



"Preparing a second phase of the Single Market Act to remove the main obstacles that are still preventing us from achieving the internal market's full potential"



Author: Michel Barnier

This week the Robert Schuman Foundation has published a European Interview with Michel Barnier, European Commissioner for the Internal Market and Services. He presents the Commission's most recent proposals regarding the ratings agencies. To control some of the most dangerous banking activities he suggests, amongst other things, to set out a regulatory agenda. On the issue of the completion of the single market he lays down the principles of more innovative, greener, more inclusive growth that is richer in jobs. He finally mentions a modernisation of the SOLVIT network as well as the introduction of a single European patent.

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Front page! :

Order the Permanent Atlas of the European Union, a practical tool for all!



The Robert Schuman Foundation recently published the "Permanent Atlas of the European Union" with Lignes de repères, co-written by Jean-Dominique Giuliani and Pascale Joannin, Chairman and General Director of the Foundation respectively. This Atlas (available only in French) presents the Union, its institutions and each of the Member States via their history, their culture and their statistics. A unique innovation, it offers free access to an internet site, www.atlas-permanent.eu, where data is updated permanently, enabling everyone to access the best information on Europe at any time... Order the Atlas on-line... [Read more](#)

Order the "Schuman Report on Europe, State of the Union 2012"



The "Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union" by the Robert Schuman Foundation, a reference book on Europe has been published. This, the 6th edition in French and 3rd in English, is devoted to the means to implement to overcome the crisis, with an exclusive interview with Jean-Claude Trichet, former President of the European Central Bank. All of the 26 articles in the "Schuman Report on Europe, State of the Union 2012" agree on one message: "the reasons calling for Europeans to stand together have never been as many as today". Using 67 commented tables and graphs and 34 colour maps, most of which are unique, the authors invite readers to learn about the challenges that the EU faces. The book is available in both French and English... [Read more](#)

Elections :

A round up one week before the first round of the French presidential election



45 million French citizens are being called to ballot on 22nd April for the first round of the presidential election. Just one week before the election the gap between the outgoing President Nicolas Sarkozy (UMP) and François Hollande (PS) has tightened even though the latter is still forecast to win the in the second round that will take place on 6th May. A survey published on 1st April last by IFOP assesses the abstention rate at 32% ie a record level in French electoral history. François Hollande is in the lead in terms of voting intentions in the most recent opinion poll, by TNS for the TV channel Itélé and published on 13th April last. He is due to win 28% of the vote ahead of Nicolas Sarkozy with (26%); Jean-Luc Mélenchon and Marine Le Pen 16% each, François Bayrou 9% and Eva Joly 2.5%. The other candidates are due to win 1% or less. More than one quarter of those interviewed (27%) say they have not decided. François Hollande is forecast to win in the second round with 56% of the vote against 44% for Nicolas Sarkozy... [Read more](#)

Great uncertainty just one month before the Greek general elections



On 11th April Greek Prime Minister Lucas Papademos announced that the next general elections will take place on 6th May. Greece's European partners fear that this election will turn to the advantage of the extremists (on both the left and the right) or radicals, who are against the rescue plan and say they would have preferred for the elections to be postponed. One survey shows that dealing out "punishment" to those responsible for the crisis will be the main motivation for a majority of Greeks (41.9%) as they go to vote on May 6th. The Greek Parliament (Vouli), which is monocameral, has 300 members, elected for 4 years. Five parties are represented there at present: the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), New Democracy (ND); the Communist Party (KKE), the People's Orthodox Alarm (LAOS) and the Radical Left Coalition (SYRIZA)... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

World Economic Outlook - IMF



The International Monetary Fund (IMF) published its world economic outlook on 10th April. The April 2012 edition is called "Growth resuming, dangers remain". It notably includes a chapter on household debt and the way States can respond to this problem, as well as a chapter on the volatility of raw materials' prices and its effects on those that export them... [Read more](#)

The OECD is anticipating "positive change" in economic activity



The OECD published its statistical indicators on 10th April that aim to model economic activity developments in order to forecast changes in trends. These indicators continue to show that over all there will be a positive change. As far as the USA and Japan are concerned the signs of positive dynamism are clearly there. For Brazil, India, China and Russia this positive dynamic is even greater than in the previous estimation. In the euro zone "a positive return"

is believed "possible" but the various Member States offer a contrasted outlook. Indeed data indicates low growth for France and Italy, whilst Germany and the UK are said on a positive trajectory but it is forecast to be less than had previously been stated... [Read more](#)

The Spanish Government approved a new "anti-fraud" plan



On 13th April the Spanish government approved the new "anti-fraud" plan that aims to counter tax fraud and the parallel economy. By putting this new plan forward the government's spokesperson, Soraya Saenz de Santamaria, explained that the money that was "stolen" yearly from the Spanish government represented 6 billion euros. Amongst the new rules established notably feature: the prohibition to pay bills over 2500euro in cash and the obligation for Spanish tax payers to declare their foreign bank accounts. Moreover the Council of Ministers approved the creation of a committee of experts to reform the university system... [Read more](#)

Stability Programme - France 2012-2016



On 11th April the French Economy and Finance Minister, François Baroin and Budget Minister, Valérie Pécressek presented the Stability Programme for France 2012-2016 to the finance committees of the National Assembly and the Senate. This document lays down macro-economic hypotheses and the trajectory of public finances on the horizon of 2016. After examination by both parliamentary committees the Stability Programme will be communicated to the European Commission at the end of April in line with the European Semester calendar... [Read more](#)

Iceland emerges from the crisis but recovery is fragile according to the IMF



Iceland is emerging from the deep economic crisis, which it sank into in 2008 but recovery is modest and is still threatened by external and internal parameters according to an IMF report published on 12th April. "Iceland is progressively emerging from its severe post-crisis recession (...). Forecasts note modest recovery but there are still dangers, both internal and external," indicates the IMF report, stressing that present growth was being pulled along by domestic demand and that unemployment was declining... [Read more](#)

Introduction of the golden rule into the Slovenian Constitution



A majority in the Slovenian Parliament gave the greenlight on 11th April to change the country's constitution for the inclusion of the budgetary "golden rule". The procedure to amend the Constitution was approved by 70 MPs, 3 voted against and there were three abstentions. With this vote the Slovenian Parliament gave its go-ahead for a modification of article 148 in the Constitution to enable greater control over public finances... [Read more](#)

New Austerity Measures in the Czech Republic



The Czech government adopted another austerity plan on 10th April to limit the country's deficit to 2.9% of the GDP in 2013 and 1.9% in 2014. Amongst other measures there will be tax increases and a limit on the indexation of pensions. The adoption of this plan over a three year span puts an end to a conflict within the tripartite Czech coalition. The centrist party, Public Affairs (VV) indeed threatened to withdraw its ministers from government if such measures were not adopted rapidly... [Read more](#)

Portugal ratifies the European Budgetary Pact

On 13th April Portuguese MPs ratified the Stability, Coordination and Governance Treaty of the euro zone, 204 votes in favour, 24 against and 2 abstentions signed on 2nd March which set stricter budgetary discipline rules in the EU. They also approved the Treaty establishing the European Stability Mechanism (ESM), a permanent mechanism



designed to provide financial aid to States in difficulty. The adoption of these texts was made possible by a large centre-right majority in the Assembly and by the decision of the socialist opposition to approve the TSCG to protect the country's credibility... [Read more](#)

Commission :

The fight to counter money laundering



On 11th April the European Commission published a report on the application of the third anti-laundering Directive. The constantly changing threats linked to the laundering of capital and the funding of terrorism makes it necessary to adapt standards. It appears however in this report that an in-depth reform is not necessary: the regulations in force have to be better adapted to developing threats as well as to recently adopted international standards... [Read more](#)

Quarterly report on the economy of the Union's candidate countries



On 11th April the European Commission published a report that presents an overview of the economies of the candidate countries and potential candidates. The Commission details the state of the economy in Croatia, Macedonia (FYRM), Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Reviewing at first indicators such as the employment rate, the GDP and inflation the report focuses on analysing the state of the tax system, the labour market, external trade, the monetary and financial sectors notwithstanding key political events... [Read more](#)

The European Commission supports training for entrepreneurship



On 13th April the European Commission published a report on entrepreneurship. It observes that increasingly European countries are encouraging it. The report says that training for entrepreneurship is believed to be a "driver for future growth" as Androulla Vassiliou, Commissioner for Education and Culture suggests. Some member countries have launched specific strategies to promote training (Denmark, the Netherlands, Estonia ...) others even include it in their national life long training strategy (Czech Republic, Slovenia ...). In two thirds of the countries questioned entrepreneurship training is explicitly acknowledged in primary teaching programmes... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Meeting of G8 Foreign Affairs Ministers



On 11th and 12th April the G8 Foreign Ministers met in Washington. During this meeting they discussed the situation in Mali asking for "all sides" to "agree on a cease-fire and to start negotiations". They also said they were "alarmed" at the military conflict and the humanitarian situation in South Sudan. Regarding Syria they asked the government to accept the plan put forward by the UN's Special Envoy, Kofi Annan. The Iranian nuclear programme and North Korea's threat to launch a missile in April were also discussed. Ministers reiterated their support to the new Arab democracies and discussed the progressive transfer of responsibility for the upkeep of public order in Afghanistan over to the Afghan authorities... [Read more](#)

The Quartet demands financial aid for the Palestinians



On 11th April 2012 the Near East Quartet (EU, USA, Russia, UN) met in Washington in parallel to the G8 Foreign Affairs Summit. In a joint declaration the Quartet called on the international community to guarantee the payment of 1.1 billion dollars to enable the Palestinians to finalise their 2012 budget. It also encouraged the Israelis and Palestinians to return to the negotiation table. The Quartet also condemns the

"rocket attacks launched from Gaza (under Hamas control) against Israel"... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Encouraging economic outlook for Germany



According to a study by the German Economic Research Institute (DIW) published in April, the German GDP is due to increase by 1% in 2012 and will increase up to 2.4% in 2013 in spite of the world economic situation. This positive development is said mainly to be due to the healthy labour market, with salaries being reviewed upwards (notably the lowest salaries). Hence consumption should also rise... [Read more](#)

The German Trade Balance mainly in surplus



According to gross data published by the Federal Statistics Office, Germany's trade surplus has been up since the beginning of the year. In February 2012 it totalled nearly 14.7 billion euros against 13.2 billion the previous month. Over one year (February 2011-February 2012), Germany's exports towards euro zone member countries increased by 3.3% against a rise of 9.7% for exports the EU member countries that do not use the euro. Exports to third countries outside of the EU rose by 13.4% (this development concerns emerging countries in the main)... [Read more](#)

Deutsche Börse defends its merger with NYSE to the Court in Luxembourg



The operator of the Frankfurt Stock Exchange, Deutsche Börse, lodged an appeal on 13th April against the European Commission's decision to prohibit its merger with NYSE Euronext. "We have lodged this complaint with the competent authorities in Luxembourg," the EU's court, said a spokesperson. The German group announced on 19th March that it intended to challenge the veto set by Brussels at the beginning of February against its project to merge with the transatlantic operator NYSE Euronext which manages the markets of New York, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Lisbon. The project plans for the holding to be owned by 60% of the shareholders of Deutsche Börse and 40% NYSE Euronext... [Read more](#)

The Netherlands :

Inquiry into the Dutch financial system



On 11th April in the Netherlands the parliamentary investigative committee presented its final report on the measures taken by the Dutch authorities to save the banks during the financial crisis. It notably concluded that the authorities had made some serious mistakes involving billions of euros during the rescue of two financial institutions, Fortis/ABN Amro and ING in 2008. According to the committee the Finance Minister and the Dutch National Bank (DNB) are said to have been inadequately prepared for a crisis of this size. Overcome, they were then pushed to take the wrong decisions... [Read more](#)

Poland :

8th High Level Hispano-Polish Meeting



On 11th April the Spanish Prime Minister Mario Rajoy and his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk chaired the 8th Hispano-Polish meeting in Warsaw. They discussed their countries' economic situation. They also said they wanted to coordinate their position on the negotiation of the European budget 2014-2020. Moreover the Spanish Prime Minister told of his experience in the use of structural funds of which Poland is the main beneficiary... [Read more](#)

Portugal :

Austrian President visits Portugal



On 10th and 11th April the Portuguese President Anibal Cavaco Silva and Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho were host to the Austrian Federal President Heinz Fischer. On this occasion the Portuguese president declared that although recent reforms made to the Economic and Monetary Union and that the structural reforms undertaken in Portugal were significant in overcoming the present crisis, it was just as "vital and urgent" to establish a "common agenda" Europe wide in order to promote economic revival, the creation of jobs and the strengthening of competitiveness and cohesion." During a press conference Mr Cavaco Silva said he was confident in his country's ability to keep its budgetary commitments... [Read more](#)

Romania :

Romania appoints a new Environment Minister



On 10th April the new Romanian Environment and Forests Minister was appointed; Attila Korodi already occupied this post for one year under the government of Calin Popescu Tariceanu (2004-2008). During the investiture ceremony at the Cotroceni Palace, President Traian Basescu thanked the former Environment Minister, Laszlo Borbely for his services and welcomed the choice made by Prime Minister, Mihai Razvan Ungureanu... [Read more](#)

Belarus :

Liberation of Andrei Sannikov, an opponent of Lukashenko



Andrei Sannikov, who was the main opposition candidate to A. Lukashenko during the Belarus presidential election in 2010 and who was consequently imprisoned for the "organisation of the widespread disruption of public order", was pardoned and freed from prison 14th April. The leader of European diplomacy, Catherine Ashton, welcomed the liberation of the two opposition leaders, Mr Sannikov and his main campaign assistant Dmitri Bondarenko, but called on the regime governed by Lukashenko to free all political prisoners unconditionally and to lift all restrictions on their civic and political rights... [Read more](#)

Ukraine :

Another conviction of a former Ukrainian minister



On 12th April Valery Ivachenko, Yulia Timoshenko's former Defence Minister from 2009 to 2010, was sentenced to five years in prison for abuse of power in an affair linked to the privatisation of a shipyard in Crimea. He is the fourth person to have taken part in Timoshenko's government to be sentenced for affairs of this kind. The supporters of the former Prime Minister continue to denounce these political manoeuvres, whilst Mr Ivachenko declared that he was innocent of the accusations brought against him... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :

5th annual report on the supervision of the execution of ECHR decisions



On 12th April the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers published its 5th annual report on the supervision of the execution of the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights for 2011. According to the study's results the number of new cases opened is still high (1606) even though, for the first time in ten years, their number has dropped by 6%. The number of cases pending is up (+8% in comparison with 2010). Moreover the number of cases closed in 2011 with a final resolution increased by nearly 80% in comparison with 2010 (up to 816). This is the first report to reflect the new supervisory procedure introduced in 2011 in response to the 2010 Interlaken Process and the work in view of guaranteeing the long term effectiveness of the European Convention of Human Rights... [Read more](#)

UN :

The Security Council decides on the dispatch of an advanced team of observers to

Syria



UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon called on the Syrian government to respect the ceasefire that entered into force on 12th April. "The world is watching sceptically whilst the past promises made by the government in Syria have not been kept," he declared. The UN Security Council adopted a resolution on 14th April enabling the dispatch of around thirty international observers to Syria to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire. A UN supervisory mission in Syria including 250 people will be deployed by 18th April... [Read more](#)

North Korean rocket condemned by the international community



In spite of international threats North Korea proceeded on 13th April to launch a rocket that was supposed to place an observation satellite into orbit. The rocket exploded in flight, and the launch was a failure. Qualified as provocation, the launch was condemned by the international community. Resolution 1874 of the UN Security Council adopted in 2009 ask North Korea not to make any further nuclear trials or launches that use ballistic missile technology... [Read more](#)

NATO :

NATO firmly committed to Afghanistan beyond 2014



On 12th April NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen met Afghan President Hamid Karzai. During a speech delivered in Kabul, the Secretary General declared that NATO was still firmly committed to Afghanistan. He stressed that this commitment would continue beyond 2014. The terms of this commitment will be on the agenda of the next NATO summit that will take place at the end of May in Chicago... [Read more](#)

WTO :

WTO forecasts a slowing in world trade in 2012



On 12th April economists at the World Trade Organisation believed that world trade, after a +5% increase in 2011, is due to decline in 2012 to reach +3.7%. This slowing finds explanation in the number of shocks suffered by the world economy, notably the sovereign debt crisis in Europe... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

2.8 billion euro external trade surplus in the euro zone



According to estimates for February 2012 published by Eurostat the euro zone recorded a trade surplus of 2.8 billion euros with the rest of the world, compared with -2.8 billion euros in February 2011. The balance recorded in January 2012 lay at -7.9 billion, against -16.1 billion in January 2011. In February 2012 in comparison with January 2012 exports corrected according to seasonal variations increased by 2.4% and imports by 3.5%. The extra-EU trade balance in February 2012 indicated a deficit of 9.4 billion euros, against -10.5 billion in February 2011. In January 2012 the balance lay at -23.5 billion, against -31.3 billion in January 2011. In February 2012 in comparison with January 2012, exports corrected according to seasonal variations, increased by 1.3% and imports by 3.2%... [Read more](#)

Increase in Industrial Production in February 2012



According to figures published by Eurostat on 12th April industrial production increased by 0.5% in the euro zone and by 0.2% in the EU in February 2012. This was a slight increase in comparison with January 2012. However in comparison with February 2011 industrial production was down by 1.8%. With regard to monthly variations the greatest increases were seen in the Netherlands (+13%) and Slovakia (+2.8%) and the greatest decreases in Malta (-4.6%) and in Sweden (-3.6%). With regard to annual variations the Netherlands (+6.7%) and Slovakia (+8.4%) are still rising whilst Luxembourg (-14.4%) and Malta (-11.4%) have recorded the biggest decreases...

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Eurobarometer :

Access to energy as a vector for development



According to a Eurobarometer survey published on 12th April 95% of Europeans believe that access to energy is a vital condition for countries to be able to emerge from poverty. Around 80% of those interviewed believe that it is in the EU's interest to help developing countries to improve access to energy, and that as a result it has to increase its support; also the energies that we promote must be of a renewable nature... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

The Nordic Countries declared "the happiest in the world"



The first world report on happiness published in April 2012 by the UN which undertook interviews in more than 155 countries and interviewing 1000 people aged 15 and over in each of these, puts European States, and within these the Nordic states, in the lead as the happiest countries in the world. Denmark indeed comes out ahead in the ranking established by the international organisation. It is followed by Finland second, Norway third and the Netherlands fourth. Sweden comes seventh. Five other countries in the EU (Ireland, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the UK) also feature amongst the first 20 in this ranking... [Read more](#)

Opportunities and risks in the great Arctic north



The opening up of maritime routes or the exploitation of oil deposits in the great Arctic north may represent formidable opportunities but also severe risks. In a study undertaken for the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) entitled "Arctic Opening: Opportunity and Risk in the High North", Charles Emmerson and Glada Lahn review the potential of this opening, recalling that it is vital to protect this part of the world... [Read more](#)

Culture :

The Passions: five centuries of art and emotion



The national museum of Stockholm is putting on show over 200 pieces of work that belongs to different artistic genres until 12th August - the theme focused on is that of "passion". The work shows how artists from the 16th century to modern times succeeded in illustrating sadness, suffering, fear, melancholy but also tenderness and joy in their work... [Read more](#)

Cima, master of the Italian Renaissance



The Luxembourg Museum in Paris is presenting a selection of paintings by Italian Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano (1459-1517) until 15th July. A provincial Italian from a poor home, Cima succeeded thanks to his talent and became one of the greatest artists of the Venetian Renaissance. His work reveals an amazing technical skill as well as an opening up to new ideas of the time. Some pictures are being presented for the first time outside of Italy... [Read more](#)

Picasso and Modern British Art



The Tate Britain is hosting a major exhibition until 15th July entitled ""Picasso & modern British Art" which reviews the development of modern British and more particularly the fascinating story of Picasso's life and the affection he had for this country. The exhibition brings together more than 150 spectacular pieces of work with more than 60 pictures by Picasso... [Read more](#)

Klimt's drawings in Albertina of Vienna



Until 10th June the Albertina of Vienna is exhibiting 170 drawings by the artist Gustav Klimt. They show the qualities of Klimt's drawings as well as his technical skill, enabling the spectator to gain a glimpse of this artist's "mental and emotional" universe... [Read more](#)

The Personalities that made Berlin



On the occasion of Berlin's 775th anniversary the Stadtmuseum is organising an exhibition at the Ephraim Palace from 18th to 28th October entitled "Berlinmacher" (those who made Berlin). On this occasion 775 portraits of people who "lived and worked" in Berlin from 1237 until today and who each influenced this city in their own way, will be on show. The collection comprises 75 portraits of historic personalities and 700 portraits of other Berliners... [Read more](#)

International Portal FranceBook



The International Portal of the French book, FranceLivre/FranceBook was launched on 16th April. Entirely bilingual in both French and English FranceLivre/FranceBook is an information tool for the promotion of the French book and is open to all professional players in the book business, both in France and abroad... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



16th-19th April
Strasbourg
Plenary Session of the European Parliament



18th April
Copenhagen
EU Energy and Environment Council



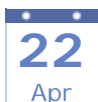
18th and 19th April
Brussels
Defence Ministers Meeting of NATO member countries



20th and 22nd April
Washington
IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings



21st-26th April
Doha
13th UN Conference on Trade and Development



22nd April
France
First round in the French presidential election



23rd April
Brussels
Foreign Affairs Council



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The Letter's Editorial Team :

Magali Balent, Pauline Massis Desmarest, Inga Groth, Charles de Marcilly, Pierre Thibaudat ;
Perle Baillard, Mélanie Laplace, Camille Stephan, Marion Zosi.

Chief Editor: Pauline Massis Desmarest
Publishing Director: Pascale Joannin

Contact/Suggestions
info@robert-schuman.eu

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