EU HEADLINES

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF EUROPEAN DEBATES

Taking a stance

Last week, international politics was dominated by government reshuffles. This week, however, the focus is on taking strong positions and making binding decisions, from Ukraine to COP29 in Azerbaijan to the G20 summit in Brazil. Whether these decisions are always favourable is, however, highly debatable.

European Headlines is a weekly newsletter from the European Movement International highlighting media perspectives from across Europe. Click here to subscribe.



A tiny push

The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took place last week and this week in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. The G20 summit was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and ended on Tuesday. Observers were hoping for a strong signal from the G20 to the COP29 in order to revive stalled negotiations to achieve an ambitious resolution. The French news outlet *Les Echos* has aptly assessed that there is no real boost to be observed from the G20, maybe a little push. The final G20 communiqué clearly mentions the need to increase public and private climate finance and investment in developing countries. It also refers to the NCQG (New Collective Quantified Goal), the amount that northern countries will pay southern countries to facilitate their climate transition and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. However, no financial amount has been agreed, not least because the EU has not yet officially put an amount on the table. This comes as a surprise, as the EU is usually a strong leader (note: sarcasm). While concrete financial figures would have been useful, the disappointment on the energy side is even greater. G20 leaders failed to reaffirm their commitment to fossil fuel divestment in their final resolution. The text of the communiqué does not repeat the language of the agreement reached at last year's COP in Dubai to phase out fossil fuels - what a disgrace. According to several observers, it was at the insistence of human rights lovers Saudi Arabia and Russia, in particular, that fossil fuel divestment was excluded from the final G20 communiqué. While some strong signals from the G20 would have been useful, the question is whether it is wise to host COP29 in a country where the prime minister praises fossil fuels as a "gift of God". Next week we will have a clearer picture of the final outcome of COP29, and hope dies late.

Read the full article



A ray of hope

While the G20's final resolution lacked strong signals for the ongoing COP29 negotiations, *El País* examines the foreign policy and other details of the agreed text. According to *El País*, the sections dealing with Israel's invasion of Gaza and Lebanon and Russia's invasion of Ukraine were the most challenging for negotiators in the weeks leading up to the summit. The section on the Middle East is longer, although only 147 words, and stronger than the section on Ukraine; it explicitly supports a ceasefire. In contrast, the reference to Ukraine is shorter, only 77 words, and more descriptive. European members of the G20 sought to adopt a firmer stance on Ukraine, particularly after Russia's weekend attack on energy infrastructure, but this was resisted by the Brazilian presidency. Russia's representative, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, used the summit as an opportunity to meet bilaterally with Chinese President Xi Jinping and strengthen ties. Apart from the regrettable lack of language on the Israel-Gaza conflict and Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, it is good to see that the declaration reaffirms the G20's "full commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls", which was opposed by Argentina's up-and-coming autocrat and Trump groupie Javier Milei. Also welcome is the fact that the G20 leaders declared their support for migrants and encouraged “efforts towards a more inclusive world, in line with national policies, legislations and circumstances, ensuring full respect for the human rights and their fundamental freedoms regardless of their migration status.” This is appreciated at a time when the far-right narrative on migrants is gaining ground and inhumane approaches to asylum are gaining traction.

Read the full article



Unhappy anniversary

Tuesday was the 1000th day of Russia’s brutal war of aggression against Ukraine and uncertainty looms as the battle for defence rages on. Outgoing US President Joe Biden has been lifting restrictions on how Ukrainian armed forces can use American weapons and pledging funds ahead of Donald Trump’s return to power, whose presidency does not bode well for international relations, let alone continued US support for Ukraine, writes Croatian newspaper *Novilist*. While politicians on both sides of the Atlantic have been hemming and hawing, at least 11,743 Ukrainian civilians – likely many more – have been killed by Russia’s war, along with hundreds of thousands of military personnel, cities have been devastated, and industry crippled. Meanwhile Russia is amassing at least tens of thousands of troops, along with support from North Korean troops and Iranian drones, and continues its assault day after day. Ukraine’s President Zelenskiy wants to end the war diplomatically next year with security guarantees and all of Ukrainian territory intact, and Putin refuses to meet Ukrainian and Western terms as he seeks stolen territory. The grim milestone served as a reminder, if nothing else, of the continued urgency of Ukraine’s victory.

Read the full article



The next generation

Pravda from Slovakia reports on Wednesday’s final confirmation of the next European Commission by MEPs after debates and reservations from various political groups that plunged the entire proceedings into a cloud of uncertainty. The first round of confirmation hearings at the beginning of this month was mostly business as usual, with Olivér Várhelyi of Hungary as the only sticking point of the 20 Commissioners-designate; he answered additional written questions after the fact. The next week, the hearings for the six vice-presidents stalled – the EPP was hung up on Socialist candidate Teresa Ribera, who has gotten flak for the Spanish government’s response to the recent floods, while Renew and S&D, for their part, were (and likely still are) concerned about Italian Raffaelle Fitto’s nomination to Executive Vice-President for Reforms and Cohesion considering his membership in the far-right Brothers of Italy party and the significance of the position and portfolio. While much of Brussels was awash with speculation and rumours, unsure when the new Commission could take form, the groups managed to conclude their negotiations Wednesday evening and meet the new mandate’s starting date of 1 December – a head start before Donald Trump begins his inevitable rampage on 20 January 2025.

Read the full article

Copyright © The European Movement International, all rights reserved.
The European Movement International
Place du Luxembourg 2. 1050 Brussels, Belgium

This is a weekly newsletter from the European Movement International.
Click here to subscribe.