

WEEKLY UPDATE

29 February - 4 March 2016

Week 11

General

Welcome to the very first newsletter of the Open Society European Policy Institute! This weekly injection of news will give you information on key developments and activities in Brussels – all in one place.

To add to our list of “premieres,” Alex Soros came to visit our office for the first time this week. Neil seized the opportunity to explain the workings of our advocacy office. We also had visits from Chris Stone, Kinga Göncz and the Independent Commission on Turkey (ICT), with Gokce Toyluogy, Executive Director of the foundation and President Martti Ahtisaari, ICT chair (among others), for a scoping mission on next steps for the ICT.

NB If you had plans to come to Brussels next week, keep in mind that the European Parliament is in plenary in Strasbourg.

Updates

- **Internal Policy**

Costanza and Villy worked together with other NGOs on a joint letter, which was sent to various Commissioners to ask their support for the initiation of infringement proceedings against Italy for failure to apply the Race Equality Directive (2000/43/EC (RED)). Unfortunately, the decision was made this week to postpone the discussion.

- **External Policy**

The Independent Commission of Turkey (ICT), accompanied by colleagues from OSF Turkey and Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) came to Brussels for an advocacy visit from 1–3 March. The delegation, led by President Martti Ahtisaari, included Ambassador Albert Rohan; Gokce Tuyluoglu and Riikka Marjamäki of CMI. The purpose was to explore the dynamics of the “new start” in EU and Turkey relations and consider ways in which the ICT can contribute. The programme, prepared by Srdjan, included bilaterals with Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations, Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, Dimitris Avramopoulos, EU Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, as well as a dinner with EU officials and think tank representatives working on Turkey.

To use the momentum of the Ukraine week in the Parliament (29 February – 2 March), we hosted a panel discussion on “*Reforms in Ukraine: Milestones for 2016*” in cooperation with the European Endowment for Democracy and the Ukraine Think Tank Liaison Office. Under Iskra’s moderation, experts from the Ukrainian civic platform, the Reanimation Package of Reforms and the EU Support Group for Ukraine, took stock of reform achievements and roadblocks in 2015 and discussed the areas of critical importance for 2016, particularly the fight against corruption, public administration and judicial reforms. They shared thoughts on the role of civil society to drive

reforms forward and how the EU can support its efforts. This was the first occasion on which we experimented with remote access for OSF colleagues; we hope many more will follow.

Bram attended the ISS Africa briefing “Avoiding deadlock in the DRC,” which provided analysis of mounting government repression in the context of electoral delay in the DRC.

- **Organisational activities**

Anca and Annalisa went to the new hire training in New York this week. For the first time, OSEPI/Neil joined Jerry Fowler’s session on advocacy to introduce OSF staff to the ins and outs of Brussels’ advocacy.

Upcoming Events

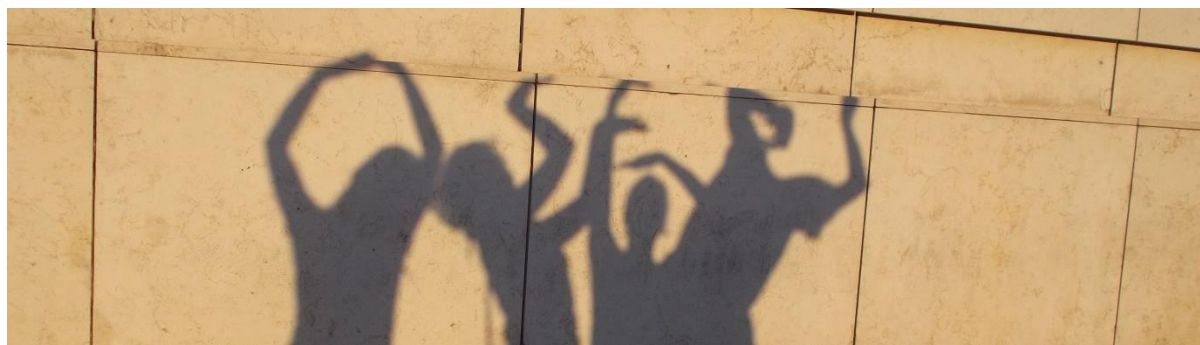
The Bridges Project Retreat will take place from 7–9 March at the European University Institute in Florence. The event will bring together researchers and policy-makers to explore the drivers behind public reactions to policy, as well as the political constraints under which policy is made. The theme of the retreat is “The Collective” and will explore the dynamics that shape collective sentiment and action and the questions these raise for effective policy-making.

We will host a visit by the Middle East, North Africa and Southwest Asia (MENASWA) team 8–9 March. Several consecutive events have been arranged:

- 8 March: Roundtable on EU policy towards Israeli settlements
- 8 March: Bilaterals between the MENASWA group and NGOs, followed by a dinner
- 9 March: Bilaterals between the MENASWA group and NGOs

Media Update

Don’t miss Srdjan’s latest op-ed: [Don’t be fooled: Joining NATO doesn’t mean Montenegro has changed](#)



We hope you found the newsletter useful and informative. We encourage you to share any thoughts you may have for improving it further. Feedback may be shared with ellen.mulder@opensocietyfoundations.org.