



In support of European Centres of Innovation and Industry



Author: Franck Lirzin

The creation of an economic and monetary Union in Europe, which led to the world's leading market, should have opened the way to unprecedented growth for all countries. 20 years later, it has to be admitted that European integration has helped to raise the living standards of European citizens, but at the same time this has gone hand in hand with increasing imbalances between countries. The debt crisis has revealed the need to re-introduce industrial policy tools into the heart of the EU's economic policy. Franck Lirzin pleads for the creation of European Centres of Innovation and Industry (CEII) that bring together all innovation tools on given themes. Established in border areas they would host researchers and businesses from all European countries. Run according to a cluster approach, not only would these Centres lead to the circulation of capital and goods, but above all, they would foster the movement of men and ideas.

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Front page! :

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



The Robert Schuman Foundation's most recent publication "L'Atlas permanent de l'Union européenne," co-written by Jean-Dominique Giuliani and Pascale Joannin, respectively Chairman and the Director General of the Foundation, is the first permanently updated atlas, because it is an intelligent mix of a book and an internet site. A unique reference work you can order on the Foundation's site... [Read more](#)

European responses to the crisis!



The Robert Schuman Foundation is a partner in a seminar on "European answers to the crisis" organised on 6th March by the European Commission's representation in France. European Commissioners Olli Rehn and Michel Barnier, French European Minister Jean Leonetti, and several MEPs will be speaking during the morning. It is obligatory to enrol... [Read more](#)

The future for the European Union?



The Institution for International and Strategic Relations (IRIS) together with the Robert Schuman Foundation is organising the 4th European Meetings on 10th March at Enghien-les-Bains. This year this seminar will be devoted to the urgency of "Rethinking Europe". There will be three round tables on the future of the euro, European Defence and France's European Policy after the Presidential election. Various personalities from the political, academic and economic environment will be speaking. The Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation, Jean-Dominique Giuliani will present "The Schuman Report on the State of the Union, 2012" as an introduction to the seminar. It is obligatory to enrol... [Read more](#)

Elections :

Presidential Election in Russia on 4th March



On 4th March the Russians are being called to elect their President. Five candidates are running: Guennady Zyuganov, Communist Party (KPRF), Vladimir Jirinovski, Democratic Liberal Party (LDPR), Serguey Mironov, former leader of Fair Russia (Spravedlivaya Rossiya, SR), Mikhail Prokhorov, leader of the Just Cause Party (Pravoe Delo, PD), a billionaire and business man, and Vladimir Putin, outgoing Prime Minister. The question is whether Vladimir Putin will be elected in the first round or whether he will have to face a second round? Many demonstrations have taken place across the country showing that the Russians are expecting new things that their politicians cannot afford to ignore... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

Economy and Finance Council



On 21st February the 27 EU Finance Ministers defined their position on two draft regulations designed to improve the governance of the euro zone, demanding a strengthening of national budget and policy surveillance of countries facing serious difficulties. They adopted a regulation that harmonises rules governing credit default swaps and short selling. In an attempt to simplify red tape and make support easier they also adopted a regulation that exempts very small companies from having to provide financial and accounting information. Finally ministers determined the Council's priorities in its negotiations with the European Parliament over the 2013 budget... [Read more](#)

Open letter from 12 European heads of government with regard to the growth



On 20th February 12 heads of government (Estonia, Spain, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Sweden) wrote a letter to the Presidents of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso and the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, in which they describe the economic crisis as one of "growth" and call for measures to re-establish this. The EU has "many basic economic advantages" but "action is necessary to modernise our economies". They notably recommend the development of the internal market, notably in areas such as services, the digital economy and energy, a commitment in support of innovation, the opening of the world markets, a relaxation of European regulations, the reform of the labour and financial markets... [Read more](#)

Meeting of G20 Central Bankers and Finance Ministers



On 25th and 26th February the G20 Central Bank and Finance Ministers welcomed the progress made by the EU on the path to settling the debt crisis but mentioned the poor growth prospects as well as world economic imbalances that continued. They deplored the high rates of unemployment in many countries and discussed action plans in support of growth and employment. Questions about raising the IMF's resources and the reform of its governance were also addressed. Ministers and governors said they wanted to continue the reforms started in the area of financial regulation and have requested reports on the volatility of raw materials prices, green growth and disaster management... [Read more](#)

German economy in net progression and the public deficit brought to 1%



The IFO index shows in February that the morale of German businesses has been good for the last seven months. In February the index reached its highest level to total 109.6 points. This is the fourth month in a row that it has increased. Together with other factors this index indicates that Germany may possibly avoid a GDP contraction in the first quarter. Moreover on 24th February the Federal Statistics Office said that Germany's public deficit had melted in 2011 down to 1% of the GDP, against 4.3% in 2010 and 3.2% in 2009. In absolute values the public deficit of Europe's leading economy rose last year to 25.3 billion euros against a GDP of 2,750.8 billion euros... [Read more](#)

A further rise in unemployment in France



According to data published on 24th February by the Dares, France totalled a further 13,400 job seekers in January 2012 in comparison with December 2011, ie a rise of 0.5% over one month and 6.2% over one year. In France there are 2,861,700 unemployed. Employment Minister Xavier Bertrand stressed that the government was taking new steps in view of fostering employment. These notably include the development of the Professional Security Contract, the facilitation of partial redundancy, and action in support of apprenticeships and sandwich courses... [Read more](#)

Greece: approval of the law enabling the launch of the restructuration of the debt



On 23rd February Greek MPs approved the draft law, inspired by the so-called PSI (private sector involvement) agreement that defines the practical means to cancel the 107 billion euros of the Greek debt held by private creditors. The Greek Finance Minister Evangelos Venizelos declared that this vote would enable the country "to start to emerge from the turmoil" but that "to succeed we must stand united, be serious, reliable, persevere, and work, work, work..." [Read more](#)

Portugal: a rise in the public debt



According to data published on 20th February by the Bank of Portugal the country's public debt totalled 183 billion euros at the end of 2011 ie 107.2% of the Portuguese GDP which represents a rise of 13.7% over one year. This figure is in line with the IMF's forecasts. These results come just as the representatives of the country's creditors, the EU, the European Central Bank and the IMF are on a mission in Portugal and are due to publish their conclusions next week... [Read more](#)

British public finance figures improve



According to data published on 21st February by the British National Statistics Office, (ONS), the British budgetary overspending, except for "temporary effects of financial interventions" lay at £11.8 million in January 2012 (around 14 billion euros) against 9.2 billion in January 2011. Moreover according to the same figures the UK was a net lender to a total of £7.8 billion in January 2012 against 5.2 billion in January 2011. The net public debt totalled 63% of the GDP against 58.3% in January 2011. These statistics which represent an improvement in comparison with the situation a

year earlier has surprised economists... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Slight recession in the euro zone in 2012



According to forecasts made by the European Commission, published on 23rd February the euro zone is due to face a slight recession in 2012 totalling 0.3%, whilst EU growth will be zero. The first two quarters will be particularly difficult whilst recovery is expected in the second half of the year... [Read more](#)

Sanctions against Hungary



On 22nd February the European Commission announced that it proposed not to pay the 495 million euros of the Cohesion Fund to Hungary because of a lack of measures on the part of the government to counter its excessive deficit. The suspension of 29% of the funds initially granted for 2013 to Hungary has to be confirmed by the Member States and would end as soon as Hungary started the necessary reform. It is the first time that the Commission is using this possibility offered by the regulation that establishes the Cohesion Fund... [Read more](#)

Europe can do Better



The President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso met Edmund Stoiber, chair of the high level group of independent stakeholders with regard to administrative burden on 21st February - the latter delivered a report entitled "Europe can do better". This text notes the best national practices which aim to implement the lightest legislation in the Union. 74 examples have been reviewed, notably initiatives in support of on-line administration or of intelligent solutions, particularly with regard to small companies. The aim of this report is to reduce administrative red-tape long term and to facilitate the running of businesses to stimulate the European economy and growth... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

The "European Elections" site updated!



The site created by the Robert Schuman Foundation for the European elections in June 2009 has been updated after the new appointments made mid-term (president of the European Parliament; Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Committees). Also put your knowledge of the European Parliament to the test by answering our new quiz!.. [Read more](#)

Council :

Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council: Single Market and Innovation



During the Competitiveness Council on 20th and 21st February, the 27 Competitiveness Ministers looked into the different means available to support businesses in order to facilitate the revival of growth and employment. As part of the single market three priorities were selected: the reform of accounting rules, the modernisation of public procurement and the improvement of access to funding on the part of SME's. The Danish Presidency of the Council of European Union also recalled its determination and the need to return quickly to an agreement on the subject of the single European patent. Moreover ministers debated the future of innovation in Europe, notably via the Framework Programme 2014-2020, and the European Institute for Innovation. They debated the funding and governance of the GMES, an EU space programme that runs parallel and is complementary to Galileo... [Read more](#)

Credit derivatives: the Council makes concessions

On 24th February the Council announced that it had come to a common position on future negotiations with the European Parliament



more

on a draft regulation concerning credit derivatives. In particular a step was taken towards the European Parliament which is demanding a greater role for the European Securities and Markets Authority... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Re-opening of two border crossings between Serbia and Kosovo



On 22nd February the Serbs in the north of Kosovo announced that the barricades built in July 2011 and which were blocking access to the border crossings of Brnjak and Jarnje towards Serbia had been dismantled and that the peacekeeping forces which had mounted the guard had been removed. Hence they responded to a request made by the EU which demanded progress in the negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo as a pre-condition to the granting of candidate status to EU Membership on the part of Serbia. This status is due to be examined by the Council next week... [Read more](#)

EU-Jordan



On 22nd February a first meeting took place between the EU's Task Force and Jordan. On this occasion the EU re-iterated that it supported Jordan in the reforms that it was undertaking at present. The priorities set are the fight to counter corruption, the creation of jobs and the facilitation of trade and investments. From 2011 to 2013 the EU's financial aid to Jordans is due to total around 300 million euros and the total allocated by the European Investment Bank will total around 400 million euros. These sums are to be used to modernise the economic, the political system and the social situation... [Read more](#)

Sanctions stepped up against Syria



On 27th February the 27 European Foreign Affairs Ministers adopted a new series of sanctions against Syria because repression is continuing. These measures are notably aimed at the country's central bank and the transport of merchandise via air. These sanctions will also include an embargo on merchandise flights operated by Syria that will no longer be able to land in Europe. Moreover seven more people will be added to a list of 150 people, organisations and companies, the main members of which are part of the Syrian regime, who are banned from entering Europe and whose assets have been frozen... [Read more](#)

Denmark :

Meeting between Nicolas Sarkozy and Helle Thorning-Schmidt



On 20th February Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, whose countries is presently chairing the Council of the European Union met the French President, Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris. On this occasion they spoke of the situation of the EU, particularly the debt crisis and the preparations for the European Council on 1st March next. They also discussed the situation in Syria, Libya and Iran... [Read more](#)

Spain :

Meeting between Mariano Rajoy and David Cameron



On 21st February the President of the Spanish Government, Mariano Rajoy met his British counterpart, David Cameron in London. During a press conference he said that it was necessary to act in all quarters to emerge from the crisis. With regard to budgetary stability, he recalled the work done by Spain in this area. With regard to monetary policy he said that measures such as those taken by the ECB at present were necessary to emerge from the crisis. Mssrs Cameron and Rajoy then declared that they had mentioned the issue of Gibraltar and that they would "continue to talk about this in the future", although they had different positions on this subject... [Read more](#)

Estonia :

New Governor for the Bank of Estonia



On 22nd February Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves appointed Ardo Hansson as governor of the Bank of Estonia (Eesti Pank) as of 7th June 2012, after the expiry of the mandate held by Andres Lipstok. By doing this he is following the recommendation made by the institution's board. Mr Hansson is an economist at present at the World Bank, after having been a member of the supervisory board of the Bank of Estonia in the 1990's and then economic advisor to the Estonian Prime Minister... [Read more](#)

France :

11th November becomes a day of tribute to all of those who died for France



On 20th February French MPs finally adopted a law that makes 11th November, a day of tribute to the Armistic of 1918, also a day of commemoration for all of those "who died for France". Hence on this date not only will the French pay tribute to the victims of the First World War but also to all of those people, civilians and military who die in operations outside of France... [Read more](#)

Employment and Salaries: women earn 20% less than men



The National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) has published a complete overview of employment and salaries in partnership with Dares. After an introduction on the development of employment and wages in 2009 the report presents three dossiers: wage policy and business performance; the change in professional trajectories over the generations; a European comparison of labour costs from 1996 and 2008. Around thirty information sheets describe employment, its features and salaries in the private and public sectors according to sex, age etc ... According to the report in 2009 women earned 20% less than men on average in the private sector for an equal working time. Labour costs in France was still higher than in Germany between 1996 and 2008... [Read more](#)

Greece :

Inquiry into the falsification of statistics



On 23rd February Greek MPs approved 168 votes in support, 76 against the creation of an investigative panel that aims to throw light on the allegations made by two former employees of the Hellenic Statistics Authority (ELSTAT) who say that the deficit figures "were artificially swollen" by the socialist government after it came to power in 2009. The two main parties, the socialist party (PASOK) and the conservative party (ND) blame each other for the revision of the deficit figures which was the trigger for the euro zone debt crisis. The socialists say that the right minimised the deficit when it was in power, and the conservatives answer that it was the socialists who falsified the figures when they took over office... [Read more](#)

Results of Negotiations between Greece and Macedonia (FYRM)



On 22nd February the Greek Foreign Minister, Stavros Dimas met the UN Secretary General's personal envoy for negotiations between Greece and Macedonia (FYRM), Matthew Nimetz. The two men first discussed the dispute ongoing between the two countries with regard to Macedonia's name. They reviewed the negotiations and Mr Dimas re-iterated Greece's support to Mr Nimetz's mission. He also said that "political will" had to be evident "on both sides" so that a solution could be found, he also said that a climate that favoured progress was necessary. This is why Mr Dimas expressed Greece's concern about some declarations and action on the part of Macedonia and said he wanted neighbourly relations to be established between the two countries... [Read more](#)

Ireland :

Visit of the Chinese Vice-President to Ireland



From 18th to 20th February the Chinese Vice-President, Xi Jinping made an official trip to Ireland. On this occasion agreements that aim to tighten links between the two countries, notably in terms of investment, education and services were signed. He met the Irish President, Michael D Higgins. Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny said that the visit was taking place at "an important stage in the development of relations between the two countries." Trade between China and Ireland is indeed increasing. The Irish employment minister Richard Bruton said that more economic relations with markets such as China "were part of the government's plan to revive the economy and to create jobs.".. [Read more](#)

Italy :

New Tax on the Italian Church



The Italian government led by Mario Monti adopted an amendment on 24th February that aims to extend the application of the new land tax to property owned by the Italian Church which hosts both religious and commercial activities. "Mario Monti informed the Council of Ministers that he had presented an amendment to the Senate (...) that planned for the immediate repeal of the exemption rules on buildings in which commercial activities were not exclusive," indicated the government in a press release. This decision that most Italians approve of was also motivated by the procedure launched in 2010 by the European Commission with regard to allegations over the distortion of competition... [Read more](#)

Malta :

Malta achieves observer status in the European Space Agency



On 20th February Malta signed a cooperation agreement with the European Space Agency providing it with observer status on the Agency's Council and in its Committees. This agreement, which is the result of a process started in 2004, will enable Maltese students and researchers to access the Agency's technological resources and to make contacts with researchers working there. The signature was welcomed by Maltese Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi who said that it showed "the government's commitment to research and innovation," and that space "could become a niche sector for Europe". At present Maltese research priorities in space are telecommunications, satellites and other high tech activities such as microelectronic mechanics and nanotechnologies... [Read more](#)

Sweden :

The Number of Emigrants reaches new heights



According to data published on 20th February by the Central Statistics Bureau 51,179 people left Sweden in 2011. This number is more than that recorded in 1887, the year of en masse emigration for the USA, which held the record until now. The first destination countries are the Nordic countries, the UK and the USA, but departures for China have multiplied by five since 2000. The statistics bureau explains this development by increased mobility on the part of the population and by the establishment of Swedish companies abroad. However this record figure in absolute terms is only of relative value: only 0.5% of the population emigrated in 2011 whereas in 1887 around 1% left the country. We should also note that many of these emigrants return to their country at a later date... [Read more](#)

Ukraine :

Poor treatment of Yulia Tymoshenko



On 21st February Czech MEP Zuzana Roithova (EPP) said that she was worried about the state of health of former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. She notably said that Ms Tymoshenko had been deprived of her crutches, that she was no longer receiving pain killers and that she had been subject to "long and gruelling" interrogations. Her family notably fears that she is being exposed to "toxic

substances" with the aim of making her give into the demands made by the powers in office. The MEP obtained access to medical files in November 2011 but could not meet the former Prime Minister personally since only her lawyer and the latter's daughter had been allowed to visit Ms Tymoshenko... [Read more](#)

UN :

Concern over and investigation into the humanitarian situation in Syria



The UN and the Arab League appointed former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan as Special Envoy to Syria on 23rd February. It will be his task to meet "all appropriate people in Syria and elsewhere" to "put an end to the violence and the humanitarian crisis" and to find "a peaceful solution" that "satisfies the democratic hopes of the Syrian people," in this crisis. On the same day the independent International Inquiry on Syria delivered the final version of its report to the UN Human Rights Council in which it declares that the Syrian regime "had failed in terms of its responsibility to protect its population" and has committed Human Rights infringements that can be qualified as crimes against humanity. It notably speaks of torture, murder, rape, imprisonment and unexplained disappearances... [Read more](#)

Concern over the Iranian Nuclear Programme



The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) declared on 24th February that there were "major differences" with Iran with regard to the clarification of its nuclear programme and re-iterated its "serious concern" about the military aspect of this. In its quarterly report the agency declared that during a recent visit to Iran the IAEA's inspectors said "an intense discussion took place over the structured approach that aimed to clarify all pending issues about the Iranian nuclear programme." "No agreement was found between Iran and the agency, because there are major differences (between the two parties) with regard to this approach" said the text... [Read more](#)

OSCE :

The OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly



On 23rd and 24th February the members of the OSCE's parliamentary assembly met in Vienna. In his opening speech Assembly leader, Petros Efthymiou, spoke of the importance of the respect of the rule of law and of the protection of freedom on the internet. The ensuing discussions focused on various subjects. The question of the respect of Human Rights, notably in prisons and legal systems was debated first. Representatives also discussed the euro zone debt crisis, in which they highlighted the need to combine austerity measures and growth support policies. They finally discussed issues associated with security such as transnational terrorism, cyber threats and the articulation of policies to counter terrorism and human rights... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

A rise in industrial orders in the euro zone and in the EU



According to figures published by Eurostat on 22nd February industrial orders rose by 1.9% in the euro zone and by 1.3% in the EU in December 2011 in comparison with the previous month. Between 2010 and 2011 these rises were respectively 8.3% and 7.6%... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

"For or against the European Parliament Seat in Strasbourg"



The European Association of Young Entrepreneurs has published a report entitled "For or against the European Parliament Seat in Strasbourg" which looks into the various arguments that plead for and against this. The authors speak of Strasbourg's historic and symbolic weight, since the city is a symbol of Europe's "painful past". They also mention the meaning of the establishment of the Parliament's office in various places, which reflects the Union's diversity. They then look into the financial

and environmental costs of the movement that this dispersal incurs. This study finally concludes with the interest in maintaining Parliament in Strasbourg but sets out some recommendations to improve the conditions of those who come to work in the city... [Read more](#)

Information Report by the Senate on the EU Budget



On 21st February Pierre Bernard-Reymond, a French Senator delivered a report devoted to the EU's own resources. Based on the observation that there has been a constant decline in traditional own resources, that now only comprise 14% of the total EU budget, he puts forward several proposals in order to bring this share up to 60%: the suppression of rebates that some countries enjoy; the creation of new own resources via the transfer of a share of VAT revenues and the implementation of European taxes, (company tax; taxes on financial transactions, tobacco, alcohol, CO2 emissions, on-line games); bringing the European budget up from 1% to 2% of the Gross National Product between 2012 and 2020. This might be done by transferring some national spending over to the European level... [Read more](#)

Culture :

The Impressionists of Vienna



The Albertina Museum of Vienna is putting on an exhibition devoted to the Impressionists until 13th May 2012. On this occasion visitors can see over 200 pastels, drawings and water colours by Impressionist and post-Impressionist artists like Monet, Degas, Renoir, Pissarro, Manet, Seurat, Signac, Cézanne and Gauguin. This selection of works reveals the quality of their work on paper, which although not as well known as their paintings, is none the less remarkable... [Read more](#)

Ai Weiwei



As part of an exhibition entitled "Ai Weiwei: entrelacs" that lasts until 29th April 2012, the Jeu de Paume Museum is presenting some photographs and videos made by the Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei. The work on show depicts the changes ongoing in China, particularly in the towns, others, which are purely artistic, reveal the artist's multiple facets. This is the first major exhibition devoted to Ai Weiwei in France... [Read more](#)

"Judaism: a world of stories"



The "De Nieuwe Kerk" museum of Amsterdam is presenting a series of exhibitions devoted to the cultural history of religions until 15th April 2012, entitled "Judaism: a world of stories". More than five hundred objects representing the Jewish religion, culture, arts and history are being presented. Amongst them are a scroll from the Dead Sea dating back to the first century, the oldest scroll of the Torah, manuscripts, paintings and tapestries... [Read more](#)

"Claude Debussy, music and the arts"



The Orangery Museum is organising an exhibition entitled "Claude Debussy, music and the arts" until 11th June 2012 - the exhibition is devoted to the relations this musician entertained with the artists and poets of his time. On show are pictures, drawings, pastels, manuscripts, letters and photographs by these artists, some of which come from the collections of three of Debussy's friends, Henry Lerolle, composer Ernest Chausson and State Advisor Arthur Fontaine. The exhibition stresses his interest for anti-conformism in terms of artistic expression... [Read more](#)

Richard Prince



The Picasso Museum of Malaga, together with the FABIA foundation is organising an exhibition until 27th May 2012 devoted to Richard Prince. On this occasion the public will be able to view paintings,

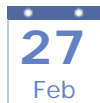
photomontages and collages that have been created over the last two years by this American artist, who addresses popular culture and the media in his works. This exhibition is a world first... [Read more](#)

The Brussels Book fair

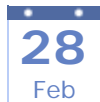


The Brussels Book Fair will be taking place from 1st to 5th March 2012, in the prestigious Tour&Taxis building. This year under the banner of "Sex, Book & Rock'n' Roll the fair focuses on the major writers who fought with their pen for the freedom of thought, imagination, dreams and desire. The guest of honour is Briton Marianne Faithfull, actress, musician and singer... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



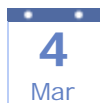
27th February
Brussels
Foreign Affairs Council



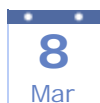
28th February
Brussels
"General Affairs" Council



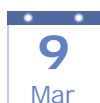
1st and 2nd March
Brussels
European Council



4th March
Russia
Presidential Election in Russia



8th and 9th March
Brussels
Justice and Internal Affairs Council



9th March
Environment Council

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