Brussels blog round up for 29 September – 5 October: Georgia votes, the third phase of the eurocrisis, and is Mitt Romney anti-EU?

by Blog Admin

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

The EU centre

Open Europe speculates on the next EU summit (due on 17-18 October) arguing that although the early signs all point towards mutually beneficial agreements for all EU members, the likelihood is that negotiations will be more strained and contentious than this in reality.

On her blog, Neelie Kroes, Vice-President of the European Commission, makes the case for rolling out faster broadband across the EU, saying that it “can energise our economy, generate jobs, and save public money”. Spanishwalker writes on the recent EU Quo Vadis conference in relation to European communication and its repercussions on the online environment.

EU Commissioner Cecilia Malmström looks at homo-and transphobia in Europe in light of Serbia’s banning of gay pride parades, saying that there “is a need for systematic work around Europe to strengthen awareness of LGBT rights at all levels of society”.

Ignacio Perez-Arriaga at the EU Energy Policy blog discusses the need for a sustainable framework for biofuels within the EU.

EU Foreign policy and the European neighbourhood

Stephen Szabo at the GMF blog looks at opinion polling in Russia. He notes that there is a significant urban-rural divide in the country, with Russians in rural areas showing higher levels of support for President Vladimir Putin than those living in cities.

The European Student Think Tank wonders if Lithuania’s foreign policy will change after elections later this month, while the European Council on Foreign Relations says that it is time for Azerbaijan to open up to the world and develop a post-oil economy. Viktor Tkachuk at Blogactiv.eu discusses Ukraine’s relationship with the EU, particularly in relation to the ‘Eastern Partnership’ initiative. He argues that prospects for Ukrainian accession have stalled, despite a significant number of Ukrainian citizens supporting EU membership.

The FT’s Brussels Blog wonders whether or not US Presidential candidate Mitt Romney is anti-EU, given recent appointments to his foreign policy advisory team, and Craig Willy ponders how the US screws Europe on everything.

The Euro Crisis

The New Federalist looks at the often strained relationship between the EU and the eurozone, while Craig Willy takes a look at eurozone endgame scenarios, saying that he is “now more and more convinced that it
can only end in a violent partial breakup of the eurozone. Open Europe looks at proposals this week for 
reform of the European banking sector saying that “for a banking union to ever really work or be effective 
there must be combined deposit and resolution fund backing it up, something which the eurozone is now 
shying away from”. Meanwhile, the FT’s Brussels blog has EU President Herman Van Rompuy’s leaked plans 
for the eurozone, which seem to indicate support for a common eurozone budget and for binding reform 
agreements across all member states.

On Saturday, Revolting Europe looks at protests in Spain and Portugal saying that hundreds of thousands 
turned out to protest deepening austerity, while Lost in Europe is concerned about pro-cyclical fiscal 
policies being instituted in Greece, Spain and France, with governments aiming for over €75 billion in 
savings, which is sure to take demand out of the eurozone. The European Council on Foreign Relations 
says that with the current rioting and unrest across Europe, the eurocrisis is entering a dangerous third 
phase where regional aspirations and ill-feeling between countries may be challenging the whole EU-
project.

On the economic side of the debate, J. Ignacio Conde-Ruiz at Nada es Gratis discusses the problems 
surrounding Spain’s next budget and the necessity to reduce the deficit to 4.5 per cent of GDP. On France, 
Noëlle Lenoir writing at l’express.fr blog asks whether the country should learn from the German strategy 
implemented not by Angela Merkel, but by her predecessor Gerhard Schröder. Writing on Blogactiv.eu, 
Dimitris Rapidis looks at the ‘medieval’ austerity conditions being imposed on Greece by the EU, the 
European Central Bank and the IMF.

Across Europe

Place du Luxembourg asks the question, “Will Catalonia become independent soon?”, concluding that it is 
likely that it will not, as an independent Catalonia would leave Spain poorer, something that its current 
creditor nations would not be keen to see.

On her blog, Romanian MEP Monica Macovei discusses the launch of a new political group, the Right 
Alliance, which calls for a raft of reforms and constitutional changes to address corruption.

Last week the German Social Democratic Party nominated Peer Steinbrück as their candidate for Chancellor. 
Kiefs Prat in Europe says that his nomination has startled German Conservatives, and that the left in 
Germany should take advantage of the opportunity that this provides.

Nada es Gratis has an in-depth analysis of public sector employment in Spain which now faces serious cuts 
to address the country’s deficit. Meanwhile, Wishing on Europe at Blogactiv.eu wonders whether or not 
Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti’s technocratic government is still useful.

This week saw parliamentary elections in Georgia. In the lead up to the vote Au Cafe de l’Europe says that 
the election is a high risk one for incumbent President Mikhail Saakashvili; a victory for his opponent, 
Bidzina Ivanichvili might mean a move away from the country’s pro-Western stance, to one closer to 
Russia. After Monday’s elections and the defeat of Saakashvili, the GMF Blog says that despite the 
elections being recorded by international observers as free and fair, they jury is still out on whether or not 
Georgia will continue on the path towards a stable and democratic political system.

Graph of the week

The OFCE blog has an in-depth look at Germany and France’s demographic differences – if trends 
continue France will (eventually) have 7 million more people than Germany:
And finally…

What has EU President Herman van Rompuy been up to? This week, he met with three Prime Ministers, Andrus Ansip of Estonia, Tunisia’s Hamadi Jebali, Enda Kenny of Ireland and the President of Yemen.

The EU Journalism Fellowship blog looks at Brussels’ Place du Luxembourg – the heart of EU networking in the city.

Over at at Blogactiv.eu, AriRusila’s Balkan Perspective says that the Kosovo passport is one of the least useful travel documents ever designed, given that it only allows visa-free travel to 37 countries (Denmark is the best with access to 169 countries).

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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.