



## The European Union, a project to unify a continent, a project for the future



Author: Franco Frattini

After an introduction about the history of European integration and the initial nature of the European political project, the author then addresses three issues that are fundamental for the future. With regard to the debt crisis he insists on the fact that the economic base of the euro zone is strong and that the fears expressed by the markets are not economically very rational. He then speaks of the challenges that the Union is facing on the world stage. Finally the "Arab Spring" has reminded Europe of its immediate neighbourhood in the Mediterranean. It is facing new challenges that it will be able to rise to if it shows political determination and in a spirit of cooperation.

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### Contents

**Front page!** : Atlas/EU - Crisis/Euro **Elections** : Latvia **Financial Crisis** : Greece - Review - Spain - France - Italy - Ireland - Czech Republic - UK **Commission** : Macro-Economy - Organic - Pensions **Parliament** : France - Payment - Hungary - Italy - Fisheries - Belarus **Council** : EU/China - Energy - Employment/Social Affairs **Court of Justice** : Internet **Germany** : Resignation - Economy - Gauck for President? **Spain** : Banks **France** : Franco-British - Franco-German - Students **Italy** : Defence **Latvia** : Referendum **UK** : Scotland **UN** : Syria **Eurostat** : Growth - External Trade - Trade/China **Eurobarometer** : Corruption **Studies/Reports** : Germany - Role/EU - Electricity **Culture** : Exhibition/Stuttgart - Exhibition/Madrid - Exhibition/Caen - Exhibition/London - Exhibition/Germany

[Agenda](#) | [Other issues](#) | [Contact](#)

### Front page! :

#### The Permanent Atlas of the European Union : the first continuously updated atlas!



One week after the publication of the "Permanent Atlas of the European Union" co-written by Jean-Dominique Giuliani and Pascale Joannin, who are respectively the chairman and general director of the Foundation, the Robert Schuman Foundation has updated its site devoted to this publication, notably the statistics and political data regarding some countries, notably Slovenia and Finland. Order your copy of the "Permanent Atlas of the European Union" now! The latest atlas offers the soundest information on all of the Member States of Europe... [Read more](#)

Europe in Crisis!



The European Week organised by the European Parliament and the Institute for Political Studies in Strasbourg is taking place in the Robert Schuman Hall at the European Parliament from 20th -23rd February. The Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation, Jean-Dominique Giuliani will be speaking on 21st February on the present crisis experienced by the EU and the perspectives of the settlement of this... [Read more](#)

## Elections :

### Referendum in Latvia



A great majority of Latvians (74.80%) voted against the adoption of Russian as a second national language. One quarter of the electorate only (24.88%) voted in support of the question - do you support the adoption of the amendments to the Constitution of the Latvian Republic which plan to attribute Russian the status of being the second official national language? - in a referendum organised on 18th February last. The "no" vote reached record levels in Kurzeme (West) where 91.53% of the population rejected the modification of the Constitution. In Riga, 63.82% of the people made the same choice. Half of those enrolled in the last general elections ie 771,893 people had to vote in support of the amendment if it was to be deemed valid... [Read more](#)

## Financial Crisis :

### Agreement of the Eurozone for the payment of the aid to Greece



In the morning of 21st February the 17 euro zone Finance Ministers came to a compromise over the aid to be given to Greece. The agreement includes, public aid on the one hand - mainly in the shape of loans to a total of 130 billion euros, after a first loan plan agreed in May 2010 in support of the country to a total of 110 billion euros. On the other hand Greece's debt held by its private creditors, banks and investment funds will be cancelled. They will accept a 53.5% loss in the end - which entails greater effort on their part than was originally decided, which totalled 50%. This should lead to a reduction of the country's debt by around 100 billion euros. The 17 Finance Ministers said they were pleased with the Greek parliament's adoption of the austerity plan, the work engaged to make good the budgetary deficit of more than 300 million euros and the commitment on the part of the political parties to implement the necessary reform. They also called on the European Commission to strengthen and make its Task Force in Greece permanent... [Read more](#)

### The European Investment Bank lent 61 billion euros in 2011



The new president of the European Investment Bank 'EIB', Werner Hoyer presented the establishment's annual results on 16th February. It recorded a net result of 2.3 billion euros in 2011 against 2.1 billion in 2010. In 2011 the EIB granted new loans to nearly 70 countries to a total of 61 billion euros. Over the 61 billion lent, 54 went to projects in the EU and 7 billion to projects external to the EU - mainly to countries that are hoping to join the EU or which are neighbours in the east and the south... [Read more](#)

### Spain: adoption of a further austerity measure



On 17th February the Spanish government approved a further austerity measure as part of its goal to reduce the public deficit by bringing down executive salaries in government companies by 25% to 30% on average. State owned companies will therefore be divided into three categories according to size: in the biggest of these the maximum salary will be 105,000 euros per year, for average sized businesses the limit will be set at 80,000 and the smallest will be restricted to 55,000 euros maximum... [Read more](#)

### French growth at 1.7% in 2011



According to data published on 15th February by the National Statistics Institute and Economic Studies (INSEE), the French GDP rose by 0.2% in the fourth quarter 2011, after growth of 0.3% in the third quarter. Hence annual growth in 2011 lay at 1.7% against 1.4% in 2010. This

rise reflects an increase in investments, up by 0.9% over the last quarter of 2011, against 0.2% in the previous quarter, as well as in increase in exports (+1.2% over the period, whilst at the same time imports declined). Household consumption slowed (+0.2% against +0.3% in the previous quarter) but continues to support economic activity... [Read more](#)

### Italy in recession



According to data published 15th February by the Italian Statistics Institute, Isat, the Italian GDP contracted by 0.7% in the fourth quarter in comparison with the previous quarter and by 0.5% in comparison with the same quarter the previous year. Since the country has experienced the successive reduction of its GDP for the last two quarters, it is now officially in recession... [Read more](#)

### Ireland: measures in support of employment



Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny announced on 13th February that there would be a series of measures that would aim to create 100,000 jobs by 2016 whilst at present the country has an unemployment rate of 14.2% ie nearly 450,000 job seekers. The government plan includes more than 250 measures to encourage companies to employ people. These include tax exemptions, fixed rate loans schemes, and the creation of a 150 million euro fund to support exports. The government has also set up a compensation system for members of the Irish diaspora who find foreign investors ready to launch a business in Ireland... [Read more](#)

### Recession in the Czech Republic



The Czech Republic entered recession in the fourth quarter of 2011 after two consecutive months of GDP contraction, according to an initial estimate published on 15th February by the National Statistics Bureau (CSU). In the fourth quarter of 2011 the Czech GDP contracted by 0.3% in comparison with the previous quarter which itself was marked by a contraction of 0.1%. For the entire year, 2011, the GDP increased by 1.7% according to this first estimation. Revised figures will be published on 9th March... [Read more](#)

### Unemployment reaches record levels in the UK



According to data published on 15th February by the British Statistics office, the unemployment rate lay at 8.4% of the working population, which represents a rise of 0.1% over the last quarter. The country now has 2.67 million unemployed ie 48,000 additional job seekers over that period. This is the eighth successive month when unemployment has increased in the UK and it is the highest rate since 1995... [Read more](#)

### Commission :

#### Alert Mechanism against Macro-Economic Imbalances



On 14th February the European Commission published its first warning report on macro-economic imbalances in the EU. France and the UK come particularly under the spotlight because of a decline in exports and a lack of competitiveness in the first former, major deficits and a large amount of private debt and a lack of competitiveness in the latter. Ten other countries are also the focus of specific attention. This mechanism was introduced by the economic governance package - the so-called "six pack". It is based on the study of six criteria, provided by the Member States and Eurostat... [Read more](#)

#### EU-USA Agreement on Organic Products



On 15th February the European Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacian Cioloș, and his American counterpart, Kathleen Merrigan signed letters establishing a partnership between the EU and the USA on "organic" products. As of June 1st products labelled by one country will be

allowed on the market in the other country and automatically enjoy the "organic" certification. This agreement aims to foster organic product trade and improve consumer information... [Read more](#)

### Presentation of a White Paper on Pensions



On 16th February the European Commission presented a white paper on "adequate, safe and viable" pensions. The ageing population and budgetary restrictions are threatening the present pension systems. To rise to this challenge the Commission is suggesting several ways to approach the problem; rebalancing working time in relation to life expectancy, encouraging individual savings, guaranteeing pensions, notably for EU citizens living in a country other than their own. The main measure is still the extension of professional life, which leads to longer contribution times and a reduction in the length of the retirement period. It also means employers adapting to their eldest employees... [Read more](#)

### Parliament :

#### The French Foreign Minister, Alain Juppé, at the European Parliament



On 15th February the French Foreign and European Minister, Alain Juppé, spoke to the members of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. Stressing that "France needed more Europe", he defined three priorities for the EU: enhancing integration and development to face the crisis, stabilising its Mediterranean and Eastern neighbourhood and asserting itself on the international stage, notably in the face of the emerging countries and new threats. He said that "France did not want a EU which focused only on the management of the crisis," to the detriment of its position in international relations. MEPs lauded France's work towards peace and democracy in the Middle East, notably its determination not to cooperate with autocratic regimes and to involve Russia and China... [Read more](#)

#### Single euro payment area



MEPs adopted a draft regulation on 14th February at first reading which establishes the rules and common standards for transfers and payments in euros in the EU. This regulation should facilitate financial transactions in Europe and reduce costs for users by increasing competition between banks. The area will involve the 27 EU members but also Iceland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Norway and Switzerland. The measures will progressively enter into force by 2016 and should help businesses and private parties to save 120 billion euros in 6 years. This regulation is part of the project for a single euro payment area, the SEPA... [Read more](#)

#### Monitoring Hungary



On 16th February MEPs decided to maintain pressure on Hungary. In a resolution adopted 315 votes against 263 they reminded Hungary of its duty to follow the European Commission's and the Council of Europe's recommendations. The European Parliament, because of its deep concern, mentioned the use of article 7, that enables the EU to suspend a Member State's rights if it can be proved that there are major threats being made to common values, notably democracy, the independence of justice, the plurality of the media and the protection of the minorities... [Read more](#)

#### The President of the Italian Council, Mario Monti at the European Parliament



The President of the Italian Council, Mario Monti, spoke to MEPs during the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 15th February. He notably spoke of budgetary measures that his government was implementing at present to counter the crisis. He presented his budgetary austerity plan, adding that to be effective it had to be completed by a strengthened domestic market. For the time being pensioners, civil servants and taxation were the focus of the reforms that had been started. He also denounced the "exaggerated hardness" with which Greece is being treated, deeming that it is too late for this kind of approach... [Read more](#)

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### EU-Morocco Agreement on agriculture and fisheries



MEPs gave the greenlight on 16th February on the liberalisation of trade between Morocco and the EU with regard to agricultural and fisheries products. In ten years time most taxes and quotas are due to be lifted. However protective measures have been introduced to protect European producers... [Read more](#)

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### Death Penalty in Belarus



In a resolution adopted on 16th February on the occasion of the plenary session at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, MEPs condemned the use of the death penalty in Belarus. They have asked the country's authorities to place a moratorium on the death penalty whilst waiting for its total repeal. This resolution comes just as two opponents might soon be executed for allegations of terrorism, whilst several civil society organisations have pointed out that the trials have been unfair, the investigations have been biased and have infringed Human Rights. Belarus is the last European country to pronounce and carry out the death penalty... [Read more](#)

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## Council :

### 14th EU-China Summit



On 14th February the 14th EU-China Summit took place in Beijing. On this occasion political leaders on both sides said they were pleased with the way their dialogue was going, likewise their strategic partnership. They called for an improvement in synergy between the Europe 2020 programme and the new Chinese five year plan. They also committed to facilitate investment and trade... [Read more](#)

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### Energy Council



On 14th February the 27 Energy Ministers discussed transeuropean energy infrastructures and notably regional groups and regulation measures. Moreover they recalled that the EU's goals in terms of renewable energies and energy efficacy could also have a major, positive impact on growth and employment... [Read more](#)

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### Employment, Social Affairs, Healthcare and Consumer Council



On 17th February the 27 Employment and Social Affairs Ministers studied various ways to provide women with a better representation in the managerial of businesses. Indeed whilst women represent 60% of all graduates, only 12% of them are company administrators and 3% are heads of companies. Some countries have spoken of introducing quotas, whilst others prefer a volunteer based approach. In preparation for the European Council ministers also discussed priorities in terms of employment and social affairs stressing that austerity measures should not be counter-productive but that they had to go hand in hand with specific measures for employment, notably for young people and growth... [Read more](#)

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## Court of Justice :

### The European Court of Justice rejects the global filtering of the social networks



In a dispute between the Belgian company of authors/composers, Sabam, with the Belgian social network, Netlog, Sabam has been demanding that Netlog immediately stop providing music and audiovisual productions illegally in its repertoire. The European Court stresses that a measure like this would mean Netlog undertaking a global filtering of the content exchanged by its users, which would infringe European citizens' fundamental rights. "A filtering system would force Netlog to undertake the global surveillance of the information stored which is prohibited under the electronic trade directive", says the Court. It pleads for "a fair balance between the protection of copyright and free enterprise, the right to personal data protection and the

freedom to receive and communicate information...".. [Read more](#)

## Germany :

### German President, Christian Wulff, resigns



German President Christian Wulff resigned on 17th February after the announcement by the Hannover Court that it was launching an inquiry into accusations of corruption. German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced that she would be looking for a consensus candidate with the opposition to take over from Christian Wulff. The position of president is mainly honorary, but he has to stand as a moral figure. The president is elected by the federal assembly (Bundesversammlung), which rallies 1244 members (Bundestag, Bundesrat, representatives of the Länder). It is due to meet, according to the German Constitution, within the next 30 days to elect their new president... [Read more](#)

### How should the German economy be prepared for the challenges of the future?



On 14th February the OECD published a study on the German economic situation. After the 2008-2009 crisis Germany experienced rapid recovery: its GDP rose to levels that were higher than before the crisis in 2011 and unemployment declined significantly. Now Germany is facing new challenges set by the economic and financial crisis. The report sets out three recommendations: strengthening domestic demand, raising labour input and using new growth sources in a context of mitigating climate change... [Read more](#)

### Joachim Gauck - next President?



On 19th February German Chancellor Angela Merkel agreed with the leaders of two other government parties and the leaders of the two biggest opposition parties on Joachim Gauck's bid for the German presidency. The latter was already the opposition's candidate in 2010 when Christian Wulff, former president, who resigned on 17th February last, was running. Joachim Gauck is an acknowledged civil rights campaigner. Between 1990 and 2000 he was the first federal commissioner appointed to investigate into the Stasi archives. Within the next few weeks the Federal Assembly is to meet to approve his appointment... [Read more](#)

## Spain :

### Reform of the Banking Sector



The Spanish MPs voted in support of the reform of the banking sector on 16th February, which demands that the latter provides an extra 52 billion euros to balance the excesses left over from the real estate bubble. The reform was approved by 303 MPs out of 350. The Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) abstained, whilst the small leftwing parties voted against... [Read more](#)

## France :

### Franco-British Summit



On 17th February during the Franco-British Summit, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron signed an agreement on nuclear civilian energy aiming to improve cooperation between the two countries in this area, notably with regard to staff training, research and the security of nuclear power plants. They also published a press release with regard to Syria in which they support the resolution approved by the UN General Assembly "repeating their condemnation" of the Syrian regime and call for greater sanctions on the part of the EU and greater commitment to providing more humanitarian aid... [Read more](#)

### Franco-German work group at the Bundestag and the National Assembly

The Franco-German work group on economic and financial policy issues



in Europe at the Bundestag and the National Assembly met on 13th February in Paris to finalise their work and to review results after four meetings since the autumn of 2011. The two chairmen, Norbert Lammert and Bernard Accoyer stressed in a joint declaration that the Bundestag and the National Assembly intended to ratify the treaty establishing the European Stability Mechanism and the Treaty on Stability as soon as possible after the signature of these by heads of State and government. The work group is encouraging the French and German governments to step up bilateral cooperation in terms of growth strategy and fiscal convergence... [Read more](#)

#### Paris appointed best student city in the world



The city of Paris came first in the world's first ranking of best student cities established by the British organisation QS (Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd), published on 14th February. According to this assessment, which is based on a series of four indicators: the composition of the student population, the quality of life, attractiveness of the universities amongst employers and the cost of studies, Paris is ahead of London in terms of living standards, attractiveness and cost, pulling ahead amongst other details, on the low cost of enrolment in French universities. From a wider point of view this ranking, based on various traditional ranking criteria, more focused on the quality of research, gives the prize to European towns and cities since nine of the fifteen leading areas are on the European continent... [Read more](#)

#### Italy :

##### Reform of Defence



On 14th February the Italian Council of Ministers approved a plan to reform defence as suggested by the minister responsible for this portfolio, Admiral Di Paola. This project aims to improve "the financial sustainability and operational effectiveness" of the armed forces. To do this investments in defence will be "reviewed" and a goal to reduce the share of spending on staff in the defence budget by 70% to 50% has been set. To do this it has notably been planned to reduce staff in the armed forces from 189,000 to 150,000 over the next ten years. Hence 22,000 army posts are to disappear, 7,000 from the navy and nearly 10,000 from the airforce. These measures do not however involve the armed forces abroad in Libya or Afghanistan for example... [Read more](#)

#### Latvia :

##### The Latvians say "no" to the Russian language



On 18th February during a referendum nearly 75% of the electorate voted against the opportunity to establish Russian as the country's second official language - only 25% voted in favour according to the electoral commission. The results of this referendum was of great interest to the Latvians - turn out totalled 70% reflecting the ethnic reality of this Baltic Country... [Read more](#)

#### UK :

##### David Cameron speaks out against Scotland's independence



On 16th February British Prime Minister, David Cameron, gave a speech in Edinburgh in which he spoke of his "wish" and "hope" that Scotland would remain within the UK. He recalled the economic, cultural, historical links between Scotland and England, saying that Scotland had taken part in the "creation and completion of the UK, built on the basis of freedom and inclusiveness" over the last three centuries. He also spoke of his belief that the two entities were now "stronger, richer and safer". He then spoke of the solidarity that exists between the various elements that make up the UK. He recalled his attachment to devolution and said that he did not rule out delegating new powers to Scotland in the future after the referendum on independence has taken place... [Read more](#)

## UN :

### The General Assembly adopts a resolution on Syria



On 16th February the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution 137 votes in support, 12 against and 17 abstentions in which it firmly condemns "the continued infringements - which are widespread and systematic - of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities." The resolution also supports the mediation of the Arab League and recommends the appointment of a UN special envoy for Syria. This non-binding resolution is symbolic. It comes in response to the veto set by China and Russia on 4th February. The UN's General Assembly has answered with one voice to the Syrian problem... [Read more](#)

## Eurostat :

### Growth down in the fourth quarter but up over 2011



According to a Eurostat estimate on 15th February the euro zone's GDP and that of the EU declined by 0.3 points in the fourth quarter of 2011 in comparison with the previous quarter. Over one year it rose however by 0.7% and 0.9% respectively... [Read more](#)

### 7.7 billion euros deficit in the euro zone's external trade balance



According to a Eurostat estimate published on 15th February the external trade deficit in 2011 totalled 7.7 billion euros in the euro zone and 152.8 billion in the EU. A year ago the deficits were around 7 billion euros higher in both cases. The energy bill with regard to Norway and Russia is notably a major factor in the deficit whilst the export of manufactured goods rose sharply (+70 billion in both cases). Germany, Ireland and the Netherlands are the countries with the highest surpluses, whilst the UK, France, Spain, Portugal and Greece all have very high deficits... [Read more](#)

### A rise in Trade with China



In a press release on 13th February Eurostat indicated that trade between the EU and China rose sharply over the first ten months of 2011. Exports increased by 21% and imports by 5%. Germany contributed to the EU's exports to China by nearly half. Likewise mutual investments rose slightly. The European trade balance with China is in deficit in terms of goods but in surplus to a total of 6 billion euros in terms of services... [Read more](#)

## Eurobarometer :

### Corruption on the increase?



According to a study published by Eurobarometer on 15th February corruption is still of major concern in Europe. 8% of those interviewed say that they had already been invited to pay bribes and 47% believe that corruption has increased in their country over the last three years. National political leaders and civil servants responsible for public procurement are those under suspicion of benefiting from these. Indeed two thirds of those interviewed say that corruption is inevitable and that it is part of the business culture. Cecilia Malmström, European Commissioner for internal affairs says that it is "disappointing to see that real results in the fight to counter corruption across the EU are still not enough" and she called on Member States to act rapidly to counter this scourge... [Read more](#)

## Studies/Reports :

### Is Germany still a EU-ropean power?



The Foundation for International Relations and External Dialogue has published a study "Is Germany still a EU-ropean power?" Author, Susanne Gratus, analyses the development of the German attitude towards Europe and the distance Chancellor Angela Merkel has set between Germany and Europe with regard to the country's traditional pro-European policy. She sees greater German confidence and greater



capacity to work towards its own interests... [Read more](#)

### The EU's International Role?



The El Cano Institute published a study on 13th February by Vaira Vike Freiberga, former President of the Republic of Latvia entitled : "The Economic Crisis and the Emerging Powers: the EU's role within a New International Order." The author defends the EU's place in the new international order and claims that there is a role for the latter in this... [Read more](#)

### The European internal electricity market



The Wissenschaft und Politik Stiftung (German Institute for International and Security Affairs - SWP) has published a study by Thomas Sattich entitled "The EU's policy to finalise the internal electricity market." The author analyses the EU's new policy that tries to liberalise and complete the European internal electricity market - which according to the author, remains fragmented. The analysis also covers recent changes in German energy policy... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### Turner, Monet and Twombly in Stuttgart



The Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart is showing nearly 70 works of art by Briton William Turner (1775-1851), Frenchman Claude Monet (1840-1926) and American Cy Twombly (1928-2011). This exhibition reveals the common points and the connections between the works of these three artists, respectively the precursor, the emblematic artist and the heir of the impressionist movement... [Read more](#)

### Marc Chagall in Madrid



The Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum and the Caja Madrid Foundation are presenting 169 works of art by the Russian painter Marc Chagall until 20th May 2012. The exhibition reviews his work chronologically and focuses on this artist's favourite themes. He was inspired by love, souvenirs and traditions - both Jewish and Russian - as well as the historic and artistic events which he witnessed... [Read more](#)

### French artists and amateurs in Rome in the 18th century



An exhibition is being held in Caen, organised by the town's fine arts museum together with the fine arts museum of Canada until 23rd April. It is devoted to "French artists and amateurs in Rome in the 18th century". On this occasion around one hundred drawings are on show, together with prints and paintings that re-create the atmosphere of that time and place. The collections on show are divided into five themes: "Amateurs, sponsors, and artists", "Academic teaching", "the Re-discovery of Antiquity", "The landscape of Rome and its environs", "Festivals and Celebrations"... [Read more](#)

### Yayoi Kusama at the Tate Modern Gallery



The Tate Modern Gallery of London is showing Yayoi Kusama's work until 5th June 2012. His work reflects a fascination for mental illness. The collections on show bring together paintings, drawings, sculptures, films and artistic performances. It is the first time that an exhibition of this extent devoted to Kusama has been organised in the UK... [Read more](#)

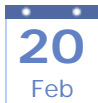
### William Copley

Until 10th June the Frieder Burda Museum in Baden Baden is showing more than 80 pieces of work by American artist William N Copley



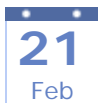
(1919-1996), a gallery owner, writer and editor in the 1940's, believed to be a "vital intermediary between surrealism and pop art." He was friends with Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp and put on exhibitions in Beverly Hills by artists such as Man Ray, Yves Tanguy, Roberto Matta, Max Ernst and René Magritte. Many of the pieces of work are on show for the first time... [Read more](#)

#### Agenda :



20th February  
Brussels  
Competitiveness Council

Brussels  
Euro Zone Financial Ministers Meeting

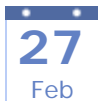


21st February  
Brussels  
Economy/Finance Council

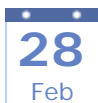
Strasbourg  
IEP Strasbourg - Speech by Jean-Dominique Giuliani (The Present Crisis in the EU and the perspectives of a settlement to this).



25th-26th February  
Mexico  
G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' Meeting



27th February  
Brussels  
Foreign Affairs Council



28th February  
Brussels  
"General Affairs" Council

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