

Shaking off totalitarianism is difficult.

Communism has never undergone trial. Is this why Polish leaders went astray with the so-called "monitoring" law?

The principles of the state of law depend on an independent system of justice that respects the right to defence, this means which guarantees a procedure of opposition. This is particularly true with regard to sanctions against representatives of the people. Infamous punishment cannot be decided by an administrative committee, the guardian of the archives of a dictatorship.

If it is true that Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Bronislaw Geremek, heroes of Freedom and Solidarnosc, have been deprived of their responsibilities we can definitely say that Democracy has been abused. Friends of Poland are already saddened to see the widening gap emerging between European democrats and this influential country which has contributed so much to freedom in Europe.

Jean-Dominique Giuliani
Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation

The competitiveness of European companies

Jean-François Jamet

Foundation : France - Presidential Election | Turkey - An agitated presidential election | The State of the Union **Council of Europe** : Disability **Presidency** : Russia/Security-Justice | Russia/EU **Council** : South East Asia | Research | Competitiveness | Iran | Central Asia **Commission** : Violence at Work | The Polluter Pays | Road Safety **Parliament** : Cross Border Payments | Aviation Security | India | Maritime Safety | Human Rights | Transatlantic Relations | Intellectual Property | Ultra Peripheral Regions | Rapid Response Teams **ESA** : Space Policy **UN** : Kosovo **NATO** : Russia **Germany** : Africa | France/Germany | Franco-German University | Climate **Denmark** : Renewable Energies **Estonia** : Soviet Status Challenged **Ireland** : General Elections **Lithuania** : Cohesion Policy **The Netherlands** : The Employment Market **Poland** : Geremek and Mazowiecki **Czech Republic** : Anti-Missile Radar **Romania** : Referendum **Turkey** : Presidential Election **Eurostat** : Industry | Public Deficit | Transatlantic Trade **Reports** : International Press Institute | Corruption | Digital Revolution

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Foundation :

[France - Presidential Election](#)

On 6th May France will have a new President of which Europe expects a great deal since the subject will be one of the first issues he or she will have to address. Nicolas Sarkozy (UMP) and Ségolène Royal (PS) who won the first round will be facing each other in the second. The voters who chose François Bayrou on 22nd April have been the subject of much attention on the part of both candidates. The undecided are undoubtedly waiting for the televised debate on 2nd May before making their choice ...

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[Turkey - An agitated presidential election](#)

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan finally, under force, gave up standing in the presidential election the first round of which was held on 27th April. He appointed his Deputy and Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gül, who appears to be more refined to stand for their party, the AKP. But this might not have been the case. Demonstrations that followed the first round where the only candidate standing did not succeed in winning the required majority were proof of this.

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[The State of the Union](#)

The most recent publication by the Foundation together with Lignes de Repères "The State of the Union - the Schuman Report on Europe" includes a great amount of information on Europe for all those interested. The publication is available in bookshops or can be ordered on the Foundation's internet site.

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Council of Europe :

[Disability](#)

On 26th and 27th April in Strasbourg the European Co-ordination Forum for the Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 rallied leaders from all Member States and international NGO's interested in disability. This comes just months after the action plan was officially launched. The 46 Member States of the Council of Europe are to draft a specific policy to improve the integration into society of the 100 million disabled in Europe.

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Presidency :

[Russia/Security-Justice](#)

In the framework of EU troika meetings, Federal Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble and Federal Minister of Justice Brigitte Zypries, both representing the German Presidency, met the President's security advisor, Victor Ivanov, and their Russian counterparts, Interior Minister Rashid Nurgaliyev and Justice Minister Vladimir Ustinov, for political talks on 23rd and 24th April 2007. Negotiations focused on further enhancing the area of freedom, security and justice agreed between the EU and Russia notably questions relative to the simplification of travel formalities, the joint fight against international terrorism, organised crime, human trafficking and the illegal smuggling of drugs as well as co-operation with regard to criminal matters and civil rights.

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[Russia/EU](#)

On 23rd April, the current President of the EU Council, Federal Foreign Minister Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, and the EU Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, joined Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov for a regular meeting of the EU Troika with Russia. They discussed an updating of the partnership and co-operation agreement. In the last few years, relations between the EU and Russia in all areas – politics, the economy, education and culture – have grown more intense, and should now be given a broader and better treaty basis. Another important item of the Troika meeting was the extension of the existing Cooperation and Partnership Agreement between the EU and Russia to Bulgaria and Romania, which acceded to the EU on 1st January 2007.

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Council :

[South East Asia](#)

On 23rd April the Council of the European Union issued mandates to the European Commission for the negotiation of free-trade agreements with the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), India and South Korea. In addition to this, mandates for the negotiation of Association Agreements with Central America and the Andes Community were adopted.

"Facilitation of market access to non-EU countries plays a key role in enabling European companies to utilise their opportunities on the world's markets in fair competition. The free-trade agreements with the emerging Asian economies which are now to be negotiated form an important element of this," declared German Economy and Technology Minister, Michael Glos.

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Research

On 26th and 27th April the Research Ministers of the European Union meeting in Würzburg discussed crucial issues with regard to the orientations of the future European research policy. Under the motto of the German Council Presidency "Success through Research", the responsible ministers from the Member States dealt with the issue of strengthening the European Research Area and the establishment of a European Institute of Technology (EIT). Another topic of discussion was the important question of the management of intellectual property and the related Presidency initiative for an IP Charter.

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Competitiveness

"The Single European Market in Global Competition" was the theme of the Competitiveness Council which met on 27th and 28th April with Ministers, European Commission Vice-President, Günter Verheugen and European Commissioner, Neelie Kroes, as well as the Economy Ministers from Norway, Iceland and Switzerland (countries associated either by the EEA internal market treaty or bilateral treaties) in attendance. Ministers agreed that to maintain and improve Europe's economic attractiveness urgent steps have to be taken both on a national and a community level : attractive tax regime, more flexible, simplified labour markets, aid to R&D.

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Iran

On 23rd April Foreign Ministers gave their final go ahead to the adoption of a decision implementing the initial UN sanctions adopted in December against Iranian nuclear and ballistic programmes. They also approved a list of persons and entities engaged in or who provide support for Iran's proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities or for development of nuclear weapon delivery systems and whose financial assets will be frozen according to resolution 1737 adopted on 23rd December by the UN Security Council. They also gave the go ahead to a second round of sanctions adopted against Iran by the UN on 24th March in response to the continued refusal by Teheran to suspend its uranium enrichment activities. This resolution plans notably for an embargo on purchasing arms from Iran and voluntary restrictions of sales of arms to the country.

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Central Asia

During their meeting in Luxembourg on 23rd April EU Foreign Ministers held initial talks on the strategy project for Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kirghistan, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan and Ubeakistan) with a view to its adoption by the Heads of State and Government on 21st and 22nd June. The strategy aims to enhance political co-operation and dialogue with the countries of Central Asia on an individual and regional basis.

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Commission :

[Violence at Work](#)

On 26th April the European social partners (ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, CEEP and UEAPME) signed a framework agreement on harassment and violence at work. It is the 6th agreement signed by social partners since the launch of European Social Dialogue twenty years ago. The agreement aims to prevent and, where necessary, manage problems of bullying, sexual harassment and physical violence at the workplace. Data suggests that one in 20 workers (5%) reports being exposed to bullying and/or harassment each year. "This is further proof of the success of social dialogue in producing concrete results for workers and employers in Europe," said Vladimir Spidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

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[The Polluter Pays](#)

Important EU legislation laying down liability rules for damage to the environment came into force on 30th April. It is specifically based on the "polluter pays principle" set out in the EC treaty. It will ensure that in future environmental damage in the EU is prevented or remedied, and that those who cause it are held responsible. Environmental damage includes damage to water resources, natural habitats, animals and plants as well as contamination of land which causes significant harm to human health.

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[Road Safety](#)

On 27th April the first European Day on Road Safety was held according to the theme of "Youth on the Road, Road Safety is no Accident" This day was part of the Commission's strategy to halve the number of road accident victims by 2010. Jacques Barrot, Vice-president of the Commission responsible for transport, said: "My aim is that these European Road Safety Days should give an extra boost to the efforts we are all making to improve road safety. We have made a lot of progress but there can be no let-up. I am particularly happy that so many young people are now working to change things." Between 2001 and 2006 nearly 12,000 lives were saved in the EU.

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Parliament :

[Cross Border Payments](#)

On 24th April Parliament after a report by Jean-Paul Gauzès (PPE/DE-FR) a legal framework for payment services in the EU (card transactions, bank transfers, direct debits), that should simplify the latter and also make them cheaper opens the way for the creation of a single euro payment area by 2010. An agreement was made with the Council and the directive will therefore be adopted.

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[Aviation Security](#)

On 25th April Parliament adopted a second-reading report by Paolo Costa (ALDE, IT) heavily amending the Council's common position on a new regulation laying down common rules on checks, searches, surveillance, prohibited items, security patrols and other aspects of airport and aircraft security. The rapporteur believes "there is no doubt that it is vital apply new security measures rapidly and effectively." Regarding implementing measures, such as the decision by the Commission to ban liquids on board, the EP wants those to expire after six months. In addition to this the measures may only be extended after security risks and costs, along with the practical effects inherent to these measures have been reassessed.

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[India](#)

An Indian President was welcomed for the first time at the EP on 24th April - he was received by

Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering and MEPs. President Abdul Kalam started his speech by stressing that India, like the EU represented "unique unity in diversity." The EU is in his eyes "a model for inspiration and an example that could be emulated in all areas of the world."

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Maritime Safety

Parliament adopted on a first reading on 25th April five reports that are part of the "third package" on maritime safety with regard to the community system to monitor traffic, accident enquiries, transport company responsibility for passengers, State control of ports and the certification of monitoring organisations. The EU is a major maritime power. It must therefore take measures which enable it to ensure the prevention of accidents, pollution as well as dealing with the consequences of accidents.

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Human Rights

Parliament adopted its annual report on Human Rights - drafted by Simon Coveney (EPP-ED, IE). The report assesses human rights activities and the overall performance of the Parliament in this field and puts forward specific recommendations. MEPs expressed particular concern about the situation in Russia, China and Iran; the EU and its institutions did not escape criticism. China's human rights record is still a matter of "serious concern" and should thus "receive more focus in the build-up to the Beijing Olympic games". MEPs urge the Council and Commission "to raise the question of Tibet" in talks with the Beijing government. The Union's trade relations with Beijing, they add, should be contingent upon human rights reform.

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Transatlantic Relations

Ahead of the EU-US summit in Washington DC which took place on 30th April, Parliament adopted a resolution on 25th April on transatlantic relations. Parliament called on the Council and the USA to intensify efforts, through the Middle East Quartet, to foster negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. They were pleased with results achieved at the Riyadh Summit by the Arab League. With regard to entry visas requested by the US for citizens from some EU Member States Parliament "invited the US to remove the visa regime and to apply the same treatment to all EU Member State citizens." In addition to this the US has been requested to "increase efforts to present and explain its planned anti-missile defence system as part of a NATO framework to enable the Alliance and Europe to remain united, to resist foreign pressure and to avoid all disagreement on various security issues."

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Intellectual Property

On 25th April the first EU directive aiming at harmonising national criminal law was backed by the European Parliament when it adopted a first-reading report on legislation imposing criminal sanctions for the infringement of intellectual property rights. If ultimately adopted, the directive will oblige all Member States to regard any intentional infringement of an intellectual property right carried out on a commercial scale as a criminal offence. The deterrent measures being proposed range from fines to imprisonment, according to the gravity of the crime.

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Ultra Peripheral Regions

On 26th April MEPs suggested an increase in the budget dedicated to ultra-peripheral regions (Azores, Canary Islands, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Madeira, Martinique, Reunion Island) with the aim of compensating for extra costs incurred in the marketing of certain fisheries products, after an increase in energy and transport costs. Due to their distance, their insular nature, reduced size, difficult geography and climatic conditions the EU's ultra-peripheral regions are lagging behind in terms of their socio-

economic development.

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Rapid Response Teams

On Thursday 26th April Parliament approved a regulation providing for special rapid response teams to be set up to give technical and operational assistance in the case of major influxes of illegal migrants over the external borders of any EU Member State, as was the case in the Canaries for example in 2006. The report plans for the creation of a "strategic reserve" initially comprising between 300 and 500 specially trained border guards. Frontex, the European agency for the management of operational co-operation on the external borders of the EU might also include 116 ships, 27 helicopters, 21 aeroplanes and various technical equipment (thermic cameras, radars) that will be made available to Member States.

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ESA :

Space Policy

On 26th April the Commission and the Director General of the European Space Agency (ESA), Jean-Jacques Dordain presented a political framework for the development of a strong, sustainable space sector aiming for the most effective use of resources thanks to combined work enabling Member States to meet global challenges. This communication will be transferred for approval to the European Space Council which brings together Competition Ministers and national ESA representatives on 22nd May. "Thanks to this communication on the European Space Policy we intend to provide Europe with the world supremacy which it is aspiring to in key areas of industry and research, which will be sources of growth and employment in the future," declared Günter Verheugen, Commission Vice-President for Enterprise and Industry.

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UN :

Kosovo

On 27th April Ambassadors of 15 UN Security Council Member States undertook an information mission to Kosovo where Albanian leaders, President Fatmir Sejdiu and Prime Minister Agim Ceku hoped to convince them that their province is ready for monitored independence as recommended in the plan drawn up by mediator Marti Ahtisaari. The delegation arrived in Pristina after talks on 26th April in Belgrade with the Serb President and Prime Minister, Boris Tadic and Vojislav Kostunica.

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NATO :

Russia

On 26th April President Vladimir Putin said once again that he was against the deployment of the US anti-missile shield in the Czech Republic and Poland and announced a moratorium on the application of the 1990 treaty on conventional forces in Europe, "until all countries had ratified it at least and had started to apply it strictly." This announcement came during a meeting in Oslo with NATO country Foreign Ministers and Russian Minister Sergueï Lavrov.

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Germany :

Africa

German Chancellor Angela Merkel invited industrialised countries to honour their promises with regard

to Africa when she met with British Prime Minister and former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on 24th April in Berlin. She maintained that it was the only way to gain the long term confidence of the neighbouring continent. In her opinion the G8 Summit that will bring together the seven most industrialised countries as well as Russia in Heiligendamm will provide new impetus to aid for Africa. Tony Blair stressed that Europe would suffer notably from masse immigration if it did not help to solve Africa's problems. Kofi Annan, who is heading a new international forum on Africa, maintains that the continent has made major steps forward over the last few years.

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[France/Germany](#)

The Robert Bosch Foundation has launched a competition entitled "On y va - Auf geht's!" (Let's Go!) designed to promote meetings and partnerships between the French and Germans. Citizens, associations and schools from both countries now apply for funding to a maximum of 5,000 euro per project. The deadline for applications has been set for 17th September 2007; projects have to be finished before October 2008; The Foundation hopes to provide new impetus to Franco-German relations rising beyond existing twinning movements. Projects must involve ecology, integration, education, cultural exchange or inter-generational dialogue.

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[Franco-German University](#)

The Franco-German University is preparing the next university year (2007-2008) with a new record to date: 142 study cycles have received its quality label and will enjoy financial support. 128 bi-national cycles integrated into French and German higher education establishments number among these - with 101 undergraduate and 27 postgraduate cycles. To this must be added 14 tri-national cycles within which a German and a French establishment works together with a third country partner - Russian, Polish, Spanish or other.

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[Climate](#)

On 26th April the German government presented an eight point programme to fight against global warming promising to reduce CO2 emissions by 40% before 2020 and to double the goals set by the Commission. "We should establish a goal to make Germany the most efficient nation in the world with regard to energy," declared Environment Minister, Sigmar Gabriel to the Bundestag. To achieve this the government plans to reduce electricity consumption by 11% by working on alternative or renewable energies as well as the updating of power stations.

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Denmark :

[Renewable Energies](#)

On 26th April in Denmark European and Asian Environment Ministers stressed the need to increase the share of renewable, clean energy to reduce CO2 emissions and to halt global warming. As part of the third Ministerial meeting in the Asem Forum they acknowledged the need to "promote sustainable energies and the development of new technologies." Denmark is the world leader in this area.

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Estonia :

[Soviet Status Challenged](#)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel whose country is ensuring the EU presidency called on 28th April for Russia and Estonia to "restrain" themselves and "avoid all escalation" after the conflict caused by the moving of a Soviet monument in Tallin. The displacement of a monument dedicated to Soviet soldiers

who died in the 2nd World War in the night of 26th to 27th April led to confrontation between the police and young Estonians of Russian origin. One Russian died and about one hundred were injured.

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Ireland :

[General Elections](#)

Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern will be standing for a third term in office as head of government during the general elections that have been set for 24th May next. Irish President Mary McAleese "dissolved the 29th Dail (the lower house in Parliament) on 29th April."

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Lithuania :

[Cohesion Policy](#)

On 26th April Regional policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner and Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities Commissioner Vladimír Špidla congratulated the Lithuanian authorities for reaching agreement with the European Commission on the national plan and priorities for Cohesion policy 2007-2013 under the Convergence objective. In their National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) the Lithuanian authorities describe how they are going to use EU funding of 6,775 million euros that they will receive over seven years to deliver growth and jobs to their regions.

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The Netherlands :

[The Employment Market](#)

On May 1st Social Affairs Minister, Piet Hein Donner would like to open up the Netherlands' employment market to the ten countries which joined the EU in 2004. "The Dutch employment market is developing particularly well. The number of job offers has never been so high and unemployment is dropping. A delay on opening up the employment market would be detrimental to Dutch business and therefore to the Dutch employment market," he explained in a letter to MPs.

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Poland :

[Geremek and Mazowiecki](#)

The threat made by the Polish government to strip Bronislaw Geremek of his mandate as MEP after his refusal to fall in line with the new "lustration" law on the decommunisation of the country was the source of a number of protests in Europe on 25th April. The law that was established by the Kaczynski government obliges 700,000 public leaders to declare once more whether or not they collaborated with the Communist political police in the past. Bronislaw Geremek, former Polish Foreign Minister has refused to sign the declaration in protest against this law which he qualifies as a "legal outrage." Hence he stands alongside Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first democratic Head of Government of Poland after 1989. He called on the Polish authorities not to decide anything with regard to his case before the decision of the Constitutional Court with which a case has been lodged both by the social democrat opposition and the ombudsman. The Court has to make its decision about whether the law is constitutional or not during a session planned for 9th-11th May. "I hope that the public authorities will see reason," he said. President of the European Parliament, Hans-Gert Pöttering, the ADLE Chairman at the EP, Graham Watson (UK) and French Foreign Minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, amongst others, have all publicly provided him with their support.

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Czech Republic :

[Anti-Missile Radar](#)

According to a CVVM poll published on 24th April about two thirds (68 %) of Czech citizens do not agree with planned deployment of U.S. anti-missile radar in Czech Republic in comparison with 61% in February. Many believe that this question should be decided in a referendum and not by ratification by Parliament. The US made an official request in January to the Czech Republic and Poland to serve as European bases for their anti-missile shield to counter any possible attacks from Iran.

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Romania :

[Referendum](#)

Although he was suspended from office on 17th April by the majority of the Lower House of Parliament which is accusing Mr Basescu of abusing his constitutional powers the president of Romania has refused to resign. Because of this refusal the Romanian authorities are obliged to organise an impeachment referendum. 17.5 million voters will be called to answer the question on 19th May: "Do you agree with the impeachment of Traian Basescu?". The suspended president is still extremely popular according to the polls. Nicolas Vacaroiu, President of the Senate is Head of State by interim until the referendum.

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Turkey :

[Presidential Election](#)

The candidature of Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gül, of the ruling AKP party has stirred up supporters of Turkish secularity. For the second time over a million people demonstrated on 29th April against the possible election of a candidate whose wife wears the veil and who is the former spokesperson of the Islamist government led by Necmettin Erbakan, forced to resign in 1997. In spite of warnings, notably on the part of the army, the only candidate running who did not win the required majority of 2/3 in the first round which took place on 27th April (he won 357 votes in Parliament out of the 367 required) is upholding his bid. The opposition has taken the issue to the Constitutional Court demanding an invalidation of the vote.

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Eurostat :

[Industry](#)

According to Eurostat estimates published on 24th April the euro area industrial new orders index decreased by 0.7% in February 2007 compared with January 2007. The index fell by 0.1% in January and grew by 1.5% in December 2006. EU27 new orders remained stable in February 2007, after a decrease of 1.4% in January and an increase of 2.5% in December 2006. In February 2007 compared with February 2006, industrial new orders increased by 4.7% in the euro area and by 6.3% in the EU27.

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[Public Deficit](#)

In the euro zone public deficit dropped from 2.5% of the GDP in 2005 down to 1.6% in 2006. In the EU the figure has dropped from 2.4% to 1.7% according to figures given to Eurostat by the Member States. The ratio of public debt in comparison with the GDP decreased in the euro zone from 70.5% at the end of 2005 to 69% at the end of 2006 and in the EU from 62.9% to 61.7%.

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[Transatlantic Trade](#)

According to figures published on 27th April by Eurostat the EU and the USA account for the largest bilateral trade relationship in the world. In 2006, the EU27 exported 269 billion euro of goods to the USA, while imports amounted to 178 bn. The most notable feature of EU-US trade over recent years has been the continued growth in the EU27 surplus, from 32 billion in 2000 to 91 billion in 2006. In 2005, the EU25 exported 123 billion euro of services to the USA, while imports of services from the USA amounted to 116 billion, meaning that the EU25 had a surplus of 7 billion in trade in services with the USA. Amongst the Member States Germany and the UK are the main trading partners with the US.

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Reports :

[International Press Institute](#)

One hundred journalists were killed across the world in 2006 the worst year ever recorded in this profession according to an annual report published by the International Press Institute (IPI) on 25th April. For the fourth year running and with 46 deaths Iraq remained the most dangerous country for journalists. "Nearly every time these were targeted deaths," says the report which reviews 180 countries. Journalists also died in 23 other countries, starting with the Philippines (10), Mexico (7), Sri Lanka (5), Pakistan (4), Afghanistan (3), Colombia (3), Venezuela (2), Russia (2), India (2) and China (2).

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[Corruption](#)

According to a report published on 23rd April by the Center for the Study of Democracy, corruption in Bulgaria is equivalent to the amount contributed per year by the EU. In 2006 around one billion euros was handed out in bribes, public market attributions and fraudulent exchanges of land belonging to town councils. The report does say however that corruption within the administration is declining.

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[Digital Revolution](#)

Nearly 20% of European households buy bundled telecom packages, according to an EU-wide survey of 27,000 representative households published on 27th April. Almost 30% are now connected to the internet via high-speed 'broadband' links and households increasingly use mobile phones as fixed lines become less popular. 17% of Europeans having a home Internet connection use it for Internet telephony. Information Society and Media Commissioner Viviane Reding said, "The challenge of this year's reform of the EU's telecom rules will be to respond to this rapidly changing technological environment while enhancing at the same time effective competition."

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Agenda :

30th April

EU-USA Summit

5th May

European Institutions Open Doors Day

7th May

Eurogroup

7th-8th May

Agriculture and Fisheries Council

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Editors : Thierry Chopin, Mathilde Durand,
Hélène Gourlet, Claire Perrodon, Elisa Sitbon

Chief Editor : Hélène Gourlet
Publishing Director : Pascale Joannin

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