



MESSAGES IN THE MEDIA

A Year in Review of EU-Member State Relations
as Depicted in National Media

THE EUROPEAN STUDIES STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

2013

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PREFACE

Following the successful publication of the inaugural ESSA journal in 2012, we were encouraged by the positive response we received to undertake the project again this year. Luckily, because more people had now heard about the journal, or had experience working on the 2012 edition, they were willing to get involved and as a result, we were able to expand both our coverage and editorial team. This year's edition is now enlarged to 25 reports: 19 EU Member States; and 6 countries that are either candidates, or are within the EU sphere of influence.

2012 was another eventful year for the European Union, with the Eurozone crisis influencing a number of reforms proposed by the EU institutions. These caused a certain amount of division within the Union, between those within the Eurozone, and those outside it. We feel that the past year's events have highlighted some interesting and revealing trends in Member States' domestic media coverage. We hope that our analysts' reports will provide insights that will contribute to the understanding on the issues affecting EU-Member State relations. Furthermore, the reports on influential non-member states elucidate the challenges that the EU faces in dealing with peripheral countries while the Union is in a state of turmoil.

We hope that you will find this year's journal compelling, interesting, and informative. In addition, we hope that whether you are a scholar of European Studies or not, these reports will enhance your understanding of the manner in which the EU is portrayed to its citizens.

Angela Deyanska and Gareth Story
Editors-in-chief
April 22, 2013

NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

While we endeavour to provide a cross-section of the society within any country reported on, there are limitations due to our methodology. When selecting media sources we ask that our analysts select them based upon the following guidelines: they must provide free access to all areas of their website; their circulation numbers should reflect that they are widely-read; and that they report on issues affecting the EU. Bearing this in mind, we feel that our publication provides insight to the general population's perception of the EU within any country covered.

NOTE ON SOURCES

All country background information has been sourced from the CIA World Factbook, unless otherwise noted. The EU funding status has been determined based upon a Bloomberg EU 2011 Operating Budgetary Balances chart. The data used for the media sources is from Presseurop, unless otherwise stated.

GLOSSARY

CEPS	Centre for European Policy Studies
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Commission
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EFSF	European Financial Stability Facility
EFTA	European Free Trade Area
EMU	European Monetary Fund
EP	European Parliament
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
EU	European Union
IMF	International Monetary Fund
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SGP	Stability and Growth Pact

ALBANIA

Andi Asimetaj

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 3,002,859
- Ethnic composition: Albanian 95%, Greek 3%, Others 2% (Vlach, Roma, Serbs, Macedonians, and Bulgarians).
- GDP per capita in 2012: \$8,000
- EU member entry date: Candidate Status

MEDIA SOURCES:

Koha Jone

- Founding date: 1991
- Ownership: Aleksander Fragaj
- Daily circulation: 7,833

Zeri I Popullit

- Founding date: 1944
- Ownership: Socialist Party of Albania
- Daily circulation: 5,167

Gazeta Panorama/ Panorama Group

- Founding date: N/A
- Ownership: Irfan Hysenbelliu
- Daily circulation: N/A

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 91 (Koha Jone-30; Gazeta Panorama-30; Zeri I Popullit-31)
- List of search words: “Bashkim” (Union), “Evrop” (Europe), “Integrim” (Integration), “Bashkim evropian” (EU), “Shqiperia edhe Evropa” (Albania and Europe)

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Albania- EU relations reported on in 2012:

EU's Agenda with regards to Albania's Candidate Status

- As 2012 began, the majority of reporting on the topic of Albania joining the EU was focused on the remaining key reforms the Albanian government had to address, following the priorities set by Brussels. The Commission reasserted the need for adequate reforms in the Parliament, the rule of law, and the Civil Administra-

tion.¹ All three papers consulted, reported the obstacles that are refraining the country from receiving candidate status for joining the EU.²

- The year that symbolized Albania's 100-year independence, had a lot at stake regarding how far the country had come, to an ever-closer EU.³ All three newspapers reported on the three reforms that have been laid out by the EU. They all concluded that in order for the country to have a chance at beginning negotiation talks in regards to Albania joining the EU, the reforms needed to be fulfilled by December of 2012.⁴

Domestic Issues Hindering Albania's Candidacy

- In domestic politics, criticisms were targeted towards the Democratic and Socialist parties, on grounds of corruption, organized crime and hindering the electoral process.⁵ The three news sources reported that the internal conflicts among party leaders obstructed their ability to concentrate efforts on fulfilling the reform objectives set by Brussels.⁶

- News source, *Zeri Popullit*, which is primarily influenced by the Socialist party, outlined the level of corruption that Sali Berisha has reached as the Prime Minister of Albania.⁷ *Koha Jone*, the Democratic Party's news source, indicated that Edi Rama, the Socialist leader, was to blame for not agreeing to sign the approval of the three reforms, which is ultimately holding back the country from receiving candidate status.⁸ The centrist news source, *Gazeta Panorama*, outlined the reasons behind the prime minister's stalling, and stated that since the elections are scheduled to take place in 2013, it is in his favor to stall these reforms.⁹

- All three news sources agreed that Albanian leaders needed to take action and work together for the purpose of achieving candidate status and to further progress as a country in order to fulfill the requirements to join the EU.¹⁰ Although Albania has improved in certain sectors of government, it is openly noted that it has reached a new level of corruption by being placed in 113th place out of 176, alongside the most corrupt African countries Ethiopia and Nigeria, by Transparency International.¹¹

External Support for Albania's Candidacy to the EU

- The majority of the reporting focused on interviews with European leaders as well as American leaders for their huge support of Albania's step forward towards joining the EU.¹² The three news sources shed light on the fact that Albanian leaders are focusing on accusations directed at one another, rather than coming to-

gether to fulfill the last three major requirements brought forth by Brussels.¹³

2012 IN REVIEW:

Throughout 2012, relations and communication between Albania and the EU were focused on the following topics: the EU's agenda concerning the fulfillment of the three required priorities: internal domestic issues, corruption, and the people's right to free elections. Internal domestic issues refrain the political parties from agreeing with one another to fulfill the three required priorities that the EU has set in place in order for negotiation talks to begin.

The year that marked Albania's 100th anniversary since independence, provided optimism to move forward in the direction of joining the EU. Albania is far from achieving candidate status, but the EU has laid out three fundamental democratic priorities for the country to fulfill, in order to have a chance at negotiation talks. The three priorities constitute reforms in parliament, rule of law, and civil administration. These priorities would move Albania towards a state where free elections are held fairly throughout, corruption is eliminated, and the country would benefit economically in meeting the criteria for joining the EU.

The continuing need for Albania to progress toward joining the EU is highly evident and anticipated by the citizens. Corruption dominates and prevents the country from entering the EU, due to political leaders having too much at stake to impose and make the required reforms. All three newspapers state that the internal domestic issues are prohibiting political leaders from coming together to make these reforms. In domestic politics, criticisms are targeted to their respective parties, Democratic and Socialist for corruption, organized crime and a lack of free elections. Each party, through its representative newspaper blames one another, creating a repetitive cycle of blame where no progress is made.

All three news sources state that Albanian leaders need to take action and work together for the purpose of receiving the candidate status and to further progress as a country, in order to fulfill the requirements to join the EU. Corruption is evident due to Transparency International ranking Albania in spot 113 out of 176, placing the country among the most corrupt African countries such as Ethiopia and Nigeria. These statistics outlined by the left wing party's news sources, provide a broader picture of where the state stands today. According to *Gazeta Panorama*, Albania's prime minister, Sali Berisha, is stalling to fulfill the outlined criteria from the EU due to upcoming elections that will take place in 2013. This

implies that if free elections were to take place he risks losing. A lack of free elections gives each party power, which the Albanian political parties are not willing to enforce. This is evident throughout the news sources that make accusations of delay and preventing the country from moving forward and having a chance to receive negotiation talks.

All newspapers agree that pro-Albania leaders from both the United States and the EU support its bid for becoming an EU member. From Hilary Clinton to prime minister Janez Jansa of Slovenia, the support is evident throughout their interviews.¹⁴ The amount of time and effort that is being put into Albania by the EU representatives, indicate a pro-Albanian direction within the EU, but as all three news sources convey, the domestic leaders are focusing on making accusations toward one another, rather than coming together to fulfill the three major requirements brought forth by Brussels.

¹ Zeri , I Popullit. "Statusi/ PE shton dy kushte per qeverine, te perndjekurit politik dhe zbardhjen e 21 Janarit." *Zeri I Popullit*, November 15, 2012. http://www.zeri-popullit.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1730:statusi-pe-shton-dy-kushte-per-qeverine-te-perndjekurit-politik-dhe-zbardhjen-e-21-janarit&catid=71:kryesore&Itemid=124 (accessed January 14, 2013).

Rapushi, Rozeta. "Statusi, Fyle: Eshte i mundshem per Shqiperine." *Koha Jone*, Periodical edition, sec. Politics, November 27, 2012. <http://www.kohajone.com/artikull.php?idm=66104> (accessed January 14, 2013).

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² Zeri , I Popullit. "Parlamenti European: Zgjedhjet e ardhshme, garanci per statusin kandidat." *Zeri I Popullit*, October 18, 2012. http://www.zeri-popullit.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1572:parlamenti-european-zgjedhjet-e-ardhshme-garanci-per-statusin-kandidat&catid=71:kryesore&Itemid=124 (accessed January 14, 2013).

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³ Zeri , I Popullit. "Klinton: Korrupsioni, kercenim per pavaresine tuaj." *Zeri I Popullit*, November 02, 2012. http://www.zeri-popullit.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1653:klinton-

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- ⁵ Zeri, I Popullit. "Rama: Kush e deshiron vertet statusin e kandidatit, te provoje se zbaton ligjet." *Zeri I Popullit*, November 16, 2012. http://www.zeri-popullit.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1733:rama-kush-e-deshiron-vertet-statusin-e-kandidatit-te-provoje-se-zbaton-ligjet&catid=71:kryesore&Itemid=124 (accessed January 14, 2013).
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- ⁶ Zeri, I Popullit. "Qeveria fajtorja e vetme per bllokimin e integritit te Shqiperise ne BE." *Zeri I Popullit*, November 14, 2012. http://www.zeri-popullit.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1723:qeveria-fajtorja-e-vetme-per-bllokimin-e-integritit-te-shqiperise-ne-be&catid=71:kryesore&Itemid=124 (accessed January 14, 2013).
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- ¹⁰ Zeri, I Popullit. "BE apel per statusin: Koha, e kofizuar." *Zeri I Popullit*, July 26, 2012. http://www.zeri-popullit.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1211:be-apel-per-statusin-koha-e-kufizuar-&catid=71:kryesore&Itemid=124 (accessed January 14, 2013).
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- ¹¹ Zeri, I Popullit. "Parate e krimt dhe korrupsionit qeveritar, jashte vendit." *Zeri I Popullit*, December 19, 2012. http://www.zeripopullit.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1919:parate-e-krimt-dhe-korrupsionit-qeveritar-jashte-vendit&catid=71:kryesore&Itemid=124 (accessed January 14, 2013).
- ¹² Fyle: Opozita mos ta lidhe integrimin me ceshtje te tjera." Koha Jone, Periodical edition, sec. Politics, December 06, 2012. <http://www.kohajone.com/zarticle.php?id=66239> (accessed January 14, 2013).
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- ¹³ Posselt: Berisha coi vendin ne NATO, po ndermerr shume reforma." Koha Jone, Periodical edition, sec. Politics, December 05, 2012. <http://www.kohajone.com/zarticle.php?id=66223> (accessed January 14, 2013).
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takimin-me-stafin-e-ambasades-monitoroni-nga-afer-zgjedhjet&catid=71:kryesore&Itemid=124 (accessed January 14, 2013).

Gjura, Eva. "Jansa: Kushtet per dhenien e statusit, te papranueshme." *Koha Jone*, Periodical edition, sec. Politics, November 30, 2012. <http://kohajone.com/zarticle.php?id=66156> (accessed February 2, 2013).

Rapushi, Rozeta. "Statusi, Fyle: Eshte i mundshem per Shqiperine." *Koha Jone*, Periodical edition, sec. Politics, November 27, 2012. <http://www.kohajone.com/artikull.php?idm=66104> (accessed January 14, 2013).

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AUSTRIA

Aglaia Lowo

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 8,219,743
- Ethnic composition: Austrians 91.1%, former Yugoslavs 4% (includes Croatsians, Slovenes, Serbs, and Bosniaks), Turks 1.6%, Germans 0.9%, other or unspecified 2.4%
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$42,400
- EU member entry date: 1995
- EU funding in 2011: net contributor

MEDIA SOURCES:

Der Standard

- Founding date: 1988
- Ownership: Oscar Bronner
- Daily circulation: 103,000

Die Presse

- Founding date: 1848
- Ownership: Styria Medien AG (Christian media and publishing group)
- Daily circulation: 98,000

Kurier

- Founding date: 1954
- Ownership: Telekurier Online Medien GmbH & Co KG
- Daily circulation: 160,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 104 (Kurier – 32; Der Standard – 35; and Die Presse – 37).
 - List of search words: “EU and ACTA (Anti-Piracy Trade Agreement),” “Unemployment,” and “Austria and the Euro crisis.”
- From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Austria-EU relations reported on in 2012:

ACTA (Anti-Piracy Trade Agreement)

- The ratification of ACTA is a topic that was extremely prevalent in the media during the first half of 2012, raising many questions pertaining to its potential limitation on freedom of expression within the EU.¹ Although Austria, along with 21 of its EU counterparts, signed the original agreement with little hesitation, it was its ratification that posed the greatest controversy.²
- Despite some protests within the country, Austria remained rather dedicated to the ratification of the agreement, with most media sources thus focusing on other EU members' decisions to halt the ratification process.³ Some articles on this topic indicate Austria's lack of concern about ACTA's potential negative repercussions.⁴
- It was only with the EU Parliament's official rejection of ACTA in July that Austria withdrew its attempt to further endorse this agreement, indicating Austria's trust in the EU and its decision.⁵

Unemployment in Austria and the EU

- Throughout 2012 the topic of unemployment was covered extensively, with an emphasis on Austria maintaining the lowest unemployment rate in the EU.⁶ A lot of attention was given to the staggering and increasing unemployment rates of Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Italy.⁷
- Furthermore, the issue of youth unemployment in the EU was addressed by all three media sources, as the EU tried to tackle this problem and reportedly looked to Austria as a successful example.⁸ Despite Austria's comparatively low unemployment rate, it did see consistent increases in unemployment, most notably between the months of June and October.⁹
- Apprehension concerning the EU's overall growing unemployment figures was mentioned with some consistency; however, it was outweighed by Austria's ability to remain the country with the lowest unemployment rate in the EU. As a result, the general attitude of the media to the EU remained positive.¹⁰

The Euro crisis

- In 2012, Austrian media started including Spain, Portugal, Italy, and some other EU member-states in the coverage of the Euro crisis.¹¹ In particular Spain attracted a lot of attention, as it seemed to resemble Greece the most in terms of its economic situation.¹² *Der Standard* and *Die Presse* were also concerned with Hungary, fearing that its weakening economy could have negative repercussions for Austria.¹³
- Despite the crisis, there was a lot of national optimism that came as a result of the economic growth prognoses, as well as statistics

that showed Austria doing well compared to its EU counterparts.¹⁴ Many of the leading politicians, such as President Heinz Fischer and Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, further endorsed the EU, encouraging the Austrian population not to lose hope in it.¹⁵

2012 IN REVIEW:

The Anti-Piracy Trade Agreement (ACTA) featured somewhat prominently in the first half of the year, raising some controversy over its ratification. Similar to the topic of unemployment, the Austrian media covered ACTA with far greater interest as to its effects in other EU member states than its effects at home. Domestic issues were again viewed through the prism of regional developments. ACTA did not appear to be as controversial within Austria as it was in many other EU states, as overall Austria remained dedicated to ratifying the treaty. This exemplifies the stability Austria was able to maintain despite some unrest concerning ACTA throughout the EU. However, with many of the other EU countries refusing to ratify it, Austria accepted the EU's overall rejection of ACTA. This complacent acceptance of the EU decision was represented objectively by the media, and again seemed to indicate a positive and trusting relationship with the EU.

Discourse in the Austrian media was, overall, quite consistent over the course of 2012. In light of the Euro crisis, much of the focus was placed upon Austria's performance relative to that of its EU counterparts. The issue of unemployment was stressed in order to emphasize how well Austria was doing in comparison to others. At 4%, Austria remained the country with the lowest unemployment rate in the EU throughout 2012. Youth unemployment was addressed separately, since many people under the age of 24 faced this problem in most EU states. Again, the Austrian media highlighted the country's leading role in decreasing these figures EU-wide, consequently being displayed as a role model for Europe by the EU. Thus, the issue of unemployment demonstrates that Austria's relationship with the EU continues to be a mutually beneficial one, as Austria's consistently low unemployment rate strengthens the EU as a whole, while allowing Austria to enjoy some of the prestige accompanied by this success.

The Euro crisis, which was the most prevalent topic covered in the Austrian press in 2012, and which influenced the discussion on unemployment, was also portrayed from varying perspectives in the media. Once again, the focus of all three sources was on the EU's most extreme successes and failures during the Euro crisis, drawing upon their data to make comparisons to Austria. Despite

being affected by the Euro crisis financially, media highlights focused on the country's unexpected growth rates and increasing credit trustworthiness. This, along with some comments from leading Austrian political figures, led to a very optimistic view of Austria's position within the EU. This optimism was maintained throughout 2012 despite a minor increase in unemployment and a small reduction in economic growth towards the end of the year. Thus, even during the direst economic times in the EU, the Austrian media worked to portray Austria as the embodiment of a successful EU state, which could stand as a bulwark against economic and political challenges, owing largely to its membership in the EU.

In conclusion, the main issues raised by the media in 2012, namely the Euro crisis, unemployment and ACTA, did not affect Austria's commitment to the EU. Despite the continued hardships brought on by the Eurozone crisis and all that it entailed, the Austrian media managed to keep an optimistic view of Austria and the EU, in no way fundamentally challenging the public's perception or feelings towards the EU itself.

¹ "ACTA: EU-Datenschutzbehörde hat schwere Bedenken," *Die Presse*, 24.04.2012. Date of access: 07.12.12

"ACTA: Die befürchteten Auswirkungen," *Kurier*, 05.07.2012. Date of access: 07.12.12.

"Europaweite Proteste gegen Anti-Piratie-Abkommen ACTA," *Der Standard*, 11.02.2012. Date of access: 07.12.12.

² "Österreich unterzeichnet Anti-Pirateriepakt," *Kurier*, 24.01.2012. Date of access: 07.12.12.

"Wissen: Das umstrittene ACTA-Abkommen," *Der Standard*, 23.02.12. Date of access: 07.12.12.

"Umstrittener Anti-Pirateriepakt," *Kurier*, 17.01.2012. Date of access: 07.12.12.

"Wie gefährlich ist das geplante Abkommen?," *Kurier*, 11.02.2012. Date of access: 07.12.12.

³ "ACTA: Mehrere EU-Staaten zögern mit ihrer Unterschrift," *Die Presse*, 08.02.2012. Date of access: 07.12.12.

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⁴ "Grüne: Auch Österreich muss ACTA-Ratifizierung stoppen," *Der Standard*, 07.02.2012. Date of access: 07.12.12.

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- “Arbeitslosigkeit: Österreich weiter niedrigste Rate in EU,” *Die Presse*, 02.05.2012. Date of access: 06.01.13.
- ⁷“Europas großer Richtungsstreit,” *Kurier*, 24.05.2012. Date of access: 02.01.13.
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BELGIUM

Emily Barrette

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 10,438,353
- Ethnic Composition: 58% Flemish, 31% Walloon, 11% mix of other groups including German minority
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$38,200
- EU member entry date: 1957
- EU funding in 2011: net contributor

MEDIA SOURCES:

L'Avenir

- Founding Date: 1918
- Ownership: Editions de l'Avenir
- Daily circulation: 118,000

Le Vif/L'Express

- Founding Date: 1983
- Ownership: Roularta
- Readership: 95,300 weekly

Le Soir

- Founding Date: 1887
- Ownership: Rossel & Cie S.A.
- Daily circulation: 90,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 53 (Le Vif/l'Express-17; Le Soir-20; L'Avenir-16)
- List of search words: "UE Di Rupo," "UE Belgique," "Sommet UE," "UE austérité"

From these findings the following major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Belgium-EU relations reported on in 2012:

Conflict over the Commission's recommendations for Belgium

- On March 2nd, the Belgium media commented on a report released by Herman Van Rompuy and Jose Manuel Barroso to European leaders, which classified Belgium as the European country with the uppermost fiscal pressure on wages.¹ Elio Di Rupo, the Belgium Prime Minister, responded to the report by stating that,

while Belgian wages had had increased by 20% over the last decade, they had not increased as much as those in the UK, France, or the Netherlands.²

- In late May, the Commission released a report of recommendations to improve Belgium's finances and criticized Belgium for only partially implementing reforms and still having "a long way to go."³ Among other things, the Commission recommended cutting health care costs, eliminating wage indexation, and linking the age of retirement to life expectancy.⁴ Di Rupo responded to these recommendations with caution and little enthusiasm, and the Socialist Party rejected outright the elimination of wage indexation.⁵

- On June 28th at a summit in Brussels, both Di Rupo and Paul Magnette, the Belgian Socialist Minister for Public Enterprises, Science Policy and Development, responded to the Commission's criticism of Belgium's wage indexation policy.⁶ Magnette stated that the European Commission is "too intrusive towards Belgium's socio-economic policy" and is enforcing Europe in "strictly a liberal sense."⁷ Di Rupo commented that the "Commission is showing itself to be too restrictive and prescriptive."⁸ Despite Belgian reservations, the Commission's recommendations were accepted at the summit by the 27 Member States.⁹

Belgium opposes the austerity consensus

- At the European summit at the end of January 2012, 25 EU member states adopted a budgetary treaty (excluding the UK and the Czech Republic).¹⁰ Belgian politicians Paul Magnette and Laurette Onkelinx spoke out against the "ultraliberal" orientation of the European Commission.¹¹ The January summit represented a shift towards a greater focus on growth and jobs and away from an austerity-only approach, which was welcomed by the Belgian media.¹² *L'Avenir* mocked the EU's attempt to combine "hope" and austerity, and the Belgian leader of the liberal group in the European Parliament, Guy Verhofstadt, called the treaty a "comedy".¹³

- On May 14th, Di Rupo launched a media campaign in five European newspapers arguing for "recovery through growth."¹⁴ In late May, Di Rupo spoke optimistically about the upcoming EU summit in June and on a new consensus of the importance of growth policies, not just austerity, reflecting the first summit in which the newly elected French President Francois Hollande would participate.¹⁵

- In late June at the summit in Rome, the EU agreed to devote 1% of GDP towards growth.¹⁶ Di Rupo acknowledged this as a start, but emphasized it was not enough of a commitment and represented only a "first step".¹⁷ At another summit on June 28th in

Brussels, after the release of Van Rompuy's roadmap, Paul Magette, a Belgian socialist minister, criticized Van Rompuy's plan by calling it "three-quarters to the right...enforcing Europe in strictly a liberal sense."¹⁸

- Leading up to the EU 2014-2020 budget negotiations in November and December, *Le Soir* and *L'Avenir* adopted a tone critical of budgetary cuts championed by other European leaders and supported the growth measures promoted by Di Rupo.¹⁹

Disagreement over EU summits and budget negotiations

- In late January, 25 EU member states agreed on a treaty to strengthen budgetary discipline, while the UK and the Czech Republic abstained from the new agreement.²⁰ Prior to an informal summit at the end of the month, Di Rupo expressed his hope that budgetary discipline would be complemented by job creation initiatives.²¹

- In June, the heads of state and government of the EU 27 adopted the Commission's recommendations for coordinated economic policy and budgets of member states.²² Belgium, however, opposed many of the individual recommendations of the Commission, especially in the areas of retirement age and wage indexation.²³ Magette criticized Van Rompuy's roadmap for being "disequilibrating" and focusing uniquely on budgetary austerity.²⁴ Belgian media was critical of the lack of measures promoting growth in the negotiations, the stalemate resulting from divergences between member states, and of Merkel's ability to influence the outcome of the talks.²⁵

- As budgetary discussions stalled in late November, Di Rupo called on European leaders to implement an "ambitious" budget, and was openly critical of David Cameron's role in the budget negotiations.²⁶ The failure to agree on a budget was blamed in large part on David Cameron and Angela Merkel's emphasis on cutting the EU 2014-2020 budget.²⁷

- At the last summit of the year in December, David Cameron was increasingly blamed for the failure of the budget negotiations, and *Le Soir* and *L'Avenir* approached the topic of budget negotiations with a negative and cynical tone.²⁸

2012 IN REVIEW:

Following the December 6th 2011 formation of the Di Rupo coalition government, which ended Belgium's record-setting 589 days without a government, 2012 marked a year of relative stability in Belgian national politics. With stability on the domestic scene, Bel-

gium was able to engage formally with the EU, while also holding its ground in the face of EU policies, which conflicted with Belgium's strong social programs and with the views of the current socialist-led coalition government.

While Belgium is widely regarded as one of the most pro-EU countries, in part because of its extremely fractured domestic politics, 2012 saw strong Belgian criticism of the EU's focus on austerity measures and on EU recommendations that were seen to threaten Belgium's strong social institutions. Debate over Belgium's wage indexation attracted ample media attention and strong words from Belgian politicians, culminating with Paul Magnette's statements that the EU is "too intrusive" towards Belgian socio-economic policy, and with Prime Minister Di Rupo criticizing the Commission for being "too restrictive and prescriptive."²⁹ The European Commission responded by criticizing Belgium for not going far enough with its internal reforms.³⁰ This conflict primarily reflects the ideological divide between the socialist-led coalition government in Belgium and the conservative majority in the European Council and Parliament. While the EU and Belgium had disagreed over the issue of wage indexation prior to 2012, it took on increased importance in the past year.³¹ The disagreement over the direction of Belgium's internal reforms, did not however, result in the media adopting an anti-EU position, and EU-Belgian relations do not appear to have worsened overall as a result of this localized conflict.

The Belgian press's criticism of the EU was largely directed towards the austerity measures promoted by Angela Merkel and, later in the year, by David Cameron, as well as towards the outcomes of EU summits and budget negotiations. It is interesting to note that this criticism was directed chiefly towards other European leaders, most notably Cameron and Merkel, and to a much lesser extent towards EU institutions or EU leaders, such as Barroso or Van Rompuy.³² This criticism reflects the dissatisfaction of Belgian politicians, MEPs, and the Belgian press, with the austerity measures adopted by the EU to solve the crisis and the cuts to the EU 2014-2020 budget. In 2012, along with François Hollande, Di Rupo was a strong voice for the importance of growth and budgetary discipline as the solution to the economic crisis, in contrast to the previous austerity-only approach.

In conclusion, 2012 was an important year in Belgian-EU relations and several new dynamics emerged. Most importantly, the vocal opposition by Belgium's recently elected socialist-led coalition government to the Commission's proposed changes to wage indexation, the age of retirement and health care spending

was a rare incident of intense disagreement in otherwise strong EU-Belgian relations. More generally, Belgium aligned itself with Hollande's opposition to the austerity-only approach and argued in favour of measures promoting growth as the means to Europe's economic recovery. Lastly, the harshest words in the Belgian press were reserved for other European leaders (Merkel and Cameron), not the EU itself. This suggests that while Belgium is still a strong supporter of European integration and increasing the powers of the EU, there is a growing ideological divide and conflicting visions among European leaders, with David Cameron emerging as a target of criticism by the Belgian press.

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- ¹ "Coûts salariaux: Di Rupo veut montrer que la Belgique est <<attractive,>>" *L'Avenir*, March 2nd 2012, accessed December 6th 2012, http://www.lavenir.net/article/detail.aspx?articleid=DMF20120302_00125705; "Di Rupo: 'les coûts salariaux ont plus augmenté chez nos voisins,'" *Le Soir*, March 2nd 2012, accessed December 5th 2012, http://archives.lesoir.be/di-rupo-%AB-les-co%FBts-salariaux-ont-plus-augmente-chez_t-20120302-01URJM.html?queryand=%22UE%22+et+%22Belgique%22&firstHit=50&by=50&when=-2&begYear=2012&begMonth=01&begDay=01&endYear=2012&endMonth=11&endDay=26&sort=dateasc&rub=TOUT&pos=52&all=231&nav=1; "La Belgique pointée du doigt au Sommet européen," *Le Soir*, March 2nd 2012, accessed December 5th 2012, http://archives.lesoir.be/la-belgique-pointee-du-doigt-au-sommet-europeen_t-20120302-01URA2.html?queryand=%22UE%22+et+%22Belgique%22&firstHit=50&by=50&when=-2&begYear=2012&begMonth=01&begDay=01&endYear=2012&endMonth=11&endDay=26&sort=dateasc&rub=TOUT&pos=51&all=231&nav=1; "Le rapport qui tue l'index," *L'Avenir*, March 3rd 2012, accessed January 5th 2013, http://www.lavenir.net/article/detail.aspx?articleid=DMF20120303_00125975
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BULGARIA

Ivan Petrov

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 7,037,935
- Ethnic composition: Bulgarian: 76.9%, Turk: 8%, Roma: 4.4%, other: 0.7% (including Macedonian, Armenian, Tatar, Circassian), other (Unknown): 10%.
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$14,000
- EU member entry date: 2007
- EU funding in 2011: net recipient

MEDIA SOURCES:

Trud

- Founding date: 1936
- Ownership: German press empire WAZ Media Group
- Daily circulation: 100,000

Standart

- Founding date: 1992
- Ownership: Standart News Agency¹
- Daily circulation: 100,000

Dnevnik

- Founding date: 1999
- Ownership: Economedia²
- Daily circulation: 30,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 141 (Trud-44, Standart-40, Dnevnik-57)
- List of search words: “Bulgaria and EU”, “Schengen”, “euro”, “judicial reform and EC”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Bulgaria-EU relations reported on in 2012:

Bulgaria's bid to join the Schengen zone

- All three sources widely reported on the resolution of EU heads of state to adopt a decision on the Bulgarian accession to Schengen in September.³ It was indicated that Bulgaria had met all membership criteria, but that the major obstacle on the way to

membership in the free area was continued Dutch opposition to the accession process.⁴ According to the Dutch position Bulgaria has only met the technical requirements such as border control enforcement, but has failed to address the issues of organized crime, corruption and judicial reform.⁵ Among the supporters of Bulgaria's candidacy were the President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Klaus, the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schultz, and the President of the European Commission, Manuel Barroso.⁶

- Bulgarian President Plevneliev reacted to Dutch opposition by showing restraint and patience, but also by communicating Bulgaria's determination to join the free zone in the pursuit of its vital interests.⁷ In January, Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov affirmed that Bulgaria had met all accession criteria and suggested that the entire process was being hindered by a single political party in the Netherlands.⁸

- However, as if to strengthen the Dutch position, in July the Supreme Judicial Council fired Sofia City Court Judge Miroslava Todorova.⁹ The European Commission and the International Commission of Jurists quickly expressed concern with the political nature of the dismissal and called for a fair appeal process and protection from further intimidation for Todorova.¹⁰ In her role as Chairperson of the Bulgarian Judges Association, Todorova had been a vocal critic of the council and interior minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov.¹¹ Shortly thereafter the European Commission published its report under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism on the progress of judicial reform, and the fight against corruption and organized crime.¹² Its findings were widely reported as further impeding the country's prospects for Schengen accession.¹³

- In September the newly adopted procedure for the election of judges to the Supreme Judicial Council did little to improve the judiciary's compromised reputation.¹⁴ In 2012, for the first time, the election process was made public and included parliamentary hearings.¹⁵ Previously the approval of candidates from the parliamentary quota had been reduced to nominating representatives of the ruling coalition. In this respect the new procedure ensured a degree of transparency, but failed to illicit a pertinent parliamentary debate.¹⁶ This led observers to suggest that the election results had been subject to political negotiations between parties.¹⁷

- Bulgaria's standing with the EC deteriorated further with the latter's objection to the Bulgarian Parliament's election of Constitutional Court judges; specifically its failure to investigate allegations of conflict of interest and corruption against Judge Veneta Mar-

kovska.¹⁸ Despite the EC's concerns, however, Markovska's candidacy was approved without an investigation.¹⁹ The Commission's criticisms were not directed at Markovska herself, but emphasized the lack of investigative process as symptomatic of the country's flawed judicial system.²⁰

- In terms of internal politics, the opposition capitalized on the negative tone of the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism report. Socialist leader Stanishev called it an acknowledgement of the failure of the Borisov government.²¹ Following the report, Germany expressed its reservations regarding Bulgaria's readiness for accession.²² In September, reporting centered on the harsh tone adopted by Bulgaria's Foreign minister regarding the Dutch position, indicating that Bulgaria had run out of patience.²³ In December, most government officials indicated that no resolution on Bulgaria's bid to join the Schengen zone is to be expected before March 2013.²⁴

Bulgaria's position regarding Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia's (FYROM) EU membership

- In May, reports began following the deterioration of Bulgarian-FYROM relations. This was marked by an incident with the Bulgarian ambassador in FYROM who was denied access to the monument of the prominent revolutionary, Gotse Delchev, in Skopje during a commemoration of his death 109 years ago. Both countries regard Delchev as a national hero.²⁵ Bilateral relations worsened further after a Macedonian journalist asked Bulgarian Prime Minister Borisov why Bulgaria was interfering in the dispute between FYROM and Greece.²⁶ He also questioned a scandal that erupted between the two countries regarding the title of an exhibition of 13th and 14th century manuscripts at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels.²⁷

- In August, Bulgaria's foreign minister categorically affirmed that Bulgaria has always supported FYROM's Euro-Atlantic orientation.²⁸ However, the manner and timeline of this integration depended entirely on FYROM, the pace of reforms in the country, and finding a compromise with Greece. According to Bulgarian officials, Bulgaria would benefit from FYROM's accession to the EU.²⁹ This would mean that FYROM has met all the prerequisites for European integration and would boost stability, development, and peace in the region.³⁰

- However, according to Bulgarian Foreign Minister Mladenov, the EC's progress report did not provide a critical assessment of the situation in FYROM.³¹ Therefore Bulgaria was not convinced that

the country could adhere to European values. In a letter to his Macedonian counterpart Poposki, Mladenov presented FYROM with three conditions to improve bilateral relations. These included the signing of a Neighbourhood and Cooperation Agreement based on the principles of the declaration signed in 1999, a plan for the institution of bilateral committees, and the creation of a mechanism for intergovernmental meetings.³²

- In December, EU foreign ministers decided to postpone the decision to begin accession talks with FYROM until the spring of 2013.³³ One of the reasons for the postponement was Bulgaria's refusal to agree to the commencement of talks, due to the deterioration of FYROM's relations with its neighbours.³⁴ Bulgaria was joined by Romania and Greece, who expressed principle support for FYROM's EU integration, but only after strict completion of accession criteria, including the resolution of the name dispute with Greece and secession of its anti-Bulgarian campaign.³⁵

Sofia metro an example for success of EU cohesion policy

- In connection with the discussion of the EU financial framework for 2014-2020, the opening of the second subway line in Sofia exemplified the success of EU funds received under EU's cohesion policy as a tool for economic and social cohesion in some of the regions in the EU. The new line includes 11 new stations and 10.5 km of rail.³⁶

- Jose Manuel Barroso expressed his desire to participate in the opening ceremony on August 31. According to Premier Borisov this was the year's best project for the European Commission.³⁷ Internally, the opening of the second metro line resonated with many Bulgarians, as the project is 42 years old and generations of Bulgarians dreamed of its completion.³⁸ It was seen as a concrete achievement for the country after 5 years of EU membership and a symbol of modern, successful, and capable Bulgaria.³⁹

2012 IN REVIEW:

In 2012 Bulgaria marked the five-year anniversary of its accession to the EU. This was a good time to pause and evaluate the benefits, challenges, and prospects of the membership. According to the three media sources surveyed, the construction of the second subway line in Sofia and the completion of the Trakia motorway, both of which hold special infrastructural significance, were emblematic of the tangible benefits of EU membership. It took five years and hundreds of millions of euros in EU funding to complete their construction—a task that consecutive Bulgarian administra-

tions had failed to accomplish for decades. This is important in one of Europe's poorest countries, where the standard of living is far below the EU average and is sometimes compared to that of non-EU members such as Serbia. In many respects, the austerity measures that have roused opposition throughout Europe are what many Bulgarians consider the normal principles of market economy. In 2012 the media echoed the infamous slogan of the Greek opposition to austerity "no Bulgarian wages in Greece".

At the same time the completion of the second line of the Sofia metro had a positive impact on EU-Bulgarian relations and was a useful public relations tool for both. It was hailed as an example for the success of the EU's policy for regional economic and social cohesion and Bulgaria's improving management of EU funds. Along with economic and infrastructural gains, Bulgarians enjoy greater degrees of labour mobility and fewer restrictions on personal travel within Europe. However, there is growing frustration with the country's protracted bid to enter the Schengen zone.

In this regard the official government position is that Bulgaria has met all membership requirements and its accession to the zone is being blocked, on political grounds, by a single party in the Netherlands. According to most media sources, the Bulgarian administration's response was restrained and measured, without detracting from its ability to emphasize the centrality of Schengen membership for Bulgaria's national interests. Although the general public seemed to share the government's view, it was also acutely aware of the slow progress in combating organized crime and corruption, particularly in the mid- and high-level administration. This sentiment escalated with what is widely perceived as the politically-motivated dismissal of Sofia City Court judge Miroslava Todorova. Todorova, in her role as Chairperson of the Bulgarian Judges Association had been a long-standing critic of the judiciary and the government. The European Commission condemned the dismissal and expressed doubts about the fairness of Todorova's appeal process. The Bulgarian Parliament also came under intense EC criticism in the wake of nominations for Constitutional Court judges. According to the EC, the parliament approved her candidacy without investigating allegations of corruption and conflict of interest, mounted against her during the parliamentary hearing. This was seen as symptomatic of the country's flawed judicial system. Following these scandals, the EC's Cooperation and Verification Mechanism Report issued the next salvo in a series of scathing findings, which further impeded the country's prospects of joining Schengen.

Internally, the report's findings gave a brief opportunity for the opposition to call Borisov's government a failure, but it did not impress ordinary Bulgarians, many of whom felt that it failed to convey the full extent of the problem. However, the report was far more damaging abroad as the country lost valuable allies, such as Germany, which expressed its reservations regarding Bulgaria's readiness for accession shortly after its publication. The harsher tone adopted by the Bulgarian government regarding the Dutch position in the second half of the year did little to incite EU institutions to vote on Bulgaria's membership bid in 2012. Thus, the issue would be revisited no earlier than March 2013.

In May, reports began to appear about the deterioration in Bulgarian-FYROM relations following a few diplomatic incidents, a spat between Macedonian journalists and Bulgarian Prime Minister Borisov, and a scandal concerning the title of an exhibition of 13th and 14th century manuscripts at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels. This was somewhat surprising to the Bulgarian public as it was common knowledge that the country was the first to recognize FYROM's independence. Many perceived Bulgarian policy vis-à-vis FYROM as ranging from openly friendly to toothless and incapable of defending Bulgarian interests, but few perceived it as aggressive and some thought it was not even assertive. Internationally, the cooling off of bilateral relations had a far more negative effect for FYROM. At stake was the country's bid for EU membership, which until recently was problematic only due to its nomenclature dispute with Greece. However, since 2012, the country's accession prospects have worsened with Bulgarian and Romanian opposition on the grounds that FYROM has to make significant efforts at enhancing neighborly relations and improving the treatment of its ethnic minorities before joining the Union. In this respect, the Bulgarian foreign minister confirmed his support for FYROM's Euro-Atlantic integration, but said that the manner and timeline of this integration depended entirely on FYROM, the pace of reforms in the country, and on finding a compromise with Greece. In FYROM, this statement was seen as a crude attempt to dictate Macedonian policy from abroad.

After five years of membership Bulgaria finds itself in a new international role, one that is predicated on working with and within the EU to project and assert its geo-political stance. While EU funds and infrastructure projects have had an immediate internal resonance, in terms of foreign policy, EU membership has provided Bulgaria with a higher international platform and allowed it to use a diplomatic tone that was unattainable five years ago. For FYROM,

engulfed in the dynamics of neighborly relations in the Balkans, this means an added dispute with a country that enjoys the benefits of this international platform and perhaps a realization that to focus on attaining this platform today ensures the resolution of regional disputes within the framework of the EU tomorrow.

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CROATIA

Danijela Stajic

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 4,480,043
- Ethnic composition: Croat 89.6%, Serb 4.5%, other 5.9% (including Bosniak, Hungarian, Slovene, Czech, and Roma)
- GDP per capita: \$18,100
- EU member entry date: 2013 (tentatively)

MEDIA SOURCES:

Jutarnji list

- Founding date: 1998
- Ownership: EuropaPress Holding (EPH) Croatia's leading press group
- Daily circulation: 100,000

Večernji list

- Founding date: 1959
- Ownership: Styria Media Group AG (since 2000)
- Daily circulation: 100,000

Novi list

- Founding date: 1900
- Ownership: self-managed
- Daily circulation: 40,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 108 (Jutarnji List-39; Novi List-28; Večernji list-33)
- List of search words: "Croatia and the EU", "EU funding" and "Ljubljanska Banka"

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Croatia-EU relations reported on in 2012:

Accession of Croatia to the EU

- As 2012 began, the media reported on the government appeals to the public to vote in the referendum for Croatia's accession to the EU. In their appeals the government stressed the many advantages that Croatia would gain after becoming the 28th member.¹ Furthermore, as reported by *Novi list*, an absolute majority of votes

in the Croatian Parliament decided in favour of the country's accession to the EU.² All three media sources reported that the Head of Delegation of the European Commission to the Republic of Croatia, Paul Vandoren, expressed high hopes for Croatia's entry into the EU and that the Bulgarian Parliament and the Italian Senate ratified Croatia's accession treaty.³

- In April, the monitoring report on Croatia demonstrated that the European Commission witnessed satisfactory improvement but that the country nevertheless needed to continue working towards further development. The majority of objections in the monitoring report were legal, as opposed to political, and were not expected to significantly affect Croatia's entry into the union.⁴ As reported by *Novi list* and *Jutarnji list* in May both the European Commission and the Croatian government anticipated that 13 out of 27 member states would ratify the accession treaty before the end of the summer.⁵

- Subsequently, in late June the president of Czech Republic ratified the Croatian accession treaty.⁶ According to reports from July 2012, the President of the Croatian Democratic Union, Tomislav Karamarko, expressed concern that not all EU member states will ratify the treaty by the target date for Croatia's entry into the union. The prime minister appealed to the member states to ratify the treaty as soon as possible. In the meantime, the Croatian government was determined to focus on judicial reform and punishing perpetrators of war crimes.⁷ Speedy ratification of the treaty by the Austrian president Heinz Fischer was construed as a sign that EU member states strongly support Croatia becoming the 28th member. The Croatian president Ivo Josipović expressed high hopes that France will also ratify the accession treaty subsequent to his meeting with the French president François Hollande.⁸

- In October, the monitoring report results showed significant improvement; nevertheless, Stefan Füle, commissioner responsible for enlargement and European neighbourhood policy stated that Croatia may not fulfill all the conditions necessary for accession to the EU and that they will be denied entry if they fail to satisfy all requirements.⁹ *Jutarnji list* reported that the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed their support for Croatia's accession to the EU.¹⁰ Once again, Germany expressed doubts that Croatia would carry out all required improvements before the target entry date, whereas the Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vesna Pusić, stated that Croatia was on the right track and that she did not expect any setbacks.¹¹

- As asserted by the Croatian President Ivo Josipović, Croatia had made significant progress towards becoming the 28th member of the EU, but further development was yet to be accomplished. Nevertheless, the president stated that all requirements would be successfully satisfied by July 1, 2013, which was confirmed by the Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanović in Brussels.¹² Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs Pusić and President Josipović expressed high hopes for Croatia's accession to the EU, stating that Croatia is ready to join the EU and that it enjoys the support of Great Britain as well as other member states.¹³
- Contradictory reports subsequently appeared in the media about Germany's support of Croatia's accession to the EU. As reported by *Novi list*, the chairman of the foreign committee of the lower house of the Bundestag, Ruprecht Polenz, and the president of the Bundestag stated that Croatia's accession in July 2013 was too soon and that the country would not be ready by that time, whereas President Josipović stated that Croatia was making continuous progress and that all requirements will be fulfilled.¹⁴ Following the reports by *Novi list*, *Jutarnji list* reported that Germany will offer their full support to Croatia on their way to joining the EU.¹⁵ In November, after his visit to Zagreb, Füle encouraged Croatia and expressed confidence that all requirements would be met by July 1, 2013. He also addressed the previous doubts expressed by the Bundestag, stating that the latest monitoring reports on Croatia had shown significant progress.¹⁶

Croatia's contribution to and benefit from the structural and cohesion funds of the EU

- In January 2012, *Večernji list* mainly focused on Croatia's utilisation of the structural and cohesion funds of the EU. It was reported that following Croatia's accession to the EU, the country's development would significantly benefit from the financial investment provided by the EU.¹⁷ As reported, Croatia is expected to have €687mn at disposal to be used towards reducing unemployment, economic development, aiding state administration, etc.¹⁸ In March, both *Jutarnji list* and *Novi list* reported that the EU had warned that they would penalize Croatia for not using an adequate amount of the available financial aid.¹⁹
- In the following months the media stressed that the European Commission must approve all funding and that Croatia is having bureaucratic difficulties concerning the withdrawal of the available EU funds.²⁰ In late June and early July the media mostly focused on reporting about Croatia's contribution to the cohesion and struc-

tural funds of the EU. The media addressed the concern of the public regarding the difference between the European and the national budget, claiming that the daily contribution of every individual will be an insignificant amount of money.²¹ In July 2012 *Večernji list* and *Novi list* once more reported on the advantages of the EU funding. The funding was intended for the development of cohesion politics, infrastructure, economy, rural development, etc.²²

- In September, *Novi list* and *Večernji list* reported on Croatia's continuing difficulties with the utilization of the available EU funds.²³ In the subsequent months, Croatia continuously experienced setbacks in the attempts to use the funds of the EU, due to administrative issues. The media reported that Croatia is not ready to efficiently use the funding as a result of these issues and that this may affect the country's accession to the EU.²⁴ It was reported by *Novi list* that approximately 30 percent of the available funds had been used before the new government was established, whereas afterwards 67 percent of the funds were used.²⁵ Croatia's contribution to the structural and cohesion funds was reported to be one third of the amount of the funds that the country will receive from the EU.²⁶

- In November the Brussels summit was held to determine the 2014-2020 budget of the EU. At the summit Croatia demanded to be granted more time to use the structural and cohesion funds. The summit, however, concluded without a decisive agreement as to whether Croatia would be awarded the additional amount of time.²⁷ As the year concluded, the media reported high hopes for the country's development resulting from EU funding and access to the European market. A rise of 2.5 percent in the GDP and advancement in the country's economy is expected in the years to follow.²⁸

Croatia-Slovenia relations concerning Ljubljanska Banka

- Commencing in April 2012 all three media sources reported to a great extent on the continued negotiations between Croatia and Slovenia regarding the Ljubljanska Banka's debt to its Croatian depositors. It was reported that although the issue was seen as irrelevant to Croatia's accession to the EU, the Slovenian government demanded that the negotiations be resumed under the supervision of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), refusing to otherwise ratify the Croatian Treaty of Accession.²⁹

- As reported by *Novi list* and *Večernji list*, the BIS refused to preside over the negotiations, declaring the issue bilateral and therefore outside their jurisdiction.³⁰ Both *Jutarnji list* and *Večernji list*

reported on the setback in negotiations in July when the Slovenian Minister of Foreign Affairs Karl Erjavec stressed the high probability of Slovenia's refusal to ratify the treaty, which prompted the Croatian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vesna Pusić to once again demand that the issue be treated independently.³¹ Reports of an attempt to resolve the issue followed this temporary setback when both sides agreed to appoint experts that will analyze the problem and offer a mutually acceptable agreement.³² The emphasis by the Croatian government that this issue was not related to the country's accession to the EU was greatly present in the media in the following months.³³

- In late July *Jutarnji list* reported that the Slovenian government was willing to work on resolving the issue provided that the Croatian government withdrew their support for Zagrebačka Banka and Privredna Banka Zagreb in their lawsuit against Ljubljanska Banka. *Jutarnji list* additionally reported that Slovenia believed that the issue had become invalid with the breakup of Yugoslavia.³⁴ In August *Večernji list* and *Jutarnji list* reported on Slovenia's financial problems and the possibility of asking the EU for assistance. Taking into account Slovenia's financial difficulties *Večernji list* criticized Slovenia for impeding Croatia's accession to the EU, while *Jutarnji list* emphasized Slovenia's refusal to ratify the Accession Treaty and the support that Slovenia may receive from other member states.³⁵ In the beginning of the following month *Večernji list* reported that subsequent to a meeting between Pusić and Erjavec a solution had been reached and that Slovenia would ratify the treaty after the conclusion of the Ljubljanska Banka issue.³⁶ Both *Večernji list* and *Jutarnji list* reported in mid-September that Slovenia was demanding €172mn for Croatia's entry in the EU.³⁷

- In the beginning of October, *Večernji list* and *Jutarnji list* reported that both countries would once more seek assistance from BIS, as advised by the experts appointed by both sides in the attempt to mutually solve the problem.³⁸ Throughout October and November, *Večernji list* and *Novi list* emphasized the demand of the Croatian government that the Ljubljanska Banka issue is dealt with independently of the Croatian accession to the EU. Both media sources reported on the concern of the Croatian government and the EC that the issue might hinder EU's expansion.³⁹ *Večernji list* reported in December that the EU could not pressure Slovenia to ratify the treaty and that Croatia must nevertheless demonstrate continuous efforts to resolve the problem.⁴⁰

2012 IN REVIEW:

Throughout 2012, the most frequently discussed issues involving Croatia and the EU in the media were: Croatia's accession to the EU; contribution to and benefit from the structural and cohesion funds of the EU; and relations with Slovenia on the subject of Ljubljanska Banka. The consulted articles revealed certain attitudes in the media portrayal of Croatian-EU relations.

The most prominent issue in Croatian media was the country's accession to the EU. The media expressed a generally positive attitude, particularly as the year began, when the government appealed to the public to vote for Croatia's accession to the EU in the approaching referendum. A majority of articles written on this subject depicted the public's interest and high hopes for Croatia joining the EU. The media forecast significant progress in Croatia's development after July 2013. Many of the articles related to this topic were connected to the ratification process. The media emphasized which member states ratified the treaty and pointed out that further ratification was to be expected. The encouraging results of the monitoring reports on Croatia further uplifted the general perception towards the country's membership. Concerns were voiced by the media, in the second half of the year, when the president of the Croatian Democratic Union, Tomislav Karamarko, stated that the ratification process was not progressing quickly enough. These concerns were intensified when the EC representative Štefan Füle and the German Bundestag asserted that in the case of failure to fulfil all the necessary requirements for accession, Croatia will be denied entry into the EU. These reports were followed by further emphasis by the Croatian government officials that Croatia is continuously making progress on their path towards becoming the 28th member of the EU. This indicated a generally optimistic attitude towards the subject of accession to the EU, regardless of the negative opinions that appeared in the preceding articles. Towards the end of the year the media demonstrated a progressively more hopeful attitude. The stressed importance of meeting the demands of the European Commission indicated the magnitude of this topic. The year ended with optimistic reports regarding German support suggesting that Croatia will receive significant encouragement from the EU member states.

The following major issue addressed by the Croatian media was connected to the structural and cohesion funds of the EU. Two distinct concerns were prominent in the media: Croatia's contribution to the funds of the EU and the adequate utilization of the funding awarded to help the country's development. The general attitudes expressed in the media were encouraging. The media

stressed the large amount of EU funding and expressed high hopes that this funding will significantly aid Croatia's progress. Nevertheless, in June and July some unenthusiastic attitudes were conveyed in the media concerning Croatia's contribution to the EU funds and particularly concerning the large difference between the national budget and the budget of the EU. These attitudes persisted in the following months when the government experienced administrative difficulties that impeded adequate utilization of the available funding. However in the final months of the year, the majority of articles generally expressed hopeful feelings for the country's advancement in the years to follow.

Another issue greatly present in the media was related to the relations between Croatia and Slovenia concerning the debts of Ljubljanska Banka to its Croatian depositors. The majority of the articles consulted depicted negative attitudes of the public towards the issue. Continuous setbacks in the attempts to resolve the issue caused the general attitude to deteriorate to a great extent. The dominant position of the Croatian public was that the issue should be treated as independent from the negotiations with the EU. Nevertheless, the public remained concerned that the issue would not only delay, but also possibly get in the way of Croatia's accession to the EU. Several attempts were made towards reaching a solution acceptable to both sides, including appointing experts who would mutually solve the problem and demanding that the Bank for International Settlements preside over the negotiations between both countries. As the year concluded the public attitude remained pessimistic subsequent to the failed attempts to resolve the issue.

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CYPRUS

Andreas Kyprianou

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 1,138,071
- Ethnic Makeup: 77% Greek, 18% Turkish, 5% Other
- GDP Per Capita: \$29,400
- Entry Date to the EU: 2004
- EU funding in 2011: net contributor

MEDIA SOURCES:

O Phileleftheros

- Founding Date: 1955
- Ownership: Phileleftheros Publishing Company Ltd.
- Daily Circulation: 70,000

H Simerini

- Founding Date: 1976
- Ownership: Dias Publishing House Public Ltd.
- Readership: 205,000 weekly

Cyprus Mail

- Founding Date: 1945
- Ownership: Cyprus mail Ltd.
- Daily Circulation: 10,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 110 (Cyprus Mail-20; H Simerini-41; O Phileleftheros-5)
- List of search words: “Cyprus EU relations”, “Cyprus EU Turkey”, “Cyprus EEZ”, “Cyprus hydrocarbons”, “Cyprus natural gas”, “Cyprus energy”, “Cyprus Troika”, “Cyprus financial crisis”, “Cyprus economy” and “Cyprus EU presidency”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Cyprus- EU relations reported on in 2012:

Hydrocarbons found in Cyprus’ Exclusive Economic Zone

- In 2009, American company Noble Energy confirmed findings of natural gas in the waters between Israel and Cyprus. In 2010, Israel and Cyprus signed an agreement determining the countries’ Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). This would allow for the first

drilling to take place by Noble in that area, and resulted in the first positive prospects for that plot by 2011.¹

- Noble Energy confirmed finding a deposit of hydrocarbons as large as 7 trillion cubic feet in its first round of drilling in Cyprus' EEZ. This proved to be good news for Cyprus, which would benefit from the findings in many ways.²

- Firstly, Cyprus has increased and improved its communications with neighbouring Egypt and Israel, who have also found hydrocarbons in their EEZ.³ Bilateral relations between Cyprus and these countries, most notably Israel, have been improving at a fast rate. Cyprus' strengthened relationships with Israel and Egypt could be beneficial to the EU's relations with these countries, providing a gateway for the EU into the Eastern Mediterranean, where Cyprus is currently the only EU member.⁴ In addition, if the EU was able to receive natural gas from Cyprus, a EU member state, it would prove to be much more efficient than relying on non-EU countries, as much of the Union currently does, since these countries may not necessarily be natural allies of the EU.⁵

- Next, the discovery of hydrocarbons in Cyprus' waters could assist the Republic in negotiating with Turkey over a resolution to the Cyprus Problem. This could result in the re-unification of the island after nearly 40 years of division. Also, the quicker a solution is found, the quicker all parties can work together and plan how to benefit effectively from findings. In turn, a domino effect of positive results could follow, such as allowing relations between Turkey, Cyprus, and the EU to grow, speeding up Turkey's accession to the EU by resolving some chapters of Turkey's accession talks (which would allow the EU to use Turkey's flourishing economy to aid with the current financial crisis of the Eurozone), and finally allowing Turkey to possibly be part of the discussion regarding finding the best way to exploit Cyprus' hydrocarbon findings.⁶

- Later in 2012, a second round of licensing was completed and 4 more blocks of Cyprus' EEZ were licensed to be explored and drilled, leading to the possible findings of more hydrocarbons.⁷

- By the end of the year, an estimated 60 trillion cubic feet of total deposits have been found. The total benefits Cyprus could see from all of its natural gas deposits could show net profits of up to 800 billion euros. The findings in just one of the blocks in Cyprus' EEZ would be enough to sustain Cyprus' energy needs for 250 – 300 years.⁸

- Since Turkey did not sign the Convention on the Law of the Sea, it does not recognize any of the EEZs outlined in it. Subsequently it does not recognize Cyprus' EEZ, and Cyprus' right to exploit the

area's natural resources. Turkey also does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus as a sovereign state. Furthermore, it is the only country in the world to argue that the illegally occupied area in the north constitutes a sovereign state, and as such has the right to explore its areas for natural resources. Turkey also claims that companies that support Cyprus' efforts will face consequences, such as restrictions from participating in Turkey's energy projects.⁹

Cyprus taking over the revolving presidency of the EU

- In July of 2012, Cyprus succeeded Denmark in assuming the revolving presidency of the EU. Considering the ongoing financial crisis in Europe, and especially in Cyprus, this was a difficult time to take over the role. During Cyprus' time as President of the EU, the Republic accomplished such tasks as agreeing on a budget for the EU for the remainder of 2012 as well as for 2013, taking steps in solidifying the future of the European currency, promoted the creation of new jobs in the EU (although an actual increase in jobs was not accomplished), and encouraged inter-institutional cooperation.
- The overall outlook on the success of the term was positive, although an important goal was not achieved: rapid growth of the economy and the creation of jobs in unemployment-ridden Europe.¹⁰ The President of Cyprus suggested that an important next step would be to offer citizens social welfare, in order to assist those increasingly challenged by socioeconomic problems.¹¹
- During Cyprus' time as President, Turkey refused to communicate with the EU, since Turkey does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus as a sovereign state.¹²

2012 IN REVIEW

Cyprus – EU relations have varied over the course of 2012, but at the end of the year, the relationship appeared strengthened. Cyprus' worsened financial situation and its request for a bailout helped tarnish the relations between the island and the EU, however relations were improved as a result of Cyprus' successful term as EU president, and the discovery of billions of euros worth of hydrocarbons in Cyprus' waters.

Undeniably, the detrimental effects of the Greek debt crisis have had a negative impact on Cyprus. During its time as the EU president, Cyprus was paid a visit by the Troika and was forced to request a bailout. As embarrassing as the situation may have been, Cyprus was still involved in various steps that were taken towards accomplishing some of the EU's goals during its presidency. Alt-

though the presidency term had some notably positive results, one could argue that they were overshadowed by the negative implications of the financial situation. Fortunately, the news of billions of euros worth of hydrocarbons found in Cyprus' waters, had a positive impact on EU-Cyprus relations. The financial and strategic implications of these findings are vast and the ripple effects could continue to benefit both Cyprus and the EU for years to come.

Among the bevy of potential benefits of these findings lay the opportunity to improve relations between the EU, Cyprus, and the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean & Middle East. Cyprus could strategically use its hydrocarbon findings to become an energy hub for the EU, which would allow for a decrease in energy dependency on non-EU countries. This would drastically reduce energy costs, and would also put the EU in a stronger position for future negotiations.

In addition, Cyprus could use the findings as leverage in its negotiations with Turkey to solve the Cyprus Problem. A solution to the Cyprus Problem would open several chapters in Turkey's accession talks with the EU, thus speeding up Turkey's accession process. Turkey's accession into the EU would be greatly beneficial to all EU member states as Turkey's stable and strong economy would help the EU in stabilizing its own economy.

Cyprus – EU relations have only just begun to turn in a positive direction. Just as the events of 2012, the future will prove to be full of more twists and turns, which will continue to shape the bi-lateral relationship.

¹ "Οι σταθμοί στην ιστορία των ενεργειακών της Κύπρου." *Η Σημερινή* 1 January 2012. Date of access: 08/01/2013.

² "Καθορίζει οδικό χάρτη η διπλωματική επιτροπή." *Η Σημερινή* 9 January 2012. Date of access: 08/01/2013.

³ "Cyprus and Egypt talk energy." *Cyprus Mail* 3 November 2012. Date of access: 09/01/2013.

⁴ "Πώς θα φεύγει το φυσικό αέριο." *Η Σημερινή* 9 January 2012. Date of access: 09/01/2013.

⁵ "The case for an Eastern Mediterranean energy corridor." *Cyprus Mail* 14 October 2012. Date of access: 09/01/2013.

⁶ "ΜΙΑΝ ΑΝΑΣΑ πριν την άτακτη χρεοκοπία." *Η Σημερινή* 14 January 2013. Date of access: 14/01/2013.

⁷ "Awarding of gas licences could cost billions." *Cyprus Mail* 11 November 2012. Date of Access: 10/01/2013.

⁸ "Στα 60 τρισ. κυβικά πόδια τα συνολικά κοιτάσματα φ. αερίου." *Η Σημερινή* 27 October 2012. Date of access: 14/01/2013.

⁹ "Turkey threatens foreign companies." *Cyprus Mail* 4 November 2012. Date of access: 14/01/2013.

¹⁰ “Δεν πετύχαμε την αύξηση της απασχόλησης στην ΕΕ ομολόγησε ο Μπαρόζο

.” *Ο Φιλελεύθερος* 15 January 2013. Date of access: 15/01/2013.

¹¹ “Την αγωνία του για το μελλον της ΕΕ εξέφρασε ο Δ.Χριστόφιας ενώπιον της Ευρωβουλής.” *Ο Φιλελεύθερος* 15 January 2013. Date of access: 15/01/2013.

¹² “Foreign ministry followed tough schedule during presidency.” *Cyprus Mail* 15 January 2013. Date of access: 15/01/2013.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Grant Babayan

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 10,177,300
- Ethnic composition: Czech 90.4%, Moravian 3.7%, Slovak 1.9%, other 4%
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$27,400
- EU member entry date: 2004
- EU funding in 2011: net recipient

MEDIA SOURCES:¹

Lidové Noviny

- Founding date: 1893
- Ownership: MAFRA, A. S.
- Daily circulation: 73,000

Mladá Fronta Dnes

- Founding date: 1945
- Ownership: MAFRA, A. S.
- Daily circulation: 290,000

Pravo

- Founding date: 1991
- Ownership: Borgis
- Daily circulation: 165,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted-91 (Mladá Fronta Dnes-29; Právo-32; Lidové noviny-30)
- List of search words: "Česká republika a EU", "Evropská Unie", "Evropa a Česko", "Novinky z EU"

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Czech- EU relations reported on in 2012:

The Female Staff Quota

- During the spring, the issue discussed most often by the press was the future plan of a law proposed by the European Parliament in Brussels, which would increase the number of female staff in both state-owned and non state- owned firms.² The quota to be imposed would require that firms must be comprised of at least 40% female staff, which stimulated a substantial discussion within

Czech society.³ The national media reported that only one-fifth of the population (mostly activists and feminists) says they would stand for this new resolution, whereas the majority of the population is categorically against it.⁴ Articles also stated that currently Czech Republic has a lower percentage of female staff workers in comparison with other countries in the EU.⁵

The Nobel Prize for Peace

• From the end of October and for the whole of November 2012, the majority of articles were focused on the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU.⁶ The reaction of Czech general public and political parties regarding this issue fell in line with the already long-standing euro-sceptic sentiment.⁷ Several articles referred to President Klaus, who called the award ceremony 'a joke'.⁸ As an act of protest, the Czech delegation was not present at the ceremony or at the party afterwards. Many articles suggested that this was the right move.⁹

EU Budget

• The end of November was very important for the Czech Republic.¹⁰ All media covered the new EU budget for the countries.¹¹ The government rejected the EU proposed budget for the Czech Republic, which was 80 billion EUR, 26 billion less than for the period 2007-2013, as it would make the Czech Republic pay more to the European funds.¹² The prime minister called the new budget 'unacceptable'.¹³ Articles also point out the dissatisfaction of other European countries and the generally unsuccessful budgetary summit.¹⁴

2012 IN REVIEW:

The year 2012 was an eventful one in terms of relations between the Czech Republic and EU. The last year in office of President Vaclav Klaus did not change the general perception of Czechs towards the EU; arguably, ever-present euro-scepticism deepened. The public opinion regarding the EU dramatically deteriorated, as was reflected heavily in media. This was caused partially by the universal laws, such as the Female Quota law, implemented by the European Parliament. At the beginning of the year, Czech media focused on the issue of the newly proposed law by the European Parliament, which called for a minimum of 40% of female staff in both state owned and non-state owned firms. As reported by the media, the majority of the population disagreed with the proposed law, stating that knowledge and ability are the

most important, not gender. This issue had a negative affect on the image of EU in public opinion.

Furthermore, in October and November, the majority of articles focused on the Nobel Peace Prize that was awarded to the EU. The media broadly criticized this event, ironically stating that 'it is like the EU is awarding itself.' The media and public opinion expressed identical thoughts on this issue and backed the government's decision to not attend the award ceremony, thus boycotting the entire event. The EU saw the attitude of the Czech Republic as inappropriate and, as the media portrayed, saw it as a reflection of the disintegration EU of values and core ideas in the Czech Republic.

The last months of the year were very important for the Czech Republic, since the new budget was being discussed for the upcoming year. The Czech government was dissatisfied with the EU proposed budget of 80 billion euro and thus rejected the proposal, the reasons for which included that the Czech Republic would have to pay more for European funds. As the Czech media portrayed, the EU, which is struggling with the ongoing financial crisis, proved unable to resolve budgetary issues and that led to the overall failure of the entire summit.

¹ "The Czech Media Landscape- The Print Media" Wien International. Date accessed: 8 November 2012.

<http://www.wieninternational.at/en/node/11577>

² "Žen v čele společností je málo. Povinné kvóty však Češi nechtějí", Mlada Fronta Dnes. 24 Jul 2012. Date accessed 28 Nov 2012.

"Ve vedení velkých firem připadá na dvanáct mužů jen jedna žena", Mlada Fronta Dnes. 17 Feb 2012. Date accessed 22 Nov 2012.

³ "Eurokomisařka protlačila směrnici o povinném počtu žen ve vedení firem" Pravo. 14 Jan 2012. Date accessed 22 Nov 2012.

⁴ "České aktivistky kvóty EU pro ženy vítají". 19 Nov 2012. Date accessed. 24 Oct 2012.

"Evropské kvóty? Návrh ženy nezáhodňuje, tvrdí aktivistky" Mlada Fronta Dnes. 18 Nov 2012. Date accessed. 24 Nov 2012.

⁵ "Většina Čechů nechce, aby počet žen ve vedení firem diktovala EU". Lidove Noviny. 12 Jul 2012. Date accessed. 26 Nov 2012.

"Ve vedení firem musí být 40 procent žen, naplánoval Brusel" Lidove noviny. 14 Nov 2012. Date accessed. 23 Nov 2012.

⁶ "Schwarzenberg: Pozvánku na Nobelovu cenu odmítl prezident, já žádnou nemám". Lidove noviny. 1 Dec 2012. Date accessed. 4 Dec 2012.

"Proč čeští papaláši nejedou na předání Nobelovy ceny Unii" Mlada Fronta Dnes. 3 Dec 2012. Date accessed. 6 Dec 2012.

⁷ "Klaus a Nečas odmítli pozvání na předání Nobelovy ceny pro EU" Mlada Fronta Dnes. 1 Dec 2012. Date accessed. 5 Dec 2012.

Co vám uniklo: český postoj k Nobelově ceně a proč se Hušák může smát" Lidove noviny. 1 Dec 2012. Date accessed. 5 Dec 2012.

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- ⁸ “Apríl, ostuda i největší mírotvorce. Svět hodnotí Nobelovu cenu pro EU” Mlada Fronta Dnes. 12 Oct 2012. Date accessed. 3 Dec 2012.
- ⁹ “Nobelova ena míru?” Pravo. 19 Nov 2012. Date accessed. 27 Nov 2012.
- “Státníci Česka a dalších pět států se nezúčastní předání Nobelovy ceny za mír” Lidove noviny. 1 Dec 2012. Date accessed. 4 Dec Nov 2012.
- ¹⁰ “Nečas odmítl návrh evropského rozpočtu, Česko v něm dostalo málo peněz” Mlada Fronta Dnes. 23 Nov 2012. Date accessed. 29 Nov 2012
- ¹¹ “Rozpočet EU: podívejte se, kam peníze plynou a za co je státy utrácí” Mlada Fronta Dnes .23 Nov 2012. Date accessed. 5 Dec 2012.
- ¹² “Lídři EU se na rozpočtu neshodli, summit skončil krachem”. Lidove noviny. 23 Nov 2012. Date accessed. 4 Dec 2012.
- “Česko získalo z rozpočtu EU o téměř 7 miliard více, než zaplatilo” Lidove noviny. 13 Aug 2012. Date accessed. 28 Nov 2012.
- ¹³ “Nečas návrh unijního rozpočtu odmítl, chudší regiony by dostaly málo peněz” Pravo. 23 Nov 2012. Date accessed. 29 Nov 2012.
- ¹⁴ “Lídrům EU se nepodařilo dohodnout na rozpočtu”. Pravo. 23 Nov 2012. Date accessed. 29 Nov 2012.

FRANCE

Rewa El-Oubari

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 62,814,233
- Ethnic composition: Celtic and Latin with Teutonic, Slavic, North African, Indochinese, Basque minorities
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$35,600
- EU member entry date: 1952
- EU funding in 2011: net recipient

MEDIA SOURCES:

Le Monde

- Founding date: 1944
- Ownership: La Vie-Le Monde Group
- Daily circulation: 340,131

Le Figaro

- Founding date: 1826
- Ownership: Dassault Group
- Daily circulation: 336,939

Libération

- Founding date: 1973
- Ownership: Edouard de Rothschild, Pathé and a staff consortium
- Daily circulation: 130,500

FINDINGS:

- Total number of articles consulted: 100 (Le Monde-33; Le Figaro-26; Libération-41)
- Key-words searched: “EU”, “France-Germany relations”, “Euro-zone crisis”, “France-EU relations”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to France-EU relations reported on in 2012:

The Economic Crisis

- Early on in 2012 there was a general worry about the downgrading of France’s AAA; a development described as a “catastrophe” and a “death after a long period of agony”.¹ At the same time, it was no longer clear if France belonged to the well-off “North” of the euro zone, or the “South” in debt.² Nevertheless, a new treaty on budget discipline signed at the end of January was deemed a posi-

tive development as France succeeded in keeping Euro summits limited to countries within the monetary union.³

- Doubts were then extended on whether France should keep the Euro, considering the crisis.⁴ The issue soon became entangled with election politics as each candidate had his own vision and solutions; a confrontation most visible during the presidential debate on May 2nd when the economy was unsurprisingly a focus area for both Sarkozy and Hollande.⁵ Europe was seen as the main political cleavage in France in the last 30 years.⁶ Sarkozy vowed to guarantee the interests of France in Europe by putting national economic interests first.⁷ The National Front, headed by Marine LePen wanted to leave the euro zone and recast the EU.⁸ As for Hollande, the solution began with Greece.⁹

- In the debate of growth vs. austerity to end the economic crisis, growth was demanded by the Leftists, with Ayrault directly criticizing the austerity in the euro zone and Hollande pushing forward growth at his first summit in Brussels in May.¹⁰ In the larger context, the debate was one of Paris vs. Berlin, where austerity had been led by the finance minister.¹¹ For economists such as Gerard Maarek, all the proposed solutions were inefficient, while others felt that Hollande was being inactive.¹²

- The June summit over the euro crisis was seen as a success, with Hollande reported as saying that “the worst has passed but the better has yet to come”.¹³

- Moreover, beyond the theoretical aspects, various issues were discussed in the press concerning the crisis. In the beginning of the year, as organizations were coming out with their annual reports, the real impact of the crisis was reported. The big groups such as Air France and Areva were hit.¹⁴ Similarly, the major French banks registered a decline in profits.¹⁵ The French economy was perceived to be experiencing stagnation.¹⁶ The outcome was a feeling of depression, gloom and no end in sight.¹⁷

- There is no doubt though that the media saw symbolism in France’s hardships. As a founding father, it has a degree of responsibility towards the union.¹⁸ Euroscepticism increased in France: 6 out of 10 rejected further economic and budget integration while 67% felt that the Union was “going in the wrong direction.”¹⁹ Yet, the hope of a “united willful” Europe was still present.²⁰ In October, Hollande celebrated the EU’s Nobel Prize by qualifying the union as Europe’s most beautiful adventure.²¹

- The year ended with talks of a banking union within the EU at a Finance ministers’ summit in December, a proposal where France wants to play the role of facilitator.²² However, Hollande opposed

calls for further federalism by Merkel and Monti, stressing that political union would come second to financial solidarity.²³

The Franco-German couple

- Both countries started off the year with joint calls for growth to fight the recession.²⁴ Earlier in the year, France and Germany worked together to push forward the issue of budget discipline as well as that of a European solution to the taxation of financial transactions.²⁵ The “Tobin Tax” started off as a sensitive subject between the two countries, as France wanted to work solo on the issue.²⁶ They nevertheless, continued working hand in hand with the proposal of a tax on enterprises.²⁷ Later on, they demanded in a common letter periodic national control of borders in case of failure of exterior borders of the Schengen area.²⁸ In the summer, Paris and Berlin expressed their joint wish to see the integration of European banks by giving supervision to the European Central Bank.²⁹ A notable effort of cooperation was the creation of a bi-national working group on the euro crisis announced by the French and German Finance Ministers.³⁰

- Divergence in opinion increased as the year went by, some doubting the survival of the Franco-German couple while others welcomed the idea of some independence from Berlin’s diktat.³¹ Actually, the conflict over a Mediterranean Union was one of the dividing subjects, as France was in favor of an all-inclusive approach seen more democratic than Germany’s alternative.³² Later on, the two countries could not agree on the issue of Eurobonds.³³ However, the most commented on blow to the relation was the end of the Merkel-Sarkozy duo, often named “Merkozy” in the press, and the election of Hollande in May 2012.

- Even before the results of the presidential elections were out, reports wondered whether France would be a less easy-going partner to Germany.³⁴ For some, a “Merlande” or a close cooperation between Hollande and Merkel was necessary for the sake of the Union.³⁵ Indeed, the coordinated Franco-German response in the past was seen as a decision engine of the union.³⁶ For others, Hollande was praised for standing up to the German Chancellor by having different, albeit converging, opinions.³⁷ Leading up to the June European Council, the main issues of divergence concerned further political and budget integration, to which Hollande was skeptical straining relations with Merkel.³⁸ The daily *Liberation* poked fun at the changed Franco-German dynamic by stating that Hollande has German friends; but they are in the opposition.³⁹ By December 2012, the Franco-German clash had become a “tradi-

tion”, as one time after the other the two state leaders fail to coordinate positions.⁴⁰

- A survey by the German Embassy in Paris showed that the majority of French citizens hold a positive image of Germany.⁴¹ At the same time, France’s failures are highlighted by Germany; seeing that in the decade since the implementation of the Euro France’s commercial deficit has increased, while Germany has never had a higher surplus.⁴² A failure that some in France see as a challenge to catch up.⁴³

France and the EU abroad: the Syrian crisis

- Throughout the year, each of the sanctions adopted by the EU against the Syrian government was reported by the main newspapers.⁴⁴ The measures started off as a list of Syrian organizations and personalities that were sanctioned by the EU.⁴⁵ By February, the Union promised to keep increasing pressure on Syria, which was materialized in France by the repatriation of its ambassador to Syria.⁴⁶ In the words of then Foreign minister Alain Juppe, the EU will “not stand with its arms crossed”.⁴⁷ In April, the export of luxury products to Syria was suspended.⁴⁸ In May, despite disagreement within the Union over the position to be taken, Paris declared the Syrian ambassador in France persona non grata; the ambassador remained in Paris as a UNESCO permanent delegate, an issue depicted with some humor by the press.⁴⁹ In June, new sanctions were adopted extending the embargo to arms sale.⁵⁰ In November, a failure in Syria was seen as a threat to European security by the Foreign minister Fabius, mentioning terrorism, arms proliferation, illegal immigration and energy security as potential threats.⁵¹

- France was seen at the forefront of the campaign. As early as February, France was asking for secured access to victims and providing assistance on the ground.⁵² In August, at the Ambassadors conference, Hollande called for European firmness to deal with the crisis.⁵³ The press praised France for being attentive to the Syrian crisis after failing to deal with the Tunisian revolution.⁵⁴ In November, France was the first EU country to recognize the Syrian opposition as the only legitimate state in Syria.⁵⁵ Hollande promised to keep working on persuading his European partners.⁵⁶ This leading role led to France becoming the main player in the Mali campaign that was approved in Brussels the same month.⁵⁷

- There was a desire for further engagement and disappointment with the way the EU was dealing with the crisis. In June, Laurent Fabius, France’s Foreign minister invited his European partners to instill deeper sanctions on the Syrian regime; an invitation that be-

came more insistent in the following months.⁵⁸ In October, Fabius sent a letter cosigned with the Italian Foreign minister, to Catherine Ashton, the EU's foreign minister calling for further engagement.⁵⁹ *Le Monde* criticized the EU for failing to unite and affirm its role as a central actor in the crisis.⁶⁰ *Libération* viewed the Syrian crisis as a major test for the EU's existence as a global political actor.⁶¹ An even more critical opinion was voiced by the French eurodeputy Rachida Dati who denounced the "weakness if not to say inexistence" of the EU in the Syrian crisis.⁶²

2012 IN REVIEW:

The most discussed issue in France was that of the Euro crisis as it was also the most contentious subject within the Union. In fact, many economic articles, even those limited to purely domestic issues, were linked to the regional crisis. At first, the debate focused on France's triple A rating; it seemed crucial for the country to remain in a certain group within the Union, and there was a general worry that a downgrade would situate France in a European economic "south".⁶³ Moreover, the economic crisis was also central to the presidential elections. Each candidate had its own views on the solutions needed, but it is clear that the three major dailies in France were in favor of the Hollande proposal of increase growth.⁶⁴ As for the incumbent President at the time, his suggestions were almost always tied to Germany whom he frequently cited as a model of success and consequently did not oppose further austerity measures.⁶⁵ Perhaps the candidate that was most criticized was LePen who wanted to withdraw from the euro in favor of protectionist policies; her proposal being described in the press as harmful to the whole region.⁶⁶ However, there was no single current of ideas in the press about what should be done, some praising the call for growth of the new government while others criticized its reluctance to more federalism in the EU. Indeed, the subtext in the crisis coverage was the central role of France within the EU.⁶⁷ It is clear that both the press and the politicians did not want France to be on the sidelines of policy-making. Despite the doubts concerning the future of the euro zone and the general feeling of gloom in the press because no end seemed in sight, there was still a belief that France had regional responsibilities and that the European project was still alive.⁶⁸

A closely related theme was that of the special relationship between France and Germany within the EU. This subject appeared to be the way to poke fun at an issue as serious as the crisis. Indeed, whether it was France under the leadership of Sarkozy or

then with Hollande, headlines could be mistaken for tabloid coverage of a torrid affair. The press speaks of courting the “beautiful German”, of “a couple” in trouble and even fuses the leaders’ names as Merkel and Sarkozy become “Merkozy” and a hope that one day “Merlande” will exist.⁶⁹ Humor aside, it is clear that the press values the German partner within the Union but at the same time a kind of brotherly competition seems to rise. For instance, French failures are described in opposition to German successes.⁷⁰ Similarly, joint leadership of the Union is deemed important as long as it is not at the expense of France being marginalized. Indeed, the press approved of Hollande standing up to Merkel, yet worried this would mean that France would no longer be part of the elite club.⁷¹

Finally, the third major theme was that of the EU engagement in international crises. France considers itself an important global player and there is high coverage and awareness of international issues. The case of the Syrian crisis shows how France wished the EU would play a more assertive role abroad, a role where it would accept a forefront position.⁷² Coverage of the crisis expressed frustrations but also acceptance of a global financial hardship, the coverage of the Syrian crisis expressed actual disillusionment with the EU. The EU was criticized for failing to present a united front and for being hesitant to take firmer stands and actions.⁷³

To conclude, the France-EU relationship has become increasingly strained given the events of 2012 and can be expressed as one of constant highs and lows. The press, in typical French sentimental rhetoric, wants to believe in a larger project and dream. At the same time, it is clear that the national sentiment is still strong, as there is no doubt that France comes first and that the future expectations from the EU are high.

¹ Chalumeau, Thomas. “Oui, l'éventuelle perte du triple A de la France serait une catastrophe”, *Le Monde*, 11 December 2011, accessed December 27, 2012.

Guillon, Stéphane. “Marche funèbre pour le triple A”, *Libération*, 17 January 2012, accessed December 27.

² Gatinois, Claire. “Une spirale déclinante menace la France”, *Le Monde*, 7 December 2011, accessed December 27, 2012.

³ “Pour l'euro, l'Europe se dote d'une discipline de fer”, *Libération*, 31 January 2012, accessed December 27, 2012.

⁴ Faujas, Alain. “Tenons-nous à l'euro? ”, *Le Monde*, 13 December 2011, accessed January 6, 2013.

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- ⁵ Guélaud, Claire. "Dettes publiques, déficit extérieur et croissance : ce que disent les statistiques et comment elles sont interprétées", *Le Monde*, 4 May 2012, accessed December 27, 2012.
- ⁶ Duhamel, Alain. "La bataille du traité budgétaire européen", *Libération*, 3 October 2012, accessed December 27, 2012.
- ⁷ "M. Sarkozy se pose en garant des intérêts de la France en Europe", *Le Monde*, 2 December 2011, accessed December 27, 2012.
- ⁸ Ricard, Philippe. "La sortie de l'euro alourdirait encore la dette", *Le Monde*, 14 January 2012, accessed December 27, 2012.
- Assouline, Gary. "Le score de Le Pen inquiète les dirigeants européens", *Le Figaro*, 23 April 2012, accessed December 27, 2012.
- ⁹ "Grèce : "doutes levés" (Hollande)", *Le Figaro*, 27 November 2012, accessed December 27, 2012.
- ¹⁰ Gatinois, Claire. "Une spirale déclinante menace la France", *Le Monde*, 7 December 2011, accessed December 27, 2012.
- Ricard, Philippe. "La France bloque la candidature de M. Schäuble à la tête de l'Eurogroupe", *Le Monde*, 31 May 2012, accessed December 27, 2012.
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GERMANY

Laura Lamster

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 81,305,856
- Ethnic composition: German 91.5%, Turkish 2.4%, other 6.1% (made up largely of Greek, Italian, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish)
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$39,100
- EU member entry date: 1952¹
- EU funding in 2011: Net contributor

MEDIA SOURCES:

Süddeutsche Zeitung

- Founding date: 1945
- Ownership: Südwestdeutsche Medienholding²
- Daily circulation: 445,000

Die Welt

- Founding date: 1946
- Ownership: Axel Springer³
- Daily circulation: 263,000

Der Spiegel

- Founding date: 1947
- Ownership: Rudolf Augstein's successors Gruner + Jahr & Co⁴
- Readership: 976,000 weekly

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 100 (Süddeutsche Zeitung-39; Die Welt-30; Der Spiegel-31)
- List of search words searched: "EU, European, EU", "EU Financial Crisis", "EMS Judgment", "Constitutional Challenge", "EU Unemployment", "Youth-unemployment", "France, Germany, Relations", "Sarkozy Merkel", "Hollande Merkel"

From these findings the following 3 major topic stand out as the leading issues related to Germany-EU relations reported on in 2012:

The European Financial Crisis: The ESM and Fiscal Compact Treaties

- Over the course of 2012 the European Fiscal Compact Treaty as well as the European Stability Mechanism Treaty (ESM) were the main focuses of the media with regard to the European Financial Crisis. The European Fiscal Compact Treaty “aimed at strengthening fiscal discipline and introducing stricter surveillance within the euro area, in particular by establishing a ‘balanced budget rule’.”⁵ The European Stability Mechanism is a ‘permanent crisis resolution mechanism’ that issues debt instruments in order to finance loans and other forms of financial assistance to Member States of the Eurozone.⁶ Following the signing of the ESM on February 2nd and the signing of the Fiscal Compact on March 2nd, a heated political debate, between German politicians, academics, and citizens evolved.⁷
- The overall debate presented by the media takes into account both positive and negative sentiments towards the treaties. However, the opposing opinions seem to prevail slightly. These include the criticism that the treaty does not provide for a right of cancellation and that Germany would be responsible for sponsoring debtor countries for 30 years.⁸
- On June 28th the *Bundestag* agreed on the Fiscal Compact Treaty as well as the ESM. Subsequent to this decision, the first constitutional complaints arrived at the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe.⁹
- While at the beginning of the year opposing opinions prevailed only marginally, throughout the year, especially after both the *Bundestag* and the *Bundesrat* (the Federal Council of Germany) passed the treaties on June 30th, they seemed to increase drastically and become more critical.¹⁰ According to the media the main argument of the opponents is that the Fiscal Compact and the ESM conflict with the principle of democracy (budgetary competences of the parliament were transferred to Brussels and the ratification was rushed through and bypassed the population).¹¹
- Following the decision by the *Bundestag* and *Bundesrat* constitutional complaints started to increase and by September more people than ever had joined the constitutional challenge.¹²
- On September 12th the Constitutional Court approved the treaties, which was an extremely significant decision for Europe, as subsequently to this decision the ESM entered into force on September 27th and the Fiscal Compact on January 1st, 2013.¹³
- Angela Merkel and Federal President Joachim Gauck welcomed the decision.¹⁴ The media, too, responded positively about the settling of the treaties and only few articles, towards the end of the year, reported on any negative consequences of the treaties.

The Repercussions of the Euro-Crisis: Unemployment

- At the beginning of the year the media represented the effects of the financial crisis on Germany itself as quite limited. Germany's exports were described to be high as ever and in terms of unemployment Germany was claimed to experience improvements. After Austria, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, Germany had the lowest unemployment rate within the EU.¹⁵
- The media's positive attitude continued throughout the year until November, when the reports began to assert that the negative repercussions of the crisis had struck Germany. While Germany's export-economy had been resilient during the first half of the year, by the end of 2012 the decline in Germany's export revenue approached that last seen in 2009.¹⁶
- However, the reports' predictions for 2013 conveyed a rather positive attitude, claiming that by the spring of 2013 the situation would have improved once again.¹⁷
- The second point of focus the media held in regard to unemployment was the devastating effect the euro crisis had on youth unemployment within the EU.¹⁸
- However, the media accentuated that Germany does not share this problem by having the lowest youth unemployment rate within Europe and thus paid attention to Southern European countries, which seemed most affected by this issue.¹⁹
- With regards to improving the situation of European adolescents, Germany suggests several measures that could be taken. For example, Ursula von der Leyen's, Federal Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, idea of "Euro-vocational-Training" – a European market for education and training to provide more cross-border youth employment.²⁰
- The third focus of the media centered on measures proposed by the EC, one of which was proposed in April suggesting minimum wages as well as a complete opening of the job markets for job seekers from Eastern European countries. Another measure was proposed in December recommending guaranteed occupations for young EU citizens under 25. Germany opposed both of these measures, as youth unemployment did not constitute a major problem within Germany itself.²¹

French-German Relations: The Election of President Francois Hollande

- At the beginning of the year the media presented the relationship between Germany and France, and more specifically that of Presi-

dent Nicolas Sarkozy and Chancellor Angela Merkel, as positive overall. President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel seemed to agree on how to revitalize the EU in times of crisis. French citizens' perception of Germany was reported to be positive; French-German relations had significantly improved since the beginning of the crisis.²²

- Towards the end of February the presidential election campaigns of Nicolas Sarkozy and Francois Hollande in France began. During this time the German media focused on the three following aspects: firstly, it accentuated the strong connection, unity and friendship between President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel, which seemed to have been intensified by means of the election campaign.²³ Secondly, it criticized Angela Merkel's 'Hollande-Boycott,' emphasizing the potential negative repercussions of Merkel's decision not to receive Hollande during his campaign.²⁴ Lastly, the media emphasized the potential disagreement that would arise from the election of Hollande, especially regarding the EU financial crisis, creating a sense of apprehension in the media.²⁵

- Following Hollande's election in May, the press analyzed the first meetings between France's new President and Angela Merkel, pointing out that both demonstrated willingness to work together; however, that their differing political views, especially with regard to the European financial crisis, were more than apparent.²⁶

- Towards the end of the year, the relationship between Chancellor Merkel and President Hollande was mainly described as aggressive. The Euro Crisis was not led by Germany and France as a unified front, but was now characterized by compromise.²⁷

- The media stressed the importance of French-German reconciliation, as the EU would otherwise face an even more severe North-South divide than before.²⁸

2012 IN REVIEW:

Throughout 2012 the following three topics affected the relationship of Germany and the EU: firstly the agreement on the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and Fiscal Compact Treaties; secondly, the negative repercussions of the financial crisis, specifically with regard to unemployment; and thirdly, the election of François Hollande as the new President of France, resulting in a change of French-German relations with regard to EU-crisis politics.

Following the agreement on the ESM and Fiscal Compact Treaties, on a European basis, the question of ratification within Germany arose. At the beginning of the year the debate concerning

whether the treaties would improve the euro-crisis, or rather impair Germany's economy, was presented by the national media in a neutral manner. However, after both the *Bundestag* and *Bundesrat*, in a hastened procedure without much discussion, passed both treaties on June 30th, the media's representation of the ESM and the Fiscal Compact changed drastically.

In accordance with most of the opposing politicians, the media emphasized those aspects of the treaties that might harm Germany's economic wealth and highlighted how the treaties would violate the principle of democracy. This negative representation was accompanied by several constitutional claims, resulting in a constitutional challenge with the highest number of applicants in history. The media stirred the German citizens to place all their hope into the Federal Constitutional Court's decision, which eventually 'disappointed' the citizens approving both, the ESM as well as the Fiscal Compact. This being the case, it can be concluded that while Germany's position, in form of the executive and judiciary, remained the same with regard to the EU, citizens following the media's analysis of the issue, will have changed their views on the EU – most likely for the worse – by the end of 2012.

Whilst German citizens might have changed their opinion of the EU following the media's representation of the ESM and Fiscal Compact, the actual fear of the crisis' negative repercussions on Germany's economic wealth might have been lowered or at least remained the same by the end of 2012. Particularly, at the beginning of the year, the media emphasized how the financial crisis seemed to have no effect on Germany itself. German exports were higher than ever before, while unemployment was decreasing and the significant issue of youth unemployment throughout the EU (specifically in the South) did not seem to affect Germany either. Thus, by accentuating these positive developments, the media conveyed an impression of security to German citizens, taking away the fears of the financial crisis. Even though during November the media's positive attitude became more reserved and began to call attention to some negative developments, by the end of the year citizens were given hope for the upcoming year. With regard to EU measures, the Commission proposed two programs, however, the German government opposed both. This development is compelling, especially in contrast to the previous issue, regarding the ESM and Fiscal Compact, where it was the government, in form of the executive and judicial, that remained pro-EU throughout the year. In the case of EU unemployment, it was the media that stressed the need for improvement in the crisis coun-

tries and the government itself that opposed. Overall, the issue of unemployment or in broader terms the negative repercussions of the EU crisis did not affect Germany's relations with the EU.

The last major issue, affecting German-EU relations during the year 2012, was that of Francois Hollande's election. Angela Merkel and Nikolas Sarkozy seemed to cooperate effectively with regard to the euro crisis. The media conveyed the impression that they agreed on measures that would lead Europe out of its crisis. During the actual election campaign this strong unity, as presented by the media, increased further. Thus, the media accentuated the strong connection between Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy and contrasted it with the problems that would arise if Francois Hollande would become President. The media also criticized Merkel's decision to 'boycott' Francois Hollande, as this would 'backfire' in the case of Hollande's election. After Holland's actual election this impression was confirmed by analyzing the meetings between Merkel and Hollande and their demeanor at EU summits, pointing out the remoteness, antagonism and discordance that overshadowed their relationship. This change within French-German relations was claimed to affect the progress of the EU crisis negatively, as a North-South divide would ensue.

In conclusion, the three issues discussed in this report and their representation by the media have caused both the improvement and deterioration of German perception of the EU. While the government's actions with regard to the ESM and Fiscal Compact were pro-EU, the media's representation thereof was rather negative, resulting in a perception of apprehension. Furthermore, the change in the French Presidency, as presented by the media, has resulted in fear of inefficient progress in the crisis. However, the persistent problem of unemployment and a decrease in economic wealth in most European countries did not seem to affect Germany. Therefore, the media's representation of Germany's progress in contrast to the situation in many of the EU's struggling countries, overall improved German citizens' perceptions of the EU.

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GREECE

Alexandros Konstantinos Hoc

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 10,767,827
- Ethnic composition: 93% Greek, 7% other
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$26,600 / €20,526
- EU member entry date: 1981
- Eurozone entry date: 2001
- EU funding in 2011: net recipient

MEDIA SOURCES:

To Vima

- Founding date: 1984
- Ownership: Lambrakis Press Group
- Daily circulation: 116,000¹

I Kathimerini

- Founding date: 1911
- Ownership: Ioannis and Aristides Alafouzos²
- Daily circulation: 26,246

Ta Nea

- Founding date: 1931 as «*Τα Αθηναϊκά Νέα*» / “The Athenian News”, until 1945; *Ta Nea* from May 1945³
- Ownership: Lambrakis Press Group⁴
- Daily circulation: 53,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 120 (To Vima-43; I Kathimerini-46; Ta Nea-31)
- List of search words: “EU”, “Eurozone”, “crisis”, “European Commission”, “European Central Bank / ECB”

From these findings the following three major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Greek-EU relations reported on in 2012:

Internal Crisis: Further austerity, political and social unrest

- General reporting focused primarily on the domestic economic situation, emphasizing the importance of legislation concerning austerity measures and public sector restructuring which successive governments introduced to parliament, most often within nar-

row margins of the deadlines set by creditors.⁵ Continued economic support from the Troika (IMF-ECB-European Commission) in the form of a second bail-out package worth €130 billion in conjunction with the restructuring of Greek government debt featured prominently in media discourse throughout the year.⁶

- Reports focused on the repercussions of the austerity measures necessitated by the Troika and their ramifications on Greek civil society, particularly in reference to rising unemployment, increased taxation, and reductions of the minimum wage, as well as cuts to government spending, wages, and pensions.⁷ The resulting riots and repeated protests in Athens and other major cities received extensive media coverage.⁸

- Reports emphasized the pressure exerted by officials of the Troika as well as by individual member-states, particularly Germany and France, focusing specifically on the criticism of the Greek government's actions with respect to meeting deadlines and targets in efforts to reduce the budgetary deficit.⁹ The issue of fiscal sovereignty was frequently mentioned in conjunction to the creditors' demands on the Greek government.¹⁰

- Elections taking place on May 6th failed to produce a government; as a result, a provisional government was formed to prepare for a second election on June 17th, and during this time media attention focused on party platforms in support of or arguing against the continued bail-out funding and accompanying austerity measures.¹¹ After the second round of elections in July, a pro-bailout coalition government under the centre-right New Democracy party emerged. Meanwhile reports focused intently on pressure from Germany, France and the EU *in toto* for the swift formation of a pro-European coalition government willing to push forward reforms necessary for Greece to be given the next installment of the bail-out package.¹²

- A large proportion of coverage concerning decisions of internal governance were linked to Troika and ECB actors, including, in the plurality of cases Angela Merkel (German Chancellor), Christine Lagarde (Managing Director of the IMF), Ollie Rehn (EU Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs), Wolfgang Schäuble (German Federal Minister of Finance) and Mario Draghi (President of the ECB).¹³

- Towards the end of 2012 reports focused on successive meetings between Greek ministers and Troika delegates in the process of agreeing to the domestic budget for 2013-2014.¹⁴ Reports extensively covered the negotiations leading to further austerity measures of €13.5 billion,¹⁵ and the strain this imposed on the

coalition government,¹⁶ while emphasizing the debate among EU officials concerning the possibility of a two-year extension to the Greek programme,¹⁷ potentially leading to a third bail-out package and further austerity measures until 2016.¹⁸

The Eurocrisis in broader perspective:

- Apart from media coverage concerning issues of internal politics and governance, there was wide-spread coverage of the larger picture of the Eurocrisis outside Greece.
- On this matter, reports covered developments at the European level, particularly the alterations of the Memorandum of Understanding pertaining to Greece, joint supervision of national budgets, decisions to increase the amount of the European bail-out account, and the actions of the EU and ECB in view of crisis alleviation maneuvers.¹⁹ The negative impact of the continuing Eurocrisis is also covered extensively.²⁰
- Media also reported on the deepening crisis in neighbouring Eurozone countries, specifically Ireland, Italy, Spain and Portugal.²¹ Areas of focus include the economy, unemployment rates and the possibility or implementation of bail-outs in these and other EU member-states.²²
- Additionally, there was extensive coverage of the portrayal of Greece and the effects of the Greek crisis on Europe as covered by the foreign media, particularly of scenarios concerning the trajectory of the Greek economy.²³ Other publications are quoted for their defense or support of the situation in Greece.²⁴
- Interviews and meetings of heads of state and government of member-states with EU officials received extensive coverage, particularly summit meetings and interviews concerning the need for growth in Europe to offset the continuing recession.²⁵ General reporting most widely covered Angela Merkel, Francois Hollande and Herman Van Rompuy.²⁶

“Grexit”

- The issue of a Greek exit from the common currency became a major concern for all sources throughout the year.²⁷ The difficulties experienced by the coalition under technocrat Prime Minister Lucas Papademos at the beginning of 2012, the inability of parties to form a government after the May elections, and the delays in implementing the necessary reforms were connected to the strong possibility of Greece leaving the Eurozone.²⁸
- Wide media coverage was given to the results of the May elections which indicated the high level of support for anti-

austerity/anti-bailout parties, sparking further speculation among the press that a Greek exit was imminent.²⁹

- Foreign media also featured prominently in domestic reporting, along with the predictions in the foreign media surrounding a Greek exit.³⁰ Reports also covered EU officials and publications both confirming and denying the danger of Greece leaving or being ejected from the common currency area throughout the year, emphasizing the repercussions a Greek exit would have on the future of Europe and the common currency.³¹

- The possibility of Greek exit from the Euro was connected through the year to the perceived unwillingness of the Greek government to implement the necessary measures.³² The larger question of whether the Greek debt—even following the “haircut” in the first quarter of 2012—was viable, and the alternative methods of unofficially restructuring Greek debt were the focus of the media.

2012 IN REVIEW:

Through 2012, the following issues affected relations between Greece and the EU: the internal political and civil crises arising from the need for continued economic support by the Troika of external lenders; the Euro crisis affecting the EU and Eurozone in broader perspective; and the fear of a Greek exit from the Euro. The domestic newspaper sources consulted offer a convincing portrayal of Greek-EU relations through 2012.

The continuing need of the Greek government for external funding of its budgetary deficit as well as the need of international creditors to secure a solution to what was deemed a disproportionately large and ultimately unviable Greek national debt was the topic dominating news reports in 2012.

While the perceived lack of internal government cohesion and ineffectiveness worked to the detriment of Greek-EU relations from the standpoint of the EU, the austerity measures necessary to secure the massive bail-out packages and “haircut” of national debt led to mass civil unrest and high domestic unemployment, especially among young people, leading to reciprocal feelings of unease toward the EU in the eyes of Greek society. European leaders acknowledged that Greece would be unable to meet its fiscal requirements without the bail-outs and exerted significant pressure on successive Greek governments throughout the year to meet legislative deadlines and reduced budgetary figures.

Reporting on this issue reflects the perception in Greece of an imposed solution resembling the dictation of terms by external actors, particularly Germany, leading to reduced trust in the EU and the

future of Greek participation in the Union itself being questioned. As 2012 came to a close and a comprehensive solution for Greek debt still remained elusive, reporting indicated that Greece questioned the EU's continuing commitment to solving the problems at hand, particularly in view of the continuing economic recession within the country, and the deleterious effects this had on the domestic population.

The Greek media also focused on the ramifications of the Euro crisis in broader perspective, with reporting comparing and contrasting EU actions regarding other countries in crisis, such as Spain, Portugal, and Italy. Reporting focused on the potential impact on the EU and Eurozone should problems in these countries – similar to those in Greece – also lead those countries to feel isolated, due to a lack of proper structure and support from their European partners. While the sources consulted also testify to the importance for Greece of broader institutional changes at the European level, such as a pact for growth or common scrutiny of national budgets, the emphasis on reporting the views and statements of EU leaders shows the growing importance and domestic focus of these supra-national actors. In fact, reporting on these leaders shows the dichotomy of an evolving mistrust of Greek society toward actors outside the domestic political stage, while concomitantly acknowledging that the fate of Greece and its continued membership within the EU and Eurozone rests largely in the hands of these actors.

Reports gleaned from foreign media sources by the Greek press also portray a stalemate concerning support for Greece: the perception that Greece was not holding to its side of the agreements explicit in certain media sources contrasted with publications lauding the bold steps taken by the Greek government, and praising Greek society for the heavy burden of taxation and unemployment that it was shouldering. While Greek-EU relations stayed largely on par with previous years in this respect due to the middle ground European officials chose in their dealings with the Greek government, reporting shows a negative trend from within Greece toward the EU, as the sacrifices being made by the population were considered to be taken for granted abroad.

The issue of a Greek exit from the Eurozone, sometimes erroneously correlated with an exit from the EU as a whole, dominated media reporting as national government instability was at its height, particularly toward the beginning and middle of 2012. The tenuous coalition government under a technocrat prime minister during the first months of the year as well as the one-month gap

following the failure to form a government after the May elections led to a transitional government before elections could be held again, sparking further fears of Greece's return to a national currency. Reporting highlighted the rise in popularity of anti-austerity parties, fuelled by the negative feelings within Greece toward the EU and external creditors. The perception in the media that Greece was unable, or may be unwilling, to fulfill the stipulations of the Memorandum of Understanding with its creditors and the fears that Greece may unilaterally renege on debt repayment, continued to feed fears concerning a 'Grexit', increasing negative perceptions of Greece within the European community as a whole.

The mixed treatment of Greece by the EU and international creditors, as well as the elusive nature of a comprehensive solution to make Greek debt viable while reducing unemployment and promoting economic growth, have led to markedly negative perceptions of the EU within Greece. From the EU standpoint, the Greek coalition government formed at the second round of national elections has since shown its resilience and commitment to keeping Greece in Europe and the common currency, while pursuing the necessary fiscal arrangements and continuing austerity measures, leading to an improvement in EU-Greek relations and a more optimistic outlook for the future.

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- ³⁰ «New York Times: Η τρόικα δανειζει την Ελλάδα για να πληρώνει τον εαυτό της.» *Το Βήμα*. 30 May 2012. Accessed November 14, 2012.
- Χειλάς, Νίκος. «Εγγραφο του γερμανικού υπ. Οικονομικών παρουσιάζει ζοφερό σενάριο κατάρρευσης του ευρώ.» *Το Βήμα*. 24 June 2012. Accessed November 15, 2012.
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³¹ Παππάς, Γιώργος. «Καταστροφή η επιστροφή στη δραχμή». *Τα Νέα*. 24 January 2012. Accessed November 17, 2012.

«Σόιμπλε: Ανυπολόγιστη καταστροφή η έξοδος της Ελλάδας από την ευρωζώνη». *Τα Νέα*. 27 March 2012. Accessed November 12, 2012.

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Κανελλόπουλος, Γιώργος. «Συναγερμός σε ΗΠΑ και Βρετανία για τον κίνδυνο ντόμινο». *Τα Νέα*. 18 May 2012. Accessed November 15, 2012.

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“British chancellor's 'Grexit' comments cause stir”. *I Kathimerini*. 13 June 2012. Accessed November 17, 2012.

«Γιούνκερ: Τεράστια αρνητικά επακόλουθα η έξοδος της Ελλάδας από το ευρώ.» *Τα Νέα*. 29 July 2012. Accessed November 15, 2012.

³² Διαμαντόπουλος, Θανάσης. «Μας δείχνουν την έξοδο....» *Τα Νέα*. 27 August 2012. Accessed November 14, 2012.

HUNGARY

Daniel Csorgo

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 9,958,453
- Ethnic composition: Hungarian 92.3%, Roma 1.9%, other or unknown 5.8%
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$19,800
- EU member entry date: 2004
- EU funding in 2011: net recipient

MEDIA SOURCES:

Blikk

- Founding date: 1993
- Ownership: Ringier
- Daily circulation: 181,558¹

Origo

- Founding date: 1998
- Ownership: Origo media group
- Daily circulation: 892,000²

Index

- Founding date: 1999
- Ownership: Central European Media & Publishing
- Readership: 1,200,000 monthly readership³

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted 82: (Origo-33; Index-31; Blikk-18)
- List of search words: “EU and Hungary”, “ Malev, EU”, “Media Laws, EU”, and “Loan, IMF, EU”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Hungary-EU relations reported on in 2012:

Changes to Hungary’s media law

- Through late 2011 concerns over Hungary’s media laws have been rising, with both the Hungarian Ombudsman and Freedom house (a non-governmental organization that researches and advocates for human rights, political freedom, and democracy) worrying about the Hungarian media and news sources.⁴ Original changes that were made to the media laws in 2010 included new

registration requirements for media outlets, the creation of a new media regulatory board, and the introduction of new public broadcasting structure.

- Concerns arose from members of the European Parliament, specifically from the European Green Party, over Hungarian media laws, and the way that they impact the freedom of the press.⁵ Others who voiced concern include Thomas Melia, who is the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, at the United States Department of State, said that these media laws are just an example of how political power within Hungary rests in the hands of only a select few.⁶

- One of the most controversial cases that concern the new media laws has to do with Klub radio (a popular left-liberal radio station in Hungary), that due to the changes to the media law, and in turn the media regulatory board, was in a battle over the FM frequency of 95.3 after their prior license for the frequency expired, although a slight extension was given to them to stay on that frequency.⁷ Even after licensing extensions, Klub Radio did not end up winning their previous broadcasting frequency due to the Hungarian media authority, this in turn brought up even more questions on how the new media laws will impact Hungary.⁸

- In response to the media laws there were protests held outside Hungarian embassies, specifically the Hungarian embassy in Rome, the main focus of these protests were to state that Hungary was heading down a dangerous path limiting the media's freedom, and that the rest of Europe should not follow in its footsteps.⁹ In the international community even Freedom House started to worry about the freedom of the Hungarian press due to the new media laws.¹⁰

- In May the controversial media laws, went under review again.¹¹ It was at this point that the Hungarian Ombudsman started to talk about the possibility of withdrawing multiple points of the media law.¹² In response to public outcry, the Hungarian government amended the law removing its most controversial aspects. However, concerns over the law's infringement on human rights have not been subdued. Human Rights Watch stated its belief that the EU must interfere in order to guarantee the protection of Hungarian citizen's right to freedom of speech.¹³

Hungary rejects the conditions of loans dictated by the IMF and the European Commission

- In 2011 Hungary experienced economic problems, instigated by a decrease in value of its currency, the Forint, thus prompting the

Hungarian government to request financial assistance from the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).¹⁴ The financial aid package, requested by the Hungarian government, was based on predictions of Hungarian fiscal reform. The European Commission and the IMF demanded the strengthening the Hungarian Fiscal Council and restore the Central Bank's independence.¹⁵

- The Hungarian government and Hungarians objected to the European Commission and IMF's conditions, hindering further negotiations. Hungary's reluctance to reform jeopardized its chances of receiving a foreign bailout.¹⁶ As a result, initial negotiations throughout the first half of the year were postponed to a later date.¹⁷

- After numerous delays, a date was finalized and further dialogue with the IMF and the European Commission resumed on July 17th 2012. During the resumed negotiations conditions proposed for Hungary included: the lowering of retirement payments, an increase in the retirement age, privatization, and local government spending cuts.¹⁸

- Negotiations quickly ended when both sides could not agree upon any of the terms. Once again, discussions were further postponed.¹⁹ Negotiations continued to be postponed and the entire affair hung in the balance. On September 6th, 2012 Prime Minister Viktor Orbán stated that Hungary would not accept any assistance from the IMF because the conditions demanded were too harsh.²⁰ Orbán's speech isolated foreign investors that had assisted Hungary in the past; Hungarian media seriously questioned the possibility of economic recovery at this point.²¹ Orbán, repeatedly, stated that an agreement with the IMF is still possible, however, political and economic analysts rebutted stating, that the chances of an agreement were slim.²² With or without IMF loans Orbán went on to say Hungary would be successful.

- In response to this the IMF cancelled any further discussions with Hungary.²³ Although no agreement has been made, the Hungarian government remains positive about the country's economic future, going as far as stating the country will not have to default.²⁴ At the moment, there is potential for renegotiations with IMF to begin in January, however, it is not to discuss the prospects of a loan. The talks will be instead a business conference. Therefore, there seems to be no future plans for loan negotiations between Hungary and the IMF/ EU.²⁵

- Prior to 2012, Malév Hungarian airlines experienced numerous financial problems including issues with loans and the threat of foreign ownership.²⁶ Late December the threat of Malév bankruptcy was so prevalent, the Hungarian government bailed out the airline company for approximately 5 billion forints. Additional financial assistance was later scrapped.²⁷

- After numerous years of financial assistance from the state, amounting to about 38 billion forints, the EU came to the decision that Malév would have to pay all of it back to the Hungarian government.²⁸ The EU stated that the aid was illegal because Malév in its current condition could not have secured outside funding.²⁹ It was after these EU rulings that the government and Malév started to worry about the future success of the airlines.³⁰ It later became evident that the airline would not be able to repay the financial aid they received and company declared bankruptcy protection and prepared for the possibility of halting its flights.³¹ Malév went into bankruptcy protection on February 2nd of 2012 and the following day, on February 3rd, officially declared bankruptcy halting all flights, leaving thousands of passengers stranded around the world.³²

- The closing of Malév also impacted the Liszt Ferenc Airport causing layoffs of thousands of workers and putting a large financial strain on the airport and the government.³³ Since the Hungarian government heavily invested in Malév, the impact of the company's bankruptcy negatively impacted the country's economy, as evidenced by a reported drop of 0,3 to 0,5 percent in Hungary's GDP.³⁴ Further complicating the matter, Hungary must pay a debt of about 112 million euros to the Russian Vnesheconombank.³⁵ When asked about the future of a new Hungarian Airline, Orbán Viktor, the prime minister of Hungary, stated there is a possibility that a new national airline will be founded sometime in the future.³⁶

2012 IN REVIEW:

Over the past few years the relationship between Hungary and the EU has been deteriorating. The events that occurred in late 2011 and 2012 did not improve the relationship between Hungary and the EU. The introduction of Hungary's new media laws caused numerous political tensions to rise between the two since the media law took away some of the freedoms the press previously held, and the strength of the media authority was overbearing. The rise of the conservative FIDESZ party and their subsequent parliamentary super majority concerns EU official because laws which can be unconstitutional by limiting the freedom of press

for the press, can pass by parliament freely. Major concerns were raised over the Klub Radio controversy, which further strengthened the EU's claims that FIDESZ has too much power within the government. Citizens of Hungary were mostly in favour of the EU's condemnation of the Hungarian government for its controversial laws. Specifically, those citizens opposed to Orbán and the FIDESZ party were in favour of the EU's decision.

Worsening the relations between the EU and Hungary was the state of the Hungarian economy. Even though the negotiations between the EU, the International Monetary Fund and the Hungarian government were supposed to help Hungary economically, the discussions only soured the relations between Hungary and the two institutions. The economic situation in Hungary has continued to worsen over time, especially since of the plummeting of Hungarian "creditworthiness" alongside the necessary national debt repayment. The IMF would have assisted Hungary from debt repayment pressure. However, the negotiations over the terms of the loan quickly stalled. When Orbán stated that he believed Hungary would be able to succeed without the aid of the IMF loan negotiations ceased. Orbán's comments portrayed Hungary as a country that is not open to compromise even though Hungary is in desperate need of assistance from the EU. Since Orbán statement the EU and the IMF have not made any further plans for negotiations. Due to these statements, the relations with the EU seem to be worse off. Hungary has been shown in a bad light, depicted as a country that when offered help refused it. Among the citizens, those who support Orbán will see this as a smart move and be in support of declining assistance from the EU and IMF in the future. On the other hand, those in opposition to Orbán will still be in favour of receiving assistance from the EU in the future.

Another issue related to the Hungarian economy and its affects on Hungary's relationship with the EU is the financial troubles of the Hungarian airline Malév. The bankruptcy of Malév greatly affected both the Hungarian government and its people. The Hungarian media outlets portrayed the bankruptcy of Malév as a result of the EU ruling. The EU ruled that the financial assistance paid by the Hungarian government to Malév as not legal therefore needing to be repaid. Unable to repay its extensive bailout Malév declared bankruptcy. Even though this event had major repercussions for Hungary, the relations with the EU did not really get worsen. There was no major backlash between the government and the EU, and the government still remains optimistic about the revival of a Hungarian Airline in the future. Those impacted the most by this deci-

sion were the Hungarian people due to the layoffs at the Liszt Ferenc Airport. Even though the people of Hungary have been impacted the most by the bankruptcy, they do not seem to have any changed their attitude towards the EU or the Hungarian government.

Over the course of 2012 the relations between Hungary and the EU have not seen noticeable changes. The relations between the EU and the government of Hungary deteriorated slightly, due to the major events that occurred, although on a grand scale relations stayed about the same as they were in 2011.

¹ "Blikk." *Ringier Publishing*, 2012. Date of access: 2/11/2012.

² "Origo." *Origo Media Corp.* 2012. Date of access: 2/11/2012.

³ "Index Általános médiaajánlat." *Central European Media & Publishing.* 2012. Date of access: 2/11/2012.

⁴ "Az ombudsman szerint jobban kell védeni az újságírók forrásait" *Origo*, 16 November 2011. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

"Veszélyben a média sokszínűsége a Freedom House szerint" *Origo*, 04 December 2011. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

⁵ "Nyílt levélben aggódnak a magyar demokráciáért az európai zöldek" *Origo*, 20 December 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

⁶ "Kevés kézben koncentrálódik a hatalom" - interjú a magyar kormányt bíráló amerikai államtitkárral" *Origo*, 16 December 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

⁷ "Jövő héten dönt az NMHH a Klub Rádió hosszabbítási kérelméről" *Index*, 5 February, 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

"Az utolsó pillanatban újabb 60 napot kapott a Klub Rádió" *Index*, 7 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

⁸ "A Klub Rádió nyerte a 92,9 MHz-es frekvenciát első fokon" *Index*, 28 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

"Új győztest kell hirdetni a 95,3-as frekvenciára" *Index*, 14 March 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

"MSZP: mondjon le a médiatanács" *Index*, 15 March 2012

"Az NMHH fellebbez a Klubrádió-ügyben" *Index*, 23 March 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

⁹ "Ötvenen tüntettek Rómában a magyar sajtószabadságért" *Origo*, 11 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

¹⁰ "Már csak részben szabad a magyar sajtó" *Origo*, 01 May 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

"Freedom House: Csak részben szabad a magyar sajtó" *Index*, 01 May 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

¹¹ "Még májusban módosul a médiatörvény" *Origo*, 19 April 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

¹² "Médiatörvény: az ombudsman több pontot is megsemmisítene" *Blikk*, 08 May 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

"Nekiment a médiatörvénynek az ombudsman" *Origo*, 08 May 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

"A médiatörvény több pontjának megsemmisítését kéri" *Index*, 08 May 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

¹³ "Mégsem lesz olyan könnyű visszavonni az interjúkat" *Index*, 18 May 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

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- “Csak az Unió mentheti meg a magyar médiát?” *Index*, 3 July 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Az Országgyűlés több ponton módosította a médiatörvényt” *Blikk*, 24 May 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ¹⁴ “Zuhant a forint az IMF távozásának hírére” *Origo*. 16 December 2011.
- “Az IMF és az EU megkapta a hivatalos felkérést Magyarországtól” *Origo*. 21 November 2011.
- ¹⁵ “Ezek lesznek az IMF feltételei?” *Blikk*. 06 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “IMF: a jegybank függetlensége a tárgyalások feltétele” *Origo*. 26 April 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ¹⁶ “Szokatlanul kemény a magyar kormánnyal az IMF” *Origo*. 13 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Egyre távolabb az IMF megállapodás” *Blikk*. 14 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Kell-e nekünk az IMF pénze?” *Blikk*. 29 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ¹⁷ “Nem csak mi, az IMF is kivár?” *Blikk*. 24 March 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Így indulhatnak el gyorsan az IMF-tárgyalások” *Origo*. 18 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “A kormány még mindig csak tapogatózik az IMF-tárgyalások ügyében” *Origo*. 13 June 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ¹⁸ “Július 17-én érkezik az EU és az IMF küldöttsége” *Blikk*. 06 July 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “IMF: Tényleg leülhetünk tárgyalni” *Origo*. 28 June 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “A Fidesz elé tárták az IMF halállistáját” *Index*. 06 September 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ¹⁹ “Nincs dátum az IMF-tárgyalásokra” *Origo*. 30 August 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ²⁰ “Orbán: Ilyen áron nem kell IMF-hitel” *Origo*. 06 September 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Orbán az IMF-ről: Ezen az áron, így nem” *Index*. 06 September 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ²¹ “Kire tudnánk rászógni még az adósságunkat?” *Index*. 06 September 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Rosszabb a magyar helyzet, mint várták” *Index*. 07 September 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Milyen áron nem kell az IMF-hitel?” *Index*. 06 September 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ²² “Orbán szerint meg lehet állapodni az IMF-fel” *Index*. 28 September 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Varga: nem muszáj megállapodni az IMF-fel” *Index*. 27 September 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Varga kicsi esélyt lát az IMF-sikerre” *Origo*. 07 December 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ²³ “Orbán: IMF nélkül is sikerülni fog” *Index*. 01 October 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Nem jön az IMF Magyarországra” *Origo*. 01 November 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

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- “IMF: Nem tárgyalunk a magyarokkal” *Origo*. 29 November 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ²⁴ “Így nem lesz államcsőd jövőre” *Index*. 13 December 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Varga: Meg lehetne spórolni néhány milliárdot az IMF-fel” *Index*. 03 December 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ²⁵ “Január közepén visszatér az IMF” *Index*. 11 December 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “A választásokig nem lesz IMF megállapodás?” *Blikk*. 21 November 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “IMF: Jövünk, de nem tárgyalunk” *Origo*. 11 December 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ²⁶ “A Malév végét jelentheti az uniós elmarasztalás” *Origo*. 06 September 2011. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Malév: kényszerpályán a kormány?” *Index*. 05 December 2011. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Titok marad, miért csődölt be a Malév” *Blikk*. 06 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Így vitték csődbe a Malévat!” *Blikk*. 06 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ²⁷ “Ismét milliárdos kölcsönt kap az államtól a Malév” *Origo*. 30 December 2011. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Nem kapott pénzt a Malév, felfüggesztették a közgyűlését” *Origo*. 06 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Ötmilliárdot kap a MALÉV az államtól” *Blikk*. 30 December 2011. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ²⁸ “Százmilliárdot bukik a Malév egy EU-s döntés miatt” *Origo*. 09 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Szabálytalanul kapott százmilliárdot a Malév” *Index* 09 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Vissza kell fizetni a Malév támogatást?” *Blikk*. 09 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Orbán békülni megy Brüsszelbe” *Index*. 24 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ²⁹ “Szerdán dönthet a Malévról a kormány” *Origo*. 16 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Állami felszámolója lehet a Malévnak” *Index*. 10 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Állami felszámolót kaphat a Malév?” *Blikk*. 10 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Malév és az Európai Bizottság: milyen jogi lehetőségeink vannak a döntést követően?” *Origo*. 25 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “A kormány szerdán tárgyal a Malévról” *Blikk*. 10 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ³⁰ “Budai Gyula: Működésképtelenné válhat a Malév” *Origo*. 25 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Csapdába esett a kormány a csödközeli Malévval” *Origo*. 02 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ³¹ “Malév: Elfogyott a pénzünk” *Origo*. 30 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Elkészült a kormány terve a Malév esetleges leállítására” *Origo*. 31 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

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- “Állami felszámolót kaphat a Malév?” *Blikk*. 10 January 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ³² “Csődvédelem alatt a Malév” *Index*. 02 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Pénteken leállt a Malév” *Index*. 03 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Káosz a reptéren, leállt a Malév!” *Blikk*. 03 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Legalább 785 milliót lehúznak még a Malév károsultakról!” *Blikk*. 23 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ³³ “Malév-csőd: mi lesz így a reptérrel?” *Index*. 06 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “A Malév 2080 dolgozóját bocsátják el” *Blikk*. 10 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Ezermilliárd forintos teher a Malév felszámolása?” *Blikk*. 08 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Kétszázötven embert bocsát el a Budapest Airport” *Origo*. 15 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ³⁴ “Malév: buktunk 108 milliárdot” *Index*. 6 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- “Vesztettünk a Malév-csőddel bármit is?” *Index*. 01 March 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ³⁵ “Mit szólnak az oroszok a Malév-csődhöz?” *Index*. 07 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.
- ³⁶ “Orbán: Lehet még magyar nemzeti légitársaság” *Origo*. 03 February 2012. Date of access: 13/01/2013.

IRELAND

Nikki Vukasovic

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 4,722,028
- Ethnic composition: Irish 87.4%, other white 7.5%, Asian 1.3%, black 1.1%, mixed 1.1%, unspecified 1.6%
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$41,500
- EU member entry date: 1973
- EU funding in 2011: net recipient

MEDIA SOURCES:

Irish Independent

- Founding date: 1905¹
- Ownership: The International News and Media Group
- Daily circulation: 181,000

The Irish Times

- Founding date: 1859
- Ownership: The Irish Times is overseen by a board of trustees who are charged with safeguarding its political and religious independence
- Daily circulation: 119,000

Irish Examiner

- Founding date: 1841
- Ownership: The Crosbie Family
- Daily circulation: 57,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 64 (Irish Independent-21; Irish Times- 24; Irish Examiner-20)
- List of search words: “EU Fiscal Compact treaty”, “Irish perceptions of EU”, “Austerity”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Irish- EU relations reported on in 2012:

Irish Endorsement of EU’s fiscal compact

- On January 30th, 2012, EU leaders agreed to a new fiscal compact treaty.² The treaty, agreed by 25 of the 27 EU members (the UK and Czech Republic refused to support the treaty) takes effect on January 1st, 2013.³ The fiscal compact requires members to

reduce budget deficits in order to prevent another debt crisis.⁴

- At that time, the Irish government said that it would seek advice from the Attorney General on whether enacting the treaty would require a change to the constitution.⁵ Ireland was the only EU member state that put the fiscal compact issue to a popular vote as its constitution calls for referendums on major issues.⁶ Irish Minister Finance Michael Noonan said he would prefer not to hold a referendum because he felt the vote would be seen by the rest of the world as an indicator of whether or not Ireland wanted to stay in the Eurozone.⁷ In March 2012, the Irish government announced the referendum would be held on May 31st, 2012.⁸

- Reaction from Ireland's political parties towards the compact was mixed. Ireland's Sinn Féin political party, the fourth largest party in the Republic of Ireland Parliament, said it believes that the European Fiscal Compact will undermine Ireland's sovereignty and do little to benefit the Irish economy.⁹ Ireland's socialist party was also opposed joining the treaty because they believe that it would lead to more austerity measures in order to meet deficit targets.¹⁰ The conservative party Fianna Fáil said it would support a yes vote if a referendum was held on the fiscal compact although the party leader also said that he believed that compact was insufficient to solve the debt crisis and instead called for a "significant expansion of key federal powers" so the EU could effectively tackle the crisis.¹¹ The Taoiseach of Ireland, Enda Kenny, said that a referendum would confirm Ireland's commitment to responsible budgeting. He also said that joining the compact would be vital for Ireland's economic recovery and job creation.¹²

- Ireland's Prime Minister denied the notion that ratifying the fiscal compact would lead to further austerity.¹³

A March 2012 poll showed that a quarter of voters reported that their vote was conditional upon having Ireland's bailout term renegotiated before the vote.¹⁴ 65 per cent of voters also thought that Ireland would need to apply for another bailout in 2013 and that access to further bailout funding was dependent on a yes vote in the referendum.¹⁵

- Just before the referendum vote, a May 2012 poll showed that the fiscal compact treaty was likely to be passed.¹⁶ However, the poll also found that 12 percent of voters who planned to vote "yes" had reservations or doubts.¹⁷ It also found a huge level of disillusionment among voters towards the government and other institutions such as the banks, National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) and Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTE).¹⁸ It also found that the majority of voters felt that the vote should have been postponed.¹⁹

Angela Merkel said the referendum result was ““good news for Ireland and for Europe” and said the vote was an expression of Ireland’s commitment to the EU and Euro.²⁰

- However, following the vote, Angela Merkel said the EU would not reopen Ireland’s bank rescue arrangements.²¹ The Irish Prime Minister had sought to restructure Ireland’s debt because he felt that Ireland passing the treaty strengthened his ability to negotiate the bank debt.²² On May 31st, 2012, 60 per cent of Ireland’s voters voted to pass the referendum.²³ Only 50.6 per cent of eligible voters voted in the referendum.²⁴

- The voting results of the referendum were said to show a significant divide between poorer and more affluent areas with referendum was supported by voters in rural constituencies and middle-class areas in urban centers, while the No vote was much stronger in working-class areas.²⁵ It was theorized that the working class in Ireland had already felt the brunt of previous austerity measures and were wary of any more austerity.²⁶

- In June 2012, EU leaders proposed further changes to its fiscal compact treaty that Ireland passed only weeks ago.²⁷ These new changes would see the creation of a banking and budget union to avoid local bank failures.²⁸ In September 2012, The Irish Central Bank said that Ireland would meet structural budget deficit target of 0.5 percent in 2020 that was agreed to under the fiscal compact.²⁹

Irish attitudes towards continued austerity measures

- Ireland has been undergoing austerity since its economic crisis that began in 2008. Ireland was given a bailout package from the EU and IMF in 2011 and forced to implement additional austerity cuts.³⁰

- In October 2012, the IMF said it had underestimated the effects of austerity on the Irish economy, asserting that the substantial loss of jobs resulting from the tax increases and spending cuts was unexpected.³¹ The report suggested that the Irish budgets have actually been more damaging to the Irish economy than the government was estimating and may explain why Ireland has not experienced the growth it was expecting after the bailout in 2011.³²

- In November 2012, thousands of Ireland’s campaigners and trade unions organized the mass demonstration to protest against further austerity in the upcoming budget.³³

- In December 2012, Ireland braced itself for its sixth austerity budget in four years.³⁴ The budget included €1.25bn in tax hikes and €2.25bn in spending cuts. Payments to jobseekers, back to

school allowances and funding for seniors medications were likely to be cut.³⁵

- Prior to that budget a report showed that middle-income families had already been hit with €10,000 a year in additional taxes, levies and charges since the first austerity budget in 2008.³⁶

- However, the government said that after this budget austerity measures would be less severe and that 85 per cent of Ireland's needed adjustments would be complete following the budget.³⁷

- At the end of 2012, the Irish economy was healthier than it was at the beginning of the year. After four years of austerity measures Ireland is more than four-fifths of the way through the bailout programme agreed with international lenders.³⁸ However, the Irish economy is still recovering and vulnerable to shocks from the EU and world markets.³⁹

The EU rules that Ireland must clarify abortion laws

- On October 25th, 31-year-old Savita Halappanavar died in Galway University Hospital.⁴⁰ Halappanavar had been pregnant and suffered a miscarriage. She asked for an abortion but was refused one because there was still a fetal heartbeat.⁴¹ Halappanavar's husband claims that he told that abortion could not be performed because Ireland is "a Catholic country".⁴² Thousands attended vigils for Halappanavar and called for Ireland to clarify its abortion legislation, which it had failed to do in the past.⁴³

- In 2002, a landmark court case decided that women in Ireland can have medical abortions when the mother's life is in danger and can be only be saved by an abortion.⁴⁴ However, no government ever passed legislation after the court case.⁴⁵ In 2010 the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that Ireland must clarify its abortion laws after three women took Ireland to court but again no action was taken.⁴⁶

- On December 1st, 2012, European Parliament committee on women's rights ruled that Ireland must clarify its abortion laws.⁴⁷ The UN has also expressed concern about the welfare of women in Ireland saying that abortion should be legal if it impacts her health and not just her life.⁴⁸ Prime Minister Kenny said that risk of suicide would be grounds for termination but the Minister of State for European Affairs was concerned about that provision.⁴⁹

- The Irish government has said that it will introduce a combination of legislation and regulation to legalize abortion as a last resort to save a pregnant woman's life.⁵⁰ The report of a clinical review ordered by the Health Service Executive (HSE) into the death of Savita Halappanavar will be released in January 2013.⁵¹ A sepa-

rate inquiry commissioned by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) will have 6 inquirers, four of them from outside Ireland.⁵²

- Halappanavar's husband refused to cooperate with either probe and has said he will go to the European Court of Human Rights in order to get a public sworn inquiry.⁵³ The issue is divisive for Ireland's ruling political party and it is a distinct possibility that Fine Gael may lose backbenchers due to the government decision to approach the issue and the decision to include risk of suicide as a reason for lawful termination.⁵⁴ Ireland's Catholic bishops have said they do not support abortion for any reason in Ireland and have called for a free vote on the issue.⁵⁵

2012 IN REVIEW:

An analysis of popular Irish media has shown that the following issues had an impact on Ireland-EU relations in 2012: Irish Endorsement of EU's fiscal compact, continued austerity in Ireland as a result of the country's 2011 bailout, and the EU's ruling that Ireland must clarify its abortion laws.

In 2011, the relationship between Ireland and the EU was difficult due to austerity measures that were forced on Ireland after it received a bailout. Many in Ireland also felt that Irish economy had suffered as a result of belonging to the EU and the Eurozone and wished to leave. During 2012, the Irish economy improved slightly which also improved attitudes in Ireland towards the EU.

Irish media indicated that many in Ireland saw belonging to the EU and further fiscal integration as being beneficial to Ireland's economy. However, Ireland continues to pass austerity budgets, which were required by the EU after Ireland accepted a bailout in 2011. The budget cuts were painful for many Irish citizens and continue to negatively affect perceptions of the EU within Ireland.

Attitudes towards the fiscal compact and further fiscal integration were mainly positive due to the fact that the majority of Irish citizens believed that joining the compact would allow the country to renegotiate its debt agreement and give the country access to the Eurozone's bailout fund.

However, Irish media also showed that many Irish citizens have concerns that the fiscal compact will mean that the country will face further austerity in order to meet its commitments. Irish citizens have been under austerity budgets for the past four years and it appears that any more austerity, as a result of joining the fiscal compact, will be unpopular especially among Ireland's working class.

Domestic media covered the death of Savita Halappanavar extensively and popular opinion was that Ireland should clarify its abortion laws as quickly as possible to ensure that Irish women have access to abortions when their health is at risk. The EU's ruling came after Savita's death and prompted the Irish government to assure outraged citizens that they would pass legislation to clarify the issue within the next year. The Irish government's willingness to confront the issue and pass through legislation was seen as admirable by the EU. However, the Catholic Church opposes the move and the EU's involvement, and may be able to rally support from Ireland's substantial Catholic population to prevent the legislation from being passed.

Although, perceptions of the EU within Ireland have improved in 2012, the relationship could suffer in 2013 if Ireland must undergo additional austerity as a result of joining the fiscal compact. Irish media has indicated that Irish voters believed that joining the compact would improve Ireland's economic situation without causing further austerity and if that is not the case Irish voters may punish the current government by voting for the opposition who opposed joining the compact and who will not be supportive of the EU's involvement in Ireland's fiscal affairs. Irish media is hopeful that Ireland's Presidency of the Council of EU in the first half of 2013 will allow it to shape EU policy that is favorable to Ireland.

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ITALY

Olivia Suppa

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 61,261,254
- Ethnic composition: Italian (includes small clusters of German-, French-, and Slovene-Italians in the north and Albanian-Italians and Greek-Italians in the south)
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$30,900
- EU member entry date: 1952
- EU funding in 2011: net contributor

MEDIA SOURCES:

Corriere Della Sera

- Founding date: 1876
- Ownership: RCS Group
- Daily circulation: 715,000

Il Messaggero

- Founding date: 1878
- Ownership: Caltagirone, one of Italy's main industrial groups
- Daily circulation: 210,000

La Repubblica

- Founding date: 1976
- Ownership: L'Espresso group, owned by Carlo De Benedetti
- Daily circulation: 650,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 84 (Corriere della Sera- 34, La Repubblica- 44, Il Messaggero- 6)
- List of search words: "Italy and the EU", "Italy in the Eurozone", "Italian Economy and Europe"

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Italy-EU relations reported on in 2012:

Italy's fragile position in the Eurozone crisis

- The financial crisis plaguing weaker nations of the Eurozone worsened with the dawn of 2012. Italy was among the several countries whose ratings were downgraded by Standard and Poor's at the onset of 2012. Standard and Poor's placed blame for the continued state of crisis on Italy, other Eurozone members, and on

Europe as a whole.¹ Italy's bilateral meetings with both Germany and France were highly publicized in the media in early 2012 and symbolized strong multilateral solidarity between these three states. Meetings were used to improve and support Italy's financial status in the Eurozone; these meetings were the first of many in 2012.² In addition, the new Prime Minister, Mario Monti, was widely recognized in the media as the optimal choice to lead Italy through the financial crisis because of his experience as the former European Commissioner.³ Overall, the first part of 2012 was characterized by debates surrounding Italy's ideal level of political and monetary independence from the Eurozone.⁴

- The European Financial Stability Facility, or *Il Fondo Salva Stati* was designed to sustain troubled national banks, such as those of Portugal, Greece, and Ireland, and was to be replaced with the permanent European Stability Mechanism in 2012.⁵ In February, Italy signed the treaty establishing the ESM and pledged to contribute about 5.6 billion Euros in two instalments.⁶

- As 2012 progressed, strain increased on Italian-Eurozone relations with the expression of divisive speculations from within and outside the EU; which also predicted that Italy would require further financial assistance, or even a bailout from economically established states.⁷ Much controversy was conveyed in all three news sources over comments from the Austrian Finance Minister, who declared that Italy would be asking for financial assistance in 2012, while Monti remained firmly against the option of a bailout⁸. Furthermore, the ex-Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, among others, advocated for returning to the Lira as the national currency.⁹ However, the general consensus from Monti's government and the rest of the EU, including influential member states such as Germany, did not seriously consider the option of Italy abandoning the Euro.¹⁰

- In the latter portion of 2012, the media depicted widespread concern and unrest because the European Stability Mechanism was not enacted until October, due to late ratification over precisions pertaining to banking oversight at the European level.¹¹ Another source of deep popular discontent was evidence of resentment towards the 'northern' EU member states, especially Germany.¹² Monti expressed concern at EU and bilateral summits that an increasingly anti-German tone echoed amongst the Italian population and that Italians perceived Germany as being strict and arrogant. Monti argued that an evident north-south division festers within the Eurozone.¹³

Technocratic Government and Reforms of the Political System

- The Italian government was welcomed into 2012 by high expectations and praise for Mario Monti and his technocratic administration, as it had already addressed significant structural reforms and labour law revisions.¹⁴ There was a large consensus among Italian and European politicians that Monti's government would restore credibility to its administration and promote sustainable growth in the Italian economy.¹⁵ Non-European nations vested confidence in the technocratic government to resolve the financial crisis; and Washington recognized Italy's renewed commitment to be an open facilitator for dialogue amongst EU countries.¹⁶ Moreover, within the Italian government itself there was an optimistic attitude of *Ce la farà* (we can do it).¹⁷
- The Italian government was decidedly Europeanist in 2012 as it engaged in, facilitated, and promoted the EU and Eurozone objectives, and advocated for solidarity between Europe and Italian citizens.¹⁸ The Monti administration, unlike past administrations, reflected foreign policy that closely aligned with the EU position, which is evident in its revised position vis à vis the Israeli-Palestinian borders.¹⁹
- There were significant demands for electoral and parliamentary reform manifested in renewed civic involvement and popular interest in European dealings, such as a social forum reinstated in Florence in November 2012 with the goal of reaffirming social rights in the face of austerity and asserting the citizens' voice regarding the financial and banking crisis.²⁰ Furthermore, in all media sources consulted there was a strong motif of political advocacy amongst representatives from the main parties, which urged citizens to exercise their right to vote in party elections and called for further transparency in politics.²¹ Ex-PM Berlusconi was increasingly vocal throughout 2012 in denouncing the validity of the technocratic government in power and proposed substantial reforms to his party (Il Popolo della Libertà) based on the results of online forums.²² Suggestions ranged from bringing in younger and more diverse party representatives, including a female vice-president, to instituting French-style presidentialism.²³
- The resignation of Prime Minister Monti in December was unexpected both domestically and at the European level, as he had planned to remain leader until April 2013, by which time he hoped to have balanced the Italian budget.²⁴ He resigned without achieving this goal.²⁵ He confirmed that even after his resignation he would be committed to leading any party that would continue the *Agenda Monti*.²⁶ Monti and his government expressed faith that

the Italian population would elect a pro-European government with realistic aims.²⁷ At that point, union leaders and other party leaders alike attacked the democratic legitimacy of the technocratic government, accusing it of being instated to make constitutional reforms that would render Italy easily governable.²⁸ The EU expressed varied reactions to the resignation: surprise and concern over Italy's stability mixed with praise for Monti's dedication to the EU.²⁹ The PPE (European Popular Party) placed its support for Monti over other Italian candidates in the 2013 election campaign.³⁰

Measures to increase economic growth

- The Italian government began 2012 with stern conviction to strictly crack down on fiscal evasion.³¹ In January, for example, the government addressed accusations of fiscal evasion by certain ecclesiastical entities, doctors, students, and citizens investing in gold.³² In addition to the goal of eliminating tax evasion, Monti's economic reform agenda outlined three essential pillars. The first was market liberalization, which he confirmed in a host of meetings with other international leaders in early 2012.³³ A second pillar was simplification of investment procedures.³⁴ The health of Italian investments is evaluated by the spread or difference between the value of Italian bonds, BTP, to the German Bund bond—which was often dangerously high in early 2012.³⁵ The third and final pillar of the economic reform agenda was to provide a fiscal subsidy mechanism for businesses.³⁶ Above all, the three media sources stressed that growth would depend on regaining confidence in the Italian economy, which was low in comparison to other Eurozone countries in January.³⁷
- Industries on the whole suffered and experienced closures, strikes, and inflated prices.³⁸ The auto-industry, for example, reported sinking sales throughout 2011, which placed growth in 2012 at the same level as growth in 1996.³⁹ The CGIL and CISL, representing the interests of Italy's workers and unions, expressed frustration in early 2012 that the government was not considering their demands for better social and job security for all ages and genders, in all sectors.⁴⁰ The government, meanwhile, called for increased jobs for young people and modernization and deregulation in all sectors, especially in information and communications technology.⁴¹ On that topic, Monti pointed out that permanent work positions are scarce and that young people must adjust to the changing labour market.⁴² In the first half of the year, Italy dragged down the Eurozone with a GDP that fell by 1.3% —the greatest drop af-

ter Greece and Portugal—and a consistently high spread and inflation above the European average.⁴³

- Mixed responses to the implementation of various austerity measures dominated media sources. For example, there were opposing opinions regarding Italian parliamentarians being paid less in comparison to those in wealthier EU countries.⁴⁴ However, the EU positively acknowledged Italy's efforts towards structural reform, along with decisive austerity measures to decrease national debt, including expenditure cuts and savings of €100 billion since May 2010. Monti believed further reform and spending cuts were necessary in order to stabilize growth.⁴⁵ The EU promoted the Cresci-Italia package—as the Monti-Passera plan came to be called—arguing that, if implemented correctly, there will be capacity for 'clean' public accounts, decreased debt, and increased GDP.⁴⁶

- The EC applauded the liberalization of the professional sector, in which the government abolished a minimum tax paid by clients; the EC endorsed the provisions which increased pharmaceutical licences by 12%, and it accepted the decision reached with the taxi strikes.⁴⁷ Unions, however, were not content with the liberalization pillar, given that unemployment in the first quarter of 2012 was at 10.8% and reportedly remained so into the summer months, and only 1 in 3 Italians have regular, secured jobs.⁴⁸ In September, the CGIL and CISL did not respond well to Monti's advice to come to an agreement, on the grounds that it was the role of the government and not the workers, to incite economic growth.⁴⁹ Minister for Economic Development, Corrado Passera, pledged limited government resources and implied limited government intervention to see the CGOL and Cisl.⁵⁰

- Istat reported that 2012 will be recorded as one of the most difficult years, in socio-economic terms, in Italian history; it also added that productivity remained chronically low, and that it was essentially the slowest growing of all 27 EU countries in real terms.⁵¹ Nonetheless, by mid-2012, growth improved in comparison to the early months of the year.⁵² In the second half of 2012, Moody's predicted that Italy could be out of the crisis by 2013 but that there was still a long way to go and much structural reform needed.⁵³ Improvements were also made in the fight against fiscal evasion and corruption, as the *DDL Anti-corruzione* became law.⁵⁴ New estimates show that economic recovery and balanced budget are unlikely to be achieved until 2014 and that unemployment is up to 11.8%.⁵⁵

2012 IN REVIEW:

2012 proved to be a crucial year for Italy's relationship with the EU. The outcome of actions carried out in the past year will have a decisive impact on Italy's future as an influential member of the EU. Three prevalent issues dominated the nation's media throughout the year: its persisting and burdensome impact on the Eurozone, the changing domestic political milieu, and the struggle to spark sustainable growth in the Italian economy. Italy entered 2012 with an expectation to achieve its economic aims, but the fruits of its efforts have yet to be reaped. Instead, 2012 turned out to be a year of continuous domestic and external strain on Italy's already sub-par economic and political reputation.

The government's economic aim for the year was to recover confidence in Italian markets, which would have a direct impact on its ability to increase GDP, expand employment, and balance its budget, thus enabling the country to align itself with Eurozone standards and emerge from the crisis. The government outlined this goal within the framework of the Cresci-Italia Package, which pledged to liberalize markets, simplify investment procedures, and provide fiscal subsidy mechanisms for businesses. This package was presented in the context of Italy experiencing downgrades throughout the year. Italy's unemployment rate of over 10%, second in the Eurozone only to Greece, inched higher by the end of 2012. Its sales and production across most sectors declined, as was demonstrated in the auto industry and the value of the spread between Italian and German bonds, which varied greatly. Each of these indicators paint a clear picture of an unimproved Italian economy vis à vis 2011.

Furthermore, the country still awaits any derived benefit from the new European Stability Mechanism due to its late ratification. In addition, the government identified and targeted a reduction in tax evasion, as it is a significant impediment to growth that is born from all sectors of society—clergy, government, professionals, and even students. The *DDL Anti-Corruzione* law, which came into force at the end of 2012, is a positive development in the fight against tax evasion. The most troubling failure in Italy's economic goals for 2012 was the government's extension of the deadline for achieving its target budget from 2013 to 2014. Italy's difficulty in achieving growth continues to weigh on the Eurozone. Nonetheless, EU institutions and national leaders showed support for the reforms already implemented and proposed by the Agenda Monti, and continue to express optimism for Italy's improved economic performance.

The political scene in Italy was transformed in 2012 with the technocratic 'caretaker' government orienting the country in a pro-European direction that was more defined than with past administrations. It was put in place in November of 2011 with the principle mandate of raising Italy to EU economic standards. PM Monti, as a former EU Commissioner, was well received in Brussels and was credited with restoring a greater level of credibility to Italian politics. He advanced reforms and policies with unwavering awareness of EU oversight. Domestically, there existed varying opinions from citizens and politicians with regards to the democratic legitimacy of his government, though the three media sources that were analyzed in this report represented slight tendencies in favour of Monti's strict yet stable governance over the previous leadership of Silvio Berlusconi. However, with Monti's resignation in December, any political restructuring and praise gained under his guidance is now threatened. Upon his resignation, Monti asserted his assurance to Europe, stating that he had faith that Italian citizens would elect another pro-EU government.

The result of the aforementioned developments is a prevailing tone of Euroscepticism among Italian citizens and political groups, which breaks from the traditionally supportive Italian conception of European integration and objectives. Despite the national government's efforts to increase solidarity with and confidence in the EU, strikes, popular forums, and extensive negotiations occurred in response to the 'reduction' of national sovereignty incurred by the implementation of austerity measures and monetary provisions imposed by EU regulations. Substantial differences in interest rates, employment, and investment in northern EU countries such as Germany generated further discontent. Extreme considerations circulated regarding the abandonment of the common currency altogether. This resentment generated from within Italy's borders and was reciprocated by some EU member states, which feared an Italian bailout. However, such idea was firmly rejected on the part of the Italian government. Cooperation with Germany and France, along with encouragement from other institutions within and outside of the EU, promoted a general will to maintain Italy's place as a forerunner in the EU. All in all, these three issues displayed a difficult test of the bond that binds Italy to the EU, however, this bond continues to remain strong.

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MALTA

Katherine Kawalerczak

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 409,836
- Ethnic composition: Maltese (descendants of ancient Carthaginians and Phoenicians with strong elements of Italian and other Mediterranean ethnicities.)
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$25,800
- EU member entry date: 2004
- EU funding in 2011: net contributor

MEDIA SOURCES:

Times of Malta

- Founding date: 1935
- Ownership: Allied Newspapers Limited¹
- Daily circulation: 20,000 – 35,000

The Malta Independent

- Founding date: N/A
- Ownership: Standard Publications Limited²
- Daily circulation: 16,000

Malta Today

- Founding date: 1999³
- Ownership: Mediatoday Co. Ltd.⁴
- Readership/daily circulation: N/A

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 90 (Times of Malta-44; The Malta Independent-21; Malta Today-25)
- Search words: “Malta EU,” “Malta EU crisis,” and “Malta Eurozone.” “EU Malta relations”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to (state)- EU relations reported on in 2012:

The Eurozone Crisis

- At the beginning of 2012, *The Times of Malta* reported that Malta was expected to oppose the EC’s controversial EU-wide financial transaction tax proposal, unless the tax was applied globally.⁵ In January, the Forum of Maltese Unions asked the government to

resist the new EU fiscal treaty, which would “impose even stricter austerity measures without any prospects for growth.”⁶

- In February, the Malta Stock Exchange and the Irish Stock Exchange announced that they would launch the European Wholesale Securities Market (EWSM), a EU regulated market. The Malta Stock Exchange would have a 20 per cent stake in the venture.⁷

- On March 26th, Malta’s Permanent Representative to the EU, Richard Cachia Caruana, addressed EU Foreign Ministers and raised concerns over the EC’s 2014-2020 budget proposals, particularly the Cohesion Policy, which allocates more funds to poorer regions. Malta, normally a net beneficiary of the funding, argued that Bulgaria’s and Romania’s GDPs lowered the EU average and therefore created an imbalance, which negatively affected Malta’s funding.⁸

- April marked the one-year anniversary of the Bank of Valetta Jeremie financing package in Malta, which has allowed 230 Maltese businesses to benefit from 23 million euro in loans since its inception. The European Investment Fund noted that it was pleased with the level of support the program gave to various small-and-medium-enterprises (SMEs) in Malta.⁹

- In April, Maltese representatives participated in the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), which welcomed the proposal of the EC for a financial transaction tax, but ultimately voted against it.¹⁰ In May, five Maltese Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) reiterated this stance by voting against the EU-wide financial transaction tax. 487 MEPs voted in favour of the tax and EP eventually passed it.¹¹

- In June, Eurostat figures indicated that Malta’s employment growth rate of 0.9% was the highest among EU nations in Q1. That being said, Malta also had the second highest annual inflation rate in the EU, at 3.7% in May.¹² In July, the inflation rate was measured at 4.2% and Malta became the state with the highest inflation rate within the EU.¹³

- At the June 28-29 EU summit, Malta rejected two of its six country-specific recommendations made by the EC. Malta maintained that the retirement age of 65 does not need to change before 2029. Secondly, it moved to change the wording of final declaration of the summit from “endorsed” to “generally endorsed,” to indicate that some member states had reservations over the summit’s conclusions.¹⁴

- In October, Malta’s Finance Minister Tonio Fenech reiterated Malta’s opposition to the creation of a EU fiscal union and the imposition of a EU-wide financial transaction tax because the gov-

ernment believed that national parliaments should be heavily involved in budget accountability.¹⁵ However, while Malta may opt out of the transaction tax, it may still be implemented amongst a smaller group of member states.¹⁶

- A major issue for Malta within the context of the November EU summit was the EU's 2011 decision to remove the country from the category of Objective 1 state because Malta received more EU funds than it contributed.¹⁷ During the November 22-23 summit, Maltese Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi attempted to persuade EU leaders that Malta deserved greater funding than that which was being proposed. In the previous summit, Malta received €855 million in funding.¹⁸ In 2012, the initial proposal was €480 million. This figure was increased to €680 million. Gonzi agreed that this was a step forward, but stated that Malta should receive special treatment because it had been the only Objective 1 state to benefit from additional funding and that it needs a transition period to prevent a serious shock to the economy.¹⁹

- November 23rd marked the end of the two-day EU summit on the long-term 2013 budget. No formal deal was reached and the member states failed to agree on the bailout conditions for Greece in particular.²⁰ Another summit is slated for January 2013 to resolve the budget.²¹ Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi informed Parliament that his government had rejected the EU's designation of Malta as a non-Objective 1 status country within the EU. Since no agreement had been reached on the EU budget, 2010 figures would have to be used to recalculate the data for the Objective 1 status.²²

- On December 4th, the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) adopted a final decision to close Malta's excessive deficit procedure. ECOFIN had begun the procedure in 2009 to keep Malta's deficit in check and to bring the deficit below 3% by 2010.²³ Malta successfully reduced its deficit to 2.7% in 2011, and is expected to reduce it to 2.3% by the end of 2012.²⁴

Migration

- In January, Maltese media reported that EU ministers had rejected a proposal for an extended migrant relocation programme within the EU that would ease the immigration burden on Malta (EUREMA, or European Relocation Malta project).²⁵ Home Affairs Minister Carm Mifsud Bonnici later insisted that the EUREMA pilot project is already in place in Malta and that ministers had not expressly turned down EUREMA itself. The ministers did however

reject the prospect of suspending the EU's Dublin II regulation, which returns migrants to their initial point of entry.²⁶

- In February, the EU's border control agency, Frontex, noted in its report that there had been a significant drop in the number of Libyan migrants entering Malta illegally in the final quarter of 2011, following the removal of Colonel Gaddafi.²⁷ Also in February, the EC approved an additional €1.2 million for Malta's emergency migrant fund, which aims to improve the living conditions of refugees and asylum seekers in Malta.²⁸

- In March, the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe released a report entitled "Lives lost in the Mediterranean Sea: Who is responsible?" The report stated that the 63 Libyans who perished in March of 2011 were not within Malta's Search and Rescue Region (SRR), which is under the jurisdiction of Malta's Rescue Co-Ordination Centre (RCC). The report concluded that Italy should have taken the lead in search and rescue in that instance and that steps needed to be taken to solve the disagreement between Malta and Italy over "whether disembarkation of rescued migrants should be to the nearest safe port or at a port within the country of the SAR [Search and Rescue] zone."²⁹

- On May 11th, at a meeting in Rome, Libya's foreign minister Ashour Bin Khaial stated that Libya was experiencing a "dramatic worsening" of migration and that most of the sub-Saharan migrants fleeing Libya for Europe were "impossible to control."³⁰

- In May, Home Affairs Minister Carm Mifsud Bonnici responded to the negative appraisal of Maltese policies towards asylum seekers in the International Commission of Jurists' report "Not Here to Stay." The report chastised Malta for approaching migration as a temporary and "emergency" situation, instead of accepting migrants as long-term commitments and working around this accordingly. Bonnici defended Malta's detention system and insisted that only illegal, undocumented asylum seekers were detained for longer periods of time.³¹

- On May 29th, President George Abela made a statement in Vilnius, calling on the EU to take further steps to deal with illegal immigrants from North Africa. Abela stressed that an influx of migrants had put stress on Malta's economy and said that he expected other EU countries to accept more refugees to alleviate the burden.³²

- The EC published its Third Annual Report on Immigration and Asylum, in which it noted that the majority of EU members did not partake in the EUREMA project, which would help relocate some of Malta's migrants in an attempt to alleviate the burden of migra-

tion.³³ Nationalist MEP David Casa echoed this call for the EU to help Malta manage the influx of largely North African migrants.³⁴

- In June, Justice Minister Chris Said addressed the EC and called on the EU and the Commission to review the Dublin regulations and the Temporary Protection Directive in light of the increase in migrants to Malta.³⁵

- On July 24th, at a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels, Foreign Minister Tonio Borg urged fellow member states to help secure Libya's borders.³⁶ This followed the European Asylum Support Office's report, which indicated that the number of Libyan and North African migrants could increase drastically in the following months.³⁷

- In September, the ECJ nullified Frontex rules after Nationalist MEP Simon Busuttil challenged them. The Frontex programme, which the Council of Ministers had adopted in April 2010, obliged Malta to "be responsible for all saved migrants brought to its shores."³⁸

- On November 27th, the EP's Civil Liberties Committee passed legislation that would strengthen surveillance along the Schengen zone's borders and stated that the main goal of the new Eurosar border system would be to save the lives of migrants, particularly on the Mediterranean Sea. It was noted that in 2011, 90% of illegal border crossings by migrants occurred in four countries: Spain, Malta, Italy and Greece.³⁹

Air Malta Funding

- At the beginning of the year, Air Malta announced that it would carry the burden of a newly introduced EU Tax on emissions, rather than pass the cost on to its customers; this would cost the airline approximately €500,000. The EC stated that any airline refusing to pay would be banned from using European airports.⁴⁰

- In January and February, the EC raised doubts over Air Malta's proposed five-year restructuring plan. Malta's proposal included €238 million to implement the plan, with the aim of breaking even in 2014 and making its first profits in 2015. The European Commission opened an investigation in January into whether the plan was realistic and whether €130 million in restructuring aid would fall under EU state aid guidelines.⁴¹ On February 21, the EC released a report, which stated that compensatory messages would have to be taken by Malta to "ensure that the adverse effects on trading conditions [would be] minimized."⁴² This included the loss of some profitable routes and a reduction in capacity by 20%.⁴³

- On March 16th, Air Malta announced that it had already implemented the 20% reduction in capacity for its summer bookings and that its implementation plan was on track.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, the Airline Pilots' Association of Malta (ALPA Malta) called on the EC to reconsider its restructuring plan for Air Malta, particularly in light of the disadvantages that would arise from Air Malta's market location and its size.⁴⁵
- Also in March, Ryanair, Easyjet, and three other low-cost carriers submitted their objections to Malta's request to grant approximately €230 million in EU aid to Air Malta. The objections have yet to prevent the EC from providing aid to an ailing airline.⁴⁶
- In June, EU Competition chief Joaquin Almunia stated that the Maltese government was "failing to provide the information needed to agree to its €130 million state aid rescue plan."⁴⁷
- On June 27th, the EC approved the Maltese government's five-year restructuring plan for Air Malta. The Maltese government agreed to grant Air Malta €130 million in state aid as part of the deal.⁴⁸ While Finance Minister Tonio Fenech expressed delight at the approval, the Airline Pilots Association and other unions had mixed feelings, with the President of the ALPA, Domenic Azopardi, calling the Air Malta plan a "cover-up" and vulnerable to future privatization. He also criticized Air Malta's rebranding.⁴⁹ Tensions between Air Malta and ALPA continued into August when Air Malta blamed ALPA for €2.5 million in lost revenue due to the blocking of an aircraft lease.⁵⁰
- Air Malta launched a new logo and livery in July as part of its rebranding. It cost €1.9 million and was included within the restructuring plan approved by the EC in June.⁵¹
- On August 25, Air Malta and ALPA reached an agreement on a new pay deal.⁵²
- In early September, Air Malta CEO Peter Davies announced that the airline was aiming to reduce its €30 million operating loss by half this year, break even by 2015, and generate €8 million in profit by 2016.⁵³ On October 12th, Air Malta confirmed a €4.5 million salary raise for its 130 pilots.⁵⁴ Also in October the airline completed the sale of its head office site in Luqa for €26.7 million; it was the first step in Air Malta's plan to sell off its €66.2 million land portfolio.⁵⁵
- Between January and September 2012, Malta's government deficit increased to €282.2 million from €188.4 million. The Maltese government's capital expenditure amounted to €243.4 million, €20 million of which went as an equity injection to Air Malta.⁵⁶ Finance Minister Tonio Fenech addressed the Aircrafts Engineers Interna-

tional Annual Congress with positive news about Air Malta: the airline registered its first profits in October.⁵⁷

- In December, the EC published the 2012 State Aid Scoreboard, which revealed that Malta “granted more non-crisis state aid to industry and services as a proportion of its economy than any other EU member state.” This state aid to industry amounted to 1.43% of Malta’s GDP, far above the EU average. This figure was largely influenced by the restructuring aid to Air Malta.⁵⁸

2012 IN REVIEW:

The relationship between the EU and Malta in 2012 wavered between cautiously optimistic to strained, largely due to disagreements on EU funding and what Malta perceived to be ineffectual migration policies. As such, the most salient issues affecting Malta-EU relations were as follows: the ongoing Eurozone crisis, illegal migration, and the funding of the Air Malta airline. All of these issues were widely reported on by the Times of Malta, Malta Today, and The Malta Independent.

With regard to the Eurozone crisis, Malta and EU came to heads on a few important proposals in 2012. From the very beginning of the year, Malta opposed the EC’s proposed EU-wide Financial Transaction Tax (FTT), which would effectively result in enhanced cooperation between participating member states in the area of taxation. In March, Maltese Finance Minister Tonio Fenech articulated the stance that Malta would hold for the rest of the year: namely, that Malta would not participate in such a project unless it was applied EU wide. Despite Malta’s vote against it, the EP passed the Tax in May. While Malta and other objecting member states were free to opt out of the Tax, Maltese media sources pondered whether it could still have negative effects on Malta.

Other points of contention included the EU’s decision to no longer classify Malta as an Objective 1 member state and thus reduce the €480 million EU funding package, which was initially proposed for Malta in November. The Maltese government managed to raise the proposed package to €680 million as it insisted that Malta would benefit from the Objective 1 funding it had received in the past and because it argued that the GDPs of Bulgaria and Romania had lowered the average EU GDP and therefore distorted results. The disagreement over these issues revealed a belief that Malta should receive special treatment because it had been the only Objective 1 state to truly benefit from extra EU funding.

In terms of migration, the Maltese government spent most of 2012 trying to convince the EU and fellow member states to share in the

migration burden, particularly in the case of North African migrants arriving from Libya. The EC's October report on Immigration and Asylum reflected Malta's belief that most member states were uninterested in the EUREMA project, which could take pressure off Malta's resources by relocating migrants around the EU. Similarly, the Dublin II regulation, which returned illegal migrants to their initial point of entry, was upheld, despite Malta's reservations. On more than one occasion, Maltese government officials addressed the EU community and called for help in the wake of an influx of North African migrants. Towards the third quarter, Malta's relations with the EU improved, thanks to an ECJ ruling which nullified Frontex rules, no longer holding Malta solely responsible for rescued migrants brought to its shores.

Funding for the ailing Air Malta airline was likewise a top priority for Malta within the context of the EU. While the EC was initially considered with the overly optimistic five-year restructuring plan proposed by the Maltese government, the plan was ultimately approved in June. Despite having to abandon some profitable routes and reduce capacity by 20%, the airline registered its first profits in October. The Maltese government was generally pleased with the outcome and with the EC's role in the restructuring.

¹ "Contact Us." *Times of Malta*. <http://www.timesofmalta.com/contact> (accessed December 2, 2012).

² "Contact Us." *The Malta Independent*. <http://www.independent.com.mt/content/contact-us-48332800/> (accessed December 2, 2012).

³ "Frequently Asked Questions." *Malta Today*. <http://maltatoday.com.mt/en/faqs> (accessed December 2, 2012).

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THE NETHERLANDS

Farbod Saatsaz van Driel

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 16,730,632
- Ethnic composition: Dutch 80.7%, EU 5%, Indonesian 2.4%, Turkish 2.2%, Surinamese 2%, Moroccan 2%, Caribbean 0.8%, other 4.8%
- GDP/capita in 2011: \$42,700
- EU entry: 1952
- EU funding in 2011: net contributor

MEDIA SOURCES:

NRC Handelsblad

- Founding Date: 1970 (After merger of *Algemeen Handelsblad* (1828) and *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* (1843))
- Ownership: De Persgroep
- Daily Circulation: 218,000¹

Trouw

- Founding Date: 1943
- Ownership: De Persgroep
- Daily Circulation: 106,000

De Telegraaf

- Founding Date: 1893
- Ownership: Telegraaf Media Groep
- Daily Circulation: 529,188²

FINDINGS

- Number of articles consulted: 156 (De Telegraaf-6; Trouw-6; NRC Handelsblad-6)

- List of search words: “EU,” “Europese Unie,” “Brussel”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Netherlands-EU relations reported on in 2012:

Financial Crisis

- The financial crisis in the Eurozone was again the biggest topic in Dutch media in 2012.

- Like last year, the main issues were the financial support for Greece and the financial situation of Spain.³ In November, it appeared that the Greek budget deficit was worse than expected. New reports released by the Greek government showed that the deficit would be 5.2%, whereas a 4.2% deficit was expected earlier.⁴ Furthermore, its sovereign debt for 2014 is estimated at 192% of its GDP.
- However, this year there was also more concern about the financial health of the Netherlands, as well as the troubling unemployment in the Eurozone.⁵ In June, Mario Draghi, the President of the ECB, pointed to a warning from the Dutch Central Bank about the country's high household debt. That is why the European Systemic Risks Board will examine Dutch mortgages.⁶

Fiscal integration/regulation

- The articles on this topic deal with the deepening and broadening of European integration. A headline such as this one is emblematic: "Each crisis ends with more Europe."⁷ European politicians have been busy with regulating things such as fiscal policy at the European level. The best example of this is the new fiscal treaty, which is based on 'German' fiscal principles.⁸
- There is a belief that to save the Euro, individual countries have no choice but to give more power to Brussels, because a monetary union also requires a political union.⁹ Eurosceptics thus conclude that the Netherlands should give up the Euro.
- According to the EU's Stability and Growth Pact, a member's budget deficit should be kept under 3%. However, member states are increasingly pressuring the Commission to be more flexible on this. Sources close to the Commissioner of Economic and Monetary Affairs and the Euro, Olli Rehn, point out that he will most likely not succumb to this pressure.¹⁰

External Affairs

- Like last year, the EU's interaction with the rest of the world was also discussed in the media often. This year, the conflict in Syria was a central topic. There has been a lot of discussion about the role the EU should play in halting the violence. For instance, Dutch Member of European Parliament, Marietje Schaake, argues that the EU should unite the Syrian opposition.¹¹
- Another major topic, in the context of the UEFA European Football Championship, was the human rights situation in Ukraine. Some European leaders decided to boycott the matches in

Ukraine in protest of the country's human rights violations, particularly regarding its former Prime Minister Joelia Timoshenko.¹²

• Iran's nuclear program drew attention again this year. Particularly within the context of the EU's boycott of Iranian oil, which started in July and caused oil prices to increase.¹³

2012 IN REVIEW:

The continuation of the financial crisis in the Eurozone was at the center of Dutch media coverage of the EU. As Greece's debt crisis remained a threat to the Euro's stability, the news articles shed a pessimistic light on Europe's future. Throughout the year, Europeans have been losing confidence, while struggling to pay off debts.¹⁴ This shows that citizens have little confidence in the ability of their governments to reverse the trends causing rising unemployment and lack of economic growth. The fact that unemployment reached a record high in 2012 is indeed worrying for citizens. While last year, most of the media attention focused on Greece and Spain, this year there was more attention paid to Dutch problems, as the waves of the financial crisis washed up more aggressively on Holland's shores. With the right-wing cabinet of Rutte I falling in April 2012 was a year in which the electorate faced a crossroads. With the populist right-wing PVV of Geert Wilders calling for a Dutch exit from the EU, central aspects of party platforms leading up to the elections in September were the financial crisis and Holland's attitude towards the EU. Although, the somewhat pro-EU parties—the VVD and PvdA—emerged as winners, we should be careful with interpreting the election results as a sign of substantial support for the EU. After all, the anti-EU parties did have a large support during the election campaign.

This brings us to the second topic in the media: European integration and regulation. The new cabinet continued to promulgate the Dutch view that the EU requires a common (and strict) fiscal policy and stronger European institutions to deal with financial crises, such as a common supervisory mechanism for the banking sector. Some articles explicitly raised the question: what should the EU look like in the end?¹⁵ Even though the media paints a negative image of the current position of the EU, it seems that the crisis is likely to end with more Europe, not less. Any further European integration will be partly thanks to the position of the Dutch government, not in spite of it.

Like last year, there was also a fair amount of media attention for the EU's interaction with the rest of the world. First of all, the conflict in Syria demanded a response, but the EU's ability to act in a

decisive manner seems to be limited, as long as Russia and China hold back any meaningful measure against Assad's regime. Nevertheless, Dutch Member of European Parliament Marietje Schaake believes that the EU should do more to unite and cooperate with the Syrian opposition, through the provision of humanitarian aid via Turkey, and by better enforcing its own sanctions against the Syrian government.¹⁶ As with earlier aspects of the Arab Spring, the conflict in Syria challenges the EU's claim to be a promoter of peace and stability in the world. The EU's lack of a common action plan means the EU is merely watching the tragedy unfold from the sideline.

Secondly, the EU's attention was also drawn to Ukraine, in the context of the Euro 2012 football championship, which was held in Poland and Ukraine. The EU has often criticized Ukraine's human rights violations, particularly regarding former Prime Minister Joelia Timoshenko. Several EU politicians, including the President of the Commission, decided to boycott the matches played in Ukraine. This further damaged the already uncomfortable relationship between the EU and Ukraine. The Dutch government has been very concerned about the Timoshenko case and some parliamentarians have urged the Sports Minister not to attend Holland's matches in Ukraine.¹⁷

Finally, the EU intensified its pressure on Iran by imposing a ban on commercial activity around Iranian oil. This not only prevents Iran from selling oil to EU members, but also from transporting its oil to Asia using European carriers. The articles on this issue point out that the sanction is really affecting the Iranian economy, but they also indicate that Iran remains persistent on its nuclear program.¹⁸ Although the Netherlands is not directly dependent on Iranian oil, fellow EU members Italy, Spain, and Greece are, therefore the economic repercussions of the sanctions pose additional challenges for the EU's most troubled economies.¹⁹

¹ "De lezers van NRC Handelsblad." *Motivaction research & strategy*. Motivaction research & strategy, n.d. Web. 18 Jan 2012.
<<http://www.motivaction.nl/content/de-lezers-van-nrc-handelsblad>>.

² "Oplagen kranten blijft dalen." *De Telegraaf*. 27 March 2012. Date of access: 22/01/2013.

http://www.telegraaf.nl/dft/bedrijven/telegraaf/20038328/___Oplage_kranten_blijft_dalen__.html.

³ "Grieken krijgen opnieuw hulp." *De Telegraaf* p.15. 01 October 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012 "Spaanse problemen nog groter." *Trouw* p.12. 01 October 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012

⁴ "Griekse schuldenlast is niet meer te controleren", *De Telegraaf* p.27 01 November 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012

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- ⁵ Gijs Moes, "Brussel bekijkt risicovolle Nederlandse hypotheke." *Trouw* p.17 01 June 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- "Werkloosheid eurozone loopt op." *De Telegraaf* p.31. 01 December 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ⁶ Gijs Moes, "Brussel bekijkt risicovolle Nederlandse hypotheke." *Trouw* p.17 01 June 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ⁷ Caroline de Gruyter, "Elke crisis eindigt met meer Europa"; Interview Frans Van Daele, vertrekkend kabinetschef van EU-president Van Rompuy" *NRC Handelsblad* p.10. 01 November 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ⁸ Gijs Moes, "Eurolanden zetten stapje vooruit." *Trouw* p.5. 01 February 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ⁹ A. Nijmeijer, "Te duur, blijkt uit fusie Duitsland." *NRC Handelsblad* p.2. 01 September 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ¹⁰ "Rehn wil vasthouden aan harde eis van 3 pct." *NRC Handelsblad* p.28. 01 May 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ¹¹ Marietje Schaake, "Pas bij duidelijk plan staken Rusland en China steun Assad." *NRC Handelsblad* p.16. 01 June 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ¹² Michel Krielaar, "Groeiende druk van EU op Oekraïne lijkt te werken; Relatie met EU belangrijker dan gevangenhouding Timosjenko." *NRC Handelsblad* p.2. 01 May 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ¹³ "Boycot Iran stuwt olieprijs." *De Telegraaf* p.15. 02 July 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ¹⁴ "Ook in tijden van crisis kan solidariteit het geluk van burgers overeind houden." *Trouw* p.2. 01 December 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ¹⁵ Paul Scheffer, "Zonder gaat het niet meer in Europa vergezicht" *NRC Handelsblad* p.6. 01 September 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ¹⁶ Marietje Schaake, "Pas bij duidelijk plan staken Rusland en China steun Assad." *NRC Handelsblad* p.16. 01 June 2012. Date of access: 20/12/2012
- ¹⁷ "Ministers in beraad over EK Oekraïne" *De Telegraaf* p.1. 01 May 2012. Date accessed: 20/12/2012
- ¹⁸ "Iran strijdvaardig onder olie-embargo EU" *Trouw* p.14. 02 July 2012. Date accessed: 20/12/2012
- ¹⁹ Roelants, Carolien. "Iran Stopt Olie-export Naar Europa - Ministerie Van Olie Ontkent." *Nrc.nl*. NRC, 15 Feb. 2012. Web. 04 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2012/02/15/iran-stopt-olie-export-naar-nederland-en-zuid-europa/>>.

POLAND

Alex Foster

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 38,415,284
- Ethnic composition: Polish 96.7%, German 0.4%, Belarusian 0.1%, Ukrainian 0.1%, other and unspecified 2.7%
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$20,600
- EU member entry date: 2004
- EU funding in 2011: net recipient

MEDIA SOURCES:

Gazeta Wyborcza

- Founding date: 1989
- Ownership: Agora Spółka Akcyjna (Agora SA, Polish media company)
- Daily circulation: 396,000

Dziennik Gazeta Prawna

- Founding date: 2006/2009 (“The Daily” originally appeared in 2006, merged with *Gazety Prawnej* in 2009 to take its present form)
- Ownership: Axel Springer AG (German media company)
- Daily circulation: 158,000

Wprost

- Founding date: 1982
- Ownership: Platforma Mediowa Point Group
- Daily circulation: 179,280

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 109 (37 from *Wprost*; 37 from *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*; 35 from *Gazeta Wyborcza*)
- List of search words: “Poland and the EU CO₂”, “Poland and the EU budget 2014-2020”, “Poland, Ukraine and the EU”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Polish-EU relations reported on in 2012:

The reduction of CO₂ emissions across the EU

- In the beginning of 2012 the Polish media focused largely on the debate between Poland and the EU over the reduction of CO₂ emissions. The story was picked up by *Gazeta Prawna* in the mid-

dle of January, when it was revealed that the EC was calculating the cost of reducing CO₂ emissions by 20-30% by the year 2020. However, it was not until March, when Polish delegates began to oppose the proposed reductions that the story became major news among all three newspapers.¹

- The three major newspapers were divided on the issue. Both *Gazeta Prawna* and *Wprost* were chiefly concerned with the effect that CO₂ reductions would have on Poland's economy, particularly where the industrial sector was concerned, and lauded Poland's decision to veto the CO₂ reductions.² Both papers also took the opportunity to criticize Brussels for trying to damage Poland's economy and forcing Polish companies to invest in green technology.³ It should be noted that only *Gazeta Wyborcza* expressed concern over how Poland's decision to veto the proposed reductions would negatively impact the environment, or alternatively, showed the concern of international organizations like the WWF.⁴

The EU budget of 2014-2020

- The latter half of the year saw the media's attention dominated by debates surrounding the proposed EU budget for the years 2014-2020. The budget issue caused particular controversy among the Polish press when initial reports suggested that Poland would be the recipient of 300 million zloty (about \$95 million US), which proved to be below expectations.⁵
- The three major newspapers were largely united over the budget issue. All three papers commented negatively on the impact the budget would have on Poland's agricultural sector – the largest part of Poland's economy – namely the extensive spending cuts.⁶

The EU and the former Eastern Bloc

- Finally, Poland's status as a "bridge" between the EU and countries of the former Soviet Union was also under media scrutiny. Though Poland's role in the so-called "Eastern Partnership" is part of an ongoing process, 2012 saw increased focus on Poland's relationship with Ukraine, Poland's co-partner in the Euro 2012 Football Championship.⁷
- In light of the Euro Cup, Poland's relationship with Ukraine was reassessed. Broadly speaking, the relationship was cast in a positive light, with the media stressing Poland's commitment to helping Ukraine in its relationship with the EU.⁸ As such, there was little mention of Yulia Tymoshenko's imprisonment, but there was some domestic pressure to urge Polish officials to mediate between the EU and Ukraine, lest the boycott negatively impact Poland.⁹ None-

theless, support for Ukraine was voiced from the highest echelons of Polish government, including President Bronisław Komorowski, Premier Donald Tusk, Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski and MEP Janusz Lewandowski.¹⁰

2012 IN REVIEW:

In many respects, the year 2012 saw a great deal of friction between Poland and the EU, such that had not been seen in the previous year. While it may be an exaggeration to suggest that the relationship has deteriorated (the Polish government still professes commitment to the EU and the Eurozone), 2012 nonetheless saw a great deal of disharmony between Poland and the EU. The overarching issues at the center of this tension, namely the proposed plans to cut CO₂ emissions across the EU and the EU budget for the next five to six years, showcase the negative reception among Poles toward the EU's increasing intervention in Polish domestic affairs.

Early in the year, certain members of the Polish government, as well as Polish MEPs, warned against the EU's interference in Poland's energy policy. Minister of the Environment Marcin Korolec stated that Poland would unilaterally refuse to agree on cuts to CO₂ emissions and unofficial documents disclosed to PAP (Polish Press Agency) suggested that Poland wanted to ensure that any reductions would not be made legally binding by the EU.¹¹ Concern over the CO₂ emissions was taken a step further by MEP Mikołaj Dowgielewicz, who suggested that Poland was keeping the EU from committing "suicide" with its decision to veto the proposed reductions, in addition to looking after its own economic interests.¹² Although the decision to veto was seen as a last resort, Polish representatives at the EU nonetheless felt that the proposed reductions to CO₂ emissions were not in Poland's best interests.¹³

The second half of the year saw renewed controversy over the new EU budget for 2014-2020 and its effects on the Polish economy. Policy makers placed a strong emphasis on the budget's impact on Poland's agricultural sector, which makes up approximately 20% of the Polish economy. Of course, the greatest opposition came from the Minister of Agriculture, Stanisław Kalemba, who reiterated the importance of agriculture to the Polish economy, stating that between 2007 and 2011, Poland's agricultural production rose by 21%.¹⁴ This, however, did not stop the EU from considering measures that would curb agricultural spending across Europe. In mid-April Dacian Cioloș, the Commissioner responsible for agricultural and rural development, suggested that €25 million

would be cut from the budget of the Common Agricultural Policy, impacting those farmers who “already receive the least amount of support.”¹⁵ Concerns over the budget went beyond the demands of the agricultural sector however, with newspaper *Wprost* suggesting that the EU aimed to control Poland’s budget, after Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski met with diplomatic heads from ten other countries (including France and Germany) to discuss closer economic ties between countries of the “Euroland”.¹⁶ In 2012, Poland also began to distance itself slightly from the Eurozone. Speaking to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Frankfurt General Newspaper), Sikorski, a committed Europhile, said “we cannot be blamed for not wanting to accept the euro when the currency is in a deep crisis.”¹⁷ Indeed, the country has avoided joining the euro for the second time since Premier Tusk’s 2008 promise that Poland would become a Eurozone member in 2011.¹⁸ In conclusion, Poland’s relationship with the EU remains ambiguous at best at the end of 2012. While Poland’s commitment to the EU has been reiterated time and again, it is difficult to ignore the growing tensions between the two entities, especially as Poland’s domestic policies and goals continue to differ from the political and economic aims of the EU.

¹ “Korolec: nie ma zgody Polski na wyższe cele redukcji emisji CO2 w UE.” *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 7 March 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.

“Politycy o polskim wecie w sprawie redukcji CO2.” *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 11 March 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.

“Czy UE zrobi ‘milowy krok’ na drodze do redukcji emisji CO2? Polska mówi ‘nie’” *Wprost* March 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.

“W sprawie emisji CO2 Polska broni UE przed samobójem” *Wprost* 10 March 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.

“Polskie weto w sprawie CO2. Brud się wylewa” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 16 March 2012. Date of access 1/12/2012

² “Gwałtowna redukcja CO2 może uderzyć w polską gospodarkę” *Wprost* 11 March 2012. Date of access 1/12/2012“

“Co oznacza dla Polski rezygnacja z węgla? Olbrzymi wzrost cen prądu, miliardy na modernizację energetyki” *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 1 June 2012. Date of access 1/12/2012

“Polska zawetowała propozycję ws. redukcji CO2 do 2050 r.” *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 9 March 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.

“Polska wygrała batalię z Unią Europejską o CO2” *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 30 March 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.

“W sprawie emisji CO2 Polska broni UE przed samobójem” *Wprost* 10 March 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.

“Polska przeciwna planowi UE podwyższeniu ceny uprawnień na emisję CO2” *Wprost* 19 April 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.

³ “Drogie CO2 czyli Bruksela uderza w polskie firmy” *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 10 April 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.

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- "UE hamuje rozwój polskiej energetyki? 'Darmowych limitów CO2 nie będzie'" *Wprost* 7 November 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.
- ⁴ "Polskie weto w sprawie CO2. Brud się wylewa." *Gazeta Wyborcza* 16 March 2012. Date of access 1/12/2012
- "WWF przeciwko handlowi nadwyżkami uprawnień do emisji CO2" *Gazeta Wyborcza* 21 November 2012. Date of access 1/12/2012
- ⁵ "Budżet unijny: 300 miliardów zł dla Polski? Może być o wiele mniej" *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 25 October 2012. Date of access 2/12/2012
- "300 mld zł dla Polski w nowym budżecie UE? Może się udać" *Gazeta Wyborcza*
- "Lewandowski: budżet z UE będzie mniejszy niż myśleliśmy" *Wprost* 3 February 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- "Budżet UE: dla Polski więcej niż 300 mld euro?" *Wprost* 29 October 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- ⁶ "Kalemba: Polska za jak największym budżetem UE dla rolnictwa" *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 26 October 2012. Date of access 1/8/2013
- "UE. Ciolos przeciw nowej propozycji budżetu UE; polscy rolnicy też tracą" *Gazeta Wyborcza* 16 November 2012. Date of access: 8/1/2013
- "Kalemba: Polska za jak największym budżetem UE dla rolnictwa" *Gazeta Wyborcza* 26 October 2012. Date accessed 8/1/2013
- "Sawicki: budżet UE? Reforma rolnictwa jest ważniejsza" *Wprost* 16 November 2012. Date accessed 8/1/2013
- ⁷ "Tusk i Azarow: Ukraina i Polska przygotowane na Euro 2012" *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 22 March 2012. Date accessed 2/12/2012
- "UEFA chwali Polskę i Ukrainę. 'Euro było fantastyczne'" *Wprost* 30 June 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- ⁸ "Ukraina: Parafowanie umowy stowarzyszeniowej z UE" *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 13 March 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- "Ukraina. Janukowycz: z Polską zblizymy się do UE" *Gazeta Wyborcza* 11 November 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- "Ukraina. Choroszkowski ma nadzieję na stowarzyszenie z UE w 2013 r." *Gazeta Wyborcza* 21 November 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- "Wiemy, co Komorowski będzie robił na Ukrainie" *Wprost* 18 September 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- ⁹ "Bojkot Ukrainy szkodzi Polsce, polityka UE staje się polityką rosyjską" *Wprost* 4 May 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- ¹⁰ "Sikorski: w marcu możliwe parafowanie umowy UE-Ukraina, ale nie podpisanie" *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 8 February 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- "Komorowski: Ukraina dojrzeła do współpracy z Zachodem" *Gazeta Wyborcza* 14 November 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- "Tusk: podpisanie umowy UE z Ukrainą możliwe za rok" *Gazeta Wyborcza* 14 November 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- "Lewandowski: 'Chcemy by Ukraina ciążyła w stronę UE, a nie Moskwy. To geopolityka XXI wieku'" *Gazeta Wyborcza* 11 May 2012. Date of access: 2/12/2012
- ¹¹ "Korolec: nie ma zgody Polski na wyższe cele redukcji emisji CO2 w UE." *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 7 March 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.
- ¹² "W sprawie emisji CO2 Polska broni UE przed samobójem" *Wprost* 10 March 2012. Date of access: 1/12/2012.
- ¹³ "Europarlament tnie CO2, choć planu nie popiera Polska" *Gazeta Wyborcza* 16 March 2012. Date of access 1/8/2013
- "Redukcja CO2 w UE. Polska znów zawetuje?" *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 11 February 2012. Date of access 1/8/2013.

¹⁴ “Kalemba: Polska za jak największym budżetem UE dla rolnictwa” *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna* 26 October 2012. Date of access 1/8/2013

¹⁵ “UE.Ciolos przeciw nowej propozycji budżetu UE; polscy rolnicy też tracą” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 16 November 2012. Date of access: 8/1/2013

¹⁶ “UE będzie kontrolować budżet Polski?” *Wprost* 18 September 2012. Date of access 1/8/2012.

¹⁷ “Sikorski: Przyjmiemy euro, gdy strefa euro upora się z kryzysem” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 3 September 2012. Date of access 1/8/2013

¹⁸ Ibid.

PORTUGAL

Alice Franco Sampaio

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 10,781,459
- Ethnic composition: Homogenous Mediterranean; <100,00 black African descent who entered Portugal after decolonization.
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$23,700
- EU member entry date: 1986
- EU funding in 2011: net recipient

MEDIA SOURCES:

Expresso

- Founding date: 1973
- Ownership: Group IMPRESA
- Daily circulation: 112,000

Diário de Notícias

- Founding date: 1864
- Ownership: Controlinveste
- Daily circulation: 49,000

Público

- Founding date: 1990
- Ownership: Sonae
- Daily circulation: 42,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 95 (Expresso- 33; Público-30 articles; Diário de Notícias-32)
- List of search words: “greve geral” (general strike); “medidas de austeridade” (austerity measures); “crise economico” (economic crisis); “divida nacional” (national debt); “troika”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Portugal-EU relations reported on in 2012:

Debt Crisis

- The Portuguese government debt ratio reached 110.1% of the GDP in the third quarter of 2011; which was the third highest in Europe, behind Greece (159.2%) and Italy (119.6%).¹ Tensions were building in the first quarter of the year with news that debt

stress had peaked on January 30, 2012, when interest rates were at their highest levels.² In addition, business debt reached a new historical high in March at 180% of GDP.³ In the second quarter, the Bank of Portugal informed the parliament that Portuguese banks needed €60 billion funding from the European Central Bank (ECB) to avoid a significant crash in the Portuguese economy, while tensions grew across political, religious and economic fronts.⁴

- Party leaders from the Portuguese opposition, economists and Roman Catholic Church Officials challenged the government's aggressive austerity measures, questioning if the measures are harming the economy by cutting too much too quickly, and placing the bulk of the financial burden on the working class, poor and elderly, instead of cutting government spending.⁵ The end of the second quarter, August 2012, was marked by a review by the Troika (IMF, ECB & European Commission) with a focus on the implementation of the 2012 budget and preparation for 2013, which blamed the Portuguese government for poor results due to the drastic fall in tax revenue.⁶

- In the third fiscal quarter, the Portuguese government admitted that it might not be able to meet the deficit target of 4.5%.⁷ This was coupled with news that economic confidence in the Euro had reached a 3-year low - 1.1% across the EU, but 5% in Portugal (close to historic lows of April 2009).⁸ The fourth quarter saw the Portuguese government's austerity measures challenged in the Constitutional Court, which were seen by the Constitutional Court as an affront to its decision and the rights of workers.⁹ In addition, the Portuguese economy shrank 3.5% in the third quarter of 2012.¹⁰ Finally, Government debt is expected to reach 123.7% of GDP in 2013.¹¹

Austerity Measures Taken by Portuguese Government

- To comply with the debt reduction plan outlined by Troika, and qualify for the loans needed to keep the Portuguese economy moving, the government examined public spending and capital-raising initiatives. In order to reduce public spending, the Portuguese Government took a series of steps, including: their decision to permanently abandon the TGV (rapid train) project;¹² to eliminate Christmas bonuses of public servants and pensioners who make over €1000;¹³ to make labour code amendments which resulted in the reduction of compensation for terminated employees from 30 days to 20 days;¹⁴ to increase the work day by 30 minutes or 2.5 hours weekly for all public servants;¹⁵ to reduce sick pay to

55%;¹⁶ to lower unemployment benefits by 10%;¹⁷ and to increase the social security contribution by 7% which will effectively decrease minimum wage by €34 from €432 to €398.¹⁸

- In a further effort to combat the debt crisis by raising capital, the state sold a 40% stake in REN (Redes Energéticas Nacionais) to Chinese-owned State Grid and Saudi Arabian-owned Oman Oil Company.¹⁹ In addition, the government is considering privatizing the Portuguese Airport Concessions (ANA)-with a 50-year lease that could result in a €1.2 billion profit.²⁰ The privatization of TAP – a publicly funded Portuguese airline – is currently under re-evaluation because of the airline's large debt load, the privatization would result in a net profit of €20 million for the state.²¹
- In October 2012, anticipating the looming loan repayment deadlines and the reality of a still-struggling economy, the government completed a debt swap by trading bonds set to mature in September 2013 for bonds maturing in October 2015, resulting in a reduction of the large amount to be repaid in loans by September 2013.²²

National Strikes and Protests and Public Action

- In November 2011, in reaction to the perceived severe austerity measures, 5 civil servants challenged the government's suspension of Christmas bonuses and holiday pay. The people of Portugal widely supported this initiative, believing the majority of the austerity measures were at the expense of the working population, the poor and the elderly. In July of 2012, the decision reached by the Constitutional Court (a vote of 9-3) was that the measures taken by the government were unconstitutional because they violated the principles of equality amongst workers.²³ The court's decision came with provisions on when and how the money would be paid out in light of the fragile economy, but it was still regarded as a major victory for the people.²⁴
- Various protests and strikes began to manifest across the country, including: the January 2012 protests against labour reform found in the government's austerity measures took place in Lisbon.²⁵ Public support for strikes became stronger as the government continued to increase income tax and reduce services.
- In February 2012, the Transportation and Communication unions joined forces (CGTP & UGT) to protest the government's reduction of services and increased restrictions.²⁶ Later, in March 2012, Portuguese workers began to receive backing from other countries in the EU, beginning with a general strike supported by a major Greek trade union leader.²⁷ Throughout May, there were rolling air

traffic controllers strikes, which resulted in various cancellations and delays at all airports in Portugal.²⁸

- On August 14, 2012, Portuguese workers gained international encouragement from French and Spanish unions supporting Portuguese dock and port workers, who were striking due to sub-standard hiring-practices and poor working conditions. Fellow dock workers from Spain came to protest alongside their Portuguese counterparts in Sines, resulting in the complete shut down of four major ports, and five ships being unable to dock. The French and Spanish decided to boycott any vessels with an origin or destination of Portugal in order to put additional pressure on the Portuguese government. The dock protests are expected to last throughout the end of 2012.²⁹ The transportation sector, already suffering from the air traffic controller strikes, was further weakened on land. On August 15, 2012, a countrywide strike involving various unions brought national train travel to a halt, allowing only 4 domestic and 2 international trains to run.³⁰

- In a show of solidarity, on October 19, 2012, Spanish unions announced their General Strike would coincide with the Portuguese General Strike, resulting in an Iberian Strike.³¹

- In a rare move, the Portuguese Police, GNR (National Republic Guards), and Coast Guard went on strike on October 24, 2012, to demand back pay from 2010, retroactive promotions, as well as to protest the government's austerity measures.³² A growing mood of discontent with the government saw the majority of the Portuguese population support the culmination of political protests during the National General Strike. On November 14, 2012, the National General Strike brought Portugal to a standstill. Services across country were profoundly affected: courts, schools, hospitals, and public transportation were all shut down.³³

- Further strikes were held after the National General Strike, including a machinists' strike on December 8, 2012 which again brought rail travel across Portugal to a halt and kept pressure on the government to address the population's discontent.³⁴ On December 15, 2012 in Lisbon, trade unions protested in reaction to further austerity measures to be introduced in 2013 and called the government's actions, a "pact of aggression".³⁵

2012 IN REVIEW:

The debt crisis across Europe, concern for Portugal's ability to meet fiscal targets and repay loans, and a growing tension amongst workers revolting against stern austerity measures were a primary focus of the Portuguese media in 2012. In the first half of

2012, the EU was optimistic about Portugal's future, believing that as long as Portugal continued to work towards creating a more solid job market and reducing government spending they would see positive results. In fact, countries such as Germany and Holland praised Portugal's proactive austerity measures.³⁶ Interest rates were monitored daily and the media communicated the importance of lower interest rates on Portugal's ability to remain in good standing with the trio of European Advisors who were granting their loans and monitoring the Portuguese government's austerity measures.³⁷

Although, locally, the fiscal measures were considered to be tough, in June 2012, 4 out of 5 of the Portuguese population stated that they wanted to remain in the Eurozone.³⁸ In addition, Portugal experienced some promising economic news, having the 5th largest increase in agricultural revenue (9.3%) across Europe, after a nominal contraction in 2011.³⁹ However, while Portugal was determined to achieve the goals set by Troika, a disparity in the equalization of the debt burden became increasingly prevalent in the media as the year passed. Unemployment levels continued to climb, reaching 375,000 in October – an increase of 81,000 from the same time in 2011.⁴⁰ In addition, 150,000 Portuguese emigrated in 2011, which is near the all time highs of the 1960s and 1970s, creating an intellectual vacuum.⁴¹ Polls in September 2012 revealed that 89% of Portuguese considered themselves affected by the economic crisis, significantly higher than the European average of 65%.⁴²

According to poll results in September, Passos Coelho, the Current Prime Minister in a coalition government of PSD (Social Democratic Party) and CDS (Christian Democrat Party), (both parties are right wing) was the least popular politician with only 34% support.⁴³ The already weak coalition government became increasingly polarized on how to deal with Portugal's debt crisis.⁴⁴ As austerity measures increased, economists began to question if the actions taken by the government were too strict for an already weakened economy, crippling it even further, due to unrealistic goals imposed by Troika. The tax burden which was unequally left to the workers and retired and not proportionally distributed amongst business and the public sector resulted in labour action that spread not only countrywide, but across Europe. Solidarity from neighbouring countries reflected the growing dissatisfaction with the European economic climate.⁴⁵

At an increasing rate, the previously accepting Portuguese public began to revolt against the drastic measures of the government

and other European countries began to question if the austerity measures taken were too drastic. Portugal went from being a model of successful economic reform, to a country whose people were pushed beyond their limits.⁴⁶ Austerity measures in the public sector were challenged in the Constitutional Court and reversed, and pressure increased on the government to shift the debt burden across the private and public sectors in a more equitable fashion. Although Portugal found itself in an unfavourable fiscal reality, members of the EU (i.e. Germany and Holland) were initially cautious yet optimistic about the debt crisis in Portugal, encouraged by the austerity measures undertaken by the Portuguese government. This had a positive impact on Portugal-EU relations. However, the growing civil unrest resulting from severe fiscal restraints, crippling an already weakened economy raised the question amongst other European states: How much austerity is too much?

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ROMANIA

Cristina Stoica

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 21,848,504
- Ethnic composition: Romanian 89.5%, Hungarian 6.6%, Roma 2.5%, Ukrainian 0.3%, German 0.3%, Russian 0.2%, Turkish 0.2%, other 0.4%
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$12,600
- EU member entry date: 2007
- EU funding in 2011: net recipient

MEDIA SOURCES:

Romania Liberă

- Founding date: 1877
- Ownership: businessman Dan Grigore Adamescu
- Daily circulation: 54,000

Evenimentul Zilei

- Founding date: 1992
- Ownership: Swiss Press Trust Ringier
- Daily circulation: 150,000

Capital

- Founding date: 1992
- Ownership: Swiss Press Trust Ringier
- Readership: 65,000 weekly

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 113 (Romania Libera-47; Evenimentul Zilei-39; Capital-27)
 - List of search words: “Romania and Europe”, “Romania and EU”, “Traian Basescu”, “Ponta”, “Schengen”, “Romania Schengen”
- From these findings, the following major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Romania- EU issues reported in 2012:

Romania’s Second National Referendum

- Romanians took to the poles on December 9th, 2012¹ and participated in the referendum aimed at soliciting the head of state.² The two largest political platforms debated social issues such as social and political corruption within the country and Europe’s involvement in Romania’s fiscal policy.³ The consensus of parliamentary

members feared the EU's reinforcement of Romania's constitutional law within the state and the prospect of increasing involvement.⁴

- Only five months after Prime Minister Victor Ponta attempted to oust President Traian Basescu, the two leaders have come to a mutual agreement.⁵ The agreement was signed by both parties under supervision and acknowledgement of the President of the European Parliament and the President of the European Commission.⁶ Both parties agreed to honour and carry out the code of law and not succumb to public disputes between one another.⁷
- All three sources reported that such an agreement limited the possibility of further confrontation between the two leaders in both private and public spheres.⁸ In contrast, some politicians view the peace pact as a Christmas armistice that will only last until Christmas of 2014.⁹ Furthermore, all three newspapers commented on the whether the involvement from the EU in the affair contested the referendum.¹⁰

Romania's Accession to the Schengen Zone

- The EU Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) focuses on countering and eliminating corruption and monitoring reforms in Romania.¹¹ Based on the country's annual performance, the committee evaluated the entry of Romania into the Schengen Zone.¹² The report called on Romania to discourage social corruption within the country and most highly within the political sphere by establishing set rules and exemplified punishments.¹³
- Before Christmas, the Netherlands withdrew its veto on the enlargement of the visa-free zone for Romania and Bulgaria.¹⁴ Both countries will be joining in the commission of the reforms based on the country's national policy as well as the reports focusing on the new judicial system established on December 9th, 2012.¹⁵
- *Romania Liberă* reports that the mandate to review the freedom of the use of the Schengen Zone to Romania by the Council of Justice and Internal Affairs will be pushed back until March 7, 2013.¹⁶ This is primarily in accordance with the final review by the CVM examined in December 2012.¹⁷
- The *Capital* reports that the Schengen Zone represents a geographical region with defined and well-protected borders.¹⁸ Within these borders, Romanians would be permitted to work and travel freely throughout the EU.¹⁹ Therefore, it is both important and necessary for the border to be protected and monitored to ensure the security of all personnel. Such an agreement will provide the smooth workings for the relations between Romania and the EU.

International Financing Reporting System (IFRS)

- Romania applied in 2012 for the first time to the International Financing Report System (IFRS). The system introduced on January 4, 2012 was based on the agreement made with the International Monetary Fund in 2010.²⁰ The system (Basel III) will modernize the banking system that has been in effect for years.²¹ This will allow foreign banks to use the same system that is used abroad in Romania as well.
- The International Monetary Fund alongside the EU has further ordered Romania's participation to aid Cyprus. To facilitate financial aid, Romania has to reduce its total national debt.²² This new program has resulted in a prolonging period of the accord between the IMF, the EU and Romania.
- The new system will have an impact on the level of the banks funds and its provisions.²³ More importantly, the system will update and align Romania's banking order to that of the EU.²⁴ This is a key notion in enhancing EU-Romanian economic relations for the future.²⁵
- To continue the progression and ensure economic stability, the prime minister has declared a possible renewal of the primary act established by the IMF.²⁶ Romania hopes to meet the standards set forth by the IMF that will be placed by the new agreement in 2013.²⁷

2012 IN REVIEW:

Throughout 2012, the following issues affected relations between Romania and the EU: the political instability within the Romania resulting in an political interference by the European Commission, the struggle for Romania and Bulgaria being granted accession to the Schengen Zone, and the restructuring of the Romanian banking system to meet the economic demands placed forth by the IMF and the EU.

Politically speaking, 2012 proved to be a time of reform for the Romanian government as Prime Minister Victor Ponta attempted to solicit the head of state, Traian Basescu. The public political debate between the two leaders was watched closely by the EU. PressEurop claims, "this contest of electoral showcasing was useful from a political perspective because it made Romania the political capital of Europe."²⁸ The referendum signified the importance of a democratic and accurate political system that allows citizens with the freedom of choice in choosing their president. Therefore, the heated political debate highlighted the limitations of

Traian Basescu's status as the President of Romania and the call for intervention by the European Parliament.

Interference by the European Parliament in the political matter highlighted the inability of the Romanian president and prime minister to cooperate. As a result, the relationship between the two bodies faltered as the inability of the two members to solve their personal problems became evident. With the participation of the President of the European Parliament, the two leaders consented to a mutual agreement.

Accession to the Schengen Zone has been a controversial topic debated among the members of the EU. Romania-EU discussions highlight that 2012 is considered to have been a year lost in the progression of an agreement to be reached. Though all of the criteria appointed by the EU for the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Schengen Zone has been addressed and implemented, the European Commission delayed the final vote for Romanian accession till March 2013.²⁹

For Romania, accession to the Schengen Zone would signify free trade between EU nations and the annulment of working contracts for Romanians within the EU.³⁰ Romanians would be permitted to travel freely throughout Europe though they would still be stopped for inspection for security measures.³¹ The same measures would be applied for all goods exported and imported from and entering the country.

With the opening of trade doors between West, Central and East Europe, Romania hopes to attract European investors. An increase of European investment in Romanian products would increase the total funds provided for the infrastructure of transport.³² Moreover, entry of products from outside the EU through Constanta (Romania's primary port) would be less expensive than through the current port, Rotterdam.³³ This assembly would benefit the economy and transaction of cash flow throughout Europe though it could cause a rift between the Netherlands and Romania.³⁴ If the primary route of trade would be through Constanta, Rotterdam's status as the primary port for trade would dissolve. However, this notion would solidify trade relations between Romania and other EU member states, providing Europe with an alternative port in the East. This would allow Europe to have two open water ports, each serving to the European market.

The implementation of the IFRS system in Romania modernized the banking system to meet the standards placed by the IMF and the EU. The new system opened the financial doors to foreign investors from Western Europe thus providing the country

with the opportunity to increase its foreign capital. In doing so, Romania was subjected to reduce its national debt as previously issued by the IMF. Various European states opposed the situation as this method of rehabilitation was supposed to be implemented only in a single unique case-Greece.³⁵ Not respecting the initial proposal could have caused a shift in the European monetary budget that may have resulted in a loss of credibility in the Euro.³⁶ However, with the introduction of the modernized banking system, relations between the EU and Romania are expected to improve. The economic relation between the two bodies entails an open-door policy that will allow for further economic partnerships in the future.

As of 2013, Romania looks forward to the renewal of the primary act implemented by the IMF. The new legislature will aim at correcting the policies that faltered last year. PressEurop states that Romania has "become a bad example for Europe and is used by interested countries to prove that the money of the wealthy must no longer be spent to reduce the gap between the developed and the lesser-developed states".³⁷ Therefore, in the upcoming year, Romania must adhere to the policies implemented by the IMF and the EU and stabilize its economy. This will ensure the growth in its economic relationship with the EU.

Romania has faced numerous issues regarding the political, social and economic factors facing society. 2012 proved to be an unstable year in politics as president Traian Basescu's position in politics was challenged. Similarly, Romania's struggle to the accession of the Schengen Zone continued while the Romanian banks were introduced to a new system after facing a reduction in its national debt. Overall, though the three prominent issues facing the country will need to be addressed in 2013, the relationship between Romania and international bodies such as the EU, European Commission and the International Monetary Fund has grown and will continue to develop in 2013.

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THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Anastasia Bizyayeva

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 142,517,670
- Ethnic composition: 80.9% Russian (111,016,896 people), 3.9% Tatars (5,310,000), 1.41% Ukrainians (1,930,000), 1.16% Bashkirs (1,580,000), 1.05% Chuvashs (1,440,000), 1.04% Chechens (1,430,000), 0.86% Armenians (1,180,000)
- GDP per capita 2011: \$17,000

MEDIA SOURCES:¹

Argumenty i Fakty

- Founding date: 1978
- Ownership: Promsvyazbank
- Readership/ daily circulation: 2,750,000

Izvestia

- Founding date: 1917
- Ownership: SOGAZ insurance company
- Readership/ daily circulation: 371,000

Moskovsky Komsomolets

- Founding date: 1919
- Ownership: Pavel Gusev
- Readership/ daily circulation: 1,215,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 92 (Moskovsky Komsomolets-33; Argumenty i Fakty-30; Izvestia-25)
- List of searchwords: “Россия Европейский Союз” (Russia EU), “Россия Евросоюз” (Russia Euro-Union), and “Россия ЕС” (Russia EU)

From these findings, the following major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Russia-EU issues reported in 2012:

Establishment of a Visa-Free Regime:

- Plans to institute a visa-free system between Russia and the EU have been in the works since 1 June 2007. However, to this day no concrete agreement has been established.
- One of the main reasons why Russia is so keen on this visa-free agreement is to promote business interests and ease commercial

activity.² Russia wants to support the men and women who must constantly travel for business, lest they move their companies out of the country because of the inconvenience travel restrictions bring.³

- In July 2012 Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated that he hoped to have a plan for eliminating visa requirements within six months.⁴ He claimed that it would be put into effect by 2014.⁵ Talks on the topic in Luxembourg early in the year went well according to the president at the time, Dmitri Medvedev.⁶

- At the end of a meeting, which took place on 3 October 2012 in Nicosia, Cyprus, the parties involved failed to reach an agreement on the visa-free entry of Russian citizens using biometric passports.⁷ After this point, Russia placed a deadline on the EU: if an agreement abolishing visas was not determined by the end of October 2012, Russia would no longer allow EU civil aircraft crews to enter Russia without visas.⁸

- One of the main grievances expressed by Russia with reference to this issue is that talks for a visa-free regime between Ukraine and the EU are proceeding at a faster rate than those with Russia.⁹ Reportedly majority of Russian citizens perceived this development as a hostile move by the EU.¹⁰

- Vladimir Putin was particularly angry about the visa situation between Russia and the EU because EU leaders claimed that opening up travel would facilitate crime and human trafficking.¹¹ Putin stated that the EU allows visa-free travel with some Latin American countries that have higher crime rates than Russia.¹²

- The Russian foreign minister said that plans to abolish visa requirements in 2014 were progressing slowly but surely.¹³

Economic Interconnectedness of Russia and the EU:

- Dmitri Medvedev stated that 42% of Russia's foreign exchange reserves are denominated in the euro.¹⁴ Thus, prosperity of the EU is critical for Russia's economic future.¹⁵ According to Russian officials, if the EU collapses the world economic order will also collapse.¹⁶ Russia is also fearful of new economic measures being taken throughout the EU.¹⁷

- Reportedly, the Russian public is particularly fearful of the EU's economic influence, because inflation of food prices in Russia is at 3.2%.¹⁸

- Despite the importance of the EU for Russia, Putin stated that it is highly unlikely that Russia would ever join the EU.¹⁹ He said the system in place was too inefficient for Russia due to power struggles and restricted national policy actions.²⁰

- Upon seeing how the EU was dealing with the second wave of the Eurozone crisis, Chairman of the Federation Council, Valentina Matvienko, offered advice to EU leaders, urging them to look at the way Russia was combating the recession.²¹
- Many politicians in Russia have cited Putin's strong hand as the reason for Russia's relative prosperity. In addition, they claim that if the EU adopted a similar model it would be more stable.²²
- Vladimir Putin visited Berlin and Paris in the last week of May, right after being elected for another term as president.²³ Russians were speculating about whether he would pursue a policy that was heavily centered on relations with the East or if he would be willing to pursue closer relations with leading EU countries.²⁴ Putin's current policy is leaning toward association with Eastern European nations and the Caucasus.

Gazprom's Manipulation of European Markets:

- With regards to media coverage of Russia's energy industry, 2012 was dominated by EC investigation of the natural gas company, Gazprom. The EC had gathered evidence from Gazprom branches in Western Europe suggesting that there were antitrust concerns with the company.²⁵ Before a thorough investigation was under way, the EC speculated that Gazprom was preventing EU states from diversifying their energy sources and manipulating prices in an unfair way.²⁶ Gazprom responded to these allegations by stating that it adhered to international law, establishing pricing principles using the standard of other fuel exporters.²⁷
- Russian president Vladimir Putin was unhappy with the action of the EC, stating that the EU was effectively declaring a trade war on Russia.²⁸ However, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko was hopeful that the issue could be resolved without severely hurting the fragile relationship between Russia and the EU.²⁹
- The EC formally outlined the three charges it allotted to Gazprom: 1) Division of gas markets between Eastern and Western Europe; 2) Obstruction of diversification of gas supply; 3) Unfair pricing.³⁰ It stated that Gazprom could be fined around 10-30% of its annual revenue, which would be the most severe punishment in EU history (with the next largest fine being 11 times smaller).³¹
- The Russian government stated that it would challenge the EU's ability to restrict Gazprom imports through the World Trade Organization.³²

Disagreements over Syria:

- Throughout 2012 domestic media reported that Western European states, especially France and Germany, placed a lot of pressure on Russia to change its relationship with Syria.³³
- At the beginning of the year, Russia wanted to see action taken against the Assad regime through the proper bureaucratic channels, as suggested by the League of Arab States.³⁴ The government was interested in finding a solution, but there were a number of underlying diplomatic tensions.³⁵
- Russia questioned whether foreign intervention was the right way to proceed. The general public believed that Syrian rebels were Arab mercenaries hired by the EU and US to promote their interests in the country. Generally, the revolutionaries were depicted in a negative light.³⁶
- The Russian public was concerned with the plight of the people caused by the war rather than the Assad regime. Sources compared the civil war to the Russian Civil War and the unpleasantness associated with that event.³⁷
- As the year went on, Russia agreed to cooperate with the EU on Syria. The UN adopted a trajectory, which was a compromise between the projects suggested by Russia and the EU: 300 observers were sent into Syrian territory for 90 days.³⁸ Russians were apprehensive because the EU supported a statement by Susan Rice, the US representative to the UN, which called for more serious action if the 90-day mission failed.
- Vladimir Putin told Angela Merkel and François Hollande that Russia was completely against military intervention in Syria.³⁹ Not only was he unwilling to change his stance on this point, but he was reluctant to discuss any new UN resolutions condemning Syria.⁴⁰ Hollande countered that only Russia could write the new chapter of Syria's history.⁴¹
- Foreign Minister Lavrov commented that a military intervention in Syria had the potential to destabilize the entire region, an action that Russia would take no part of.⁴² He also criticized the EU and Arab League for restricting Syrian television shows, saying that it was important to have free access to information regardless of the opinions presented.⁴³

2012 IN REVIEW:

The relationship between Russia and the EU has historically been a unique blend of interconnectedness and apprehension. 2012 was a year that continued to highlight this dichotomy. The portrayal of Russian-EU relations in the major Russian newspapers ana-

lyzed, shows that the necessity of the relationship was accepted by both parties, although with a degree of reluctance.

One of the main sentiments expressed by Russian journalists in the media sources consulted, is the idea that the EU is infringing upon Russia's sovereignty. Generally speaking, Russia sees the closeness of the EU as a weakness, with all major Russian leaders asserting that the Russian Federation is unwilling to join the supranational arrangement. In fact, much of the reporting on the Eurozone crisis in the Russian media criticized the impotency of governments in controlling their internal affairs. Moreover, politicians and reporters alike maintained that an economic recession is the only outcome possible when foreigners are in a position to decide on the internal affairs of a nation. Conversely, the heavy-handedness of the Putin administration is seen as beneficial to the Russian nation and necessary for its prosperity.

Despite the prevalence of reporting on the Eurozone crisis, the fiercely independent character of the Russian Federation is visible in other areas of international politics as well. For instance, the government becomes defensive whenever the World Trade Organization discusses regulating private corporations in Russia. In addition, Russia is almost completely isolated in its stance on the Syrian Crisis. Ultimately, Russia and the EU have diverging positions on enough issues that it can be said that they constitute two different paradigms with their own spheres of influence.

When looking at the key issues reported by the Russian media, it is easy to develop an isolationist view of Russian affairs. While a certain degree of suspicion and wariness is directed against the Western world, there has been a gradual trend toward more openness between Russia and the EU. With increasing globalization and the success of Russian nationals abroad, there is a demand for fewer barriers between Russia and EU countries. Currently Russian citizens require a visa to travel to Europe, a bureaucratic obstacle that proves to be a considerable nuisance. The Russian government is under pressure to negotiate with the EU and arrange a visa-free regime. Talks on the matter have been taking place for nearly half a decade but 2012 marked a real turning point on the Russian front, seen through its admirable diplomatic efforts. While politically divergent, Russia and the EU share close economic ties; this fact alone means that a safe prediction can be made on the future of cooperation in this delicate relationship. Although there are considerable differences between the two entities, the discourse and effective remedies applied to disagreements

between the EU and the Russian Federation in 2012 signal their mutual understanding that their codependence is crucial.

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SERBIA

Petar Dodic

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 7,276,604
- Ethnic composition: Serb 82.9%, Hungarian 3.9%, Romany (Gypsy) 1.4%, Yugoslavs 1.1%, Bosniaks 1.8%, Montenegrin 0.9%, other 8%
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$10,800
- EU member entry date: Not currently a member. Achieved candidate status March 1st, 2012¹

MEDIA SOURCES:

Blic

- Founding date: 1996
- Ownership: Ringier (Swiss press group)
- Daily circulation: 120,000

Politika

- Founding date: 1904
- Ownership: Politika AD 50%, WAZ-Mediengruppe 50% (Until July 18, 2012), East Media Group 50% (From July 18, 2012)²
- Daily circulation: 135,000

B92

- Founding date: 1989³
- Ownership: Astonko d.o.o 84.99% (Greek company), B92 Trust 11.35%, Small shareholders 3.66%⁴
- Daily circulation: 200,000⁵

FINDINGS

- Number of articles consulted: 93 (Blic- 40; Politika- 25; B92- 28)
- List of search words: “Serbia EU”, “Serbia Kosovo EU”, “Serbia candidacy”, “Nikolic EU”, “Elections EU”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Serbia-EU relations reported on in 2012:

EU candidacy/accession talks

- The year started out with results from polls showing a fifty-one percent approval rate for joining the EU, an increase from the previous year in which support for membership fell below fifty percent.⁶

- After failing to achieve candidate status by December 2011, (the original date that Serbia's leaders hoped to accomplish this by), the year started out with near certainty in the news that Serbia will achieve candidate status by the next European Council meeting.⁷ Already in January, there were reports that the EU will grant candidate status to Serbia, with the European Parliament pressuring the European Council to do so.⁸ Still, there were some fears being voiced that in order to be granted candidacy, Serbia may have to take further measures in Kosovo such as the severance of parallel institutions in the north⁹ or even recognition of Kosovo's independence.¹⁰
- After achieving candidate status, on March 1st, many articles reported statements of congratulations by both European and domestic politicians, which highlighted what an accomplishment this was.¹¹ With this achievement, the news services sought to explain and interpret what obtaining candidate status meant for the country. Some articles reflected a degree of uncertainty over what this achievement might translate to in reality.¹² Other articles highlighted the positive aspects of having candidate status, such as the financial aid as well as an improvement of the national image.¹³ Still other articles qualified the positive aspects and hopes with a reminder that the EU is undergoing a time of economic crisis.¹⁴
- Having achieved candidate status, speculation started as to when accession talks might start.¹⁵ Many articles reported statements made by EU officials and leaders of EU member states, which raised hopes that accession talks would start by the end of the year.¹⁶ Other articles reported that the more realistic start date for accession talks was some time in 2013.¹⁷
- As the year went by, speculation in the media continued over what might be required of Serbia in order to begin accession talks. Reports of statements by EU officials revealed that nothing additional, such as recognition of Kosovo's independence, would be required of the government that they were not already aware of.¹⁸ However, articles highlighted the EU conditions that in order to get to the next step toward EU membership, relations with Kosovo would have to improve and there would have to be progress in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina.¹⁹ Some speculated that the slow progress in the Serbia-Kosovo talks and the normalization of their relations would mean that accession talks would be pushed back to the latter half of 2013.²⁰
- The year finished off with uncertainty as to when talks might start. Some articles reported that talks would begin in the first half of 2013, especially ones reporting statements of Serbian politi-

cians.²¹ Other articles stated that the date for the start of accession talks would not be set until June 2013.²² *B92* reported that Kosovo would be the key element determining the start date for discussions.²³

Presidential Election

- The Presidential elections involved two rounds, the first on May 6th,²⁴ and as a result of how slight the margin was separating the top two contenders, a second round was held on May 20th between Tomislav Nikolic and incumbent president Boris Tadic.²⁵
- The presidential campaigns were already underway at the beginning of the year with statements of various politicians being reported in the news as to who would be the best candidate to lead Serbia into the EU.²⁶ The platforms of the main presidential candidates were well reported. Tomislav Nikolic and his Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) were pro-EU but also maintained that Serbia should pursue good relations with Russia and not make major concessions over Kosovo.²⁷ Boris Tadic and his Democratic Party (DS) were strongly pro-EU and believed only their party would genuinely work towards European integration.²⁸ They decided on the slogan "Both EU and Kosovo."²⁹ Attention was also given in the news to candidates who were against Serbia joining the EU, such as Vojislav Kostunica and his Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) who felt that joining the EU was against national interests especially since they felt it would mean having to alter Serbia's official stance on Kosovo.³⁰
- After the results of the elections on May 6th, a second round was necessary between the top two candidates. The campaigns resumed and the media continued to report on the statements of the two contending politicians and their supporters. Tadic presented the upcoming election as a referendum on whether or not Serbia will continue its path toward the EU.³¹ Nikolic on the other hand argued that there had been election fraud and threatened to boycott the second round.³² He eventually agreed to participate, presenting his campaign as one for justice.³³ Despite the various characterizations of the politicians of what the elections meant for Serbia's future in the EU, *Blic* also published an article that reported on the thoughts of leading analysts who suggested that the upcoming election did not bring into question further European integration.³⁴
- After the election, there were many articles in *B92* and *Blic* reporting on the congratulations sent from European officials for Nikolic and their hopes that Serbia will continue on their path toward

EU integration.³⁵ Among these was a gaffe in which the European Council President sent expressions of congratulations to Nikolic three hours before he had officially won the election.³⁶ *Politika* did not cover much of the foreign reactions to the elections, but mainly focused on the domestic politics, which resulted the formation of a new coalition government.³⁷

- After the election, many articles have reported on the opinions of various analysts regarding the implications of the results of the election on Serbia's relationship with the EU. Most articles reported that the elections did not fundamentally change Serbia's relationship with the EU.³⁸ However, some articles have expressed anxiety as to how committed the new president might be to European integration.³⁹

Kosovo

- Issues surrounding the status of Kosovo featured in the media throughout the year. Prior to achieving candidate status, many articles were preoccupied with establishing whether Serbia's government will meet the conditions set out by the EU with regards to Kosovo.⁴⁰ Articles reported on the importance of the negotiations between Serb and Kosovar officials in determining Serbia's future in the EU.⁴¹ The news sources also reported that the Serbian government has made a lot of progress in the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and some important agreements were reached.⁴²

- After achieving candidate status in March, speculation arose over what further concessions might be expected of the Serbian government in order to begin accession talks.⁴³ *B92* reported that Kosovo would not join the EU alongside Serbia.⁴⁴

- Since the end of the presidential election, numerous articles have reported statements of officials and analysts that Serbia will, or should, have to eventually recognize Kosovo's independence to become a member.⁴⁵ These have ranged from reports of condemnations from right-wing politicians,⁴⁶ to views of political analysts,⁴⁷ and to some European officials.⁴⁸ At the same time, there have been many reports which have suggested that Serbia will not have to "give up" Kosovo but that further dialogue and a "normalization" in relations between the two would be sufficient.⁴⁹ These have largely been reports of statements by European officials and politicians in the governing administration.⁵⁰

- In the midst of all this speculation, Tomislav Nikolic and his officials have continuously made statements establishing that if the condition for membership becomes recognizing Kosovo, Serbia would give up pursuing EU membership.⁵¹ There have also been

several reports on the softening of the stance taken by the new administration.⁵²

• In late December, top government leaders met and established a platform presenting a coherent stance regarding Kosovo, receiving much news attention.⁵³ Significant media attention was also allotted to reporting reactions to the announced platform, which has largely been negative and has been considered a step backwards in the progress made in Serbia-Kosovo relations.⁵⁴ The politicians responsible for making the platform have defended it and the reformulated policy has gotten the support of Serbs residing in Kosovo.⁵⁵

2012 IN REVIEW

2012 has been an eventful year in Serbian politics and in Serbian-EU relations. The three major topics discussed in the media this year have been: the achievement of candidate status and the prospect of accession talks; the presidential elections; and issues relating to Kosovo. Despite the many changes in the political landscape in Serbia, the media has not reflected any fundamental shifts in the relationship between Serbia and the EU. That is not to say that there were not important fluctuations, and the achievement of candidate status later coupled with the succession of a new president created somewhat of a change, if not necessarily in relations, at least in expectations. Such fluctuations were very much reflected in the trends in the media.

With regard to the direct relationship between the EU and Serbia, the major topic covered in the media has been that of Serbia's road toward membership. More specifically, until March, coverage was focused on the anticipation of candidate status whereupon attention shifted to the next step, the beginning of accession talks. There had been intensive reporting on any statements made by domestic and European officials, which would indicate how the country was advancing toward accession. The amount of coverage on these developments reflects the large interest of the public in the progress being made toward membership. The positive attitude toward EU accession was most clearly observable in the media after the achievement of candidate status when most articles portrayed the occasion as a great achievement. Furthermore, the subsequent articles reporting on the opinions of analysts and politicians highlighted that candidate status would bring a lot of benefits to Serbia. Therefore, the importance of EU membership to Serbia was reflected in the media's constant attempts throughout the year to gauge Serbia's progress.

The centrality of issues surrounding EU membership in Serbian politics was most prominent in the coverage of the presidential elections. Already early in the year, the various party leaders began promoting their platforms. A central part of all of these platforms had to do with the politicians' policy on EU membership. In the run-up to the election, the three media sources presented the election as a sort of referendum on whether Serbia would continue the path toward EU membership or not. As such, the election was presented as fundamentally being a decision about Serbia's relationship with the EU. However, this was not the case since the two leading candidates were both pro-EU and the media quickly reverted from its previous characterizations once Tomislav Nikolic won the run-off election. Through its reports of statements by EU officials, who claimed that this did not mean any significant change in relations as well as the similar viewpoint of analysts, the media worked to portray the outcome as not signaling a fundamental shift in Serbia's road to membership.

However, there did seem to be a slight change in relations once the new president was elected. Although the path to accession would continue, at a minimum a new president meant a new rhetoric, but it also meant a somewhat new approach to responding to EU conditions. This new environment, coupled with anticipation of reaching the next step toward membership – the beginning of accession talks – created a sense of anxiety in the media, which was reflected in the issues surrounding Kosovo. The anxiety was observable in the vast amount of reports emerging since the election of the new president, focusing on whether or not Serbia would have to eventually recognize Kosovo in order to achieve membership. The conflicting reports created an atmosphere of uncertainty regarding Serbia's future path towards the EU. It is important to note that although there were some reports of specific incidents and events in Kosovo, most of the coverage about the territory was related to its role in Serbia's progress toward accession. This shift in focus represents a change in the media's conceptualization of the importance of Kosovo away from its own isolated value as a territory, to being viewed mainly through the lens of EU accession and its capacity as a potential hindrance on Serbia's road toward the EU.

Following the trends near the end of the year, it seems that the determining factor in Serbia-EU relations will hinge on Kosovo, and more particularly, on the question of whether Serbia will have to recognize Kosovo's independence in order to become a member. The anxiety shown thus far has the potential to turn into more seri-

ous tension between Serbia and the EU as the high amount of coverage on the concessions Serbia has made to Kosovo has created the perception that the government has already done a lot and that it has been the Serbs who have been the more proactive party. The idea that relations largely hinge on policies toward Kosovo was brought to light at the end of the year with the unveiling of the new platform toward Kosovo, which was widely criticized by EU officials as a step backward in Serbia's bid for EU accession.

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²"Daily Politika has new owner." *Tanjug*, accessed November 2, 2012. <http://www.tanjug.rs/news/51206/daily-politika-has-new-owner.htm>

³"Informacije o B92." *B92*, accessed November 2, 2012.

http://www.b92.net/o_nama/index.php

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶"Članstvo u EU podržava 51 odsto građana ." *Blic*, Online edition, sec. Vesti - Politika, January 13, 2012. <http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Politika/301208/Clanstvo-u-EU-podrzava-51-odsto-gradjana> (accessed December 13, 2012).

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⁸"EP poziva vođe EU da odobre kandidaturu za članstvo Srbiji ." *Blic*, Online edition, sec. Vesti - Politika, January 11, 2012.

<http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Politika/300803/EP-poziva-vodje-EU-da-odobre-kandidaturu-za-clanstvo-Srbiji> (accessed December 13, 2012).

⁹ Mastilovic Jasnica, Ivana. "Nikad bliže, ali i nikad dalje od EU ." *Blic*, Online edition, sec. Vesti - Politika, January 06, 2012.

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<http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Politika/Ukoliko-uslov-bude-Rezolucija-kandidatura-malo-verovatna.lt.html> (accessed December 13, 2012).

¹¹"Šta su srpski političari rekli o kandidaturi?" *Politika*, Online edition, sec. Politika, March 02, 2012. <http://www.politika.rs/rubrike/Politika/210328.sr.html> (accessed December 13, 2012).

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SPAIN

Karen Lugo-Londoño

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 47,042,984
- Ethnic composition: composite of Mediterranean and Nordic types
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$31,000
- EU member entry date: 1986¹
- EU funding in 2011: net recipient

MEDIA SOURCES:

El País

- Founding date: 1976
- Ownership: PRISA² (closely linked w/ the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE))
- Daily circulation: 440,000

La Vanguardia

- Founding date: 1881
- Ownership: The Godó family
- Daily circulation: 185,000

ABC

- Founding date: 1903
- Ownership: Catalina Luca de Tena and García-Conde³
- Daily circulation: 250,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 120 (El País-14 ; La Vanguardia-27; ABC- 36)
- List of search words: “UE y España” “EU and Spain”, “Union Europea”, “Catalunya y Mas”, “Cataluña”, “déficit”, and “Medio Ambiente”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Spain-EU relations reported on in 2012:

Catalan Independence:

- Late in the year, Catalan independence appeared in the media as a major issue in Spanish politics. On September 24th, *El País* reported that Catalan’s bid for independence was a cause for concern for the EU, for fear that it might distract the Spanish Govern-

ment from economic commitments and that it might inspire other regional entities within the EU Member States to also seek independence.⁴ However, on October 15th, the Spanish media reported that the European Commission refused to reveal anything about the possible consequences of Catalan independence in relation to the EU, unless formally asked to do so by the Spanish government.⁵

- In mid-October, it was reported that Artur Mas, the Catalan President leading the bid for independence under his party *Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union), was threatening to take the demand for a referendum for Catalan independence to the EU, should the Spanish government continue rejecting it on the grounds that Catalan independence would constitute a breach of the Spanish Constitution.⁶

- Mas acknowledged that an independent Catalan would not automatically be in the EU, but went on to suggest “the treaties binding EU countries could be ‘reinterpreted’ to deal with possible cases on independence.”⁷ This was not the case, however, since it was later reported that the EU would “never recognize a unilateral secession” from Catalan, as it would go against article 4.2 of the Treaty of EU.⁸ Furthermore, the Vice-President of the European Commission, Viviane Reding, assured the Spanish government that she agreed with its conclusion that Catalan independence would result in the exclusion of Catalan from the EU.⁹ This complicated matters for Mas, as the integration of a new state into the EU is a unanimous decision— thus, a Spanish veto could deny Catalan’s entry to the EU.¹⁰

- In November, the Catalan election campaign began, with Catalan independence as a central campaign issue.¹¹ Earlier that month, Mas had announced that, in light of the expulsion of an independent Catalan from the EU, he would have to revise his strategy for secession, but that he would continue the bid for independence.¹² According to an article published in late November by *ABC*, Mas had not outlined his ideas for independence in detail—the article attributes this to the unfeasibility of the project, in part due to issues such as its lack of currency and inability to acquire EU membership.¹³

- On November 26th, the media reported Mas’ failure to acquire the absolute majority his party needed, winning only 50 seats (and losing 12 it previously had) in the November 25th elections, in which 69.5% of the Catalan electorate voted.¹⁴ It was, however, noted that despite this setback, the Catalan independence movement lives on (though, not as strongly as Mas had previously as-

sumed).¹⁵ This was demonstrated in Mas' end of the year message to Catalan and in his inaugural speech, in which he announced his aims to have "all the structures of statehood" such as a public bank and a Catalan Treasury ready by 2014 at which point a referendum on self-determination would be held.¹⁶

The Eurozone Crisis:

- The Eurozone Crisis and the Spanish debt crisis were issues continuing from 2011, remaining at the forefront of Spanish news in 2012. On January 24th it was reported that the EU, disregarding expectations of economic contraction, refused to grant Spain a longer term to reduce its deficit—the targets would remain at 4.4% for 2012 and 3% for 2013.¹⁷ Financial Vice-President of the EC, Olli Rehn, described the EU's decision as one born out of concern that setbacks in deficit reduction could aggravate the distrust markets hold towards the Spanish economy.¹⁸
- However, in denying an extension for deficit reduction, the EU also disregarded the Spanish government's claim that the original deficit was not 6% but 8% and that the Zapatero government had failed to fulfil the 2011 deficit reduction objective.¹⁹
- In late January, it was reported that the European Commission saw the need to review the 2012 deficit objective for Spain, in light of the 8% deficit and an economic contraction estimated by the IMF.²⁰ On February 14th, the media reported that the EC had begun to take disciplinary action against Spain for its excessive imbalances.²¹ Spain is one of the member states with the highest number of imbalances, exceeding the limits in 6 of 10 indicators that the EU uses to identify economic risks.²² The EC launched an investigation aiming to propose corrective measures, asserting that if ignored by the Spanish government, would trigger penalties such as a fine of up to 0.1% of the Spanish GDP (€1,000 million).²³
- In late February, the EC stated that the Spanish Government needed to explain the failure to reach the 2011 deficit objective and outline the adjustment measures for the 2012 budget, before the EC could consider a change in the deficit objectives for 2012.²⁴ In early March, the media reported that, at the European Summit, Prime Minister Rajoy presented a new public deficit target of 5.8% rather than the 4.4% that had been agreed upon for 2012 by the Government of ex-Prime Minister Zapatero.²⁵ Rajoy went on to state that that change of the deficit target was a "sovereign decision taken by Spain".²⁶ On March 9th, *La Vanguardia* reported that a group of EC experts had been sent to Spain to investigate the

Spanish deficit, the variations (6%, 8% and 8.51%) of which have caused doubt in the EC.²⁷

- On April 3rd, the media reported that unemployment, an issue for which EU reinvestment funds of over €100,000 million had been estimated in January, increased to 23.6% —a record high in the Eurozone where the rate of unemployment was 10.8%.²⁸ Later that month, Rajoy finally addressed the idea of a bailout but claimed that Spain would not need it.²⁹ On the 23rd of April, the EU confirmed that the Spanish public deficit had, in fact, increased in 2011 to 8.5% of the GDP (from 61.2% in 2010 to 68.5% in 2011)—the third largest deficit in the EU.³⁰ This confirmed that the previous Zapatero government had deceived the EU about reaching the deficit target by having claimed that the 2011 deficit was 6%.³¹

- On June 10th, it was reported that Spain would accept a bailout to recapitalize its banking sector; a package of €100 billion was granted by the EU, though the IMF had indicated that a sum of €40 billion would be sufficient.³²

- Earlier, in April and May, Rehn had noted Spain's determination in facing economic challenges and described reforms to remove vulnerabilities in the banking sector as necessary to restore confidence in the stability of the Spanish banking sector, and achieve sustainable growth and better jobs.³³ In late June, the EC warned Spain that its large scale of austerity measures could actually hinder economic growth.³⁴ The measures outlined in the 2012 Spanish budget, which Rajoy had warned in March would be "very austere", included cuts in spending in sectors like education.³⁵

- In early July, it was reported that (with the condition that Spain quickly implement additional measures to reach the objectives) the EU would give Spain until 2014 to reduce its deficit to under 3%.³⁶ The new deficit goals were set as follows: from 8.9% to 6.3% in 2012, 4.5 in 2013, and 2.8% in 2014.³⁷

- The EU also stated that it would closely monitor Spain's fulfilment of the conditions attached to the assistance in the recapitalization and restructuring of its banking sector, as well as Spain's excessive deficit commitments.³⁸ On the 20th of July, Rehn stressed that the only way for Spain to achieve "financial stability, a competitive economy, and a fall in unemployment" would be through reforms, the aid being given to Spanish banks, and the restructuring and recapitalization of the financial sector.³⁹

- In an interview in early September, Rehn stated that further revision of the deficit objectives would not be needed since, with the reforms the country has made, Spain can meet the new objectives.⁴⁰

- In mid-September, *ABC* reported on the EC's clarification of the conditions that would be imposed on Spain, should it request that the ECB buy its debt.⁴¹ However, on October 3rd, Prime Minister Rajoy denied once again that Spain would request a bailout.⁴² Rajoy was successful in sending a confidence-building message of unity to Europe and to the global financial markets, when regional leaders of Spain reached unanimous agreement and expressed their commitment to reaching the deficit targets.⁴³
- In mid-October, the EC stated that it would respect Spain's decision regarding an application for financial assistance, but should Spain decide to apply for assistance beyond the recapitalization program, the EU executive would be prepared to help.⁴⁴ In early November, *El Pais* reported that, according to an EC report, Spain would be the last country to emerge from its recession and that its economy would not experience any growth until the last quarter of 2013.⁴⁵
- On November 14th, Rehn complimented the Spanish government's measures for 2012 and 2013, but highlighted the importance of concrete new initiatives and asked for a clarification of Spain's plans for meeting its 2014 deficit-reduction target.⁴⁶ On November 16th, the President of the EC, Jose Manuel Barroso, confirmed that the EU would not ask for Spain to make more adjustments in 2012.⁴⁷
- However, on November 19th, *El Pais* reported that, to improve the effectiveness of future funds, the EC required that the Spanish government redirect community aid from building and road construction to unemployment (particularly youth unemployment) and innovation.⁴⁸ On November 28th, the media reported that Spain had finally met the EU's conditions for the first portion, €39.5 billion, of its bank bailout.⁴⁹ Meanwhile, *El Pais* reported on the 30th that Spain remains the EU member state with the highest rate of unemployment (26.2%), having grown from the 22.7% of 2011.⁵⁰
- In December, it was reported that all banks with assets greater than €30,000 million are to be controlled by the ECB; meaning 80%-95% of Spanish banks will be supervised by the ECB.⁵¹ According to Rajoy, these changes are expected to have many positive effects; among them is an increase confidence in the financial sector.⁵² As the year came to a close, the government of PM Mariano Rajoy decided not to ask for the EU to bailout Spain at the moment, as they believed Spain did not need it.⁵³

The Environment:

- The issue of the environment was sporadic in its appearance in the Spanish media throughout 2012; however, it remained an important issue in EU-Spanish relations. In late February, a European Environment Agency report showed that Spain was the only country in the EU to exceed the legal limits of three out of the four pollutants controlled by a community standard—making it the most polluting European country.⁵⁴
- On April 28th, *La Vanguardia* reported that, as a result of the Spanish economic crisis, there has been less traffic and thus nitrogen dioxide pollution by vehicles has decreased.⁵⁵ However, the crisis has also caused a drop in sales of new cars, resulting in the use of old, particulate-polluting cars.⁵⁶ This has resulted in an increase in the already excessive air pollution in Barcelona—the pollution of which is above the EU air quality values for NO₂.⁵⁷
- In early June, it was reported that the EC called for a change in Spanish environmental policies, seeing as the revenues from Spanish environmental taxes (relative to GDP) were the lowest in the EU in 2010.⁵⁸ The collection of taxes in the Spanish Strategic Plan does not encourage proper waste management or an increase in recycling—instead it subsidizes the use of imported fossil fuels.⁵⁹
- On July 7th, *La Vanguardia* reported that Madrid had sent the European Commission its air quality plan for 2011-2015 as well as a request for a time extension for compliance with EU NO₂ limit values.⁶⁰ The EC has a period of nine months to review Madrid's air quality plan and decide on the matter.⁶¹
- Meanwhile, in early August, *ABC* reported that Catalan is the autonomous community that produces the most (23.9%) hazardous waste—332,962 tonnes.⁶² Later that month, it was reported that the EC had asked the Spanish and Catalan governments for stricter measures in pollution reduction, so that areas such as Barcelona meet EU air quality requirements—in particular for NO₂.⁶³ This was the EC's response to the request, made by Spain earlier in the year, to have more time to enforce the annual NO₂ EU limit values.⁶⁴
- The Spanish media reported in October that though gas emissions in the EU fell by 2.5% last year, they increased in Spain.⁶⁵ Though emissions only increased by 0.1% (an effect of the increased use of coal for steam-powered electricity due to Royal Decree), it shows that the country is behind in its commitments to the Kyoto Protocol for 2020.⁶⁶ The European Environment Agency believes Spain will not fulfil the aforementioned commitments, de-

spite having bought carbon credits –for nearly 100 million tonnes of CO₂—from Poland in early October.⁶⁷

- In early November, the media reported that the EU Environment Commissioner, Janez Potocnik, stated that it was important for Spain to design new policies for greater efficiency in water management, and that greater attention should be given to waste management, water and air quality, and recycling.⁶⁸ In the case of recycling, Spain's level of recycling is only 5% while other countries have levels of 90%.⁶⁹

- The Commissioner continued to urge Spain to base its environmental taxes on pollution and to provide tax incentives to environmentally friendly companies, as well as to integrate environmental policies in order to achieve sustainable development.⁷⁰

- In an attempt to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and the Environment decided on 40 'Climate Projects', in sectors not subject to the EU Emissions Trading System, that will be funded by the Carbon Fund, and are expected to reduce about a million tonnes of CO₂ in the next four years.⁷¹ On December 6th, *El Pais* reported that Barcelona failed again to reduce NO₂ emissions, which have remained stable since 2007.⁷² In mid-December, the Spanish media reported that, as part of the program for innovative renewable energy projects (NER300), the EC would provide a fund of up to €70 million to build a solar power plant in Alvarado, Spain.⁷³

2012 IN REVIEW:

Despite having arisen late in the year, the issue of Catalan independence had the potential to deeply affect the relationship between the EU and Spain, as well as the perception of the EU within the country. Catalan independence is a domestic issue that invokes nationalistic sentiment, not only with Catalans, but also within the rest of Spain—in 2012 it was clear that many Catalans wished to separate, while many in the rest of the country deeply disliked the idea.⁷⁴ The EU handled the issue with caution— at first refusing to comment on it unless asked to do so by the Spanish government, and later supporting the side of the national government over that of Artur Mas and other separatists. By doing so, the EU respected Spain's responsibility in "ensuring [its] territorial integrity", thereby adhering to the TEU and retaining the neutral –if not positive— perception of most Spanish people.⁷⁵

The decision to support the Spanish government was an important one, since –as the Catalan elections showed—the vote of many Catalans depended on whether or not an independent Catalan

would be allowed to remain in the EU. Artur Mas' decision to pursue independence despite Catalan's prospective expulsion from the EU could have worried voters, explaining the CiU's failure to achieve the absolute majority it needed to begin pressuring for independence. EU support in this issue had more than symbolic power, it visibly influenced the Catalan elections—the decision to support the Spanish government in its claims that Catalan would not remain in the EU appears to have made the prospect of independence less than ideal for some of the Catalan electorate. However, despite the potential to damage relations, the EU's handling of the issue assisted in the maintenance of good relations with Spain and most of the Spanish people (at least those who did not support Catalan independence).

The Eurozone Crisis and the domestic debt crisis dominated the Spanish media in 2012. Throughout the year, EU-Spanish relations seem to have improved a great deal from 2011. The government of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and his *Partido Popular* (People's Party), elected in November 2011, introduced a series of reforms in the economy that have brought the country much closer to fulfilling the economic commitments to the EU. At the beginning of 2012, relations between Spain and the EU appeared slightly strained, as Spain's request for an extension to reach its deficit reduction targets was denied, followed by the revelation that the deficit was in fact 8% instead of 6%—later study suggested the deficit was as high as 8.5%. The combination of these two issues resulted in Rajoy announcing that the government had taken a unilateral decision, not discussed with the EC, to lower the deficit reduction goal from 4.4% to 5.8% of the GDP.

However, as the deficit of 8.5% was subsequently accepted by the EU and as Spanish reforms demonstrated the country's commitment to its austerity measures and to its debt reduction target, relations between the EU and Spain steadily improved. By mid-November, the EC confirmed that it would not require further adjustments for 2012, as it considered the efforts made in the past months effective and believed the country would be able to reach its revised deficit target of 6.3% for 2012. In addition to the increase in the EU's confidence in Spain, it seems that Spanish sentiment towards the EU had also improved by year's end. This can be seen in Spain's agreement to allow 80-95% of its banks to be supervised by the ECB, as well as by Prime Minister Rajoy's commitment to further economic and monetary union with the EU.⁷⁶

The issue of the environment, though reported on sporadically throughout the year, was still an important topic that influenced perceptions of Spain within the EU. The EU has been patient during the past year with Spain's lack of environmental commitment, but has periodically reminded the country of the need to promote recycling and reduce NO₂ and CO₂ emissions. While the issue does not seem to have had a notable effect on Spanish environmental policy, the current economic crisis has caused the EU to worry that Spain will continue to exceed the EU limit values for gas and particulate emissions.

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<<http://www.prisanoticias.com/es/>>.

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⁴ Pérez, Claudi, "EU fears over Catalanian independence moves," *El País*, Sept 24, 2012, accessed November 21, 2012,
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⁵ "Bruselas solo se pronunciará sobre la independencia de Cataluña si España lo pide", *ABC*, Oct 15, 2012, accessed Jan 5, 2013,
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⁶ Noguer, Miguel, "Catalan leader threatens to 'internationalize conflict' with EU appeal", *El País*, Oct 15, 2012, accessed November 21, 2012,
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⁷ Noguer, Miguel, "Catalan leader threatens to 'internationalize conflict' with EU appeal", *El País*, Oct 15, 2012, accessed November 21, 2012,
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⁸ "El Gobierno, 'La Unión Europea no reconocerá jamás una secesión unilateral'," *ABC*, Oct 30, 2012, accessed November 24, 2012,
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"The Union shall respect the equality of Member States before the Treaties as well as their national identities, inherent in their fundamental structures, political and constitutional, inclusive of regional and local self-government. It shall respect their essential State functions, including ensuring the territorial integrity of the State, maintaining law and order and safeguarding national security. In particular, national security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State."

("Consolidated Version of The Treaty of the EU," *The Official Journal of the EU*, Feb 7, 1992, accessed Nov 24, 2012, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:083:0013:0046:en:PDF>.)

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SWEDEN

Emma Nilsson Fjallstrom

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 9,103,788
- Ethnic composition: indigenous population: Swedes with Finnish and Sami minorities; foreign born or first-generation immigrants: Finns, Yugoslavs, Danes, Norwegians, Greeks, Turks
- GDP per capita: \$41,700
- EU member entry date: 1995
- EU funding in 2011: net contributor

MEDIA SOURCES:

Dagens Nyheter

- Founding date: 1864
- Ownership: the Bonnier Group, one of the two biggest media owners in Sweden. Dagens Nyheter is a self-proclaimed independent liberal newspaper
- Daily circulation: 339,800

Aftonbladet

- Founding date: 1830
- Ownership: Schibsted Group, a Norwegian business in charge of several Swedish newspapers is the major owner of this newspaper. The other owner with only partial influence on appointments of columnists and political content and thereby viewed as a minor owner is *Landsorganisationen*, a union associated with the Social Democratic party
- Daily circulation: 450,000

Fokus

- Founding date: 2005
- Ownership: FPG Media AB
- Daily readership: 22,000-73,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 201 (Dagens Nyheter-122; Aftonbladet-48; Fokus-31)
- List of search words: “EU”, “Europeiska Unionen”, “euro”, “europa”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Sweden-EU relations reported on in 2012:

The Economic Crisis

- The Swedish coverage on the economic crisis was summarized in *Fokus'* annual chronicle. The chronicle questioned who was in charge of steering Europe during the financial crisis; Angela Merkel was the simple answer.¹ The reports on the financial crisis were largely focused on Germany with several pieces focusing on Germany's fear of inflation,² power in the budget negotiations,³ and the need for the repayment of debts.⁴
- The Danish presidency in the EC at the start of 2012 was expected to have a cultural impact on the EU and make little mark on the prevailing economic situation.⁵ The report on the economic crisis was dominated by the "to be or not to be" of the common supervision of European banks, also called the European Banking Union. One of the first positive pieces appeared in *Dagens Nyheter* in October and argued that the Bank Union would be a legitimate way of controlling the financial system, which would be the appropriate way to proceed after the Swedish Financial Inspection miscalculated the risks of investments in the Baltic countries of two major Swedish banks.⁶
- As for the Bank Union, it was reported as a half-integrated solution that would enable a centralization of the audits of the financial system.⁷ A Swedish request for the Bank Union was a restriction on the use of Swedish taxpayers' money to save foreign banks and to require higher levels of capital in Swedish banks.⁸ Both Prime Minister Reinfeldt and Minister of Finance Anders Borg were initially sceptical.⁹ They were dissatisfied with non-euro countries' lack of influence.¹⁰ Borg, however, was quoted as being satisfied with the result as some of the most important points for the Swedish delegation were included in the final result, though he made clear that Sweden would not be a part of the bank union.¹¹ Up until the day before the October Summit, the reports were very uncertain as to whether or not the Bank Union would have any effects at all.¹²
- Meanwhile the Swedish Government was criticized for overemphasizing austerity measures in countries affected by the crisis.¹³ The Swedish economic crisis in the 1990s was treated in a similar manner, employing direct measures.¹⁴ While the Baltic countries' austerity measures (for example the internal devaluation) were seen as temporarily beneficial, the reports discussed whether the

long-term costs of emigration and unemployment would become too costly in the future.¹⁵

- One aspect of the reports on the economic crisis in early 2012 was that the average Swede was to benefit from the crisis with an increase in real wages and a lowering of interest rates on mortgages.¹⁶ The Swedish Prime Minister claimed that the “middle age ethnic Swede” was subject to a very low rate of unemployment and that the unemployment rate for the other ethnic groups in Sweden was not approaching a level of mass-unemployment.¹⁷

- In September 84% of the Swedes saw the Euro as a currency which would inflict great harm on the economy if introduced in Sweden.¹⁸ Later in 2012, reports were concerned with whether or not the Swedish economy was about to be hit by the economic crisis in terms of lowered demand on the crucial export market combined with a high valued currency.¹⁹ These reports appeared at the same time as reports on the recession in the Eurozone.²⁰

The EU Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize

- In December, the decision to award the EU the Nobel Peace Prize was very well received by the Minister for Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt, members of the EP, and the Swedish Commissioner Cecilia Malmström.²¹ After the question of who should attend the ceremony and receive the prize arose, the traditional Kissinger quote on who to call from Europe was used to emphasize the lack of one decisive figure who would receive the award.²²

- The most common critique of the granting of the Nobel Prize to the EU was the timing of the event as the EU was in the midst of suffering economically.²³ *Svenska Freds*, an organization for disarmament, claimed that the EU should not have been considered in the discussion on the Peace Prize because of its member states' involvement in the arms trade and their possession of nuclear weapons.²⁴

- Also discussed in the media was the reasoning behind the establishment of the EU and its organisational predecessors. Two scholars claimed the French-German cooperation was not a peace project, but rather a response to the Suez Crisis in order to maintain Europe as an important actor in world politics, with developed colonial holdings in Africa.²⁵ This was met with great scepticism as others claimed that their thesis was a perverted interpretation of history,²⁶ or that the scholars had departed from a regional aversion for EU as a peace-keeping power in Europe.²⁷

The European Identity, Unity and Democracy

- Questions of European solidarity and signs of dissatisfaction among EU citizens became increasingly important at the end of the year. This debate was a key feature in op-eds. Despite the Euro, conflicts between member states are not impossible. Furthermore, with a continued use of national stereotypes the risk for inter-European conflicts can increase, according to an op-ed in *Dagens Nyheter*.²⁸
- A movie from the EU Commission intended to enhance European solidarity – by playing on stereotypes of the “outsiders” fought off by the EU symbols – was used as a way of promoting European identity and unity.²⁹ Meanwhile, reports on separatism included pieces that played blame games between nations (Spain, Italy,³⁰ Greece, Germany,³¹ Great Britain³² and Hungary³³ but also between regions (Belgium, Scotland, South Tyrol³⁴ and Catalonia) with the Catalan elections appearing as a relatively significant event in news reports.³⁵
- The interest and opportunity for the citizens to participate decreased as the economic crisis evolved. One opinion piece argued that the EU will not lose its democratic deficit until there are elections for EU leaders, enabling a person in van Rompuy's position as President of the European Council to be as known to Europeans as the American President is in Europe.³⁶ With the economic crisis, van Rompuy's power has increased as more topics were raised by the European Council.³⁷ Different versions of dissatisfaction with the current lack of transparency, accountability, autocracy and lack of discussion on where the EU is headed were also voiced in several opinion pieces.³⁸

Snuff restrictions

- Except for these major topics a number of minor topics still influence the relationship between the EU and Sweden. These include the proposed ban on added flavours to Swedish *snus* (English: snuff), a traditional product of pulverized tobacco placed against the gums, which today is sold in Sweden and Denmark. The exception from earlier bans on snuff in the EU are included in the Swedish accession protocol.³⁹ This was then related to Commissioner Dalli's resignation after a bribery accusation emerged which linked him to the export ban on snuff.⁴⁰ Allegedly, previous reports asserted that scientific reports were censored and altered to advocate the Commission's point of view.⁴¹

2012 IN REVIEW:

The economic crisis is seen as a two headed problem: one part of the reports focused on coming up with a solution to the problem, while the other part of the reports focused on determining the effects that the crisis would have in Sweden. The ambivalence on how to handle the crisis created a debate on whether or not the experiences from the Swedish crisis in the early 1990s are applicable to the current crisis, combined with a certain sense of relief that the Swedish referendum on the Euro in 2003 was turned down. The complexity of the EU has been emphasized over the past year, both in terms of technical solutions for the Bank Union but also as to how decisions in the EC are largely seen as a result of converging French and German affairs. The end of the so-called Merkozy pact (a combination of Merkel and Sarkozy) with the election of Francois Hollande was seen, in Swedish eyes, as creating a less predestined and more democratic way forward for the EU.

After the Peace Prize was announced, the majority of the reports in the Swedish media were more or less astounded as to how the Norwegians could award the EU such an honour during its time of crisis. The basis for the motivation was agreed upon in a large part of the media: creating peace among these Europeans is surely a good thing, but it was not enough, as asserted by most Swedish reports. Peace has prevailed in Sweden for around 200 years; the EU ought to instead do what it claims to do: enable trade and freedom of movement among Europeans. Arguments that the peace-keeping and interdependence-effects of the EU are solely nostalgic were very common. The democratic deficit of the EU was also discussed in several pieces, alongside the inefficiency and unclear direction of the development in the European Integration-project.

The Peace Prize, combined with the economic crisis spurred reports on how integrated the EU is in reality. Regional elections, increased nationalism and examples of self-righteousness were used to illustrate how poorly the theoretical top-down and spillover effects make a mark in European citizens' everyday life. After almost 20 years in the EU, few Swedes would do as the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs does and include "European" in the title of their memoirs.

Perhaps due to the absence of a serious economic crisis, the Swedish general discourse is still entirely focused on how Sweden will work *within* the EU – a Swedish exit is seen as something completely unthinkable and has never been brought up in discussion. Good formal relations were maintained through 2012 and despite a more open scepticism towards increased integration,

there is no doubt that Sweden will continue to contribute to the development of the EU in the coming years.

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SWITZERLAND

Natasha Miletic

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 7,925,517
- Ethnic Composition: German 65%, French 18%, Italian 10%, Romansch 1%, other 6%
- GDP per capita 2011: \$43,900

MEDIA SOURCES:

Neue Zürcher Zeitung

- Founding date: 1780¹
- Ownership: NZZ-Gruppe²
- Daily circulation: 300,000³

Le Temps

- Founding date: 1998⁴
- Ownership: Le Temps SA⁵
- Daily circulation: 142,000⁶

Basler Zeitung

- Founding date: 1977⁷
- Ownership: Maurice Sutter's Basler Zeitung Medien group⁸
- Daily circulation: 77,600⁹

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 65 (Le Temps-27; Neue Zürcher Zeitung-23; Basler Zeitung-15)

- List of search words: "L'UE et la Suisse", "Europäischen Union", "Europäischen Union und Schweiz", "L'Union Européenne"

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Switzerland-EU relations reported on in 2012:

Swiss-EU negotiation over electricity agreement

- The renewal of bilateral relations between Switzerland and the EU involves compromises over a wide range of policies.¹⁰ Since January and throughout 2012, Swiss media reported that the country preferred to focus negotiations with the EU on its electricity sector and energy markets.¹¹ However, due to reforms within the EU caused by the financial crisis, the EU preferred to dedicate more

time to negotiations regarding other sectors of European Law in 2012.¹²

- This point of contention accounts for much of the delay in bilateral negotiations between the EU and Switzerland, as the process continued into 2013.¹³

- Switzerland's proposal in March to renew bilateral relations by sector meant the Swiss were pushing for a forum that was specifically related to the energy sector and various electricity agreements.¹⁴ The EU rejected the Swiss proposal on March 20th but it was reported in April that it would "serve as a model [for the EU] for future agreements on market access."¹⁵

- Swiss press reports indicated that bilateral negotiations on electricity remain very important for Switzerland and Swiss partners.¹⁶ Switzerland's hydroelectric capacity acts as a valuable market for Switzerland and it is in Switzerland's strong interest to open this market and provide transparency to EU members.¹⁷

- In September *Le Temps* reported that these negotiations are also highly important to the EU as the Union faces the constraints of a low carbon economy.¹⁸ Furthermore, the Union has been faced with the specific challenge of increasing its levels of renewable energy and store electricity.¹⁹

- However, in November, suspensions of the draft EU budget for 2013, which called for tighter economic policies, and reform within the EU due to the financial crisis, caused the EU to be less flexible in its negotiations with Switzerland.²⁰ This was perceived as the EU's attempt to put other matters ahead of the electricity negotiations despite Switzerland's firmness around the necessity of these negotiations.²¹

- Reportedly, the EU argued that a draft agreement on Swiss electrical policies poses a subsequent issue to larger institutional and policy aspects of market opening in Switzerland.²² Therefore, the EU recognizes that although these negotiations are important, the absence of an agreement in the short term is not dramatic.²³

- Furthermore, the European Commission warns that if Switzerland does not intend to incorporate into the new network of "highways" of electricity in accordance with Community rules, it could be physically bypassed, which would impede its trading potential; a potential largely dependent in its geographic position between Germany and Italy.²⁴

- As noted by the media, Swiss electrical companies expressed fear that Switzerland could face problems in the international market if they fail to make proper investments in Europe in the short term.²⁵ To put this into perspective, the international side of the

Swiss electricity sector represents an amount almost equivalent to the domestic consumption and generates trade surplus of more than 1 billion francs.²⁶

- Reports from *Le Temps*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, and *Basler Zeitung* all referred to the Swiss firmness towards the EU regarding electricity negotiations as affirmation of sovereignty and unwillingness to be treated as a Member State.²⁷ Renewal of bilateral relations between the EU and Switzerland therefore suggest a re-evaluation of the structure of this relationship.²⁸

Swiss-EU negotiation over tax policy

- Swiss media reported on the effects of the EU's continuous struggle with the economic crisis, asserting that the Union was pursuing a firmer economic model, which hindered the formerly flexible EU-Member State relations²⁹ As a strategy to tackle the ongoing economic turbulence, the EU is seeking to further integrate economically, including increased centralized powers over economic and fiscal tax policies surveillance.³⁰ The EU is attempting to impose these new requirements on its partners, including Switzerland.³¹

- As conveyed by the domestic media, this development has already affected the renegotiation of the bilateral relations between the EU and Switzerland, specifically regarding the issue of taxation.³² Furthermore, considering the many reforms pursued by the EU, Switzerland will be affected by the transformation of EU policies.³³

- In order to secure interests regarding taxation, the EU signed a "surprising" tax agreement with the UK.³⁴ As reported in March, Swiss politicians expressed fears that the EU now has less of a reason to be compromising with Switzerland on the issue of taxation policy and reform, given the agreement reached between the EU and the UK.³⁵

- Reportedly, the seemingly apparent status quo does not mean that Switzerland has escaped the need to eliminate the preferential tax status of foreign holding companies, joint ventures or domicile.³⁶

- The Swiss wish is for their freer tax policies to serve as a model for other countries, specifically EU member states.³⁷

- However, reports indicated that Switzerland risks being put on a gray or black list as threatened by former German Finance Minister Steinbrück.³⁸ Considering German companies have large investments in Switzerland, the existence of a "law against harmful tax practices" would become a risk for European companies doing

business with Switzerland.³⁹ Therefore, it has become in the best interest for the countries bordering Switzerland, and the companies working within Switzerland, to secure a pragmatic resolution of tax issues.⁴⁰

- For the EU, the tax issue is at the center of Swiss-EU bilateral relations.⁴¹ Swiss unwillingness to concede on this issue has translated to a lack of flexibility by the EU regarding Swiss electricity negotiations and therefore bilateral negotiations between the two bodies reached a stalemate.⁴² Furthermore, reports cautioned that the lack of agreement regarding the tax issue might result in discrimination against Swiss businesses.⁴³

- The EU wishes to have relations with Switzerland that are identical to those of the countries of the European Economic Area, as if it was part of the single market.⁴⁴ Equal treatment of companies would therefore be essential.⁴⁵ However, Switzerland wishes to assert its sovereignty and for this reason, the renewal of bilateral negotiations between the two bodies may drag on.⁴⁶

Swiss proposal for a supervising body between Swiss-EU renewal of bilateral negotiations

- Given the changes within the EU that resulted from the financial crisis, bilateral relations between Switzerland and the EU have become increasingly complex.⁴⁷ Since 2010, the European Council has found that the mode of relations between the EU and Switzerland had become too complex, with different regulations for each of the 130 agreements, stating that negotiations had become "unmanageable" and had "reached [their] limit."⁴⁸

- Considering the various contentious issues such as taxation and energy markets, Switzerland proposed the establishment of a national supervisory board to oversee the negotiations.⁴⁹ According to Switzerland, because negotiations have been largely unchanged since April, this could provide a solution to simplify and standardize bilateral relations with the EU and speed up the negotiations.⁵⁰

- Rather than being a supranational supervisory body, the concept was based on a system of two pillars, one national in Switzerland, and the other in Brussels.⁵¹ Switzerland rejected the idea of sacrificing a part of its sovereignty by submitting to foreign judges.⁵² It would instead create an independent national authority, elected by parliament to monitor the implementation of agreements on its soil. In case of discrepancy, the matter could be brought before the Federal Court, and ultimately only discussed in a joint

committee with the EU and, in case of failure, submitted to an arbitral tribunal.⁵³

- However, national governance over supranational issues is unacceptable for the EU.⁵⁴ Ultimately, the Federal Council rejected any supranational body to monitor the implementation of EU law in Switzerland, stating that the Swiss proposal to establish a national supervisory authority agreement would be unacceptable.⁵⁵

2012 IN REVIEW:

Geographically bound to its member states, Switzerland is inescapably affected by the economic policies and the supranational framework of the EU. Since 1992, Switzerland has sought to assert its sovereignty by establishing a series of bilateral agreements with the EU. However, the periodic renewal of these bilateral agreements requires restructuring depending on the ways in which the EU has changed. Dramatic changes within the Union have resulted from the financial crisis and the anticipation for further economic integration, as well as tighter monetary policies.⁵⁶ The changes and restructuring of the EU need to be taken into consideration when negotiations for the renewal of Swiss-EU bilateral agreements take place.

The renewal of bilateral relations between Switzerland and the EU in 2008 and 2010 appear to have been welcomed more warmly than those in 2012.⁵⁷ Although media sources *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Basler Zeitung* and *Le Temps* were careful to note that the EU values its relationship with Switzerland, it is clear that tension exists between the two bodies on how the bilateral relationship should change. For example, it is evident that the EU has been attempting to impose the same tax policies towards Swiss companies as it has in other Member States.⁵⁸ Not only does Switzerland not wish to compromise on the issue of taxation, it would rather focus negotiations on issues related to energy markets and the electricity sector.⁵⁹ These two opposing interests have created a dynamic in 2012 that involves compromise, pressure and even the possibility of suspending negotiations for a period of time. Switzerland perceives the contention as an issue of sovereignty and is fearful of the EU's push for deeper integration and its treatment of Switzerland as a Member State.⁶⁰

Although Switzerland strongly asserts its sovereignty and the fact that it is not a member of the EU, the Swiss government correctly anticipated that the EU would attempt to impose stricter tax policies on it in line with impositions on EU Member States. Analysis of three media sources over the span of 2012 highlight three dis-

tinct areas where Swiss-EU relations experienced disagreement: tax policy, electricity and the implementation of a supervisory board to oversee these negotiations.

However, Switzerland has a vested interest in its most important market: energy and electricity and would prefer that this be the centrepiece of bilateral negotiations with the EU.⁶¹ Because the EU has been so forceful about renewing tax policies with Switzerland, it appears as if the Swiss are seeking to push their interests in electricity negotiations by using it as leverage. Therefore, if Switzerland is willing to compromise on tax policies in favour of EU interests, then perhaps the EU will compromise in return in favour of Swiss electricity demands.

The Swiss suggestion to create a national supervisory board is another clear example of Switzerland's attempts to maintain its sovereignty.⁶² However, the idea of a national board supervising the negotiations between Switzerland and the EU was unacceptable to the EU and thus it was rejected in March 2012.⁶³ Although the EU is a much larger entity and has expressed its disagreement with Switzerland, according to Swiss media, Switzerland is not fearful of the shadow that the EU has attempted to cast. The ultimate consensus appears to be that there is no rush in coming to any kind of agreement with the EU and that diplomats would be willing to suspend negotiations for a period of time in order to achieve mutually agreed upon results rather than unilateral ones.⁶⁴

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³ Ibid

⁴ "LeTemps.ch | Actualité." LeTemps.ch | Actualité. <http://www.letemps.ch/> (accessed November 2, 2012).

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TURKEY

Alev Kayagil

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 79,749,000
- Ethnic composition: 70-75% Turkish, 18% Kurdish, 7-12% other minorities
- GDP per capita in 2011: \$14,700

MEDIA SOURCES:

Hurriyet

- Founding date: 1948
- Ownership: Dogan Industrial Group
- Daily circulation: 419,000

Sabah

- Founding Date: 1985
- Ownership: Ciner Group
- Daily circulation: 322,000

Zaman

- Founding Date: 1986
- Ownership: Feza Inc.
- Daily circulation: 1,000,000

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 75 (Hurriyet-46; Sabah-24; Zaman-5)
- List of search words: “Turkey and EU,” “Turkey and Cyprus,” “EU report on Turkey,” “EU and PKK,” “Kurds and EU”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to Turkey- EU relations reported on in 2012:

EU report on enlargement including Turkey

- Media sources indicated that the recent report at the EU Summit in Ankara was particularly critical to Turkey’s inclusion, however the introduction of visa-free travel for Turkish citizens has been seen a significant step forward.¹ It has been two years since serious arrangements have been made between Turkey and the EU regarding accession talks.² EU accession is still important for Turkey therefore it wants to speed up the process even if this means making some changes.³ Prime Minister Erdogan stated that EU-

Turkish relations are achieving momentum, especially due to the relationship with Germany, which is a supporter of Turkey.⁴

- The Turkish media presented the report commending Turkey on its developments regarding Syria as well as its relationship with the international community.⁵ However, many articles highlighted that there is still much doubt on the progress that has been made so far concerning Turkish accession and EU report, including visa-free travel; Turkey does not want to negotiate a Readmission Agreement until visa regulations for Turkish citizens begin.⁶ The Turkish media reported that Enlargement Commissioner, Stefan Fule, was pleased about the Turkey report draft in March 2012 regarding the compromise of issuing a constitution through a democratic process.⁷

- *Sabah* newspaper reported that some opinions hold that Turkey is not really interested in integration into the EU due to the constant postponing of negotiations and long awaited opening of chapters.⁸ In an article published about Turkey's association with CERN (European Committee of Nuclear Research) Turkish engineers related their membership to Turkey giving up its full membership during EU accession and only settling for a "privileged partnership."⁹

- Countries such as Holland welcome Turkey and point to its growing economy and resources as essential in their being trading partners, and that neither the EU nor Turkey can afford to shut their doors to each other.¹⁰ Articles in the Turkish media report on the latest advances in December 2012 between the EU and Turkey, as the report section on Turkey includes a mention of "accession" for the first time in five years; this development has been attributed to the presidency of Francois Hollande as well as a comment by the EU General Affairs Council recognizing the full potential of Turkey-EU relations and active negotiations.¹¹

- Despite the drawbacks and improvements in EU-Turkey relations, the media reported on Turkey wanting to be seen as a member by at least 2023, and wants to see serious action taken by the EU after the end of the Greek Cypriot presidency at the end of 2012.¹² Prime Minister Erdogan stated that Turkey would speed up its negotiations with the EU regarding membership as soon as the Irish presidency goes into effect.¹³ The report has been largely praised in Turkish media as a success in diplomatic relations between Turkey and the EU.¹⁴

Kurdish problem and human rights issues

- Concerning the Kurdish minorities and pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, the EU made it clear that it does not want this party to be excluded from politics, however the question arises as to whether it should be persecuted or not.¹⁵ The Kurdish Workers' Party, PKK, has been identified as a terrorist organization by both Turkey and the EU and is therefore an issue that must be dealt with in the draft report on Turkey. Media reports further assert that EU countries should work with Turkey against the PKK organization.¹⁶ Chancellor Merkel of Germany promised that she would work with Turkey in combating the PKK.¹⁷
- In an article in the media in late October 2012, President Erdogan further informed Chancellor Merkel about the activities of the PKK, not only in Turkey but in Germany as well.¹⁸ In addition, Egemen Bagis, the Turkish Commissioner in the EU, slammed EU countries for not supporting Turkey in its battle against the PKK.¹⁹
- *Hurriyet* newspaper stated that European countries could better cooperate with Turkey in the fight against terror if the country could further harmonize its law with that of the EU, which includes adopting a measure on the protection of personal data as well as an international convention against financing of terrorism.²⁰ Stefan Fule, the Commissioner for Enlargement, said that the EU condemns terrorist groups and recalls that the EU lists the PKK as a terrorist group.²¹ The article indicated that the President of the European Parliament has linked the resolution of Turkey's Kurdish issue to its eventual accession. Leader of the Socialists in the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, stated that there could be a creation of two sovereign states while maintaining a high degree of autonomy and territorial integrity of the country. Turkish media reports stated that the EU is concerned with the rights and recognitions of the Kurdish minorities in its member as well as future member countries.²²
- The EU welcomed Turkey's efforts in putting the army under civilian control, recognizing it as the base of civilian democracy, however in trying to draft a new constitution the EU cautioned about the problems of delivering justice in Turkey such as conditions and durations of detentions.²³
- With the case of a Turkish family whose son died during his service in the army, in confronting the ECHR wanted to obtain more information, the Turkish courts were not helpful at all in dealing with the case, demonstrating the inadequacy of the civil courts.²⁴
- In addition, a Senior European Commission officer pointed out the fundamental rights problem as the new enlargement project is adopted; Turkey has not met all the criteria for membership, espe-

cially the issues on freedom of speech and the Kurdish problem.²⁵ The articles show that Turkey is critical of the progress made in recent reports where the Justice Minister, Bakan Ergin, was not happy with the EU Justice Minister in not being able to provide a report on social justice concerns since 2006, stating that the delay is unacceptable.²⁶

Cyprus issue as a stalemate in EU relations

- *Hurriyet* newspaper stated, regarding Turkey's relationship with the Italian energy company, ENI, that there is great animosity from Turkey regarding approved Greek Cypriot licenses for drilling near the island. Energy companies that are cooperating with Greek Cypriots will not be allowed to take part in new energy projects in Turkey.²⁷ New natural gas exploration in the Mediterranean in 2013 is likely going to lead to disputes between Turkey and Greek Cyprus.²⁸

- Media reports commented on Cyprus as being a major factor in Turkish accession where in 1999 for Turkey to become a member it had to compromise Cyprus, which Turkey as well as the Greeks did not agree upon. This disagreement led to a decreasing importance for Turkey's accession, where the EU called for a privileged partnership with Turkey rather than full membership.²⁹ Turkish media articles stated that since the commencement of the Greek Cypriot presidency in the EU, Turkey has ceased its contact with the presidency; none of the ministries and institutions of the Turkish Republic will be in contact with the presidency in any activities.³⁰ Turkey's main objective is to solve the Cyprus issue and reunify the island but the Turkish media quotes Egemen Bagis, EU Minister, when he states that Turkey will not abandon northern Cyprus if solutions to reunify will end in failure; annexing Turkish Cyprus or even seeking to gain international recognition for a Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus might be an outcome.³¹

- A report published by the EU Institute for Security Studies in the *Hurriyet* newspaper stated that Turkey will be a pivotal power by 2030, however, it is not sure it will be a part of the EU; the difficulties in Turkish accession may persist and render a solution difficult due to continuing issues with Greek Cyprus.³² The Commissioner for Enlargement Stefan Fule, stated that the Greek Cyprus rotating presidency will not hinder reunification talks; he urged unification talks to continue just before the Cyprus presidency in late June 2012.³³

2012 IN REVIEW:

The EU-Turkey relationship has been stagnant since major concessions started between 2004 and 2006. There have been advances in Turkish enlargement, however there are many barriers that are preventing further negotiations from proceeding. The progress seen at the beginning of the year for EU enlargement involved discussion over visa-free travel for all Turkish citizens within the EU. As the year progressed, there were setbacks seen in the lack of negotiations and the continued delay in the opening of new chapters between Turkey and EU. These setbacks and the lack of communication over the opening of new chapters and the visa negotiations strained the relationship between Turkey and the EU. The constant postponing of negotiations made Turkey wary of integrating into the EU and did not lead to any significant advances in relations, despite Prime Minister Erdogan's several comments of speeding up Turkish-EU relations and his reassertion that membership is still a prominent goal for Turkey.

However, by looking at the critical EU report on Turkey, the relationship between Turkey and the EU is at a standstill with no new chapters being opened and it seems that it will be a while until Turkish citizens are able to travel without visas in the EU. In addition, the Cypriot Presidency as well as Nicolas Sarkozy's comments regarding Turkey's EU membership, have not positively contributed to the relations between Turkey and the EU. The Turkey-EU relationship has been declining since its prominent years from 2004 to 2009 where accession talks were more frequent and chapters were being opened and negotiated upon. Currently, the EU report serves as a significant roadblock for Turkey in negotiating with the EU, which has led to Turkey's disinterest in working on its relations and not concentrating on opening more chapters.

The presence of the Kurdish nationalists and the terrorist organization of the PKK have brought the EU and Turkey closer, in supporting and condemning its terrorist acts. However, the human rights issues apparent in Turkey are of big concern for the EU. Turkey has gained support from EU countries in working against the PKK organization, especially from Chancellor Merkel of Germany. The strong alliance between Erdogan and Merkel regarding the fight against the PKK is keeping Turkish-EU relations from further declining. The EU has made it clear that it is on Turkey's side in repressing the PKK since its more prominent existence and aggression in more recent years. The Turkey-EU relationship has strengthened in working together against an aggressor but has been at a standstill concerning the existing human rights and freedom of speech issues in Turkey. The Turkish Enlargement takes

into consideration the pressing Kurdish minority problem, freedom of speech, duration of detentions, and adequacy of civil courts. The fact that Turkey is unable to mirror the EU's justice and democratic system greatly hinders the opening of new chapters and negotiation. These justice issues have been prevalent for some time now and have not led to Turkey bowing down to the EU's demands, therefore further straining relations and bringing them to a halt.

The Cyprus issue has always been at the core of EU-Turkish relations and still continues to this day. Nothing substantial has changed since the integration of Cyprus into the EU, however the EU Cypriot presidency caused great animosity between the EU and Turkey. Although the Commissioner of Enlargement, Stefan Fule, stated that the Cypriot presidency would not hinder accession talks, in actuality this was not the case. The Turkish government declared that they would have no contact with the Cypriot presidency during its time in office. Evidently, there has been no progress in Turkey's relations with the Greek Cypriots and it does not look like any progress will happen in the near future. The Cyprus roadblock has posed a significant problem for EU-Turkey relations for a very long time and there have been no negotiations or attempts in mending the situation. Media coverage of 2012 shows that several major issues between Turkey and the EU have stagnated, consequently, tensions in Turkey have risen resulting in an increasingly strained relationship between Turkey and the EU.

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THE UNITED KINGDOM

Gareth Story

BACKGROUND:

- Population: 63,047,162
- Ethnic composition: white (of which English 83.6%, Scottish 8.6%, Welsh 4.9%, Northern Irish 2.9%) 92.1%, black 2%, Indian 1.8%, Pakistani 1.3%, mixed 1.2%, other 1.6%
- GDP per capita: \$36,700
- EU member entry date: 1973
- EU funding in 2011: net contributor

MEDIA SOURCES:

The British Broadcasting Corporation

- Founding date: 1922
- Ownership: The BBC Trust
- Readership: ca. 6,000,000 across TV/Radio/Web¹

The Sun

- Founding date: 1964²
- Ownership: News Corp³
- Readership/ daily circulation: 3,128,500⁴

The Daily Mail

- Founding date: 1896⁵
- Ownership: Daily Mail and General Trust⁶
- Readership/ daily circulation: 2,252,271⁷

FINDINGS:

- Number of articles consulted: 83 (BBC-25; The Sun-19; The Daily Mail-39)
- List of search words: “EU UK,” “EU Referendum,” “EU Immigration,” “EU Budget”

From these findings the following 3 major topics stand out as the leading issues related to UK-EU relations reported on in 2012:

Referendum on EU membership

Calls for a referendum on the UK’s membership of the EU were constant in 2012, with support coming from civilians and politicians alike.

- In early February, the People's Pledge group announced that they would be conducting polls around the UK to gauge support for an in/out referendum on EU membership.⁸ In April, the first was conducted in Thurrock, Essex and concluded that 90% of those who voted supported a referendum.⁹
- Towards the middle of the year, support for a referendum grew. Two high-profile left-wing Lords, Mandelson and Owen, voiced their support for an 'in or out' vote; however, they diverged on when it should occur, with Lord Mandelson believing that a referendum should only take place once the Eurozone crisis has ended, whereas Lord Owen stated that he believed the vote would happen before 2016 due to the inevitability of the referendum.¹⁰
- On June 8th, George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, became the most senior member of the Conservative party to voice his support for a referendum; however, the Chancellor favours a referendum on the repatriation of power, rather than a simple in/out vote.¹¹
- By late June, 100 backbench Conservative MPs signed and sent a letter to Prime Minister David Cameron in which they expressed their desire for an in/out referendum, they argued that no-one under the age of 55 has been able to vote on the UK's membership of the EU.¹²
- In late June/early July, Cameron responded to the growing number of calls for a referendum by stating that he was willing to consider a referendum; however it would have to wait until the Eurozone is in a more stable position.¹³ Foreign Secretary William Hague also voiced his support for a referendum, but he too agreed that it is not the right time for a vote while Europe is in the midst of a crisis.¹⁴ *The Daily Mail* was critical of Cameron's perceived waffling on the issue of the referendum and stated that the UK should exit the EU as soon as possible.¹⁵
- The Foreign Secretary announced an audit of every law created by the EU, as the UK seeks to repatriate powers and diminish the role of the EU.¹⁶ The likelihood of a referendum seemed to be increasing, as David Cameron discussed a push to loosen the UK's ties with the EU and repatriate over 100 powers concerning justice, policing, and crime; Cameron also revealed that he planned on redefining the British relationship with the EU.¹⁷
- In late September, David Cameron confirmed that he would seek the British people's consent for Britain's continued role in the EU; however, he stated that he would hold a referendum after the election in 2015, if he were re-elected.¹⁸ Despite Cameron's realization that a referendum is necessary, he still faced a large amount of

disquiet within his own party, as many Tories feel that 2015 is too far away to decide on an issue that is of immediate importance.¹⁹

- During the October party conference season, both major parties, the Conservatives and Labour, discussed the need for a referendum on the EU. Boris Johnson, the Conservative Mayor of London, revealed his belief in an EU referendum.²⁰ While at the Labour conference, the Shadow Defence Secretary, Jim Murphy, stated that although there is a need for an in/out referendum, once the Eurozone crisis has passed, the majority of Labour MPs would campaign for the UK to stay in the EU.²¹

- In the last months of the year, many politicians spoke about an EU referendum. The First Minister of Wales, Carwyn Jones, voiced concerns that a vote would create a large amount of discord within the UK.²² Despite David Cameron's September statement regarding the likelihood of an EU referendum, he faced division over the issue within his own party. Many Tories, including the Work and Pensions Secretary, Iain Duncan Smith, a former leader of the Conservatives, stated that he believed Britain would be no worse off if it were to leave the EU entirely; the issue concerning many Tories seemed to be the discussion of EU-wide banking regulations. Boris Johnson seemed to vacillate on a referendum, stating in November that he was against an in/out referendum; however, in early December, Johnson explicitly stated that he believed the UK should have a lesser relationship with the EU, and a referendum would be the best way to decide upon Britain's role within the EU.²³

- After the deluge of anti-EU comments over the course of 2012, both the President of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, and the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, seemed to tire of the UK's burgeoning anti-EU mentality. Barroso was the first to state that while he believes the UK's membership is beneficial to the EU, they are free to leave, should they choose.²⁴ President van Rompuy, was more critical of Britain's position and its desire to be selective about its membership of the EU, pointing out that it goes against the idea of a union.²⁵

- Finally, in late December, David Cameron committed to making a speech regarding the UK's future in the EU in January 2013, satisfying many within the Conservative party, and signaling a complete reversal of his anti-referendum stance of earlier in 2012.²⁶ It was also revealed that Euroscepticism has increased greatly within the UK in the past ten years evident by the following statistic: in 2002, 68% favoured staying in the EU, whereas in 2012 that number had dropped to 40%.²⁷

Immigration policy reform

- In early January, the Institute for Public Policy Research announced that the government would fall short of its commitment to reduce net migration—immigration less emigration—to tens of thousands.²⁸
- A widely reported case in January was that of a Romanian immigrant who was allowed to claim housing benefit as her job selling *The Big Issue*, a street newspaper, was deemed eligible self-employment.²⁹ Those who registered their disapproval of the court ruling included MigrationWatch UK, who stated: “It’s an open invitation for beggars from Eastern Europe to come here”, and Chris Grayling, Minister for Employment, who stated that it is the government’s responsibility to protect the taxpayer from possible abuse of the benefit system.³⁰ Following this controversy, *The Daily Mail* featured a story in which they claimed that one third of *Big Issue* vendors in the UK were Romanian, and many claim benefits.³¹
- It was reported that British businesses were advertising in Romania for jobs in London, while the UK’s unemployment figure increased; it was suggested that MPs were powerless in ensuring British jobs went to Britons because of its EU membership.³² This issue was raised again when it was revealed that a deal between the EU and India meant that 40,000 workers would be allowed to live and work within Europe, of which the UK was told it would have to take a minimum of 12,000; this prompted accusations of the EU meddling in border controls which are outside of its mandate.³³
- The issue of immigration gained a higher profile, when Theresa May, the Home Secretary, announced that there were plans underway to restrict the influx of immigrants should Greece exit the EU.³⁴ Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, contradicted May and stated that the UK would not shut the door on those fleeing the Eurozone, should it collapse.³⁵ However the following month, David Cameron explicitly stated that, should the Eurozone collapse, the UK’s borders would be closed to refugees from failing states.³⁶
- In June, a report by Eurostat, the statistics branch of the EU, revealed that Britain has the third highest number of citizens born in another EU state, prompting MigrationWatch UK to warn the government of the risks associated with a high rate of immigration during an economic downturn.³⁷
- Theresa May stated in October that the Home Office would be investigating the possibility of instituting visas on migrants from

some EU countries; while this would challenge one of the key principles of the EU, it was seen as necessary given the large numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians who are expected to flock to the UK once restrictions are lifted.³⁸

- The predicted issue of Romanian and Bulgarian immigrants arriving in the UK en masse in 2014 seemed to cause concern, with both *The Daily Mail* and *The Sun* discussing the fact that since the 2004 round of accessions, 1,114,368 Eastern Europeans have immigrated to the UK; it is believed that that number will increase greatly when the restrictions against Romanians and Bulgarians are lifted in 2014.³⁹

EU Budget

The topic of the EU budgets, both the 2013 and those for 2014-2020 caused a considerable amount of controversy in the UK in 2012. Parties across the political spectrum agreed that during a time of austerity, it was unacceptable for the EU to be increasing its spending.

- The EU was seen by the Commons as out of touch, after it announced an increase of 1.7% in its wage bill, this came at a time when Whitehall departments were facing budget cuts of 34% by 2014-15.⁴⁰

- There was some controversy when it was revealed that funds given to the EU by the Department for International Development were being used to pay for infrastructure upgrades in Iceland—which owes Britain £2.3 billion—and in Turkey, where the economy has been booming.⁴¹

- In April, it was announced that the EU would be seeking a 6.8% rise in the 2013 budget, which would increase Britain's contribution by £925 million, during a time when Britons are enduring austerity measures.⁴² It was revealed that this increase would cost each British family an additional £666 per year.⁴³ President Barroso defended the budget increase stating that it was for the benefit of EU citizens; however, David Cameron argued that an increase exceeding the rate of inflation is irresponsible when governments across the EU have to make cuts in public spending.⁴⁴

- Coverage of the 2014-2020 long-term budget of the EU also provoked criticism of the EU's spending when a report by Open Europe revealed that spending on MEPs salaries and allowances increased 77.5% between 2005 and 2012, and European Commission salaries increased 17.9% during the same period; Open Europe estimated that an alternative EU budget could save the UK £4.6bn annually.⁴⁵

- David Cameron warned prior to the European Summit in June that when discussions opened for the 2014-2020 budget, the UK's rebate from the EU was an issue on which he was unwilling to negotiate, this proved to be the start of Cameron's clashes over the EU budget.⁴⁶
- In July it was announced that the increase in the 2013 EU budget had been reduced from 6.8% to 2.8%; however, it was said to be an unhappy compromise, as the UK's £350 million share of the increase was seen by many MPs to be unacceptable given the UK's economic climate.⁴⁷
- The Office of National Statistics revealed in August that the amount of money the UK sends to the EU now topped £53 million per day—at a cost of £300 per person per year—and that Britain has been a net contributor for each of the 32 years it has contributed to the EU; prior to these revelations, David Cameron stated that while he did not want the UK to leave the EU, he felt that the time had come for Britain to negotiate a new settlement.⁴⁸
- Justine Greening, the International Development Secretary, used a meeting in Luxembourg in October to tell EU officials that the manner in which its £10 billion foreign aid budget is spent is irresponsible, as it was revealed that half of the budget is sent to relatively rich countries.⁴⁹ This came several weeks after it was revealed that the EU had given £1.8 million to build a hotel in Barbados to train youth in hospitality management.⁵⁰
- David Cameron took the opportunity to attack the EU institutions and their fiscal irresponsibility in a speech following the October summit. Cameron stated that his favourite fact of the day was that almost 6000 European Commission employees earn over €100,000; Cameron viewed this as hypocritical, considering the fact that the EU is encouraging member states to make cuts in their budgets, and used this as evidence of the need for protecting the UK's interests.⁵¹
- During the time leading up to the EU summit on the 2014-2020 budgets, David Cameron resolved that he would seek an inflation-adjusted freeze in EU spending and would veto anything less; in light of this, it was reported Angela Merkel would be seeking to cancel the summit.⁵² Cameron furthered that Britain had not made cuts in order to pay for the EU's profligacy.⁵³ In a speech in Berlin, Foreign Secretary William Hague stated that while Britain was committed to a future within the EU, public disillusionment has never been higher.⁵⁴ In light of Cameron's unwillingness to accept anything less than a freeze, European Commission President, Herman van Rompuy, warned the PM that other member states

would seek a review of Britain's rebate.⁵⁵ While Cameron had planned to argue for a freeze in the EU budget, in late October, Cameron suffered a humiliating defeat as both Labour and the Conservatives united to insist he seek a reduction in the budget.⁵⁶

- Things did not improve after it was revealed that the EU Court of Auditors would not sign off on the official accounts, for the 18th consecutive year; errors in the EU's payments amounted to 3.9% out of the €130 billion budget, it is believed that the majority of the errors come from misapplication of EU rules, although there were believed to be some cases of fraud.⁵⁷

- In an effort to reach consensus prior to the summit, President van Rompuy attempted to appease the PM and dissuade him from challenging the EU budget by stating that the UK's rebate would be safe along with reducing the proposed budget by €80 billion.⁵⁸

- The EU 2014-2020 budget summit was called off two days later after no consensus could be reached; however, David Cameron found an ally in the form of Angela Merkel, after she too agreed to fight for a reduction in the EU budget.⁵⁹ David Cameron criticized the negotiations, stating that far too little was done to cut spending, and that the EU needed to start living in the same world as its member states.⁶⁰

2012 IN REVIEW:

It is safe to say that 2012 was an eventful and turbulent year for the UK's relationship with the EU. The British media reported on many major topics, with the populist *Sun* and the right-wing *Daily Mail* seizing every opportunity to report on any division in the relationship. The *BBC* which aims to have no bias, reported on many of the same issues, however, in a much more balanced manner. The UK can have insular tendencies, in the truest sense of the word, and the divisions that were created in 2011 over the EU referendum Commons vote were exacerbated in 2012. In addition to the issue of a referendum, the soaring unemployment levels, resulting from the UK's still-recovering economy, became an issue over which Britons displayed a protectionist mentality, with the *Mail* and *Sun* blaming British joblessness partly on the EU's lack of borders. What became clear over the course of 2012 is that while Britain likes the idea of the EU, it is uneasy about giving away its money and powers to a relatively unaccountable institution, and this became especially evident in David Cameron's negotiations over the 2014-2020 EU budget.

The question of a referendum on EU membership has arisen before, however in light of the Eurozone crisis it has gained

traction. In the UK, approval ratings for the EU reached a new low, with the majority of Britons surveyed favouring a British withdrawal from the EU. While the notion of a referendum is widely supported, the timing is where many disagree, with Eurosceptics favouring a vote sooner than those who believe that the relationship with the EU merely needs to be redefined rather than removed completely. With the budget talks looming, David Cameron came under increased pressure from his own backbenchers to put measures in place to recast the EU-UK relationship, he announced that he would be outlining Britain's future in the EU in early 2013. Unsurprisingly, the wave of anti-EU sentiment in the UK has meant that relations with the EU institutions and other member states has suffered, as the British are seen to want one deal for themselves, and another for the rest of the Union.

Another topic that has received much coverage is that of immigration, while the UK has struggled with immigration beyond the EU, it also faces issues with those immigrating from within the Union. The unemployment level in the UK reached a 17-year high in 2012, and as a result, those who were seen to be abusing the system incurred the ire of the British media. Romanians and Bulgarians were a particular target, as under current EU laws they are not allowed to work within the UK unless they secure a job prior to their arrival. Recent immigrants who collected benefits particularly bothered the media, as they believed that the British welfare state's goodwill was being exploited. This abuse of the system caused exasperation in a time during which the government was continuing to implement austerity measures. These issues led to Theresa May, the Home Secretary, announcing that the government would be investigating implementing a visa requirement on migrants from within the EU, which would contravene EU law. These issues have caused resentment within the UK, and caused Britain to reevaluate its immigration policies for both those within and without the EU.

The issue of the EU's budget became one of the largest issues of 2012, with both its 2013 budget as well as the 2014-2020 budgets coming under British scrutiny. The year did not start well for the EU's cause, with the announcement of an increase in their wage bill coming at a time when most member states' governments were asking their administrations to make further reductions in spending. The continual revelation of profligate spending by the EU institutions continued the ruination of their reputation, with media reports of EU aid being given to countries that would not meet the UK's own requirements for foreign aid. The announcement that

the Commission would be seeking a 6.8% increase in its 2013 operating budget was met with criticism in Whitehall, as it was seen to be irresponsible at a time of austerity, David Cameron immediately said he would contest it. The issue of the budget arose again in October, when the EU sought to increase their 2014-2020 budgets by a rate greater than that of inflation, a move that was met with much criticism and seen as proof of further fiscal irresponsibility by the EU. David Cameron vowed to use Britain's veto to prevent any increase greater than the rate of inflation; however, prior to the November summit, Cameron lost a vote in the Commons and as a result, the official position of the UK was to seek a cut in the budget. The debate surrounding the EU budget was caused largely by the Union's being unresponsive to the plights of its member states. The UK became increasingly critical of the EU's spending throughout the course of the year and found the EU's hypocrisy in dealing with member states' budgets to be of concern. In December, it became apparent that Britain's relationship with the EU would have to change, as it cannot survive in its current form.

Overall, 2012 was perhaps the nadir of EU-UK relations. Britain buoyed by the successes of the Olympics and the Diamond Jubilee, chose this year to re-assert its independence and challenge the EU on key issues. With a referendum on EU membership becoming increasingly inevitable, Euroscepticism running rampant, and the EU doing nothing to help its case, it is no surprise that many Britons now feel that the EU is not of benefit to them. The blame for this deterioration in relations cannot be placed solely on either party, as the UK's insularity and the EU's arrogance are to blame in equal measure. Britain still looks more towards the Commonwealth and its special relationship with the USA than the EU and for that reason, it may never be able to have the same kind of relationship with the EU that other member states do.

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