

Brussels blog round up for 26 May – 1 June 2012: Uncertainty over Spain and Italy, mixing politics with history, and does the EU need a ‘Reformation’?

Jun 1 2012

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

The EU Centre

Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission, is poised to continue protecting and advancing consumer rights. This week, she reported in her blog, “We know that [at least 20%, and potentially up to half of EU mobile broadband users have contracts that allow their Internet service provider \(ISP\) to restrict services](#) like VOIP (e.g. Skype) or peer-to-peer file sharing.” She finds that it is now time for the EU to step in.

The EU is already advancing the regulation of carbon emissions from air travel, and Brussels is about to adopt a scheme for all air services into European airports. *Public Affairs 2.0* predicts that the [EU will resist once again lobbyists’ pressure](#) to soften the legislative package. But the new scheme might cost passengers from €3 to €40 more per flight. A case of consumer protection?

Jon Worth accuses the *Guardian*’s Nicholas Watt of [lazy journalism](#) in a recent article about EU structural funds, while the *FRIDE Blog* writes in support of a [European democracy foundation](#) (currently being debated by the EU), saying that it would provide quick support for those struggling for democracy. Meanwhile, *Nosemonkey* (who has started blogging again) says that “[this European Union has failed](#)”, and calls for its reformation into something more democratic and with a longer-term vision. Looking at [recent survey evidence](#), *FRIDE blog* says that while Europeans are not confident in the Eurozone’s economies, they still support the Euro, and European institutions.

EU Foreign policy and the European neighbourhood

This week *Europe and Me* asked young Russians [how they perceive Vladimir Putin](#) after his recent re-election.

Erkan’s Field Diary is sceptical of Turkish Prime Minister, Abdullah Gül’s recent claims that [Turkey is free of web censorship](#).

Blogging at *Europe’s World*, Rob de Wijk argues that the crisis means that Europe’s strategic power is now [on the decline](#), while *Karpfenteich* at BlogActiv.eu looks at [Europe’s response](#) to the Houla massacre in Syria last weekend.

The Euro Crisis and Greece

Who can solve the Euro crisis, and can Greece be saved from an exit from the Euro? Polls indicate that [support for staying in the Euro is at 65 per cent](#) in Greece. Only 25 per cent of Greek people want to leave the common currency, reports *Open Europe*. Who caused the crisis? *Martinned* argues that many problems are not rooted in ‘Greek laziness’ in any real way. However, that does not change the fact that there is “[something rotten in the state of Greece](#)”. *Europe mon beau souci* says that there is no purpose in continuing to



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stigmatize the Greeks, saying that they are [not solely responsible](#) for the current crisis in Europe.

Many observers predict that the economic costs of a 'Grexit' would be colossal. However, "the Soviet collapse teaches us that just because the economic costs of disintegration would be very high, this is not a reason for it not to happen. To believe that the EU cannot disintegrate simply because [it would be too costly](#) offers only weak reassurance that the Union will continue to be stable," finds *Charlemagne's Notebook*. *Nosemonkey* reckons that [further fiscal integration](#) in Europe may be a solution that works best for everyone.

If Greece stays in the Euro, Italy's future and Spain's destiny remain uncertain. The leaked copy of Italy's "country-specific report" from the European Commission [which Brussels Blog got a hold of](#) before its official publication on Wednesday contains many warnings about tax evasion and the black economy. If these warnings are not taken seriously, Italy might be the next country to be bailed out. Later in the week, both *Nucleus* and *Open Europe* are [similarly downbeat](#) about Spain's economic future, given the government's difficulties in propping up Spanish banks and the huge debts of some of Spain's regions.

This week saw Ireland vote on the Fiscal Stability Treaty which will impose more collective budget discipline on European governments. The *European Citizen* is [reluctantly in favour](#) of the Treaty while the *FRIDE Blog* expects Irish voters to vote with their [heads rather than their hearts](#), meaning they will continue to have access to bailouts in the future.

Across Europe

Corina Crețu says that it is [not good to mix politics with history](#), especially in the context of historic tensions between Hungarians and Romanians in regions like Transylvania. Meanwhile *Nada es Gratis* looks at how [gender violence](#) in Spain can be stopped.

The Honeyball Buzz warns that Britain risks becoming a '[political pygmy](#)' if it continues to position itself outside of the EU which is becoming more fiscally and financially integrated.

And finally...

What has Herman been up to? This week he delivered a speech on [the situation in Greece](#). And he [visited Cyprus](#).

Meanwhile, *Jon Worth* predicts that [new social media will only have a marginal effect](#) on the outcome of the European Parliament elections in 2014.

And: Google's *European Public Policy Blog* suggests dropping single-subject lessons from the school curriculum altogether – "instead, students should work on projects that [combine maths, science, languages and other subjects](#) in an integrated learning environment". An interesting idea?

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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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