



Storm Warning in the Gulf



Author: Jacques Charmelot

The American withdrawal from Iraq at the end of December last brought radical change to the situation in the most fragile, strategic region in the world: the Gulf. Referred to as Arabian by some and Persian by others, for the world's oil-thirsty economy it really has become a vital life line. Over thirty years ago the USA and its allies, notably Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain, launched into a dangerous stand-off with the Islamic Republic of Iran. The coming months will be decisive and there is a real danger that this low-key confrontation will turn into outright conflict, as during the worst moments in the war between Iraq and Iran.

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Front page! :

Europe: Brighter Skies Ahead



On the eve of the European Council of 30th January, the Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation, Jean-Dominique Giuliani published an editorial on his site on the future of the EU. According, "It is far too early to speak of the end of the crisis in Europe, but the end of the tunnel is now in sight and we have entered a period of consolidation. We must not give up and continue working, and be prepared to put in more effort.".. [Read more](#)

Franco-German Prize awarded to Jean François-Poncet and Edzard Reuter

On 24th January the French and German European Affairs Ministers,



Jean Leonetti and Michael Link, awarded the de Gaulle-Adenauer Prize in Berlin to former minister, former Senator and member of the Robert Schuman Foundation Board, Jean François-Poncet and to Edzard Reuter, former CEO of Daimler-Benz. The two men received their prize for having organised the Evian Meetings. These have been convened every year since 1992 between French and German entrepreneurs and help to extend the unique, privileged relationship that unites the two countries together... [Read more](#)

Manifesto for a unified, integrated Euro zone



Organised by Confrontations Europe, the Astrid Foundation and the Bertelsman Foundation, the European Economic Interviews led to a "Manifesto for a unified and integrated euro zone". To put a halt to growing pressure from the markets and to prevent the collapse of the European Union, greater solidarity and coordination between European countries are necessary to revive their competitiveness. At a time when debate is accelerating over a reform of the European Treaties, the three associations from civil society adopted a European manifesto for a euro zone to show more solidarity and for it to be more integrated; a campaign has been launched to foster its goals. Jean-Dominique Giuliani, chair of the Robert Schuman Foundation is one of the many signatories of this manifesto... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

Europe must adapt its economic model and not give it up



On 24th January the World Bank published a report on the advantages and inconveniences of the European economic model entitled "Restoring the lustre of the European economic model." During the presentation the Vice-President of the World Bank, responsible for Europe and Central Asia, Philippe Le Houerou, asked Europeans to maintain their critical spirit and not to lose confidence in their economic model. The report focuses on the last two decades and analyses six areas relevant to growth, ie trade; finance; business; innovation; work and government... [Read more](#)

Hungary prosecuted for excessive debt



On 24th January the 27 European Finance Ministers officially acknowledged that Hungary had not taken the necessary steps to reduce its excessive deficit. Indeed although the deficit goal was technically achieved in 2011 the Council believes that there has not been any "strong, long lasting" correction of it. The country may therefore see the payment of the cohesion funds that it receives from the EU suspended. They also noted the priorities set by the Danish Presidency and debated the annual review of growth by the Commission which is used as a base for the analyses undertaken as part of the European semester; they also discussed draft legislation concerning over the counter derivatives, budgetary surveillance and economic governance... [Read more](#)

The IMF reviews its growth forecasts downwards in 2012



On 24th January the International Monetary Fund lowered its world economic forecasts in 2012 by 0.7% in comparison with the world economic outlook in September 2011; the IMF believes that world economic growth will lie at around 3.25% in 2012. Growth prospects worsened in the wake of increased economic tension in the euro zone. The IMF is forecasting a 0.5% recession in the euro zone in 2012 and growth of 0.8% in 2013. According to the most recent forecasts by the IMF the situation in Spain is due to decline with a 1.7% contraction of economic activity in 2012 as well as 0.3% in 2013 (which represents a downwards correction of 2.8% for 2012 and 2.1% for 2013); in Italy the economy is due to contract by 2.2% in 2012 and 0.6% in 2013 (which represents a downwards correction of 2.5% in 2012 and 1.1% in 2013)... [Read more](#)

Reducing inequality and stimulating growth



On 23rd January the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) published a chapter of the "Economic Policy Reforms 2012. Going for Growth" report. In this text OECD experts explain that it is possible to reduce the wage gap and to stimulate growth simultaneously by making reforms to the labour market, to the contributions and transfer systems and by adopting quality education. Hence the crisis which is pushing us towards reforms and to rethink public finance is giving us an ideal opportunity to address growing inequalities, "one of the main dangers that weighs over our prosperity and our future security." as stressed Pier Carlo Padoan, the OECD's Chief Economist... [Read more](#)

Spain: unemployment reached a record high in 2011 totalling 22.85%



According to figures published on 27th January by the National Statistics Institute (INE), in the fourth quarter of 2011 Spain had nearly 5.3 million unemployed, which meant that unemployment had risen by 1.33 points to 22.85%, the highest rate since the first quarter of 1995. Amongst the 25 year olds the rise in unemployment has been particularly dramatic. Over one in two of them (51.4%) is without work, in comparison with 45.8% at the end of September. The activity rate, for its part, totals 59.94%... [Read more](#)

France: unemployment increased by 5.6% in 2011



According to figures published on 25th January by the Labour, Employment and Healthcare Minister, across the entire year of 2011, the number of unemployed increased by 5.6%. In 2011 152,000 people lost their job. In all France now has 2,874,500 unemployed... [Read more](#)

Greece: continuation of negotiations on the reduction of the debt



On 27th and 28th January the leader of the IFF, Charles Dallara, Greek Prime Minister Lucas Papademos and his Finance Minister Evangelos Venizelos met to continue discussions about the Greek debt. The meeting between private creditors and government led to "progress"; however no agreement has been signed for the time being. It is urgent for an agreement to found quickly, indeed the next instalment to be paid by Greece ie 14.4 billion euros, is due on 20th March... [Read more](#)

The IMF invites Hungary to continue its austerity measures



In a report on Hungary, published on 25th January the International Monetary Fund (IMF) asked Budapest to continue implementing austerity measures and to put an end to its interventionist economic policy, whilst Hungary wants to start negotiations with the IMF in view of a loan. Financial aid from the IMF and other international organisations "may help to relieve financial restrictions and improve investor confidence," but it can only be effective if it is based on a sound economic policy. Hungary, which is encountering problems in getting funding from the market wants to negotiate a loan estimated at between 15 and 20 billion euros. But the country has irritated international organisations by adopting controversial laws, notably a reform of the central bank deemed damaging to its independence... [Read more](#)

Simplification of Administrative Procedures



Mario Monti's government adopted measures that aim to simplify administrative procedures which are very cumbersome in Italy and believed to be an impediment to growth. Amongst the measures feature the constitution of a data base on calls for tender which will lead to centralisation and accessibility of all candidates files by the administrative offices concerned. Administrative procedures will also be simplified for the public who will be able to use the internet to undertake a certain number of these acts. Mr Monti said that this plan to simplify the administration aimed to reduce "radically" the red tape surrounding the creation of businesses... [Read more](#)

UK: contraction of the economy at the end of 2011



The British economy contracted by 0.2% in the fourth quarter of 2011 according to an initial estimate published on 25th January by the Office for National Statistics. This decrease after a rise of 0.6% in the third quarter is double that expected by economists. Moreover GDP growth for all of 2011 lay at 0.8%; this poor result comes just as unemployment is already at its highest level in 17 years... [Read more](#)

42nd World Economic Forum in Davos



From 25th-29th January during the 42nd world economic forum in Davos many political and economic leaders spoke during debate, notably the President of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi. The latter declared that the euro zone had made "spectacular progress" towards emerging long term from the debt crisis that has been undermining it since December 2009. "It is surprising if you make a comparison with the last five months, the euro zone is another world," he maintained. "Many positive things have happened on the market, the banks have more capital, less debt and are in some way immunized against the perverse incentives that were typical of the financial crisis." In his introductory speech German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that the solution to the present crisis lay in greater credibility of the economic policies that were being undertaken... [Read more](#)

European Council :

Meeting with the new Bulgarian President, Rosen Plevneliev



On 26th January the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy, and Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev stressed that the Bulgarian priorities with regard to Europe should focus on accession to the Schengen area, the fight to counter corruption, the integration of the Balkans and more general social and budgetary measures to counter the economic and financial crisis... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Find out everything there is to know about the Citizens' Initiative



The conference on 26th January 2012 "Warming up for the Citizens' Initiative" marked a decisive stage in the last preparatory sessions devoted to the European Citizens' Initiative. The official site to register a Citizens' Initiative was launched and the free software that citizens can use to collate signatures on line was presented on this occasion. The conference also provided an opportunity to recall the functioning and the procedures to be followed in the Citizens' Initiative. The Vice-President of the European Commission and the initiator of this idea, Mr Maroš Šefcovic, stressed the central role played by the social media in the implementation of the Citizens' Initiative. He said that "this new right (will open) a new chapter in the European Union's democratic life"... [Read more](#)

Adjusting the trade and investment policy



On 27th January the European Commission presented several proposals that aim to support the development of third countries by way of growth that is driven along by international trade. Amongst the ideas studied are firstly to reserve preferential prices for the poorest countries, to make free-trade systematic, to put an end to all equivalent effect taxes on customs duties and equivalent effect measures on quantitative restrictions, to facilitate foreign direct investment, to help developing countries respect international standards in the economic, social and environmental areas and finally to include trade instruments in the management of natural and political crises... [Read more](#)

Regulation of the use of personal data

On 25th January the European Commission put forward a legislative proposal obliging the main internet companies to gain people's prior



consent to use their personal data, under the threat of a fine. The leading measure in the proposals put forward by the Vice President of the Commission responsible for Justice, Vivian Reding, comprises an introduction "the right to be forgotten" which will notably force the social networks to delete personal data, photographs of the users who ask for it. More generally companies on the net will have to gain the clear consent of the citizens whose data they would like to use... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Reorganisation of the Parliamentary Committees



Following the election of the president, the 14 Vice Presidents and the five questeurs at the European Parliament last week, MEPs this week elected the chairs and deputy chairs of the various parliamentary committees. They will complete their two year and a half year term in office at the end of the present legislature... [Read more](#)

Council :

Analysis of Macedonia's Progress



On 24th January during its eighth meeting the Stabilisation and Association Council between Macedonia and the European Union lauded the reforms made to Parliament and to the legal and public administration authority, likewise the progress the country has made in terms of the fight to counter corruption and its work to integrate the Roma community. The economic policies undertaken were also approved and the Council noted that progress had been made with regard to aligning Macedonian legislation with the community acquis in many areas; however progress still has to be made with regard to the freedom of expression in the media. Finally Macedonia recalled that its main goal was to launch membership negotiations with the EU as quickly as possible... [Read more](#)

Presentation of Danish priorities in terms of agriculture and fisheries



On 23rd January the 27 Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers studied the proposals put forward by the Danish Presidency for the next six months. The priorities retained are, amongst others, the funding of the Common Agricultural Policy, its transparency and the importance of including it in research and innovation. More generally they debated the reform of the CAP and studied the European strategy for animal well-being... [Read more](#)

Sanctions against Iran and Syria



The 27 European Foreign Ministers expressed their concern about the situation in Iran and Syria on 23rd January 2012 in support of the action taken by the Arab League in the latter country and they decided to step up sanctions against both countries. They also welcomed the reforms undertaken by Myanmar and encouraged the junta to go further with this. They also welcomed the work done by Jordan to facilitate direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians as part of the quartet and said they wanted Sudan and South Sudan to conclude a peace agreement, urging both governments to "find a negotiated settlement" to all of the problems associated with the secession of South Sudan. The situation in Belarus and relations between Serbia and Kosovo were also discussed... [Read more](#)

What will the next multi-annual framework be?



On 27th January the 27 Ministers responsible for European Affairs discussed the multi-annual financial framework for the period 2014-2020. The discussion led to a clarification of the positions of the various Member States on this issue. Hence some of them demanded a reduction in the Union's spending with regard to the Commission's proposals, whilst others supported these proposals. Some delegations also defended

the priority given to the CAP and the Cohesion Policy, whilst others highlighted other priorities. Thanks to these discussions the Danish presidency hopes to achieve a sound base for the future European Council in June, which will discuss the multi-annual financial framework. The latter may be adopted at the end of 2012 and take over from the one that is presently in force... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Labour Law



[more](#)

In a decision delivered on 26th January the EU Court of Justice believed that the repetitive use of limited work contracts, for replacements, was not contrary to European labour law. This decision may modify present practice quite radically. Indeed, long term contracts are standard and Member States generally undertake major campaigns against the abusive use of other types of contract... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

The European Union signs the international treaty against counterfeiting



On 26th January the EU signed the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement in Tokyo; this is an international agreement that aims to fight counterfeiting on an international level in order to provide better protection to legal world trade. Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Morocco, Singapore, the USA, New Zealand all signed this agreement in October. One of the fundamental measures comprises a strengthening of and a harmonisation of the means to counter illegal downloading. This text, negotiated in secret has been highly criticised by civil society organisations and by the European Parliament that still has to ratify it before it enters into force... [Read more](#)

Germany :

German, Tom Enders appointed as the head of the EADS group



The EADS Board of Directors, that met in Amsterdam on 26th January appointed German Tom Enders, the present head of Airbus to take over EADS, as successor to Frenchman Louis Gallois, whose mandate expires on 31st May 2012. Arnaud Lagardère, the French industrialist will take over the chair of the board on 1st June as planned in the wake of German Bodo Uebber. Jean-Claude Trichet, former ECB President will take over the free administrator's seat... [Read more](#)

82% of the French have a positive image of Germany



According to an IFOP poll undertaken for the German Embassy in Paris, published on 24th January, Franco-German friendship is a reality. 82% of the French say they have a very good (19%) or quite a good opinion (63%) of Germany. A relative majority (43%) also think that the euro crisis will oblige the two countries to step up cooperation. The study shows that the French also have a positive image of relations between France and Germany. The poll was undertaken from 4th to 6th January based on a representative sample of 1,005 people... [Read more](#)

Cyprus :

Discussions over the reunification of the island



On 23rd and 24th January, near New York, discussions on the reunification of Cyprus between Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Dimitris Christofias and Dervis Eroglu, took place but "progress was limited" says UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon. During this, the fifth multilateral meeting, the three key issues addressed were "the executive, property and citizenship"... [Read more](#)

Spain :

The Regions can no longer present a budgetary deficit



The Spanish government approved a draft law on budgetary stability on 27th January which includes the ban - for the country's 17 regions, on being in deficit as of 2020, whilst their poor financial situation is worrying the markets. "All of the autonomous regions will have to present budgetary surplus or balance," announced Budget Minister Cristobal Montoro after the Council of Ministers. The 17 Spanish regions which manage heavy healthcare and education budgets have been seriously in debt since the collapse of the real estate bubble in 2008 and are due to have an accumulated deficit of 2.3% to 2.4% of the GDP at the end of 2011, well above the goal set by Madrid (1.3%)... [Read more](#)

France :

France will sanction the negation of the Armenian genocide with criminal proceedings



On 23rd January the French Parliament adopted the draft law that sanctions the negation of the Armenian genocide after a final vote in the Senate that ratified the text 127 votes in support 86 against; it had already been adopted by the National Assembly on 22nd December 2011. The text punishes any type of negation of genocide, France now officially acknowledges two genocides: that of the Jews in the Second World War and that of the Armenians in 1915... [Read more](#)

Nicolas Sarkozy presents further reforms



On 29th January during a televised appearance, the French President Nicolas Sarkozy unveiled a final package of reforms, which will be economic in the main. The new measures involve: VAT which in its "social" version will rise by 1.6 points to 21.2% on October 1st 2012, the CSG on financial income that will rise by 2 points; the creation of a tax on financial transactions of 0.1%, which will enter into force in August 2012; housing with incentives to build, but also a new reform of the 35 hour week to privilege "salaries over employment"... [Read more](#)

Italy :

The Italian Population is growing older and the number of immigrants is increasing



The Italian population is getting older and the number of immigrants in the country continues to grow, now totalling 8% of all of the country's residents announced the National Statistics Institute on 27th January 2012 (Istat). The Italian population totalled 60.851 million people on 31st December 2011, 4,859 million of whom, representing 8% of the entire population were foreigners. Over one year the Italian population lost 65,000 people, dropping down below the 56 million mark. The foreign population increased by 289,000 units according to the same source... [Read more](#)

New European Policy



On 25th January four motions were approved by the Italian Parliament, signed by the leaders of the majority to commit the government to a new European policy. The main points are: the enhancement of Italy's role in Europe; the reduction of the intergovernmental method in support of a more federal view of Europe, the proposal of a tax on financial transactions, and above all the commitment to continue work achieved in 2011 to stabilise public accounts and growth through into 2012. The President of the Italian Council, Mario Monti, spoke to the Senate before the vote. In his opinion "overcoming the financial and economic crisis (...) depends on structural reforms which will be implemented"; moreover they insisted on the fact that there was "a close link between national measures and the work that has to be done at a community level"... [Read more](#)

Portugal :

Adoption of a law on Competitiveness

The Portuguese government adopted a law on competitiveness on 26th



January that is designed to make the country's economy more "dynamic" and more "open", as it promised as part of the aid plan granted by the EU and the IMF. "By having legal instruments that enable us to have a more competitive economy, the latter will be more dynamic and more open," declared Economy Minister Alvaro Santos Pereira. This reform will bring Portugal closer to having "better international practice" and will "open sectors that have been over protected to date". The new law notably plans for a strengthening of the powers held by the Competitiveness Council and for harmonization with community standards in terms of the abuse of dominant position and monopolies... [Read more](#)

UK :

The Scottish Prime Minister reveals his roadmap for independence



On 25th January Scottish Prime Minister, Alex Salmond, presented his Parliament with detailed proposals for the organisation of a referendum on the region's independence in 2014 and launched a 20 week consultation. In his declaration Mr Salmond unveiled the question that he wanted to ask the Scots: "Do you agree that Scotland should be an independent country?" His roadmap plans for a law on the referendum to be submitted to the Scottish Parliament in 2013 and for a White Paper to be published in November 2013 that will bring together his government's proposals for independence... [Read more](#)

Romania :

New Foreign Minister



On 24th January Romanian Prime Minister Emil Boc appointed Senator Cristian Diaconescu as Foreign Minister. On the same evening the new minister was sworn in before the Head of State Traian Basescu. The previous day Mr Boc dismissed his Foreign Minister Teodor Baconschi for "verbal insults" against demonstrators. The dismissal took place during the first extraordinary session of the Parliament since the start of the social protest on 11th January... [Read more](#)

Slovenia :

Janez Jansa, new Prime Minister



On 28th January the Slovenian Parliament approved the appointment of Janez Jansa as Prime Minister, 51 votes in support, 39 against. Mr Jansa led the Slovenian government between 2004 and 2008 - a country which has been a member of the eurozone since 2007. "I am calling on all parties to work with us", declared Mr Jansa after the vote, adding that he wanted to present his government - that also has to be approved by parliament - by 10th February. After an agreement was reached on a coalition, the latter is due to include members of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), the Gregor Virant Citizens' List, the Popular Party (SLS), New Slovenia (NSi) and the Pensioners' Party (DeSUS)... [Read more](#)

Kosovo :

The end of independence surveillance in Kosovo?



On 24th January the International Surveillance Group (ISG) declared after a meeting that was held in Vienna, that its surveillance mission in Kosovo may come to an end in 2012, four years after the country proclaimed its autonomy. The group, comprising 25 States noted that Kosovo will soon have finished implementing the measures included in the independence accession plan. An "organised end" of international surveillance is therefore deemed possible and the International Civilian Office (ICO), the body responsible for controlling the application of this plan may close at the end of 2012. The ISG encouraged the States that had not acknowledged Kosovo to do so and recalled the principles of the Ahtisaari plan were the "best model" for the future of Kosovo... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :

Jean-Claude Mignon, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe



Jean-Claude Mignon, MP (Seine et Marne), was elected on 23rd January as president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). He has been Vice-President since 2007. He is the first Frenchman to occupy this post since Louis Jung, former Senator and also former Chair of the Robert Schuman Foundation... [Read more](#)

Women's Rights



On 26th January the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution aiming to protect women's rights better in the world. Parliamentarians are notably concerned about the effects of the crisis on employment and women's social condition, about the violence they suffer and the complications they are subject to because of pregnancy. In their resolution they ask Member States to ratify all of the European conventions that protect women, as well as to include the paragraph concerning equality between men and women in the European Human Rights Convention. This plenary assembly was marked by a number of debates over the protection of women... [Read more](#)

Niels Muiznieks elected Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe



Former Latvian Social Integration Minister Niels Muiznieks was elected on 24th January by an absolute majority as the third Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe by the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), that met in Strasbourg in plenary session. His term in office will start on April 1st 2012... [Read more](#)

"Deep concern" on the part of the Council of Europe about the situation in Belarus



On 25th January, in recommendation 1992 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe expressed its "deep concern" about the respect of human rights and freedom in Belarus. It recommends therefore to the Committee of Ministers to encourage the Member States to take sanctions against this country by falling line with measures taken by the European Union and to "use their political and diplomatic influence" to lead Belarus towards making the necessary reform and at the same time to speak with the "opposition forces" in the country to facilitate Belarus citizens' visa applications and maintain university exchanges with the establishments there... [Read more](#)

Democracy working badly in Ukraine



On 26th January in its resolution 1862 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe expressed its concern over the legal proceedings launched against former Ukrainian ministers, including former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, in conditions that may "have reduced the possibility for the accused to enjoy a fair trial". The Assembly recalls that these situations reflect the shortcomings of the Ukrainian legal system as a whole and it expresses its concern about the "lack of independence" of the legal system, the excessive use of preventive detention and the bias which is systematically in favour of the accusation," of the country's courts. In its opinion this confirms that even though progress has been made, a reform of the constitution is necessary to bring Ukraine in line with the Council of Europe's standards... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Social Europe and the Crisis



The Bertelsmann Stiftung has just published a new issue in its series "Europe in Dialogue" entitled "Solidarity: For Sale?" analysing the social aspects of the new policies undertaken in the EU. This document looks at the Union's results in terms of social cohesion and solidarity

both between States and within each State itself, before and during the financial crisis. The authors look into the various visions of solidarity and assess their pertinence in the context of the EU today and the present debt crisis. They are worried about the risks of seeing this crisis degenerate into a "massive social crisis" and put forward solutions to the present difficulties, ranging from European integration and social investment ... [Read more](#)

The Role of the European Union and the USA in Humanitarian Aid



The College of Europe of Bruges has just published a study entitled "The EU and the US as International Actors in Disaster Relief" by Erik Brattberg and Mark Rhinard in its series "Cahiers de recherche politique". This comparative study analyses the role of the European Union and the US in the conduct of humanitarian operations. To do this the authors apply the concept of "actorness", which enables the description of behaviour within political systems that represent several levels of functioning. They conclude their analysis with the admission that Europe and the US are international players the area of humanitarian aid and disaster relief but each is typical in its own way... [Read more](#)

Culture :

"Au fil des collections de Tiepolo à Degas"



Until 20th May 2012 the Hermitage Foundation in Lausanne is offering people an opportunity to see the treasures on show in the exhibition "Au fil des Collections, de Tiepolo à Degas". Focusing on the Foundation's most precious pieces of work, from Tiepolo to Degas, Bocion, Magritte, Vallotton, Vuillard and to Valadon, the most important pieces in the Hermitage's collection are on show with other works from both public and private Swiss collections... [Read more](#)

From Vermeer to Kandisky



Works of art from museums around the world are on show at the Sismondo Castle in Rimini (Italy) until 3rd June 2012 each presenting major nations that have brought success to the history of art. The exhibition is divided into sections, one for each nation, offering the public a selection of work on the most representative centuries. Hence the public can see "the Painting of Venice in the 15th and 16th centuries" for Italy, the "Golden Century in Spain"; "Painting in England between the 18th and 19th century", and also "the Age of Impressionism" for France... [Read more](#)

Italian Cinema Festival



Bastia is holding the 24th Italian Cinema Festival on the theme of comedy until 11th February 2012. The 2012 selection includes 24 films, divided into four major sections: competing, non-competing, ciné-past, and ciné-youth; the jury comprising cinema fans and chaired by the French film-maker, Yves Boisset, will award its Grand Prize to one of the 12 films taking part in the official competition. During the festival there are exhibitions showing sculptures and paintings by the artist Gabriel Diana and photos of films sets from the Centro del Cinema in Cesena... [Read more](#)

300th Anniversary of the Birth of Frédéric II of Prussia (Frederic the Great)

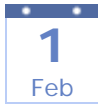


January 24th marked the 300th anniversary of the birth of Frederic II of Prussia (1712-1786), otherwise known as Frederic the Great. In 2012 there will be exhibitions, concerts and public readings commemorating the King of Prussia, who is considered as one of the most fascinating personalities in German history. Not only was Frederic the Great a powerful monarch and a pitiless soldier, but he also had an open mind and was sensitive to art and philosophy. He designed himself as the "the State's first servant"... [Read more](#)

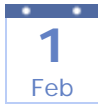
Agenda :



30th January
Brussels
European Council



1st and 2nd February
Brussels
Mini-plenary session at the European Parliament



from 1st to 3rd February
Copenhagen
Meeting of European Competitiveness Ministers



2nd February
Brussels
NATO Defence Ministers Meeting



5th February
Finnish Presidential Results (2nd Round)



10th February
EU-India Summit

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