

INFOCUS

Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union put under the microscope

C4EP analysis on the subject – *Not to “battre le beurre”? Conclusion of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union*

„The year 2024 started with the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. As the torch is being passed on to Hungary, it is worthy to take a look at the past half year and see if there are any results worthy of our attention.

Belgium held the presidency of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2024, from 1 January to 30 June. It took the rotating EU Council presidency for the thirteenth time, at a very delicate moment, with the European Union standing at crossroads in many dimensions: it had to deal with the consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, with the remnant effects of the COVID pandemic, the energy crisis, and a renewed conflict in the Middle East – just to mention the most relevant ones.”

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The Belgian Presidency Priorities

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C4REPORT

EPC: The French Elections: A New Challenge for the EU? – 8 July 2024

„The 2024 French legislative elections have significantly reshaped the country's political landscape, leading to unexpected outcomes. With the Rassemblement National (RN) failing to secure an anticipated majority and the emergence of the Nouveau Front Populaire (NFP) as the leading party, the political dynamics have become more complex and fragmented, an unexpected turn of events for Macron, leading to major difficulties in forming a stable government.”

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EPC: South Africa's new government: Expectations for domestic and foreign policy – 9 July 2024

„The recent election in South Africa marked a historic turning point, as for the first time since the end of apartheid in 1994, the African National Congress failed to secure a parliamentary majority. This situation led to the formation of a coalition government that includes parties with diverse agendas. During this conference, various experts discussed the domestic and foreign policy priorities of the new national unity government led by re-elected President Cyril Ramaphosa. All the speakers evaluated the viability of this new coalition, the potential challenges as well as the implications for relations with the European Union.”

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EPC: EU's post-elections trajectory: What role for citizens and civil society? – 10 July 2024

„After Johannes Greubel's introductory remarks, Vladislava Gubalova, Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Global Europe at GLOBSEC gave an overview of the EUact2 project. The four partners of the two-year EU funded project from Austria, Ireland, Greece and Slovakia aimed to engage EU citizens, especially young people. Among the key observations, it was revealed that young people are in fact interested in Europe, they just

do not feel included. They either do not engage at all, or engage, but get disappointed, and then disengage. The civic space is shrinking, while societal polarization is increasing. Gubalova emphasized that citizens' voices now more than ever need to be amplified and heard.”

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Martens Centre: Stay Calm and Keep Brexiting! UK's General Election – Implications for the EU and the UK – 11 July 2024

„Tomi Huhtanen, Executive Director at Martens Centre gave the introductory remarks recalling 2019 when everyone estimated that the EU-UK relations would be one of the key issues on the agenda due to Brexit. But then, starting with Covid, one crisis followed another, which changed everything. It has become clear however, that Brexit was not a success story, which reduced the probability of another exit. The issue is that the reconstruction of EU-UK relations was not really discussed among all these crises, even if the war in Ukraine altered the dynamics for the better. After the 2024 UK general elections, the new Labour government made it obvious that they do not want to return to the EU or the single market, but they seem to seek better relations with Europe.”

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A RELAXING SUMMER HOLIDAY
AND GOOD WORK FOR THE NEW EU OFFICIALS!
C YOU IN SEPTEMBER!