



## The European Tax on Financial Transactions: From principle to implementation



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Believed to be "technically possible, financially vital and morally unavoidable" by the former President of the Republic in November 2011, the project for a European tax on financial transactions came to fruition during the Economy-Finance Council on 22nd January 2013 with the launch of an enhanced cooperation agreement. The choice of this format highlights the lack of unanimity over the project drafted by the Commission, without however challenging the principle of this levy. The means for the implementation of this new measure remain to be defined.

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**Front page!** :

**The Schuman Report on Europe, State of the Union in 2013 has just been published!**



The "Schuman Report on Europe, State of the Union 2013", a reference work on Europe, has just been published. This, the 7th edition, includes an exclusive interview with José-Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission. The 27 articles all point to the same question: will 2013 be the year of recovery? This book, edited by Thierry Chopin and Michel Foucher, is being published by Lignes de Repères. It is now available in all bookshops and on the Foundation's site in paper form and for the first time a digital book will be available (e-book and tablets) very soon... [Read more](#)

Talking Europe hosts Olafur Ragnar Grimsson

As part of the partnership between the Robert Schuman Foundation

and Audiovisuel extérieur de la France (AEF), the Foundation is broadcasting its most recent programme "Talking Europe" on its site, whose guest this week is Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, the Icelandic President. Olafur Ragnar Grimsson reviews the collapse of the Icelandic banks in 2008 and its effects on Iceland. He also explains how, five years later, this little country managed to over come this crisis... [Read more](#)

## Elections :

### The Labour Party wins the general elections in Malta



The Labour Party (LP) led by Joseph Muscat made a landslide victory in the general elections that took place on 9th March in Malta. He won 54.83% of the vote and 38 seats in the Chamber of Representatives (Il-Kamra Tad-Deputati), the only chamber in Parliament (ie +4 in comparison with the previous election on 8th March 2008). He came out ahead of the Nationalist Party (PN) led by outgoing Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi who won 43.34% of the vote and 29 seats (-6). Democratic Alternative (AD), an ecologist party led by Michael Briguglio won 1.8% of the vote and failed to enter parliament as a result. Turn out lay at 93.10%... [Read more](#)

### Can outgoing President of the Republic Filip Vujanovic be beaten?



On 7th April next 515, 000 Montenegrins are being called to vote in the first round of the presidential election. Outgoing Head of State Filip Vujanovic (Socialist Democratic Union, DPS) is running for office again. He will be facing Miodrag Lekic, leader of the Democratic Front, a coalition that rallies the New Serb Democracy (NOVA), led by Andrija Mandic, the Movement for Change (PzP) led by Nebojsa Medojevic and the Pensioners', Invalids' and Social Justice Party. He will also be facing Rade Bojovic, a member of the Fair Montenegro Political Club, who is standing as an independent candidate. If no one succeeds in taking the absolute majority on 7th April, a second round will be organised on 21st April... [Read more](#)

## Financial Crisis :

### The ECB reviews its economic forecasts



On 7th March 2013 the Governors' Council of the European Central Bank (ECB) decided not to change its interest rates. The ECB has reviewed its growth forecasts in the euro zone for 2013 and 2014 downwards and has reduced its inflation estimates for 2014. The ECB is now expecting a 0.5% contraction of the GDP against a decline of 0.3% forecast to date. It is now counting on more limited growth in 2014 of 1% against a previous 1.2%. The ECB maintained its euro zone inflation forecast for 2013 at 1.6% but reduced its 2014 figure by 0.1% down to 1.3%. The monetary policy "will remain as flexible as necessary," and "the ECB will continue to offer as much liquidity as asked for by the banks" said Mario Draghi saying that the situation was still fragile in the euro zone in spite of an improvement noted over the last few months in terms of the debt crisis... [Read more](#)

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### Eurogroup Declarations on Cyprus and Greece



On 4th March 2013 the 17 euro zone Finance Ministers met within the Eurogroup and called on the Cypriot, European and international authorities to step up negotiations in view of a rapid conclusion on a protocol agreement for financial aid to Cyprus - at the same time they re-iterated their confidence in the new Cypriot President and government. Ministers also welcomed the efforts made by Greece, notably regarding state run companies and called on them to continue the budgetary reforms that have been started... [Read more](#)

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### France: unemployment up in the fourth quarter of 2012

According to a press release by the National Institute for Statistical Studies (INSEE) published on 7th March 2013, 10.2% of the French were looking for a job in the fourth quarter of 2012, a rate that had



not been seen since 1999. This is equal to 0.3 points more than in the previous quarter. Including overseas territories, unemployment totals 10.6%. The unemployment rate that measures the share of unemployed amongst the working population has been rising since mid-2011. INSEE now believes that 2.9 million people are without work in France according to the standards set by the International Labour Organisation (ILO)... [Read more](#)

#### Greece: unemployment is affecting young people and women in particular



According to figures published by the Greek Statistics Authority (Hellenic Statistical Authority EL.STAT) on 7th March 2013 more than one quarter of the Greek working population was unemployed at the end of 2012. Although these figures show a slight improvement between November and December 2012 the Greek labour market is still in a terrible state. The country has been in recession since 2008. The most affected by unemployment are still young people with nearly 6 young people out of ten under 24 (57.5%) out of work at the end of 2012. But women are also severely affected since nearly one third of them (29.3%) are without work against 24.3% of men... [Read more](#)

#### Commission :

##### Green Paper on a European Strategy for Plastic Waste



A Green Paper published on 8th March 2013 by the European Commission aims to launch structured discussion over the possibilities to improve the sustainability of plastic products during their life cycle and to reduce the impact of plastic waste on the environment. The consultation, which includes 26 questions, will last until the beginning of June 2013. Amongst the ideas are a tax on incineration. On the basis of these results the Commission will start a strategic reassessment of the entire European context in this area. In spite of five directives adopted on waste management the situation is still problematic in several countries, notably in the south of the continent where burial and incineration are still the privileged solutions... [Read more](#)

##### SME: relaxation of the most binding measures



On 7th March the European Commission announced that it wanted to help some 20 million European SME's by relaxing 10 of the most binding laws governing them. These laws involve areas as varied as the labour market, VAT, the acknowledgement of professional qualifications, procurement markets, data protection and the environment. The Commission will reassess the laws in detail to correct or abolish some areas which are the cause of superfluous red-tape for SMEs... [Read more](#)

##### New labelling to strengthen the surveillance of medicines



In line with a legal act adopted on 7th March 2013 by the European Commission an inversed black triangle will soon feature on the labels of some medicines on the EU's market. This will help patients and healthcare professionals spot medicines more easily if they are the focus of specific surveillance. According to the European Commissioner for Healthcare and Consumer Policy, Tonio Borg, "the strengthening of the patients role in the notification of side effects is an integral part of the European pharmacovigilance..." [Read more](#)

##### Brussels inflicts a 561 million euro fine on Microsoft



On 6th March 2013 the European Commission inflicted a 561 million euro fine on Microsoft for not respecting its commitments. The multinational was promising to offer users a multi-choice screen which would allow them to select the web navigator of their choice. In 2009 the Commission made this commitment legally binding for Microsoft until 2014. In the decision adopted the Commission notes that the American

company did not integrate the multi-choice screen into the Service Pack 1 of Windows between May 2011 and July 2012. 15 million Windows users in the EU have effectively been deprived of this screen over this period. Microsoft acknowledged that the screen had not been made available. It is the first time that the Commission has had to sanction a company for not respecting a decision focusing on commitments... [Read more](#)

### The launch of negotiations for a trade agreement between the EU and Thailand



On 6th March 2013 José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission and Yingluck Shinawatra, the Thai Prime Minister started negotiations in view of a free-trade agreement between the EU and Thailand. The aim is to conclude an overall agreement covering the following aspects: tariff and non-tariff barriers, services, investments, public markets, regulatory questions, competition and sustainable development. Thailand is the EU's third biggest trade partner with the ANASE. In 2012 exports from the EU to Thailand totalled 14.8 billion euros and imports from this country totalled 16.9 billion euros. The total amount of goods trade is estimated at 31.7 billion euros... [Read more](#)

### Parliament :

#### Debate in the European Parliament over the impact of the crisis on women



On 11th March 2013 the European Parliament debated a report by the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee on "the effects of the economic crisis on equality between men and women and women's rights. " The report by Elisabeth Morin-Chartier (EPP, FR) which aims to define the impact of the crisis on women's work also puts forward a certain number of measures to reduce present inequality between men and women, notably in terms of employment. The Robert Schuman Foundation publishes studies on equality between men and women in the EU. The General Manager of the Foundation, Pascale Joannin recently published a text entitled "More women in Europe?" in the Schuman Report 2013... [Read more](#)

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### Council :

#### No enlargement of the Schengen area and the establishment of the SIS II system



On 7th and 8th March 2013 the 27 Interior and Justice Ministers decided to delay a possible decision to enlarge the Schengen area to Bulgaria and Romania until the end of the year. They adopted two legislative acts relative to SIS II. The new system will be in service on 9th April. They spoke of the Commission's proposal for smart border controls, highlighting new technologies. They also debated a European framework for data protection. They assessed the Commission's proposals to strengthen the criminal aspect of the fight to counter counterfeiting but the definition of common minimum sentences was not approved by all delegations. They finally approved the agreement with the European Parliament which enables the provision of a common rights base to victims across the EU... [Read more](#)

#### Banking Regulation and support to Ireland and Portugal



On 5th March 2013 the 27 Finance Ministers approved the main guidelines of the agreement with the European Parliament regarding rules on banks' capital. This agreement aims to replace existing rules in order to implement the recommendations set down by the G20 in the so-called Basel II agreement. This agreement with the Parliament also anticipates the limitation of bankers' bonuses. Ministers also looked into the possibility of extending the maturity of the loans granted to Ireland and to Portugal in order to facilitate the reimbursement of their debt; they also asked the Troika to act accordingly... [Read more](#)

#### Sanctions against Iran

On 11th March 2013 the 27 Foreign Affairs Ministers approved the extension of the EU's restrictive measures against Iran by a further twelve months in response to "serious human rights infringements";



they stepped up the measure slightly by adding nine more people to the black list, which now comprises 87 names. The European leaders decided to freeze the assets of an organisation responsible for Human Rights infringements. Ministers also called for the next elections in Pakistan to be impeccable in order to foster a peaceful, democratic political transition; they offered the EU's support to this end. They also asked for violence perpetrated against ethnic, religious and sexual minorities to cease. They encouraged the political, diplomatic and social reforms undertaken by Pakistan and said that it should continue along this path... [Read more](#)

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#### Germany :

##### [Angela Merkel and Donald Tusk at the CeBIT show in Hannover](#)



"New technologies are a vital sector for the future," declared German Chancellor Angela Merkel in her inaugural speech at the CeBIT show on 4th March 2013 in Hannover. The CeBIT is the biggest show of new technologies in the world, whose guest country of honour this year is Poland. "We must merge the real economy and ITs. All of Europe is lagging behind in this matter," declared the Chancellor. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk stressed that "in Poland 15 minutes were necessary to create a company. What we need in Europe is creative optimism.".. [Read more](#)

#### Austria :

##### [Resignation of Austrian Defence Minister](#)



The Austrian Defence Minister Norbert Darabos resigned on 5th March to become secretary of the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) just seven months before the general elections planned for 29th September. Norbert Darabos has been replaced by Gerald Klug, who was the head of the SPÖ's parliamentary group at the Upper Chamber of Parliament, the Bundesrat... [Read more](#)

#### Belgium :

##### [Resignation of the Belgian Finance Minister](#)



On 5th March 2013 the Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Steven Vanackere resigned after a scandal erupted over the financial links between the Belfius bank and a Christian Democratic movement close to this Flemish member of government. This resignation comes at a difficult time for the Belgian government coalition which is facing the rise of the Flemish nationalists, problems with Belfius (ex-Dexia) and European budgetary requirements. He has been replaced by Koen Geens, a lawyer and professor of company law... [Read more](#)

#### Bulgaria :

##### [The Bulgarian President declares that he can manage national crises](#)



In Brussels on 6th March 2013 Bulgarian President Rosen Plevneliev declared that his country had the necessary resources to enable an increase spending in social programmes designed to tackle the political, social and economic crisis in Bulgaria. He notably qualified his country as "an island of budgetary discipline" with a deficit of 0.5% in 2012 and a forecast deficit of 1.3% in 2013. Brussels expressed its hope for a "stable, fully operational" government in the wake of early elections that are planned for 12th May next in order to continue major reforms in the country... [Read more](#)

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#### France :

##### [France: five billion euros savings to be made](#)

Together French Ministers will have to find five billion additional euros in savings in 2014 according to guidelines set out in a letter dated 8th March, addressed to them from Matignon as a run up to tough



budgetary discussions. French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault asked ministers in his letter to pin-point five billion euros in further savings in 2014." This guideline confirms our commitment to stabilising public accounts for the country's recovery," he said in a press release... [Read more](#)

#### Poland :

##### A. Merkel and F. Hollande guests at the Visegrad Group in Warsaw



On 6th March 2013 French President François Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel were guests at the Visegrad Group Summit (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia). The agreement on the European budget 2014-2020, Economic and Monetary Union as well as competitiveness and EU growth were addressed during this meeting. However the issue of European defence was the focus of discussions. The six leaders repeated that they wanted to step up European defence means and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). They also spoke of the need to pool military and defence resources. At the same time Defence Ministers published a joint declaration for the development of European Defence... [Read more](#)

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#### Czech Republic :

##### Investiture of new Czech President Milos Zeman



Milos Zeman was sworn in on 8th March 2013 at the Vladislav Hall of the Castle of Prague and thereby became the third head of the Czech Republic. He is taking over from Vaclav Klaus and is the first president to be elected by direct universal suffrage. His mandate is for five years... [Read more](#)

#### Slovenia :

##### Agreement between Slovenia and Croatia



On 11th March 2013 in the presence of the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, the outgoing Head of the Slovenian government, Janez Jansa and Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic signed the agreement that has brought an end to the interminable conflict between the two countries over the distribution of assets of the Ljubljanska Banka dating back to the time of the former Yugoslavia, which was delaying Croatia's accession to the EU planned to become effective on July 1st 2013... [Read more](#)

##### Reform of the Labour Market in Slovenia



The Slovenian Parliament adopted two bills on 5th March 2013 that were put forward by outgoing Prime Minister Janez Jansa's government. These are designed to reform the labour market and make it more flexible and competitive. The two bills were approved by 68 of the 83 MPs in Parliament which comprises 90 seats. No MPs present voted against the texts. This labour market reform aims to facilitate long term contracts for young people and to encourage companies to take people on by relaxing dismissal rules. It also sets a maximum of 25% of the staff being temps and plans for stricter measures in the event of non-payment of social contributions by employers... [Read more](#)

#### Sweden :

##### The Swedish Parliament ratifies the European Budgetary Pact



On 7th March 2013 the Swedish Parliament ratified the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG), 251 votes in support, 23 against. This text introduces the "golden rule" on public finances and automatic sanctions in the event of any excesses. Sweden is the 19th Member State to ratify the text signed by 25 governments in the Union. The Robert Schuman Foundation has published an explanatory paper on the budgetary pact as well as a table on its site showing the ratifications per country of

**Moldova :**

**Moldovan government goes into minority**



On 8th March 2013 Moldovan Prime Minister Vlad Filat handed in his government's resignation. This follows a no-confidence vote by parliament on 5th March by 54 of the 101 MPs, several of whom belong to the European Integration Alliance in power. The fall of the Moldovan government opens a period of political instability in the country and compromises its European aspirations. Indeed Moldova was hoping to sign an association agreement with the EU during the Eastern Partnership Summit in November 2013. Moldovan President Nicolae Timofti now has 45 days to propose a new Prime Minister to the MPs... [Read more](#)

**Vatican :**

**The Conclave will start on 12th March**



On 8th March 2013 the Vatican press office announced the 8th general cardinals' congregation for the election of the successor to Benoit XVI on 12th March 2013. The "pro-eligendo Pontifice" will be celebrated in the morning in the Saint-Pierre Basilica and in the afternoon the cardinals will enter the conclave says the press release... [Read more](#)

**Council of Europe :**

**Response to the dismissal of a Ukrainian opposition MP**



On 7th March 2013 the co-rapporteurs of the monitoring committee at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) said they were extremely concerned and disappointed after the dismissal of a Ukrainian opposition MP Serhiy Vlasenko in a decision delivered on the previous day by the Ukrainian High Administrative Court. "This raises the spectre of punishment inflicted on Mr Vlasenko because he is a political ally and legal advisor to former imprisoned Prime Minister Yulia Tymochenko", said the rapporteurs... [Read more](#)

**IMF :**

**The IMF "open" to an adjustment in the aid programme to Ireland**



On 8th March 2013 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced in Dublin by way of its General Director Christine Lagarde, that it was "open" to an adjustment to the terms of the financial assistance programme to Ireland in order to help the country settle the situation and make its final return to the markets. "We have an open mind over a number of questions, terms and conditions for an exit strategy (an aid plan) and going as far as a loans adjustment," she notably declared. She also welcomed Ireland's work that serves as a model amongst countries under assistance in terms of reviving the economy... [Read more](#)

**Eurostat :**

**GDP contraction**



On March 6th 2013 Eurostat confirmed that the euro zone's GDP had contracted by 0.6% and that of the EU by 0.5% in the fourth quarter of 2012, in comparison with the previous quarter. Over one year the contraction totalled 0.9% and 0.6% respectively... [Read more](#)

**The EU recorded a current trade surplus of 34.1 billion euros**



On 8th March Eurostat indicated that the EU had recorded a current trade surplus of 34.1 billion euros in the fourth quarter of 2012, which is a rise of nearly 10 billion euros in comparison with the same period one year ago; this is notably due to a surplus of 36.9 billion in services and 5.1 billion in the goods trade... [Read more](#)

### One third of women with a young child work part time



On 8th March Eurostat published a selection of data on women's employment and on reconciling professional and family life in the EU. In 2011 one third of executives in the EU were women. In all Member States there were less women than men executives, with the highest share of women executives being in Latvia (45%), Hungary (41%) and in France (40%) and the lowest numbers were in Cyprus (15%), Greece (23%) and in Malta (24%). Part time work is a means of reconciling work and family life affecting mainly women in 2011. 32% of women aged 25 to 54 who are in work and who have children under 6 years old work part time whilst amongst men in work the share is much lower (5%)... [Read more](#)

### Eurobarometer :

#### Women and male/female inequality in the crisis



On 8th March the European Parliament published a survey on male/female inequality in the crisis. Undertaken amongst 25,556 citizens from the 27 Member States this survey reveals that 38% believe that wage inequality is the one that remains between men and women. Male/female inequality seems to have worsened with the crisis since nearly one European in three believes that the crisis has strengthened wage inequality (30%) and increased the difficulties experienced by women in reconciling family and professional life (30%). The fight to counter inequalities are due to be the focus of European elections in 2014. Hence 21% of those interviewed believe that the candidates in the elections must give priority to fighting wage inequality and 16% believe that violence against women and the difficulties experienced by women in reconciling family and professional life should be priorities... [Read more](#)

#### Citizens and Participatory Democracy



According to a Eurobarometer survey European citizens believe overall that NGOs have a local, national and European role to play since they are the bearers of strong values. However the study reveals a gulf between the north and the south of Europe, the latter being sceptical about the interest of NGOs. Only a minority of Europeans are active within these organisations. The signature of petitions is widespread. 70% of citizens believe that local and national elections are the best way to influence political decisions, and 50% think this about European elections... [Read more](#)

### Studies/Reports :

#### "Agenda 2010, a model for France?"



The Centre for Information and Research on Contemporary Germany (CIRAC) has published a study by Bert Rürup entitled "Agenda 2010, a model for France?" The author, a professor in economy and former chair of the "Council of Experts" (2005-2009) analyses the German structural reforms, known as "Agenda 2010" and the lessons that France might learn from it... [Read more](#)

#### Report by the World Economic Forum on competitiveness in tourism



The World Economic Forum published its fifth report on competitiveness in the travel and tourism sectors on 7th March 2013. France, the world's leading destination in terms of the numbers of foreign travellers (more than 81 million in 2011) dropped from 3rd to 7th position. The two leaders in the world ranking remain Switzerland and Germany, whilst third place is now occupied by Austria, which supplanted France. Spain also has become more attractive over the last two years rising from 8th to 4th place. The UK rose from 7th to 5th place... [Read more](#)

### Culture :



### Art Fair in Maastricht



The 2013 TEFAF, believed to be the biggest art and antiques fair in the world, will be taking place from 15th to 24th March 2013 in Maastricht. Nearly 260 art dealers from 20 countries will be bringing their best collections together during this international fair. An exhibition of 15 rare Van Gogh drawings lent by the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam is being held on this occasion... [Read more](#)

### "The Medici: people, power and passion"



The Reiss-Engelhorn Museum of Mannheim is devoting an exhibition to one of the most famous families in the world: the Medici. This family's name is closely linked to the Renaissance, power, wealth and to the promotion of the arts. They profoundly affected the town of Florence and Europe as a whole for over three and a half centuries. The exhibition is on until 28th July 2013... [Read more](#)

### Impressionists and landscapes at the Thyssen Museum of Madrid



Until 12th May 2013 the Thyssen Museum of Madrid is presenting an exhibition devoted to the landscapes painted by the Impressionists, with around one hundred pictures signed by the greatest masters of this school and their predecessors on show. The exhibition is called "Impressionism and Open Air Painting, from Corot to Van Gogh" and brings together world famous paintings on loan from the Louvre and the Metropolitan Museum of New York... [Read more](#)

### Monet, Renoir ... Chagall. Journeys in the Mediterranean



Until 5th January 2014 the Carrières de Lumières at the Baux-de-Provence are putting on a show entitled "Monet, Renoir ... Chagall. Journeys around the Mediterranean". Organised as part of the Marseilles-Provence 2013 European Capital of Culture this multi-media installation takes visitors on a walk through the quarries following 16 major artists including Monet, Signac, Matisse and Chagall on the theme of the Mediterranean... [Read more](#)

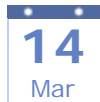
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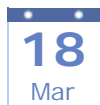
11th March  
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Foreign Affairs Council - General Affairs Council - Transport, Telecommunications, Energy Council



11th and 14th March  
Strasbourg  
Plenary Session - European Parliament



14th-15th March  
Brussels  
European Council



18th and 19th March  
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