



"Europe, a new political split in Italy"



Author: Marc Lazar

Just days before the Italian general elections on 24th and 25th February 2013, a major election for the European Union, the Robert Schuman Foundation has published an interview with Marc Lazar, university professor in history and political sociology, a specialist of Italian political life. Who are the favourites? What are the possible outcomes in the event of a victory of the coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi or that of the left led by Pier Luigi Bersani? In one scenario as in the other what would the effects be on the European Union?

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Front page! :

Bringing Europe and its Citizens closer together



The Institute for International and Strategic Relations (IRIS) is organising the 5th European Meeting in Enghien on 23rd February 2013 together with the Robert Schuman Foundation on the theme of "Bringing Europe and its Citizens closer together". On this occasion the Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation, Jean-Dominique Giuliani will be presenting the "Schuman Report on the State of the Union 2013" to be published the following week. It is obligatory to enrol... [Read more](#)

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"Europe: crisis policy and political crisis"



On 25th February 2013 the Centre for Political Research at Sciences Po (CEVIPOF) is organising an event from 5:30pm to 7:30pm, entitled "Europe: crisis policy and political crisis". On this occasion Thierry Chopin, Studies Director at the Robert Schuman Foundation, Thomas Hanke, the correspondent of the German economic daily Handelsblatt in Paris and Pascal

Perrineau, Director of CEVIPOF-Sciences Po will be debating the different issues at stake and perspectives which the economic and political model of the EU is facing. It is obligatory to enrol but entry is free of charge... [Read more](#)

Parliamentary Days on Defence



The 19th Parliamentary Defence Days will take place on 26th February 2013 at Chemistry House. Jean-Dominique Giuliani, Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation will be speaking at a roundtable devoted to European Defence. It is obligatory but free of charge to enrol... [Read more](#)

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Elections :

The Italian Electoral Campaign just one week before the election



Just one week before the elections in Italy the leftwing opposition is forecast winner by all of the polls. The Tecne institute credits the coalition "Italy Common Good" led by Pier Luigi Bersani that rallies the Democratic Party (PD), Left, Ecology and Freedom (SEL), the South Tyrolean People's Party and the Socialist Party (PSI) with 33.1% of voting intentions; Silvio Berlusconi's rightwing (the People's Party of Freedom, PdL) with 29.4%; the Five Stars Movement (M5s) led by Beppe Grillo with 16.3% and the centre led by outgoing President of the Council Mario Monti, with 12.6%. Demoscopia is forecasting 33.6% for the left, 28.5% for the right, 18.2% for the M5s, and 13.6% for the centre. Piepolo forecasts 35.5% for the left and 30.5% for the right and is the only institute to place Mario Monti's centre party ahead of M5s with 16% against 14% for Beppe Grillo. A great number of voters remain undecided... [Read more](#)

Results of the first round of the Presidential election in Cyprus



With 45.46% of the vote, opposition candidate Nicos Anastasiades, leader of the Democratic Assembly (DISY), supported by the Democratic Party (DIKO) easily won the first round of the presidential election in Cyprus on 17th February. Former Healthcare Minister (2011-2012), Stavros Malas (Progressive Workers Party AKEL) came 2nd with 26.91%. He just came out ahead of George Lilikas, former Foreign Minister (2006-2007) supported by the Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK), who won 24.93% of the vote. The other 8 candidates won less than 1% each. Turn out totalled 83.14%. Nicos Anastasiades and Stavros Malas will face each other in the second round on 24th February next... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

Eurogroup Decisions



On 11th February 2013 the 17 euro zone Ministers debated the reform programme that could be implemented in Cyprus in order to bring the country back to budgetary balance. The Ministers called for an assessment of by private experts in order to identify the key points in this programme which have to be decided with the Troika and the Cypriot authorities by March at the latest. The question of the euro's parity was addressed but the G20 meeting "is more appropriate for that" deemed the new Eurogroup president, Jeroen Dijsselbloem... [Read more](#)

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Growth in the euro zone reviewed downwards



Euro zone growth will be lower than expected in 2013 and 2014 according to a monthly report published by the European Central Bank (ECB) on 14th February. Growth will be zero against +0.3% anticipated in November. In 2014 a rise in the GDP is forecast to total 1.1% against +1.3% anticipated to date. The main factor to explain this revision in 2013 is the slower development of economic activity in the fourth quarter of 2012 writes the ECB... [Read more](#)

An IMF report defends total banking union in the euro zone



On 13th February 2013 the IMF published a document entitled "A Banking Union for the Euro zone". This paper maintains that the euro zone countries must finalise their project for banking union, notably "by creating a common depositor safety net, otherwise the economy as a whole will be endangered." The project also advocates the creation of an authority - a so-called "resolution" authority - which could manage the closure of defaulting banks and lighten the sovereign responsibility of the States. The IMF's paper speaks in support of the unique supervision by the ECB for the "immediate" implementation of direct recapitalisation by the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and for the creation of a common depositor safety net... [Read more](#)

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Germany: in spite of a 0.6% contraction in the GDP in the fourth quarter, growth of 0.7% in 2012



Due to a decline in exports Germany witnessed a contraction of 0.6% in its GDP in the fourth quarter of 2012 in comparison with the previous quarter, as indicated by Destatis on 14th February. It is the highest contraction in the German economy since mid-2009, when the world economy was severely affected by the financial crisis. For the whole of 2012, Germany's annual growth is set at 0.7%... [Read more](#)

Improvement of Spain's financial situation according to Mr Draghi



On the occasion of a meeting between Spanish MPs in Madrid on 12th February 2013, the President of the European Central Bank (ECB) Mario Draghi declared that the Spanish banks now had enough capital and were able to ensure the distribution of loans. In his opinion the two dangers hanging over the Spanish financial system ie the lack of financing and capital, have now been overcome. Mario Draghi met the head of the Spanish government, Mariano Rajoy to whom he said that "Spain was on the right path." However the adoption of a "credible fiscal plan" was a priority concluded the ECB President... [Read more](#)

France: contraction of the GDP and zero growth in 2012



The national statistics and economic studies institute (INSEE) announced on 14th February 2013 a GDP contraction in France in the fourth quarter of 2012 as well as zero growth for all of 2012. The GDP declined by 0.3% after growing by 0.1% in the third quarter. On a yearly average growth was zero in 2012 after +1.7% in 2011. The INSEE notes a decline in overall output, a further contraction in investments, a decline in foreign trade but consumption that is withstanding the storm in spite of a slight decline... [Read more](#)

The Portuguese government reviews its economic forecasts downwards



Portuguese Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho admitted on 15th February 2013 that he would be forced to review his economic forecasts downwards because of weaker external demand, whilst last year's recession was worse than anticipated. "We are ready to review our forecasts," declared the Portuguese head of government who is anticipating a 2.9% rise in exports and a GDP decline of 1%. The Bank of Portugal is already forecasting a recession of 1.9% in 2013. According to the figures published by the National Statistics Institute, the Portuguese economy contracted by 3.2% in 2012, notably due to a slowing in exports in the fourth quarter... [Read more](#)

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Recovery of British economic growth slower than anticipated



In its quarterly report on inflation published on 13th February 2013 the Bank of England deemed that inflation will not return to its target of 2% before 2016. The bank revised its inflation forecasts upwards with a 2.3% rate over the next two years, whilst in its November report it was anticipating 1.8% for the same period. The report also states that the British economy will "recover slowly but regularly" over the next three years, with the GDP not returning to its pre-crisis level before 2015... [Read more](#)

European Council :

Herman van Rompuy speaks about the agreement on the multi-annual budget



On 15th February 2013 the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy defended the multi-annual budget 2014-2020 which the 27 Heads of State and government agreed on at the European Council of 7th and 8th February last. In Mr van Rompuy's opinion, this agreement is "a good compromise for Europe as a whole" - a result of the States' budgetary constraints and also of the determination to direct investments towards growth and employment. According to the president of the Council this moderate budget "which is modern and realistic" was the only solution. The latter will present the budget agreement to the European Parliament on 18th February... [Read more](#)

Commission :

The Commission reveals the details of the tax on financial transactions



On 14th February 2013 the European Commission put forward a draft directive revealing the modality of the enhanced cooperation agreement on the Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) in which 11 European Union Member States will be taking part. The tax on financial transactions will also apply to transactions undertaken elsewhere in the world, particularly in the City of London. This tax, which is due to generate revenues of around 30 to 35 billion euros per year "will be the first tax on financial transactions applied on a regional level." This text suggests the taxation of all transactions undertaken from or towards the FTT zone at a rate of 0.1% on shares and bonds and 0.01% on derivated products... [Read more](#)

Rules and stricter supervision of the food chains



After the extraordinary meeting of agriculture ministers worried about the presence of unlabelled horsemeat in food products, the European Commission decided to step up the supervision of the processed food products' sector. Hence it is planned that stricter DNA analyses will be undertaken to detect the presence of veterinarian products in food chains. Moreover the Commission is planning to launch a month-long coordinated supervision plan in all Member States. This will lead to the analysis of all food products that indicate meat content in order to prevent all health risks. Moreover the Commission suggested new rules on 13th February 2013 that aim to improve the traceability of products... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Conclusion of the Economy and Finance Council



On 12th February 2013, as part of the European Semester the 27 Finance Ministers noted the European Commission's report on the "warning mechanism" which highlights the macro-economic imbalance of certain Member States. Fourteen Member States, as well as those under financial assistance are likely to be the focus of greater analysis. The ministers also validated the five priorities identified by the Commission in its annual assessment of growth. They recalled that the macro-economic and budgetary guidelines recommended to the States in 2012 are still valid for this year, notably the continuation of public accounts consolidation and the reduction of external imbalances. Finally they examined the 2012 Report on the viability of public finances... [Read more](#)

Decisions of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport's Council



On 15th February 2013 the 27 Education, Youth and Culture Ministers of the European Union adopted their conclusions on investment in education and training in response to the annual growth survey and the conclusions of the European Council. According to the Ministers, the Member States should create closer links between their education systems and the labour market, improve professional training, identify young people who are at risk and improve access to adult training and also promote life-long education.

Ministers reviewed the state of progress regarding the regulation establishing "Erasmus for all" and made a number of changes to the Commission's proposal. This programme should be budgeted at 19 billion euros... [Read more](#)

The EU takes up development cooperation with Mali again



On 12th February 2013 the 27 Development Ministers decided to take up development aid progressively with Mali again. It has been suspended since the coup d'état in March 2012. This move comes in response to urgent requirements of the Malian population. An envelope of around 250 million euros will be released to this effect... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Bundesbank forecasts recovery of growth in the first quarter 2013



Germany will recover growth in the first quarter of 2013 after a contraction of 0.6% of the GDP in the fourth quarter of 2012 deemed the country's central bank, the Bundesbank, in its monthly report, published on 18th February. This opinion is widely shared by economists and if this forecast is correct Germany will escape technical recession, which is defined after two successive quarters of GDP contraction. "A gradual recovery is emerging for the rest of the year, without us being able to count on an extremely strong revival in external demand," continues the Bundesbank. In 2013 the German government is counting on another slowing in GDP growth at 0.4% against 0.7% in 2012 before recovery of 1.6% in 2014... [Read more](#)

Energy Transition - a Franco-German Project



France and Germany are stepping up their cooperation in the domain of renewable energies. The Environment Ministers of both countries, Delphine Batho and Peter Altmaier, announced on 7th February 2013 in Paris the launch of a Franco-German Renewable Energy Office. In a joint declaration Mr Altmaier and Ms Batho stressed that energy transition places Germany and France before extremely similar challenges, in spite of the differences in their energy mixes. Hence the development of renewable energies "is an extremely important political goal for both countries," they said... [Read more](#)

Strengthening of Financial Rules



German Chancellor Angela Merkel declared on 16th February 2013 in a weekly video message that she intended to defend "tougher" regulation of the financial markets in the months to come. "We are going to defend a tougher regulation of the financial markets worldwide on the occasion of the G20 this weekend (in Moscow) and I shall do this same at the G20 in September," declared Ms Merkel. The Chancellor welcomed the proposal announced on 14th February 2013 in Brussels for a tax on financial transactions which 11 European countries would like to implement... [Read more](#)

Spain :

The Spanish Government reforms its local governments



The Spanish government announced on 15th February 2013 a reform targeting the functioning of the townhalls, which notably includes the suppression of the salary of 82% of local councillors" and of the mayors of small towns by which it aims to save seven billion euros by 2015. This reform will enable "significant savings" estimated at "7,129 billion euros thanks to spending cuts and savings between 2013 and 2015" declared the Budget Minister Cristobal Montoro... [Read more](#)

France :

The 3% Deficit Goal impossible to achieve by the end of 2013

In its annual report published on 12th February 2013 the Auditors



Court turns its critical eye to the way that the French government put its 2013 budget together. The goal of returning to a 3% public deficit in France "has little chance of succeeding" in 2013 declared the head of the Auditors Court, Didier Migaud. Although the report welcomes the "major structural effort achieved in 2012" totalling 1.4% of the GDP, it criticises the government for not having cut spending enough and of having counted on tax increases too much. "Three quarters of the effort made has focused on obligatory levies and a quarter on slowing expenditure. It must be re-balanced," he said, calling for "greater spending cuts". On 13th February 2013 the Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said that "growth in France will not total 3% in 2013.". [Read more](#)

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International Meeting in support of Libya



On 12th February 2013 the international meeting in support of Libya took place in Paris at the Foreign Ministry. Before the States and organisations that were represented, including the USA, UN, the Arab League, the European Union and the African Union, the Libyan Foreign Ministers, Mohammed Abdelaziz officially requested help from the western powers and neighbouring countries to make safe the country's borders. "If we want to prevent the Islamists, who have been chased out of Mail, from coming back, the borders have to be secured," he declared. A "development plan for national security" and a "development plan for the justice and rule of law" were adopted after this meeting... [Read more](#)

Italy :

The CEO of Finmeccanica resigns



The CEO of the Italian aviation and defence group, Finmeccanica, Giuseppe Orsi, arrested on 12th February 2013 for international corruption in a suspected bribery affair involving the Indian government relinquished his dual role as CEO and administrator on 15th February 2013: "With this letter I deliver my resignation as Administrator and CEO of Finmeccanica, whilst claiming and repeating the coherence of my action, which was based on the exclusive interest of Finmeccanica and its branches and also to help appease the climate which is engulfing the group," he declared... [Read more](#)

Lithuania :

Visit by the Lithuanian Prime Minister Poland



On 12th February 2013 the Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius travelled to Warsaw where he met his Polish counterpart Donald Tusk. They discussed the joint energy project LitPol Link, as well as economic cooperation between the two countries which has never been as extensive. They also discussed the preparation of the Lithuanian Presidency of the European Council that will begin on 1st July and of the situation of the Polish minority in Lithuania. The Lithuanian Prime Minister then spoke with Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski... [Read more](#)

Lithuania must revive investments according to the IMF



On 11th February 2013 the IMF deemed that Lithuania should take different steps to revive investments and revenues in order to strengthen the country's recovery. Stressing that most of the effort to consolidate the budget had been achieved on spending the IMF advised the Baltic State to increase taxes on property and cars and to improve its fiscal administration to increase its revenues. The institution also said that for growth to continue in Lithuania "investments had to recover" stressing that the removal of "administrative red tape" was a prior condition to achieve this... [Read more](#)

Slovenia :

Meeting of political parties in Ljubljana: an end to the crisis?

On 14th February 2013 the Slovenian President Borut Pahor convened



the seven parties represented in Parliament in a bid to put an end to the country's political crisis. After this meeting, in which the Prime Minister Janez Jansa took part, the Head of State declared that the leaders of the various parties had agreed to accelerate the ratification of the Membership Treaty of Croatia to the European Union, to modify the referendum rules and to adopt the reform of the labour market... [Read more](#)

USA :

A free-trade zone with the EU?



On 12th February 2013 in his speech on the State of the Union, the President of the USA, Barack Obama called for negotiations on an "ambitious" free-trade agreement with the European Union which would cover half of the world's economic output. "Free, fair trade on either side of the Atlantic would support millions of well-paid American jobs" the American head of State declared. This initiative was welcomed on 13th February 2013 in a joint declaration by the President of the Commission, José-Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and the American President, Barack Obama. "The future agreement will be a true engine for our economies. It will provide 0.5% of extra wealth for the Europeans" and "many jobs" they declared... [Read more](#)

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Kosovo :

Kosovo is celebrating the 5th anniversary of its independence



Kosovo celebrated five years of "irreversible" independence from Serbia on 17th February 2013 - it was a date marked by a relaxation in the relations with its former enemy thanks to the EU's mediation which the two nations both wanted. "The Republic of Kosovo is an irrefutable, irreversible reality," declared the Kosovar President Atifete Jahjaga...

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Vatican :

The Conclave might start before 15th March next



The Conclave, which will elect the successor to Pope Benedict XVI may start before 15th March indicated the Vatican on 16th February 2013, whilst speculation is raging about the qualities required and the origins of the future head of the Church which comprises one billion followers. The Apostolic Constitution anticipates the start of the Conclave 15 to 20 days after the "seat becomes vacant" recalled the Vatican's spokesman, Father Federico Lombardi. This time is needed to allow for the arrival in Rome of the cardinals who will be voting. "If they have all arrived there will be no reason to wait," added Father Lombardi. "Several cardinals asked about "an early Conclave" he stressed. A clause in the Constitution allows this if the college of cardinals is in favour of it... [Read more](#)

OECD :

The OECD wants to revolutionise international corporate taxation



On 12th February 2013 the OECD promised an "action plan" by the summer to prevent multi-nationals avoiding taxation. Admitting that there were loopholes in international taxation standards the diagnosis makes no concessions: "some multi-national companies use strategies that enable them to pay just 5% tax on profit whilst the smallest companies have to pay up to 30%". Although technically legal "these strategies undermine the tax base in many countries and threaten the stability of the international system," said the OECD's Secretary General Angel Gurría. The press release adds that it is "vital for all taxpayers - both private parties and businesses - to pay their fair share of taxes and that they trust in the transparency of the international fiscal system..." [Read more](#)

G20 :

Conclusions of the G20 meeting in Moscow



Russia hosted the meeting of the G20 Finance Ministers and the Central Banks on 15th and 16th February 2013 in Moscow. In their final press release the G20 countries maintained that the monetary policy, rather than serving the States' competitiveness should "continue to support economic recovery". The G20's major powers committed not to sink into an "economic war" casting aside all aggressive monetary strategy. They also said they were committed to relaxing their budgetary austerity, which is increasingly blamed for preventing world recovery. The G20 finally made a joint declaration that aims to counter a currency devaluation war... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Euro zone trade surplus in 2012



According to a press release by the European Statistics Office, Eurostat, published on 15th February 2013 the euro zone recorded an external trade surplus of 81.8 billion euros in 2012 against a deficit of 15.7 billion in 2011. In December the euro zone recorded a trade surplus of 11.7 billion euros with the rest of the world against 13 billion euros in November and 8 billion in December 2011. However the EU recorded a deficit of 0.7 billion euros in December against a deficit of 1.9 billion in November. Over 2012 as a whole the EU recorded a deficit of 104.6 billion euros with the rest of the world against a deficit of 162.7 billion euros in 2011... [Read more](#)

0.6% contraction in the GDP in the euro zone in the fourth quarter 2012



Estimates by the European Union's Statistics Office, Eurostat, published on 14th February 2013 reveal that growth in the euro zone contracted in the fourth quarter of 2012. The GDP dropped by 0.6% in the euro zone and by 0.5% in the EU in comparison with the previous quarter. Over 2012 as a whole the euro zone's GDP contracted by 0.5% and that of the EU by 0.3%... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Chagall - Between War and Peace



Between 21st February and 21st July 2013 the Museum of Luxembourg in Paris is devoting an exhibition to the artist Marc Chagall entitled "Between War and Peace". Throughout his career the artist succeeded in freeing himself of the artistic diktats of the 20th century by integrating allegory and narrative into his work, constantly reviewing themes such as his home town of Vitebsk, the Jewish tradition, the Bible, the couple, the family and the circus. Showing around 100 pieces of work the exhibition highlights the singularity with which Chagall addresses the way war and peace are represented... [Read more](#)

Picasso's early years explored in London



The Courtauld Gallery in London is hosting an exhibition entitled "Becoming Picasso: Paris 19001" until 26th May 2013. This exhibition brings together a vast collection of Picasso's work dating from 1901, which helps towards understanding the painter's artistic development at a time when he was forging his reputation in Paris. This event includes paintings from various public and private collections like the "Leaning Harlequin", "Self-portrait Yo-Picasso" or the "Child-with-Pigeon". The work "Evocation, the Burial of Casagemas" is the central work of this exhibition... [Read more](#)

A retrospective of Lichtenstein at the Tate Modern in London



From 21st February to 27th May 2013 the exhibition "Lichtenstein: a retrospective" turns its attention to the work of one of the most important artists in American pop art: Roy Lichtenstein. This exhibition is the first major retrospective in 20 years. In all, 125 pictures and sculptures will be on show in the Tate Modern in London... [Read more](#)

Paul Hansen wins the 56th edition of the World Press Photo Award

WORLD PRESS PHOTO Swede, Paul Hansen won the 56th edition of the World Press Photo Award, on 15th February 2013 - this is one of the most prestigious prizes in photo-journalism. His photograph taken in Gaza on 20th November 2012 of the funeral of two children killed in their house by an Israeli missile was elected photograph of the year 2012... [Read more](#)

Eileen Gray Retrospective at the Pompidou Centre

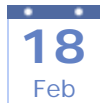


The Pompidou Centre is devoting an exhibition to Irish artist Eileen Gray from 20th February to 20th May 2013 with a unique retrospective. 70 modern creations illustrate the image of an avant-garde, cosmopolitan woman. The furniture, photos, and models enable the discovery of a woman who paid great attention to art and to the development of trends. Eileen Gray continues to inspire designers and young creators both because of her poetry and her revolutionary idea of space and her vision of furniture-objects... [Read more](#)

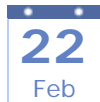
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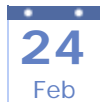
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Foreign Affairs Council



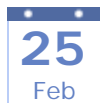
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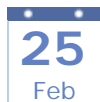
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24th and 25th February
General and Senatorial Elections in Italy



25th February
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