

Does the Euro area still need or want stable national governments?

After several months Germany has put together a precarious coalition between the CDU, CSU and SPD. Like many Eurozone countries the old system of two main parties offering a centre left or a centre right alternative has broken down. Voters now vote for a wide array of different parties, and the politicians stumble to put together a government after the election. The one thing they can guarantee is no voter will get the government they voted for.

The progressive decline of the Christian Democrat/Social Democrat choice that was the continental version of Conservative against Labour is now well advanced everywhere in Euroland. In Greece Syriza has blown away the traditional socialist party altogether. New Democracy, the centre right party, has spent a lot of time in the 20s for support, but has recently recovered a bit to the mid thirties.

In Germany herself Merkel's CDU hit a new low of 26% in the last General Election, whilst her main socialist opponent polled just 20%. In the Netherlands the centre right retains the Prime Ministership with a shaky multi party coalition and just 27% of the vote.

In Italy PD, the centre left, is currently on 23%. The Christian Democrats have disappeared, and Forza has 16% in their place. In Denmark the social democrats have held on to 30% of the vote, but the centre right Peoples party is down to just 4%. In Spain the PP have 26% of the vote and the Prime Ministership with a minority coalition, whilst their socialist opponents are currently on 23%.

It probably suits the EU that the two party system is broken so comprehensively and no country now is capable of providing a single party majority government, with the breath taking exception of France who elected a totally new party to both the Presidency and a majority of the Parliament. These things have become so bad for the two traditional parties that neither had a candidate for the Presidency in the last two! A US Presidential election without either the Republicans or the Democrats is unimaginable.

The fact that some Euro area countries go long periods with no government at all, and then have periods of weak coalition government, helps shift more power to the EU. It raises the issue of accountability, and the possibility of more direct elections at the EU level. The German government is now likely to add its voice to that of France in seeking a bigger EU budget, an EU bail out fund for banks and more centralised decision taking. The exit of the UK makes achieving this much easier as they will no longer have a large non Euro country wanting to stop this process.

Regional flag day today

Three charities have been issued Public Subscription Permits to hold flag sales from 7am to 12.30pm today (February 10). They are, on Hong Kong Island, Care for Your Heart; in Kowloon, Centre for Restoration of Human Relationships Limited; and in the New Territories, South Kwai Chung Social Service, a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said.

Arrangements have been made with the charities to help people distinguish between the three flag-selling activities.

Information on the three flag-selling organisations on February 10 is as follows:

Region	Name of Organisation	Colour of Collection Bag	Colour of Flag
Hong Kong Island	Care for Your Heart	Pink	White
Kowloon	Centre for Restoration of Human Relationships Limited	Green	Light Yellow
New Territories	South Kwai Chung Social Service	Orange	White

For enquiries, please call the SWD's hotline at 2343 2255, or the Charitable Fund-raising Control Team at 2832 4311 during office hours. Information on the flag days of the month is available at the SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_whatsnew/). Permits for flag days containing contact information of the flag-selling organisations and information on the approved flag-selling activities have also been uploaded to the SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_controlofc/sub_recentlyap/). For enquiries about the detailed flag-selling arrangements, please contact the individual flag-selling organisations.

Details of the charitable fund-raising activities covered by the Public Subscription Permit issued by the SWD have also been uploaded to the GovHK website (www.gov.hk/fundraising).

In the case of suspected fraudulent flag day activities, people should not make any donation and should immediately report the matter to the Police, the spokesman added.

Main topics and media events 12 – 25 February 2018

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The Government have no plan and no idea

Michel Barnier has warned that a transition period immediately after Brexit is 'not a given' and that he did not understand some of the UK's positions on Brexit.

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Author:

News story: Investigation updates: fv Nancy Glen

Updated: Further update on the Nancy Glen investigation following the underwater survey.

Update, 9 February 2018

We have now completed our underwater survey of the wreck of Nancy Glen, which despite the depth and poor underwater visibility has been largely successful. We are now in the process of assessing the extensive quantity of data collected, which is taking some time. We are very conscious of the need to come to a decision as soon as possible as to whether or not the MAIB intends to raise the wreck as part of its investigation. However, we do not expect to make an announcement on this until after the weekend.

News story, 7 February 2018

The Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) is investigating the capsizing and loss of the fishing vessel Nancy Glen and why, tragically, two of the crew did not survive.

The wreck of Nancy Glen is lying at a depth of over 140m. Following a multi-beam sonar survey of the wreck conducted by Northern Lighthouse Board vessel Pharos last weekend, the MAIB has contracted KML to carry out a more detailed survey of the wreck. KML's vessel Severn Sea is on scene, and has carried out a side-scan sonar survey of the wreck. This has provided us with 3-dimensional information on how the wreck is lying on the seabed and potential obstacles such as wires or nets that could be hazardous to remotely operated vehicle (ROV) operations. The ROV is fitted with cameras, used to collect important evidence as part of our investigation. ROV surveys commenced on Wednesday 7 February, but progress has been slow due to low underwater visibility of around 3 metres and the risk of the ROV becoming snagged on wires and ropes around the wreck. Our inspectors are on board, and are keeping the families updated on progress.

Press enquiries

Press enquiries during office hours
01932 440015

Press enquiries out of hours
020 7944 4292