

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



Gerard Depardieu Credit: Georges Biard [CC-BY-SA-3.0] via Wikimedia Commons

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 assiting 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 Rapisdis 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 ratios and therefore more austerity.

FinancialGuy, also at *Blogactiv.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).

