



Franco-American Relations after the election of François Hollande



Author: Justin Vaisse

The French Presidential election was not really followed in the US, where incidentally, a preference for "continuity" embodied by the outgoing president seemed to dominate amongst many of the country's leaders. Indeed, Nicolas Sarkozy's Presidency was marked by excellent France-US relations. In this context, although the positions of the new President François Hollande on issues such as the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and the anti-missile defence system seemed to comprise bones of contention with the US, his main advantage amongst American leaders is his clear commitment to a European policy that is more in favour of growth. This position has indeed gained the support of the Obama administration, which is concerned about the European economic situation and its possible effects on the other side of the Atlantic. [Read more](#)

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Front page! :

Growth at the heart of the "Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union 2012"



The issue of growth and the means to overcome the crisis is the focus of the Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union 2012". This, the sixth edition (in French), the third in English includes an exclusive report with Jean-Claude Trichet, former European Central Bank President. Using 67 commented tables and graphs as well as 34 colour maps, which are mainly unique, the authors invite you to understand all of the challenges facing the EU. This work is available in French and English on

the Foundation's site... [Read more](#)

Update of the economic and political data on the Atlas site



The European Union's Statistics Office has published data on EU growth, the Euro zone and the 27 Member States for 2011 and its forecasts for 2012. The Robert Schuman Foundation has updated the economic data that feature on the www.atlas-permanent.eu site that is linked to the Permanent Atlas of the European Union published recently and co-written by Jean-Dominique Giuliani and Pascale Joannin, the Chairman and General Director of the Foundation respectively. The Foundation has also updated the political data on Greece and France following the elections on 6th May. The book is available on the Foundation's site. Order it!.. [Read more](#)

Démocratie participative-Democratie de proximité, dialoguer en Europe



The fifth European Association Conference is taking place on 21st and 22nd May in Strasbourg. Organised by the Maison de l'Europe of Strasbourg with several partners, including the Regional Council of Alsace, the Council of the Associations of Europe and the European Parliament, it is focusing this year on the theme: "Démocratie participative-démocratie de proximité: dialoguer en Europe". The Foundation's Director General, Pascale Joannin and former Vice President of the European Commission, Member of the Foundation's board, Jacques Barrot will be taking part. On 22nd May Pascale Joannin will be speaking at the fourth round table entitled "From the Eurozone to the United States of Europe?" Jacques Barrot will be taking part in the closing session along with European Commissioner Michel Barnier... [Read more](#)

Wolfgang Schäuble, receives the Charlemagne Prize 2012



On 17th May the 2012 Charlemagne Prize, one of the highest European prizes, was given to Wolfgang Schäuble, the German Finance Minister and Member of the Robert Schuman Foundation's Board, for his work in support of European Integration. Speaking at the award ceremony he called on the EU to provide itself with an elected President so that Europe had a "face". "We need strong institutions that enjoy political legitimacy," he explained... [Read more](#)

Talking Europe receives Anni Podimata



As part of the partnership between the Robert Schuman Foundation and the AEF the Foundation is broadcasting on its site the latest programme "Talking Europe" whose guest is Anni Podimata, Vice-President of the European Parliament and the member of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats group at the European Parliament. Interviewed by Christophe Robeet, Anni Podimata reviews the political and economic crisis that is hitting her country, Greece... [Read more](#)

European Roadmap to settle the crisis



Jean-Dominique Giuliani, chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation and Joachim Bitterlich, Deputy Chairman of Notre Europe, both co-founders and co-chairmen of the Rhénan Club have signed a "European roadmap to settle the crisis".. [Read more](#)

Elections :

A new round of general elections in Greece on 17th June



Faced with the failure on the part of the three parties that came out ahead in the general election on 6th May - ie New Democracy, the Radical Left -SYRIZA- and PASOK - to find a majority to form a government, Greek President Karolos Papoulias was forced ask the Greeks to vote again in another round of elections that will take place on 17th June. This situation has led to great tension on the markets

and concern over Greece respecting its commitments and whether it will stay in the euro zone or not. The Greeks are being invited to decide on their future and that of their country in this next election. Will this lead to a majority and if so which parties will take part?.. [Read more](#)

Surprise election of Tomislav Nikolic as the Serb President



Contrary to all expectations Tomislav Nikolic (Serb Progressive Party, SNS) won with 49.7% of the vote in the second round of the Serb presidential election on 20th May. He drew ahead of outgoing Head of State Boris Tadic (Democratic Party, DS) who won 47% of the vote. Turnout was low totalling 46.32%. Voters expressed their lassitude and have punished what some qualify as the "Tadic System". By voting for change they may also be led into co-habitation, given the result of the general elections on 6th May last... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

The G8 leaders recall their "commitment to budgetary responsibility"



The leaders of the G8 countries, (USA, Canada, Italy, France, Germany, UK, Japan and Russia) who met in Camp David on 18th and 19th May declared their "imperative to encourage growth and employment" in their final press release. They did however say that the measures to take to counter the crisis "are not the same for everyone". They recalled that they wanted Greece to stay in a "strong, united" euro zone. On the issue of the world oil supply market the G8 leaders said they would take decisions so that the "market remained adequately supplied". On issues concerning foreign policy and notably the Syrian situation they called on the Syrian government and "all sides" to put a stop to the violence. They support the efforts made by mediator Kofi Annan... [Read more](#)

EU Agreement to Support Banks



On 15th May the 27 Economy and Finance Ministers came to agreement on the capitalisation of banks and investment companies. The aim is to transpose the regulations established notably by the G20 in November 2010, the Basel III agreement, whose goal it is to enable banks to cope better with shocks. If they believe it useful the States may, depending on the risks, add an additional "cushion" of own funds to a total of 3% on top of the 7%, which can be taken up to 5% in some cases. The ministers also adopted conclusions regarding the rapid funding of measures for climate change and on the future of VAT... [Read more](#)

The Eurogroup declares in "unshakeable" support to Greece



On 14th May the Finance Ministers of the 17 euro zone Member States looked into the economic situation in some Member countries (Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Slovakia) and notably Greece. The ministers declared their "unshakeable" support to Greece and it remaining in the euro zone in spite of propaganda about the country's exclusion from it. To end the stalemate Jean-Claude Juncker spoke of extending deadlines... [Read more](#)

Former ECB President Jean-Claude Trichet defends the Euro's Results



During a conference at the Peterson Institute in Washington, former ECB President Jean-Claude Trichet defended the results of the EU's monetary policy and notably that of the euro. He firstly recalled the prompt introduction of the single currency that suffered no major technical obstacle, then the success of the currency which is the official tender for 350 million people in 17 countries. He also stressed that the Central Bank had fulfilled its main goal since the creation of the single currency, ie the fight to counter inflation. Without denying the present difficulties, he also pointed to two strong points that are often ignored: since the entry in force of the euro, the creation of jobs and GDP growth per capita had been greater in the euro zone than in the US... [Read more](#)

The German economy recovers



According to figures published on 15th May by Destatis the German economy grew by 0.5% in the first quarter of 2012. Over the last three months of 2011 the German GDP contracted by 0.2% and that of France increased by 0.1%... [Read more](#)

Spain still in recession



On 17th May the National Statistics Institute released the latest figures on Spanish growth for the first quarter of 2012. This data confirms the return of recession with a contraction of 0.3% in the GDP (contraction equal to that of the previous semester). Moreover the Spanish government announced on 18th May that it had revised its public deficit 2011 upwards to 8.9% of the GDP against 8.51% forecast until now - because of the budgetary excesses of some Spanish regions. "The Finance Minister believes that the latest data provided by the Autonomous Regions impacted the public accounts by 0.4 points, which brings the deficit up to 8.9% of the GDP," indicated the press release... [Read more](#)

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The French GDP stagnates in the first quarter of 2012



According to figures communicated on 15th May by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), the French GDP remained stable in the first quarter of 2012 and the country's economic growth lay at 0%. In the fourth quarter of 2011 the GDP rose by 0.1%. More specifically household consumption increased slightly (+0.2% after +0.1% in the fourth quarter 2011) whilst investment (gross fixed capital formation) declined (0.8% after +1.3%). Imports rose after having declined in the fourth quarter of 2011 (+0.7% after -1.4%) and exports slowed (+0.3% after +1.1%)... [Read more](#)

From economic to political instability: Greece increasingly isolated



Greece has now entered its fifth consecutive year of recession. According to the most recent figures published on 15th May by the National Statistics Office, its GDP fell by 6.2% in the first quarter of 2012 in comparison with 2011. On 17th May the ratings agency Fitch took down Greece's sovereignty rating from "B" to "CCC", expressing fears of "greater risk" of the country exiting the euro zone. The agency stressed that political instability in Greece reflected the "lack of political and public" support regarding the aid programmes implemented by the EU and the IMF which announced on the same day that it was suspending its relations with the Hellenic Republic until the general elections had taken place on 17th June... [Read more](#)

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IMF Conclusions on Italy



On 16th May the IMF published the conclusions of a mission undertaken in Italy. IMF executives declared that the country's economic activity was due to slow in 2012 before recovering slight growth in 2013. Therefore in the IMF's opinion it is necessary to step up euro zone integration and to continue structural reforms in Italy. The IMF particularly talks of reforms to the labour market and the energy and services sectors. It also mentions the country's budgetary consolidation programme, recalling the importance of budgetary discipline as well as the Italian banking system... [Read more](#)

The Czech Republic in Recession



According to the first estimates by the national statistics bureau published on 15th May the Czech GDP contracted by 1% in the first quarter of 2012 in comparison with the last quarter of 2011. The Czech Republic now lies in recession with its GDP contracting for the third consecutive quarter... [Read more](#)

Parliament approve the government's economic austerity programme



The Slovakian government led by Robert Fico won the vote of confidence in Parliament on 15th May regarding his project to control public finances and the replacement of the single flat rate tax by new taxes that target the wealthy and businesses. The government won 82 votes in the monocameral Parliament comprising 150 seats... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Informal Meeting of the European Council on 23rd May



With the aim of preparing the European Council of 28th and 29th June next and given the seriousness of the economic situation in Europe, the President of the European Council Herman van Rompuy invited the 27 Heads of State and government to an informal dinner on 23rd May to review and make progress towards a conclusion of a certain number of decisions that are expected at the end of June... [Read more](#)

Commission :

The Commission undertakes the first Schengen "healthcheck"



On 16th May the European Commission published its first "healthcheck" on the Schengen Area. This report covers the period November 1st 2011 to 30th April 2012. The Schengen Area represents over 400 million Europeans and 1.25 billion trips yearly. This report looks more specifically into the situation of Schengen's external borders and also inside the Schengen Area, the implementation of the Schengen rules and visa and residence permit delivery procedures. According to the Commission the control of the external land and maritime borders is still a priority... [Read more](#)

Council :

The environment, the focus of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council



On 14th and 15th May the 27 Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers met to debate environmental aspects of the common fisheries policy as well as the European maritime fund. As part of the reform of the common fisheries policy they put forward several ideas: integrating environmental legal obligations with the proposal or including a "maximum sustainable production" to guarantee the survival of the fishing sector. They concluded the meeting by addressing the effects of the closure of fishing by European ships in Mauritanian waters, recalling the importance of this partnership for the fisheries sector... [Read more](#)

15th EU-Ukraine Meeting



During the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council that took place in Brussels on 15th May European leaders declared that they were ready to step up their relations with Ukraine, notably with regard to trade and foreign affairs (visas). They did however express their concern about the respect of the rule of law and human rights stressing that the fate of former government members and notably Yulia Tymoshenko was still not satisfactory. Future developments regarding the partnership will be greatly influenced by the implementation - or not - by Ukraine of legal reforms that the EU deems vital... [Read more](#)

EIB :

Annual Conference



On 15th May the EIB's annual conference took place. Its President Werner Hoyer stressed the major role played by the Bank in supporting sustainable growth, innovation and employment. In 2011 the Bank provided the biggest contribution to the real economy with nearly 60 billion euros in payments and 395 billion in loans. The EIB mainly acts in areas such as "the knowledge triangle" comprising the research-innovation-education sectors (10 billion euros), SME's (13 billion), and also in environment (18 billion)... [Read more](#)

EBRD :

Suma Chakrabarti - new president of the EBRD



Briton, Suma Chakrabarti, a high ranking civil servant specialised in development, was elected on 18th May for four years as President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, announced the bank in a press release. Mr Chakrabarti, 53, was appointed after a secret ballot involving the 65 governors of the EBRD representing the countries or shareholding institutions, during a general assembly in London. It is the first time that the EBRD is not being headed by either a Frenchman or a German... [Read more](#)

Germany :

The G6 supports the freezing of criminal assets



The German, British, Spanish, French, Italian and Polish Interior Ministers of the G6, who met in Munich on 17th and 18th May, approved the European Commission's proposal to introduce financial sanctions against organised crime, in other words the confiscation of assets that result from criminal activity in Europe. They said they were concerned about the danger of political destabilisation in the north African countries in transition since the Arab Spring. The Spanish and French Ministers also confirmed their cooperation to counter ETA and any other terrorist organisations... [Read more](#)

Peter Altmaier: new federal Environment Minister



During a declaration made to the press on 16th May the German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced the dismissal of her environment minister, Norbert Röttgen, after the CDU's poor results in the regional elections on 13th May in North Rhine-Westphalia. The Chancellor chose Peter Altmaier as the new Environment Minister. She said: "It is clear that the implementation of the energy policy requires much more work and therefore the Federal Environment Ministry has a major role to play in this context. To make this new start I am putting forward the head of the CDU's parliamentary group in the Bundestag, Peter Altmaier..." [Read more](#)

First meeting between François Hollande and Angela Merkel



Just a few hours after his investiture on 15th May the new French president François Hollande made his first trip to Germany to meet German Chancellor Angela Merkel. They declared that they both wanted Greece to remain in the euro zone. Regarding the budgetary discipline pact the French President intimated that he was ready to accept a separate text on growth. For her part the German Chancellor said that there "were points of agreement" with François Hollande on growth, admitting that it was a "general idea". These points of discussion will be on the agenda of the next informal summit between the Heads of State and Government on 23rd May. Finally the French president declared that he wanted "balanced relations between France and Germany that respected their political sensitivities"... [Read more](#)

Exports and Imports reach record levels



In March 2012 German exports totalled 98.9 billion euros and imports, 81.5 billion. According to provisional figures published by the Federal Statistics Office (Destatis) this represents, year on year, a rise of 0.7% in terms of exports and 2.6% on imports. These monthly figures are the highest in the statistical history of Germany's foreign trade... [Read more](#)

France :

Composition of the French Government led by Jean-Marc Ayrault

The new government led by French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault was announced on 16th May. The government comprises 34 ministers, 17 of whom are women. According to a table published and updated by



the Robert Schuman Foundation on the share of women within government, France now lies second behind Sweden... [Read more](#)

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Greece :

Interim Government in Greece



The President of the Greek State Council, Panayotis Pikramenos, was sworn in on 16th May as interim Prime Minister responsible for managing current affairs and for preparing the elections on 17th June... [Read more](#)

Italy :

The Italian and German Defence Ministers propose 'an extension' to European Defence



In an open letter to the Italian daily "Corriere della Sera" on 15th May the Italian and German Defence Ministers, Giampaolo di Paolola and Thomas de Maizière, called for an extension of European Defence. The two ministers set five goals for the European Defence Policy. The first is "commitment" because the EU should "taken on greater responsibilities" in the area of security. The second is that of "a global approach", ie the coordination of military and non-military resources. Finally the two ministers mentioned the need for the integration of military "capabilities" and "complementarity" between the EU and NATO and also international cooperation... [Read more](#)

Portugal :

Reform of the Energy Sector



The Portuguese government adopted a reform of the energy sector on 17th May which will enable consumers to save between 170 and 190 million euros per year, ie around 5% of their bill as demanded by the aid plan agreed in May 2011 by the EU and the IMF. By 2020 these savings should total around 1.8 billion euros said the Economy Minister Alvaro Santos Pereira, after a Council of Ministers... [Read more](#)

Romania :

Resignation of the Romanian Education Minister, Ioan Mang



Romanian Education Minister Ioan Mang accused of plagiarism in several scientific articles presented his resignation on 15th May whilst the polemic rages on, announced Prime Minister Victor Ponta. "Mr Mang told me that he wanted to resign because of the accusations being made against him," declared Mr Ponta during a press conference. The outgoing Minister "may now defend his image and prestige away from the pressure associated with this post," he added... [Read more](#)

Ukraine :

The hounding of Yulia Tymoshenko



On 15th May former Ukrainian Prime Minister and opposition leader, Yulia Tymoshenko announced that she had decided to suspend her medical treatment in protest against the revelation of information about how she was being cared for. This new pressure does not however seem to have affected the Ukrainian government, which has categorically refused to transfer her abroad for care. This "bad" news comes in addition to the Ukrainian Appeal Court's announcement to delay the date of the trial of the former Prime Minister to 26th June... [Read more](#)

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UN :

Postponement of Ratko Mladic's Trial



On 17th May trial of former military leader of the Serb Army of Bosnia, Ratko Mladic was postponed sine die because of "irregularities" in the communication of documents that would have enabled the defence to prepare for the trial. This started on 16th May at the ICTY in The Hague. The former commander of the armed forces is being prosecuted for several crimes against humanity and war crimes. He is notably accused of the massacre of Srebrenica in 1995... [Read more](#)

NATO :

Conclusions of the NATO Summit in Chicago



The 28 NATO members, who met in Chicago on 20th and 21st May came to agreement on transferring responsibility for combat missions over to the Afghan forces (ANSF) by mid-2013. Hence the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) under the aegis of the Alliance will transfer over from a fighting role to one of assistance. Troops will progressively be withdrawn until 31st December 2014. France has decided to withdraw its combat troops by the end of the year. NATO leaders also announced the completion of the first of four phases in the missile defence system designed to protect the territories and populations of Europe from possible attacks from "proliferating" countries, notably Iran. This defence project is due to be completed by 2020... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

Publication of External Trade Figures for March



According to Eurostat figures published on 16th May the euro zone's external trade in March 2012 was in surplus of 8.6 billion euros against 2.3 billion in February 2012. Adjusted to seasonal variations exports decreased by 0.9%. Regarding the entire EU the first estimates indicate a deficit of 6.7 billion euros against 12 billion in February 2012. The biggest increases concern exports to Switzerland (+29%) and Russia (+22%)... [Read more](#)

1st Quarter 2012: stable growth in the euro zone and in the European Union



According to rapid estimates published by Eurostat on 15th May, during the first quarter of 2012 the euro zone and EU GDP remained stable in comparison with the previous quarter. During the fourth quarter of 2011 growth lay at -0.3% both in the euro zone and in the EU. In comparison with the same quarter in the previous year the GDP, adjusted to seasonal variations remained stable in the euro zone and increased by 0.1% in the EU over the first quarter of 2012 against +0.7% and 0.8% in the previous quarter... [Read more](#)

The euro zone and the EU's annual inflation rate declining



According to figures published by Eurostat on 16th May the euro zone and EU's annual inflation rates are declining. In the euro zone it lay at 2.6% in April 2012, against 2.7% in March. Regarding the EU, it lay at 2.7% in April against 2.9% in March. The lowest annual rates were recorded in Sweden (1%), Greece (1.5%) and in Ireland (1.9%) and the highest rates were recorded in Hungary (5.6%), Estonia (4.3%) and in the Czech Republic (4%). Generally annual inflation fell in 16 Member States and increased in ten... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

The European Union and the Ukraine



The Carnegie Europe Foundation has published an article by Olga Shumylo-Tapiola entitled "EU's B plan for Ukraine". Seeing that Ukraine "is not doing well" and that the EU "is in a rather uncomfortable position" regarding this country the author lists the three main faults that weigh over Ukraine: wealth grabbing by the

Yanukovych family, the imprisonment of Yulia Tymoshenko and the population's indifference to politics. She mentions the stakes of the upcoming general elections, as well as the EU's political stalemate in Ukraine. She finally draws up some proposals for a new Ukrainian policy on the part of the Union suggesting financial sanctions against the Yanukovych family, a communication strategy that targets the population and a clear definition of what the Europeans want from Yanukovych... [Read more](#)

German-Russian relations after Putin's return



The Finnish Institute for International Affairs has published a study on "German-Russian Relations after Putin's Return". The author shows that Vladimir Putin's presidency may weaken the strategic partnership between Germany and Russia. This new presidency is indeed full of frustration on the German side with regard to the Russian political situation, which might end in the country relinquishing its role of defending Russian interests within the EU... [Read more](#)

"After Merkozy: How France and Germany can make Europe work"



The European Council on Foreign Relations has published a report by Ulrike Guérot and Thomas Klau entitled: "After Merkozy: How France and Germany can make Europe work". The authors put forward ideas for a new Franco-German roadmap during François Hollande's five year term in office. Amongst other things they suggest a Franco-German compromise on growth and the launch of an ambitious reform programme that is open to other European partners aiming to enhance the effectiveness of European governance... [Read more](#)

The Costs of Solidarity in the Euro Zone



"Notre Europe" has published a study by Sofia Fernandes and Eulalia Rubio who focus on an assesment of the cost of the measures that aim to provide aid to euro zone States in financial difficulty (rescue plans to Greece, Ireland, Portugal, the support mechanisms, non-conventional action on the party of the European Central Bank). The authors review the nature of these measures, their impact on the public finances of the various States and some present controversies involving the monetary policy. They also compare the total cost of aid to the euro zone States in difficulty with that of support actions to the financial sector undertaken since the start of the financial crisis... [Read more](#)

The UK's exposure to the sovereign debt crisis



The "Bruges Group" has just published a paper that reviews the UK's exposure to the euro zone's sovereign debt crisis. The UK is committed to a total of 110 billion euro with the EU, 60 billion of which match its participation in the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism. It also holds a share of the captial in the EIB and the ECB. All of these international financial commitments may, if things develop badly, lead to losses for the British taxpayer. The total amount of these losses is estimated at 149.2 billion euro... [Read more](#)

Consequences of the French Presidential Election on Austerity



"Fair Observer" published an analysis on 14th May entitled : " Francois Hollande's Victory: What It Tells Us About France." Author, John Bruton, looks in the consequences of the election of the new French President on austerity in France, Greece and in Europe... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Franz Stock and the path to Europe

The Sauerland Museum of Arnsberg (North Rhine Westphalia) is paying tribute to the German Catholic priest, Franz Stock (1904-1948) who



came from the region. An ardent pacifist, then chaplain to French resisters condemned during the Second World War, he worked his entire life for peace and friendship between France and Germany. An exhibition organised together with the Franz Stock Committee for Germany and supported by the French Ambassador in Berlin and the German Ambassador in Paris, reviews the life of this personality. It is open until 26th August... [Read more](#)

On the Road with Jack Kerouac: a saga - from the written word to the screen



The Letters and Manuscripts Museum is presenting an exhibition devoted to one of the most mythical novels of American literature "On the road: a saga, from the written word to the screen" until 19th August. Between 2nd and 22nd April 1951 Jack Kerouac wrote a novel of 125,000 words on a piece of paper that was 36.5 metres long. He was 29. It is the first time that the typescript has been on show in France. This exhibition is being opened on the occasion of the release of the film by Walter Salles 'On the Road' - on 23rd May... [Read more](#)

Lady with an Ermine at the Wawel Castle

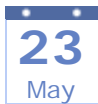


Since 12th May the "Lady with an Ermine" by Leonardo da Vinci is again on show in Krakow at the Royal Castle of Wawel after travelling to Madrid, Berlin and London. It was only in 1992, after years of doubt, that this picture, one of the best preserved of the Renaissance genius, was identified as the portrait of Cecilia Gallerani... [Read more](#)

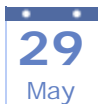
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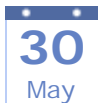
21st-24th May
Strasbourg
Plenary Session of the European Parliament



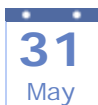
23rd May
Brussels
Informal Meeting of 27 EU Heads of State and Government



29th May
Brussels
General Affairs Council



30th and 31st May
Brussels
Competitiveness Council



31st May
Referendum on the budgetary discipline pact in Ireland
Brussels
Trade Council

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