the markets, it did also produce results, which will be an advance in the debt crisis once they are implemented. This week 172 German economists [wrote](#) to the Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper, critiquing the summit



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and a potential European banking union. The *OFCE blog* mulls over [how a banking union might work](#), saying that it could “help break the correlation between a sovereign debt crisis and a banking crisis”. Meanwhile, the *Centre for European Reform* is concerned that Eurozone has reached the [limits of the politically possible](#), as many states have no mandate to institute the policies needed to save the Euro.

Nucleus at Blogactiv.eu looks at the [ideological splits](#) across Europe, and how 60 years of progress is now being threatened by the Eurozone crisis. He says that the only thing really keeping the Eurozone together now is the fear of the consequences if it were to collapse.

Across Europe

The *OFCE blog* looks at higher education fees across Europe, advocating that it be [funded through taxation](#) rather than by fee increases.

A political crisis is building in Romania as the President, Traian Basescu, faced near impeachment and was [suspended](#) by the Romanian Parliament according to *Beyond the Transition*. Now, Prime Minister Victor Ponta is seeking a referendum on Basescu’s suspension, but the EU has concerns over the rule of law in the country. Romanian MEP, *Monica Macovei* says that the democratic world is now against Ponta, while *Corina Cretu*, also a Romanian MEP says that the Supreme Court has confirmed the legality of the referendum, but is concerned about the potential for a [low turnout](#). *A Fistful of Euros* says that Romania’s political crises are taking place against the backdrop of an [economic slump](#) and a relatively ineffective programme from the IMF.

Open Europe reviews recent [YouGov polling](#), and finds that a majority of British people would like a referendum on EU membership or a renegotiation of the UK’s relationship with the EU. Meanwhile, the *Centre for European Reform* finds even if the UK did leave the EU, it would [still have to follow EU regulations](#), in order to maintain its access to the Single Market. *The European Citizen* echoes this, saying that the UK is essentially asking to be a [free-rider](#) in the EU. Meanwhile, *Nucleus* at Blogactiv.eu discusses UK Foreign Secretary’s plans this week for a [full audit of EU law](#).

Meanwhile *Croatia, the war, and the future* is concerned that [cronyism is alive and well](#) in Croatia, despite the country’s pending accession into the EU.

Beyond the Transition looks at [the Polish economy](#) after the Euro 2012 competition, saying that if the government wants to maintain the post- competition ‘feel good factor’ and avoid an economic slump, it must increase its invest in infrastructure, transport and public services.

And finally...

What has Herman been up to? This week, he met with the [President of the Dominican Republic](#), the Prime Minister of Bulgaria, [Boiko Borisov](#),

Finnegan’s Take at Blogactiv.eu is concerned that the drying up of credit in Europe may restrict the amount of [‘vaccine bonds’](#) (where investors offer loans for vaccines) and therefore lead to a resurgence of polio in the developing world.

Germany Joys takes a trip to [a German welfare office](#) in Dusseldorf, and concludes that there are worse fates than signing up for welfare in Germany.

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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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