



Women and Europe: for total and irrevocable equality



Author: Pascale Joannin

In view of the conference "Women and Europe & the Citizens' Initiative" that is taking place on 21st September at the European Parliament in Brussels the Robert Schuman Foundation has published a European Issue by Pascale Joannin, General Director of the Foundation, on the position of women in Europe and notably on the question of equality which must become a reality at last.

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Front page! :

Women take the Floor!



Just as Dane, Helle Thorning-Schmidt is about to become the first woman Prime Minister of her country, the Robert Schuman Foundation, with the support of the European Commission's DG Education and Culture, in partnership with the Karamanlis Institute for Democracy and the Polish Robert Schuman Foundation, is organising a conference "Women and Europe and the Citizens' Initiative" on 21st September at the European Parliament in Brussels. This conference aims to highlight the citizens' initiative and to raise women's awareness of the use they may make of this new tool to ask the Union to take matters forwards and for equality to become a reality at last: women must speak out and act. There is just one day left to enrol on-line... [Read more](#)

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Political Parties



On 20th September the Centre for European Studies and the Hanns Seidel Stiftung are organising a conference in Brussels on political parties, their strategies, analyses and development in times of crisis. Pascale Joannin, General Director of the Robert Schuman Foundation will be speaking during the debate... [Read more](#)

Social Charter



The Council of Europe, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of France and the European Economic and Social Committee are organising a day of reflection on "The Social Charter of the Council of Europe: 50 years and what next?" on 23rd September. The chair of the Robert Schuman Foundation, Jean-Dominique Giuliani is speaking at a round table on the European Social Charter and the economic crisis... [Read more](#)

Euractiv



Euractiv, a network of 15 on-line newspapers specialised in European policy and the effects they have nationally, launched its free iPhone application that is available in 9 different languages (French, German, English, Bulgarian, Polish, Spanish, Slovakian, Czech and Turkish). This application offers daily access to 50 publications according to various themes (energy, agriculture, industry, communities ...)... [Read more](#)

Elections :

Denmark



The leftwing opposition forces led by the Social Democratic Party (SD) won the general elections that took place in Denmark on 15th September. Together the four parties in the Red Bloc - the Social Democratic Party, the Social Liberal Party, the People's Socialist Party and the Unity List - won 50.2% of the vote and 89 seats in the Folketing, the only chamber in Parliament, ie +8 in comparison with the previous election on 13th November 2007, pushing ahead of the Blue Bloc - formed by the rightwing - the Liberal Party, the Danish People's Party, the Liberal Alliance and the Conservative Party - which won 49.7% of the vote and 86 seats (-3). Although the Red Bloc's victory is undeniable, the left only won by a narrow majority. The formation of the next government may be difficult. The coalition led by Helle Thorning-Schmidt is effectively heterogeneous. Having succeeded in federating the Danish left and in winning the elections she is now due to become the first woman Prime Minister in Denmark's history... [Read more](#)

Latvia



On 17th September Harmony Centre (SC) won 28.37% of the vote and 31 seats in parliament (+ 2 seats in comparison with the previous election on 2nd October 2010). It took the lead over the Zatler's Reform Party (PRZ), which won 20.82% of the vote and 22 seats and Unity (V), the party of outgoing Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis, which won 18.83% of the vote and 20 seats (- 13). National Alliance-All for Latvia came fourth with 13.88% of the vote and 14 seats (+ 6), just ahead of the Greens and Farmers Union (ZSS), a member of the outgoing government coalition, which won 12.22% of the vote and 12 seats (- 9). The other parties, including the People's Party (TP) led by businessman and former Prime Minister (1995-1997 and 1999-2000) Andris Skele Latvia's First-Latvia's Way (LPP-LC), led by Ainars Slesers did not manage to rise above the 5% threshold of votes cast, which are vital to be represented in the Saeima, the only chamber of Parliament... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

Greece



The Greek government met on 18th September to discuss a new series of budgetary measures to convince the country's creditors, who are increasingly impatient, not to turn the loans tap off, which would lead to a high risk of bankruptcy. Further austerity measures in 2012 have

been decided - and they still aim to avoid payment default, to maintain the country in the euro area and to achieve the release of the next part of international aid, notably via the future presentation of a public finance stabilisation plan... [Read more](#)

Hungary



On 16th September the Hungarian government announced that it was counting on 1.5% growth in 2012 ie half of what it had previously planned but it still aims to achieve the goal of a public deficit of 2.5% of the GDP, notably thanks to an increase in VAT. "The 2012 draft budget is built on an economic growth forecast of 1.5% and on public deficit of 2.5% of the GDP," declared Economy Minister György Matolcsy during a press conference... [Read more](#)

Portugal



The Portuguese government presented a reform on 15th September concerning the central administration of the State which plans for the abolition of 27% of executive managers' posts, whilst Portugal's creditors have launched a new phase in technical assistance. "It is urgent to reduce costs and to make the State more effective," to "adjust the State's dimension to its financial capability," explained the Secretary of State for Public Administration Helder Rosalino during a press conference after a Council of Ministers meeting... [Read more](#)

UK



According to a press release published on 14th September by the National Statistics Office the increase in the number of unemployed in the UK was 20,000 in August. From May to July the number of job seekers increased by 80,000 ie the highest quarterly increase in two years. At the end of July there were more than 2.5 million unemployed ie 7.9% of the working population... [Read more](#)

Economic Governance



The 27 EU Finance Ministers met in Wroclaw to decide on new economic governance measures. An agreement was found to enhance dialogue and the surveillance of macro-economic and budgetary imbalance. Hence "a procedure regarding excessive imbalance" that will be accompanied by sanctions will be established. The agreement is due to be formally adopted by the Council on 4th October before being presented to the European Parliament. The package contains six texts (five regulations and one directive)... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Growth



On 15th September the European Commission said it believed that growth in the euro area would be 1.6% and that of the European Union 1.7% in 2011. This is a lower estimate, notably because of the UK's poor results. Moreover Eurostat said on the same day that the inflation rate in August was 2.5% in the euro area and 2.9% in the EU. This is higher than last year but stable in comparison with July... [Read more](#)

Schengen



On 16th September the Commission suggested a strengthening of the Schengen area in order to guarantee the freedom of movement of hundreds of thousands of EU citizens and those of third countries travelling everyday across its territory. The Commission's proposals aim to set up a more effective approach to Schengen cooperation Europe wide. This means establishing an enhanced assessment and monitoring system, designed to check and guarantee the application of the Schengen rules, as

well as a more structured European decision making mechanism in the event of a serious threat to public order or internal security... [Read more](#)

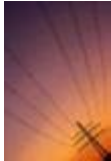
Parliament :

Security/Borders



Frontex, the EU's external border management agency will be enhanced; an inspector to ensure the respect of Human Rights will be appointed. On 13th September a wide majority of MEPs voted in support of this project that plans for Frontex to have more personnel and its own equipment; this agency will therefore be more effective and independent of the Member States. Moreover a code of conduct will be set out and an inspector will guarantee the respect of Human Rights during border controls... [Read more](#)

Energy



On 14th September the European Parliament approved a resolution for the integrity and transparency of the energy market. Aiming to protect consumers this text should prevent agreements being made between the various operators. It should also serve as a base to monitor these operators who would only be authorised to work if they were registered. This text applies to the sectors of electricity and natural gas. It was adopted by a wide majority, 616 votes in favour... [Read more](#)

Raw Materials



Parliament has asked the EU to draw up an ambitious, all encompassing strategy with regard to raw materials. Supply, usage and recycling have to be planned better, since raw materials are needed during the entire industrial chain and therefore they are necessary to the economy and have a major ecological impact... [Read more](#)

[more](#)

Council :

General Affairs



During the General Affairs Council on 12th September the Foreign Ministers of the 27 Member States discussed the pluriannual financial framework 2014-2020. The text put forward by the Commission enumerates the spending limits for each area; it is a tool for budgetary austerity as well as a means to define priorities of action in the EU. Ministers also agreed on the creation of an agency to manage IT systems associated with visa requests and asylum seekers and illegal immigrants, the HQ of which will be shared between Tallinn (Estonia), Strasbourg (France) and Sankt Johann im Pongau (Austria). They also adopted a new Eurovignette directive that should improve air quality and the movement of traffic... [Read more](#)

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Diplomacy :

South Africa



On 15th September the fourth summit between South Africa and the EU came to an end. Both sides discussed the fight to counter global warming and the need to come to a post-Kyoto agreement., the situation in Sudan and the importance of the G20 in the world's financial and economic cooperation. Cooperation between South Africa and the EU has moved forward in terms of development aid, trade, healthcare, Human Rights and exchanges in the areas of education and research... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Pilot's age limit

In a decision delivered on 13th September the European Court of Justice rejected the idea that there should be an obligatory age limit on



airline pilots. The court indeed said that the parameter of physical fitness was of course important but it could not be decided on by a predetermined age limit. As a result setting an age limit would only be useful to air safety indirectly and could not really be used as such...

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France/UK :

Sarkozy and Cameron in Libya



French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron travelled to Libya on 15th September - firstly to Tripoli and then to Benghazi. During this visit, which is the first to be made by foreign leaders since the fall of Kadhafi, Mr Sarkozy said, as he addressed the crowd, "Friends of Benghazi, now we shall ask you one thing: we believe in a united Libya, not in a divided Libya," whilst Mr Cameron exclaimed, "Your town has been the inspiration for the entire world, you overthrew a dictator and you have chosen freedom..." [Read more](#)

Germany :

Elections/Berlin



In the election on 18th September in the Land of Berlin that is held at present by the Social Democrats, the SPD came out ahead with 28.3% of the vote, followed by the CDU led by German Chancellor Angela Merkel with 23.4% of the vote, the Greens, 17.6% and the Left (Die Linke), 11.7%. The Liberal FDP, a member of the government coalition federally has been ousted from the Berlin parliament because it did not reach the 5% threshold. We should note a breakthrough of the Pirate Party (8.9%)... [Read more](#)

Siemens/Nuclear



On 18th September the German company Siemens announced that it was giving up its nuclear activities, which it deems pointless since the abandonment of the civilian nuclear sector by Germany - it will now focus more on renewable energies." We shall no longer be involved in managing the construction of nuclear power stations or in their funding. This chapter is now closed for us," said Peter Löscher, the group's CEO, in an interview in Der Spiegel... [Read more](#)

Belgium :

Settlement?



On 16th September Elio di Rupo announced that he had come to an agreement with the 8 parties negotiating the Brussels-Hal Vilvorde (BHV) issue, which has been emblematic in the institutional stalemate that started after the last elections in June 2010, 462 days ago. The political parties agreed on the scission of BHV, but in compensation the inhabitants of these communities will be able to vote on Brussels' lists. Now negotiators will try to come to an agreement on the socio-economic chapter as well as the transfer of competence and the finance law. Moreover Yves Leterme, Prime Minister, announced that he would be joining the OECD as Deputy Secretary General at the end of 2011... [Read more](#)

Aid/Greece



Belgian MPs approved the European agreement to rescue Greece elaborated on 21st July for countries in the euro area. The Belgian State's guarantee to the second aid plan to Greece that rises from 15.3 billion to 34.5 billion euros was approved 114 votes in favour, 13, against and 1 abstention... [Read more](#)

Denmark :

A woman Prime Minister?



In Denmark the centre-left coalition led by Helle Thorning-Schmidt, former MEP, won the general elections on 15th September. This closely run victory (89 to 86 seats) that went together with a high turnout rate, has put an end to 10 years of centre-right government, but neither side has an absolute majority (90 seats). The formation of a minority government, as was the case with the outgoing government, is highly likely. Helle Thorning-Schmidt is due to become the first woman to occupy the post of Prime Minister in Denmark... [Read more](#)

Spain :

Wealth/Tax



The Spanish economy and finance Minister announced on 16th September that Spain was going to re-introduce wealth tax on a temporary basis after suspending it in 2008; this measure should bring in around one billion euros and will affect 160,000 people... [Read more](#)

Italy :

Austerity



On 14th September the Italian Parliament adopted an austerity programme totalling 54 billion euros. The plan intends to raise VAT by one point, taxes on property profits will also be raised from 12.5% to 20% except on State bonds; there will be a tax on income set at 3% as of 300,000 euro per annum and the fight to counter tax fraud will be stepped up... [Read more](#)

Latvia :

NATO



On 13th September the President of the Latvia, Andris Berzins visited NATO's HQ and met the organisation's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen. In a joint press conference the two men spoke of the future of cooperation between Latvia and NATO. They notably focused on the country's budgetary contribution to NATO, which President Berzins has reduced; they also discussed Latvia's participation in Afghanistan... [Read more](#)

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Romania :

Dismissal



On 16th September, in a surprise move, Romanian Prime Minister Emil Boc dismissed the Labour Minister, a key post in a country that has launched in depth social reform to reduce public deficit. Sebastian Lazaroiu was dismissed after making political declarations in which he criticised the present organisation of the Liberal Democratic Party in office. He will be replaced by Sulfina Barbu, former Environment Minister... [Read more](#)

European Affairs Ministry



Romanian Prime Minister Emile Boc has delivered suggestions to both chambers of Parliament for the establishment of a European Affairs Ministry. The first proposal contains details of the organisation and missions of the latter. The second focuses on the appointment of Leonard Orban, former European Multilingualism Commissioner to head this ministry. The latter would be responsible both for Romania's relations with the EU and that of managing European funds allocated to Romania... [Read more](#)

UK :

Future/EU



In a speech delivered at the London School of Economics on 14th September British Deputy Prime Minister responded to suggestions made by Foreign Minister William Hague, who said that UK should take advantage of the crisis in the euro area to renegotiate its relations with the EU. The important thing here is to see "how we can help the euro area avoid further turbulence" declared Nick Clegg. In his opinion it is also vital to "deepen and widen the single market"... [Read more](#)

Croatia :

Draft treaty/EU Membership



On 17th September Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, whose country is undertaking the Presidency of the Council of the European Union at present, delivered a draft membership text to his Croatian counterpart, Jadranka Kosor. Croatia completed its EU membership negotiations on 30th June - originally they were started in 2005; the country is now due to become the 28th EU member on July 1st 2013... [Read more](#)

Turkey :

Germany



Turkish President Abdullah Gül is on a four day official visit to Germany during which the main issue addressed will be Turkey's membership of the EU. On 18th September President Christian Wulff declared that Turkey was a major partner for Germany after his meeting with Mr Gül... [Read more](#)

OECD :

Education



The OECD published a report on 13th September "Views on Education" that show the importance of study in times of crisis. "Graduates from higher education have been far less likely to lose their jobs during the world economic crisis than those who left school without any qualifications." Governments must invest in education concludes the study: indeed this investment will be to their advantage long term - the more qualified are less likely to ask for unemployment benefit and they will put their competence to the benefit of their country... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

External Trade



On 16th September Eurostat published figures concerning the EU's external trade for July 2011. Although the euro area is in surplus of 4.3 billion euros there has been a slight contraction in comparison with last year; however the 27 EU countries reveal a deficit of 8 billion euros, up by 500 million in comparison with July 2010... [Read more](#)

Employment



On 15th September Eurostat published figures showing a slight recovery in employment. It has risen by 0.3% in the euro area and by 0.2% in the EU as a whole... [Read more](#)

Industry



The figures published by Eurostat on 15th September show that there was a recovery in industrial activity in July in comparison with June, when the figure declined. The rise is still much lower however than figures published last year: 1% for the euro area instead of 4.2%, 1.1% in the EU instead of 3.6%... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Crisis/Solidarity EU



The Centre for Information and Research on Modern Germany has published an article by Hans-Helmut Kotz, Jan Pieter Krahen, Christian Leuz and Helmut Siekmann: "Crise européenne. Plutôt que des Eurobonds, concevoir une 'Union de développement moderne'". In this study the authors define a third way between blind solidarity and withdrawal, and advise on reconciling community solidarity with national responsibilities. They call for the identification and differentiation between problems that the euro area is facing: lack of liquidity, dubious solvency, etc ... Answers should enable the States to put structural solutions forward... [Read more](#)

EU/Russia



The German Institute for International Relations and Security has published a study on relations between the EU and Russia. Author Susan Stewart challenges the probability of a progressive modernisation of the country as announced by Russian President Dmitri Medvedev... [Read more](#)

Transatlantic Opinion



The 10th annual survey "Transatlantic Trends" has just been published; this all encompassing survey explores the public opinion of the USA and Europe and was undertaken between 25th May and 17th June 2011 in the USA, Turkey and 12 EU Member States. The poll reveals that Americans seem disinterested in Europe; most of those interviewed say that their national interests lie more in Asia than in the EU... [Read more](#)

Publications :

Europeans



The new issue of the Review "Questions Internationales" published by the Documentation Française is devoted to Europeans and European identity. A variety of articles focus on Europe and its cultures, values, on the uncertain emergence of a European political community..... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Exhibition/ Rome



The Trajan markets in the centre of Rome are hosting an exhibition "Meet Design" until 13th October; it brings together work by major names in Italian design (the Distex chair by Gio Ponti, the Bali lamp by Bruno Munari), but also some avant-garde projects. The event is being organised on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Italian Unity combining "Antiquity and Modernity"... [Read more](#)

Biennale Sculpture



The Caillebotte property is hosting the 3rd Sculpture Biennale in Yerres (France) until 27th November bringing together 40 modern and contemporary artists and over one hundred works of art focusing on one theme: "Inventing strange worlds". Three generations of sculptors are on show including: Eugène Dodeigne, Jean Dubuffet, Bernar Venet, Agnès Bracquemond, Damien Cabanes, Alain Kirili, Denis Monfleur ... the different works of art are presented in various places ranging from the Art Centre, the Park, to the Orangery... [Read more](#)

Festival/San Sebastian



The 59th Festival in San Sebastian that is devoted to the cinema is taking place until 24th September; for the first time it will be under the

patronage of José Luis Rebordinos. The jury, this year chaired by American actress, Frances McDormand, will award the "Golden Shell" to the best film in the international competition during the closing ceremony... [Read more](#)

Exhibition/Paris



The Jacquemart-André Museum is devoting an exhibition to Fra Angelico, an "Enlightenment" painter, from 23rd September to 16th January 2012, with the presentation of 25 of his most important works and also panels undertaken by painters who were his contemporaries (Lorenzo Monaco, Masolino). This is the first event undertaken by a French museum devoted to Fra Angelico... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



19th-20th September
"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council



21st September
Women and Europe & the Citizens' Initiative in the European Parliament in Brussels



22nd-23rd September
"Justice and Internal Affairs" Council



23rd September
G20 Ministerial Meeting on Development



26th September
"Foreign Affairs" Council

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