Brussels blog round-up for 15 – 21 December: Cyprus close to insolvency, Cameron hints at ‘Brixit’ and Depardieu departs to Belgium over tax.

by Blog Admin

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

The EU Centre

_Coulisses des Bruxelles_ looks at the failure of the summit last week to reach agreement on European integration, saying that the roadmap towards a federal Europe has become a post-it. _Karpfenteich_ at Blogactiv.eu is similarly pessimistic about the timetable for further integration, (and metaphorical) saying that “Europeans have embarked on a long-distance trail to a true economic and monetary union”. _Lost in Europe_ blames German Chancellor Angela Merkel for the lack of agreement at the summit, something that she is apparently becoming known for.

What was agreed at the summit last week was a single supervisory mechanism (SSM) for the eurozone’s banks. _Protesilaos Stavrou_ writes that the should have existed before the euro even came into being. He is also very concerned about the workload that it will bring to the European Central Bank (ECB), and whether or not the new scheme represents an over-concentration of powers towards the ECB.

This week sees controversy as well-known actor Gerard Depardieu renouncing his French passport and moving to Belgium to avoid the French government’s new taxes on higher income earners. _Lost in Europe_ says that Depardieu is only one of many who have escaped to Belgium, Luxembourg and Switzerland to escape the tax.

_Au Cafe de l’Europe_ writes that despite seemingly equal access to power in Europe, European countries are mostly governed by a small elite from the upper classes. _Rhein on Energy and Climate_ at Blogactiv.eu looks at how EU member states are represented by European Commissioners, especially as there are moves to reduce their number from 28 to 18 in 2014.

At Blogactiv.eu _Andrew Duff MEP_ looks at recent proposals by the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schultz to remove UK MEPs from scrutinising the eurozone. He says that while improved scrutiny is required, this measure could lead to the European Parliament being sued by the European Court of Justice. Meanwhile, _PolsciEU_ looks at recent proposals that will make it easier for EU citizens to stand for the European Parliament in countries that are not their home state.

_Karpfenteich_ at Blogactiv.eu looks at the European Commission’s proposal this week to ban menthol cigarettes and introduce stronger warning labels, saying that it is a welcome step given that 700,000 people die annually in Europe from smoking’s effects. Meanwhile, the _Centre for European Reform_ says that it is time for the European Investment Bank to stop lending to coal projects, as they are inconsistent with the EU’s climate change policies.

EU Foreign policy and the European neighbourhood
**Eurdemocracy** at Blogactiv.eu vehemently disagrees with the prominence that the European Council has given former French leader Charles de Gaulle in making peace in Europe possible, and therefore assisting the EU in recently winning the Nobel Prize for peace.

The **FRIDE blog** writes that Spain has done far less than other European countries on climate change and external action, and that it is not currently part of ‘Brand Spain’.

Dimitris Rapidis at Blogactiv.eu looks at the history and future of **EU-Turkey relations**, concluding that, “The future of Turkey is found inside the European Union”.

**The Euro Crisis**

Lost in Europe warns that while Cyprus may be close to insolvency, assistance may not arrive from the EU until January. Raymond Gradus at Blogactiv.eu examines Dutch public finances, saying that despite predictions for a balanced budget before the eurocrisis, now, the near future holds high deficit/GDP rations and therefore more austerity.

FinancialGuy, also at Blogactive.eu, reckons that the pressure on Greece has let up of late. The reason? Germany has elections next year, he argues, and it preferable to postpone decisions until afterwards. Lost in Europe agrees that Greece no longer seems to be a candidate for bankruptcy or an EU-exit (at least for the time being).

**Across Europe**

In a post of 20 graphs, Craig Willy takes a close look at the similarities and differences between France, the UK and the USA. Meanwhile, Open Europe reports that David Cameron has for the first time hinted at the possibility that the UK might leave the EU.

The Verfassungsblog looks at recent moves in Belgium to ban the burqa, saying that it would be intolerable for it to be banned.

Open Europe looks at Silvio Berlusconi’s recent anti-German sentiments as well as what Mario Monti’s next move might be after he resigns as Prime Minister of Italy.

The EU energy policy blog looks at new progressive energy tariffs in France, arguing that the new tariff may actually increase residential energy consumption. Meanwhile, Karpfenteich at Blogactiv.eu is concerned about an apparent shortage of doctors in Germany.

Open Europe says that Poland would have nothing to gain from rushing into a European banking union given the potential risks. Meanwhile, Croatia, the War and the Future comments on that country’s recent downgrade by rating agency Standard and Poor’s to BB+, or junk status, saying that the country will not be able to borrow forever, and entry into the EU next year may still not offer a way out.

**Graph of the week**

As Spain’s Christmas lottery approaches, Nada es Gratis looks at whether some regions of the country are luckier than others (they are), and whether or not lottery wins trigger a consumption boom locally (they do not).
And finally…

What has President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy been up to? This week he spoke to the European Parliament about the outcome of the European Council summit and at the EU Children of Peace Prize ceremony in Brussels. He also attended the EU-Russia summit in Brussels this week.

According to Nada es Gratis, Monday is the best day to fill up your car in Spain.

Charlemagne looks at how Germany’s 8,000 chimney sweeps will be affected when new EU competition law removes their local monopolies in 2013.

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

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