

Brussels blog round up for 21 – 27 July: German pensions under threat, NATO stagnates in Europe, and is Spain heading for a full bailout?

Jul 27 2012

Chris Gilson and **Stuart A Brown** take a look at the week in Brussels blogging.

The EU Centre

The European Parliament recently made it mandatory for all MEPs to make a formal ‘declaration of financial interests’. Aimed at increasing transparency, particularly in the aftermath of the ‘cash for amendments’ scandal published by the Sunday Times last year, the declaration has, nevertheless, not been taken [entirely seriously](#) by all MEPs. *Jon Worth* is especially critical of [Danish MEP Jens Rohde](#), who caused a small controversy by stating in his declaration that his previous occupation had been “Master of the Universe”.

PolsciEU says that EU Commission President Barroso recently “[freaked out](#)”, over recent European Court of Justice decisions that may now mean that NGOs can request to review environmental decisions that are taken by the Commission. Meanwhile, the *EU Energy Policy Blog* looks at how all buildings can be [refurbished by 2050](#), in order to meet new energy efficiency standards. On the *Common Agricultural Policy* blog, Wyn Grant gives some background on why [milk prices have fallen](#) recently, which has led to protests and blockades from dairy farmers across Europe.

EU Logos at [Blogactiv.eu](#) looks at the proposals for an [EU Justice Minister](#), by Viviane Reding, the current European Commissioner of Justice. Such a position would strengthen the range of tools available in Europe to force states to comply with the rules of democracy and the rule of law. The *Fride Blog*’s idea of the week is to [simplify EU development aid](#), saying that its funding is too complex, too geographically based, and the allocation of budget support is often too open to criticism.

EU Foreign policy and the European neighbourhood

Following the announcement that the United States will be reducing the number of American military personnel stationed in Europe, Guillermo Serrano Peña at [blogactiv.eu](#) assesses [the future of NATO in Europe](#). He argues that NATO is likely to experience a period of stagnation on the continent, if not outright collapse.

Debating Europe conducted an interview with Latvian foreign minister Edgars Rinkēvičs on the question of whether there are [too many EU member-states](#), and too wide a divergence in opinions between them, to effectively negotiate common foreign policy positions on issues such as Kosovo.

The European Council on Foreign Relations argues that beginning of Cyprus’ EU Council Presidency this month coincides with an ‘upward trajectory’ of [EU/Turkey relations](#). Key are France’s improving relations with Turkey.

The *FT*’s *Brussels* blog looks at the on-going imprisonment of former Ukrainian Prime Minister [Yulia Tymoshenko](#), saying that with elections in the Ukraine only three months away, there is little sign that she will



Credit: Éole Wind (Creative Commons BY NC SA)

be released.

The Euro Crisis

With the situation in Spain deteriorating, *Open Europe* analyses the likelihood of Spain staying solvent in the face of [rising borrowing costs](#). Michele Boldrin and Ignacio Conde-Ruiz at *Nada es Gratis* highlight the [Spanish tax system](#) as a key problem. They state that Spain currently possesses some of the lowest taxation revenue per GDP in Europe, yet also has one of the most generous welfare states. Ultimately they conclude that the country's finances will not be sustainable until this is rebalanced. *Eva en Europa* says that the crisis is an opportunity for Spain and Europe to [reinvent](#) themselves. In the wake of another EU summit this week, the *FT's Brussels blog* says that France and Italy have some [disdain for Spain](#), after Spain released what it claimed to be a three-way agreement between the countries, when in fact no agreement had been reached. As the week progresses, *Open Europe* wonders if Spain is heading for a [full bailout](#).

This week ratings agency Moody's cut its outlook for Germany's AAA rating. *Lost in Europe* says that much of this owes to the fact that the country owns so much [Spanish and Italian debt](#), countries that would be hit hard if Greece were to exit the Euro. *Open Europe* says that Bavaria is getting [angry](#) about the burdens that the crisis is placing on Germany, especially as the finances of that region are in good order.

The European Citizen reports that the Irish Supreme Court has [referred](#) the European Stability Mechanism Treaty to the European Court of Justice for it to be examined for compliance with EU Treaties.

Meanwhile, *Bruegel* address the specific problem of [youth unemployment](#), illustrating that young people in Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal and many other countries are being disproportionately affected by the economic crisis. *Neelie Kroes*, Vice-President of the European Commission says that it is time for the bankers who helped to cause the Eurozone crisis to start saying [sorry](#).

Protesilaos Stavrou, writing at Blogactiv.eu has an in-depth look at Greece's [debt problems](#), citing the country's unbalanced debt restructuring, perverse capital adequacy criteria, and the on-going uncertainty about a possible Euro exit.

Across Europe

Romanian MEP *Corinna Crețu* attacks that country's President, Traian Basescu as [undemocratic](#), accusing him of setting up a 'parallel government'. Basescu is currently under threat of impeachment by Romanian Prime Minister, Victor Ponta. Meanwhile, Monica Macovei [says](#) that those who have been part of the 'coup' against President Basescu must now resign in shame.

A Fistful of Euros looks into UK Eurosceptics' seeming obsession with the cost of [EU regulations](#), saying that there is no evidence that the UK's electorate would support a 'libertarian utopia', free of EU regulation. Meanwhile *Dimitris Rapidis* at Blogactiv.eu looks at the [rise of the far right](#) as a response to the economic crisis in countries such as Greece.

Open Europe says that the front page of Monday's *Bild* newspaper in Germany warns of the effects of the crisis on [Germans' pensions](#), saying that, while there may be an element of scaremongering occurring, it is the sort of report that will bring the crisis to life for people.

And finally...

Jon Worth is worried by a recent trend for journalists to be [paid to tweet](#) about news programmes.

The *FT's Brussels Blog* doubts that Brussels will be able to have a [quiet summer](#) as the Eurozone crisis smoulders on.

[Please read our comments policy before commenting.](#)

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.

Shortened URL for this post: <http://bit.ly/MK0ruW>

Related posts:

1. [Brussels blog round up for 14 – 20 July: EU funded research to become open access, Sicily on the verge of bankruptcy, and who really runs the EU?](#)
2. [Brussels blog round up for 9 – 15 June 2012: Preparing for Rio+20, liquid democracy and is Italy next in line for a bailout?](#)
3. [Brussels blog round up for 24-30 March 2012: Strikes in Spain, a new €800 billion bailout fund, and divine intervention for the Euro](#)

This entry was posted in [Brussels Blog Round up](#) and tagged [Bavaria](#), [blogging](#), [environmental policy](#), [EU crisis](#), [Germany](#), [Greece](#), [social media](#), [Spain](#). Bookmark the [permalink](#).