



The Future of Retirement Pensions in the European Union



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More than 10 years after the introduction of the "open coordination method" that was supposed to launch a process whereby the various national retirement systems would draw closer together, it has to be admitted that the retirement systems in Europe still differ greatly in the way they function and in terms of their financial situation.

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Front page! :

Order the Schuman Report on the State of the Union



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The "Schuman Report 2013 on the State of the Union" was presented to the European Parliament in Brussels on 5th June 2013 with a number of personalities in attendance. This the seventh edition in French (fourth edition in English) is available in paper on our internet site in French and English and in digital format for e-books and

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"Talking Europe" hosts Ioannis Kasoulides



As part of the partnership between the Robert Schuman Foundation and the Audiovisuel extérieur de la France (AEF), the Foundation is broadcasting its most recent programme "Talking Europe" on its site, whose guest this week is Ioannis Kasoulides, the Cypriot Foreign Minister. Cyprus is in the midst of a serious crisis which led to the closure of its banks for 10 days and even to the bankruptcy of one of them. Europe flew to the country's aid with a bail-out plan of 10 billion euros. In Mr Kasoulides' opinion the Cypriots have now emerged from their state of shock... [Read more](#)

Cultures and Policies in Europe



The Institut d'histoire sociale is organising a seminar entitled "L'Europe: cultures et politiques" on 24th June. The idea of European culture as well as the challenge made by communitarianism to the EU will be one of the main themes addressed. Jean-Dominique Giuliani, Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation and Magali Balent, Project Manager will be members of the panel of speakers. It is obligatory to enrol... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

The ECB always prepared to support the euro zone



On 6th June 2013 the European Central Bank decided to maintain its main rate at 0.5%. Moreover it reviewed its growth forecast for the euro zone in 2013 downwards (from 0.1% to -0.6%), and raised it for 2014 (to 1.1% against 1%). Mario Draghi, the ECB's president reiterated that he wanted to maintain a flexible monetary policy "for as long as necessary", as well as a consolidation policy for the financial markets. He declared that real banking union needed the rapid implementation of supervisory and also single resolution mechanisms. Moreover he stressed that the granting of extra time to Member States for them to reach their set goals in terms of reducing deficits and public debts should be reserved for exceptional circumstances... [Read more](#)

The Bundesbank reduces its growth forecasts for Germany



On 7th June 2013 the German central bank (Bundesbank) reduced its growth forecasts slightly for Germany in 2013 and 2014 believing however that prospects were looking better for Europe's leading economy after a difficult end to 2012. The Bundesbank is now forecasting on GDP growth of 0.3% in 2013 against an earlier 0.4% and 1.5% in 2014 against previous 1.9%... [Read more](#)

Spain: decrease in the number of unemployed



On 4th June 2013 the Spanish Labour Ministry announced that the number of unemployed had decreased by 98,265 in May in comparison with April. Employers who are preparing for the summer tourist season are now more inclined to take people on. On 3rd June the ministry announced that the total number of workers registered for unemployment benefit lay at 4.89 million. Spain has been in recession for the last four years with its economy experiencing problems in recovering after the collapse of its real estate sector. The Spanish unemployment rate reach a record height in the first quarter totalling 27.2%... [Read more](#)

France: unemployment rises to 10.4%



In a press release dated 6th June 2013 INSEE published its unemployment estimates for the first quarter of 2013. The unemployment rate in mainland France, according to ILO standards, is estimated at 10.4% after 10.1% in the fourth quarter of 2012. This is the highest level since 1998 whilst the absolute record of 10.8% was achieved in 1994 and 1997. According to the latest forecasts by INSEE unemployment is due to continue to rise to reach 10.6% of the working population by mid-2013 and 11% if the overseas departments are included... [Read more](#)

Hungary emerges from recession



Hungary recorded a GDP increase of 0.7% in the first quarter of 2013 in comparison with the previous quarter, and therefore has emerged from recession according to final figures published on 6th June 2013 by the Central Statistics Bureau (KSH). In the fourth quarter of 2012 the Hungarian economy contracted by 0.9%. The country entered into recession in the second quarter of 2012 and the GDP contracted by 1.7% over the entire year... [Read more](#)

Contraction of the Portuguese GDP in the first quarter of 2013



According to an INE estimate published on 5th June 2013, Portugal's GDP contracted by 0.4% in comparison with the previous quarter and by 4% over one year. This contraction can be notably explained by a contraction in domestic demand totalling 6.3% this quarter against 4.3% in the last quarter of 2012. The Portuguese Parliament approved a revised budget on 7th June forecasting further austerity measures to compensate for those rejected in April by the Constitutional Court and to enable the respect of the budgetary goals set by the international creditors. "This revised budget includes measures that will help us to respect the deficit goal of 5.5% of the GDP at the end of the year, " stressed the Finance Minister Vitor Gaspar. They notably plan for a reduction in the functioning budgets of all ministries, an extension of civil servants' working hours from 35 to 40 hours per week as well as an increase in their social contributions. The government also intends to do away with 30,000 civil servants' posts out of a total 700,000... [Read more](#)

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Commission :

More measures to counter cigarette smuggling



On 6th June 2013 the European Commission adopted measures that aim to step up the fight against the illegal trade of tobacco, particularly cigarette smuggling. This activity deprives Member States of more than 10 billion euros in revenues yearly which is equivalent to the total of unpaid taxes. Hence the strategy puts forward specific action in four areas: reduction of incentives to smuggle cigarettes; improvement in the security of the supply chain; stricter control of the application of legislation on the part of the fiscal and customs authorities; heavier sanctions regarding smuggling activities... [Read more](#)

Anti-Dumping tax on Chinese solar panels



On 4th June 2013 the European Commission approved the introduction of anti-dumping taxes on solar panels from China. These taxes -which will be introduced progressively and which might reach 47.6% in two months time if the Commission does not come to an agreement with China - aim to protect European industry in the face of the low prices practiced by China. After this decision by the Commission the Chinese government declared that it was "firmly against" such taxes and the Chinese Trade Minister announced on 6th June 2013 to have launched an "anti-dumping, anti-subsidy procedure" targeting European wines and cars... [Read more](#)

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Third six-monthly report on the functioning of the Schengen Area



In its third sixth-monthly report on the functioning of the Schengen Area the European Commission indicates that overall the functioning rules have been respected which means that no particular measures need to be taken. Only Norway had occasionally controlled its borders on the occasion of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize. Moreover the information system on visas continues to develop in Africa and is soon due to involve South America and Asia. Over one year irregular crossings of borders have declined by over 50% and these concern Italy and Greece in the main... [Read more](#)

Improvements in economic statistics



On 7th June 2013 the European Commission is putting forward new rules to frame and improve the drafting of statistics used in macro-economic imbalance procedures. Algirdas Semeta, the European Commissioner for Statistics hopes that "the new rules put forward will enable the inclusion of macro-economic indicators in the rules that are to be as sound as the data used to assess the level of public debt and deficit. These new rules will help strengthen economic governance of the EU." The statistics will fall in line with those used in excessive deficit procedures: the Member States will have to provide statistics within the given deadlines together with their methods of calculation to Eurostat which will have the power to monitor and correct... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Audition of Future Croatian Commissioner



On 4th June 2013 Neven Mimica, candidate for the position of European Commissioner for Consumer Protection was auditioned by the European Parliament which invited him to speak on the EU's consumer policy and on his projects in this area. During his speech the future commissioner promised to focus on "the proposals concerning product safety, the monitoring of the markets and access to a basic bank account." After the three hour audition some MPs said they were unhappy with the "vague" answers given by the Croatian candidate. The final position of the Parliament will be voted on in plenary session in Strasbourg on 12th June... [Read more](#)

Council :

Conclusions on asylum, the rule of law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights



Th 27 Justice and Interior Ministers agreed on 6th and 7th June 2013 on the general guidelines for the draft directive relative to the protection of the Union's financial interests (PFI). Based on these guidelines negotiations now have to start between the Council and Parliament. They then started a second debate on guidelines governing the European Account Preservation Order. They adopted conclusions relative to fundamental rights and the rule of law before being informed of the progress in EU accession to the European Convention of Human Rights. Finally they adopted the Union's new action plan on drugs for the period 2013-2016... [Read more](#)

Conclusions on Digital Strategy and Energy



On 6th and 7th June 2013 as they debated the single telecommunications market the 27 Telecommunications Ministers prepared the October European Council devoted to innovation and the digital agenda. They also stressed the importance of stepping up the security of electronic communications. The 27 Energy Ministers said that the measures to implement in order to achieve the goals set by the European Council in 2014 and 2015 regarding the completion of the European energy market. They notably insisted on the need to improve the role and security of consumers as well as helping energy transition... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

EU-Russia Summit



On 3rd and 4th June 2013 in Yekaterinburg during the 31st EU-Russia Summit, Russian President Vladimir Putin insisted on the boom in trade between the EU and Russia. The President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso declared that both parties had made "real progress as part of the new overall agreement between the EU and Russia". Both sides signed a new cooperation agreement on the control of drugs... [Read more](#)

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Germany :

Berlin "shocked" by the conviction of an NGO in Egypt



On 4th June an Egyptian court in Cairo convicted around forty Egyptian and foreign employees of an NGO including two members of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation to prison sentences for illegal work and illicit funding. The German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said he was "shocked" by the fate reserved for the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and its employees and promised to support the Foundation in its appeal trial. This conviction is "totally unacceptable from our point of view" and the sentences delivered "are completely out of proportion" criticised the German government's spokesperson, Steffen Seibert... [Read more](#)

Spain :

Mariano Rajoy visits Brussels

The Spanish head of government, Mariano Rajoy visited Brussels on



5th June 2013 together with some of his ministers. He notably spoke with the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso. The two men agreed on the need to step up European integration and to continue implementing reforms both from a national and European point of view. Regarding Spain Mr Rajoy stressed that a great deal of progress has been achieved to correct the country's economic imbalances although a great deal still has to be done and that many reforms had been introduced since he entered office as head of government. He plans to reform the Spanish tax system next year and the retirement system at the end of the year... [Read more](#)

Hungary :

Hungary withdraws two controversial amendments



On 7th June 2013 Hungary announced that it was going to withdraw two controversial amendments made previously to its Constitution with the aim of reassuring Brussels and to avoid possible European sanctions. Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi declared during a press conference that a specific tax on the population to be implemented if Budapest had to pay a fine in the wake of the an EU infringement procedure was to be withdrawn from the Hungarian Constitution. Another contested modification - that of the right given to the president of the National Justice Office to transfer a trial over to a more conciliatory judge after the start of a trial - which is deemed to be an infringement of the principle of legal independence - is also to be removed from the Constitution... [Read more](#)

Italy :

18th months to complete reform in Italy



On 5th June 2013 the head of the Italian government Enrico Letta declared that he was allowing 18 months for the completion of institutional reforms in Italy. "18 months is the deadline I have set myself, I promised parliament and if there is no final result I shall pay the price," he maintained. The draft bill adopted by the Council of Ministers sets a calendar that lays out stages, the last of which is due to fall in October 2014. However it does not give any detail of the reforms that are to be prepared by a "Committee of Experts" and a "Committee of 40". The "Commission of Experts" comprises 35 people, mainly university professors in law and political science and it will play a purely consultative role. The "Committee of 40" comprises members of the Constitutional Affairs Committee from the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies... [Read more](#)

Latvia :

Greenlight for Latvia's entry into the euro zone



On 5th June 2013 the European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB) published their convergence reports for Latvia which assess whether the country meets the necessary conditions for the adoption of the single currency. The two institutions gave their greenlight for Latvia's entry into the euro zone on January 1st 2014. However the ECB notably warns against "inflation" linked to the high volatility of consumer prices observed over the last ten years. It also points to the high volume of foreign savings in the banks which may pose a "threat to financial stability". The report will be submitted to the European Parliament and the euro zone governments. The latter will decide formally about this membership during a meeting planned for July... [Read more](#)

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UK :

Support for the creation of SME's



On the occasion of the event organised to celebrate the contribution made by SME's to the British economy, Prime Minister David Cameron declared on 5th June that all recommendations included in a recent report on businesses would be implemented. These recommendations notably aim to facilitate the creation of SMEs by enabling entrepreneurs to receive more advice and aid and by removing some red-tape... [Read more](#)

Slovenia :

Former Slovenian Prime Minister convicted



On 5th June 2013 former Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Jansa and two co-accused were convicted of corruption in the "Patria Trial", a tank armaments contract with Finland. The Court of Ljubljana said that Mr Jansa had been sentenced to two years in prison. However the sentence is not yet final and the defence has indicated that it will appeal at a higher level. The former Prime Minister was convicted of corruption for the signature in 2006 of the biggest arms deal ever made by the country totalling 278 million euros with the Finnish company Patria ... [Read more](#)

Norway :

Euro-Arctic Cooperation Summit



During the Euro-Arctic Summit on 3rd and 4th June 2013 the Finnish, Icelandic, Russian and Norwegian Prime Ministers as well as the Swedish and Danish Foreign Ministers, together with the European Commission's Vice-President said they wanted to guarantee the economic and social development of the region's competitiveness within Europe. A declaration re-iterating the principles of Euro-Arctic Cooperation and supporting the strengthening of this - notably in the economic, trade, educational and transport areas was adopted... [Read more](#)

Space :

Lift off of Ariane5 to supply the International Space Station



The fourth European supply vessel of the International Space Station was sent into space on 5th June 2013 on board Ariane 5. Lift off took place at the Guianese space centre. The ATV-4, christened 'Albert Einstein', will reach the ISS, with link-up being planned for 15th June. By that time the teams in the control centre will have to monitor the ATV trajectory. The ATV-4 provides astronauts with material, food as well as fuel and oxygen... [Read more](#)

NATO :

Meeting of NATO countries' Defence Ministers



The Defence Ministers of NATO countries who met in Brussels on 4th and 5th June 2013 talked about cyber defence and examined the projects to reform Georgia in terms of defence. With their counterparts who contribute to the ISAF (International Security and Assistance Force) which operates in Afghanistan, they approved the detailed idea of the new mission that NATO will lead in Afghanistan in order to train, advise and help the Afghan security forces after 2014... [Read more](#)

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NATOs Secretary General in Poland



NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen travelled to Poland on 6th June 2013 to meet Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski, Defence Minister Tomasz Siemoniak and Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski. During a press conference he lauded Poland's "courage and devotion" in NATO's operations, notably in Afghanistan. The Polish President invited Mr Rasmussen to attend the "Steadfast Jazz" exercise that will be taking place in Lithuania, Latvia and Poland in November and which will comprise a major training event for NATO's reaction force... [Read more](#)

IMF :

Reduction by half of Germany's growth forecast



The IMF reduced its growth forecast for Germany on 3rd June 2013 from 0.6% to 0.3% this year, but it forecasts that Europe's biggest economy will recover in the second semester 2013. Although recovery in activity is expected in the second half of the year "thanks to sound

domestic fundamentals", "growth in 2013 is due to be weak", stressed the economists at the IMF. "The continued weakness of investments is impeding greater recovery, mainly because of the uncertainty surrounding perspectives and policy in the euro zone in spite of the progress already achieved," explained the IMF, adding that this also weighed on German exports in the region... [Read more](#)

Risk of Stagnation in France



On 3rd June 2013 the IMF said it believed that the recession will total 0.2% this year in France (against -0.1% in its previous forecasts published mid-April). Growth will only start slowly again in 2014, totalling +0.8%. This outlook "leads us to believe that unemployment will continue to rise and that it will be difficult to reverse this trend before the end of the year," declared the IMF's head of mission in France, Edward Gardner. "In this context the challenge to the general policy is to restore competitiveness and revive growth," explained the financial institutions experts. In this context the IMF notably calls for greater competition in the goods and services markets and a reduction in labour costs of poorly qualified workers... [Read more](#)

IMF Report on the first bail-out to Greece



On 5th June 2013 the International Monetary Fund published a report on the conclusions of the first bail-out of 110 billion euros granted to Greece to save it from economic bankruptcy in May 2010. This report highlights the continuing disagreements between the members of the troika (IMF, EU, ECB). It also stresses the lack of experience and competence as well as the lack of any "clear division of tasks". "Market confidence has not been re-established (...) and the economy is facing greater recession than forecast," believes the organisation. These conclusions come just a few days after a further payment of 1.7 billion euros on 31st May last... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

Surplus of current accounts



On 7th June 2013 Eurostat indicated that the EU had recorded a surplus in its current account totalling 21.8 billion euros for the first quarter of 2013. The surplus totalled 29.8 billion euros in terms of services... [Read more](#)

GDP Contraction in Europe



On 5th June 2013 Eurostat published the GDP figures for the first quarter of 2013. In comparison with the previous quarter the figures are down by 0.2% in the euro zone and by 0.1% in the EU as a whole. In comparison with the first quarter of 2012 the GDP contracted by 1.1% in the euro zone and by 0.7% in the EU. As a comparison the US witnessed growth of 0.6% in its GDP in comparison with the previous quarter and by 1.8% in comparison with the first quarter 2012... [Read more](#)

Foreign Work Force



According to a publication by Eurostat on 7th June 2013 foreign workers comprised 7% of all employees in the EU in 2012. This study also shows that the unemployment rate is lower amongst nationals than amongst foreign citizens, especially amongst those from non-EU Member States... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Slowing of growth in world agricultural production

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) and the FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation) published their report on 6th June 2013 that focuses on the agricultural outlook for the period 2013-2022. According to this document the world's agricultural



production is due to grow by 1.5% per year on average for the next decade, in comparison with 2.1% from 2003 to 2012. Together with greater restrictions in resources and pressure placed on the environment, the lack of additional agricultural areas and the rise in production costs are the main factors that explain this trend... [Read more](#)

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New report on work in the world



On 3rd June 2013 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) published a report on work in the world in 2013. Most emerging and developing countries experienced a rise in employment and a reduction in inequalities of income. However as far as world unemployment is concerned the ILO is forecasting a rise from 200 million to 208 million in 2015. Inequalities in income in the advanced economies have increased over the last two years... [Read more](#)

Report on Food and Feed



The annual report on the European rapid alert system on food and feed (RASFF) published on 10th June 2013 revealed that in 2012 nearly 50% of the notifications concerned the rejection of food and feed for animals on the EU's borders due to the dangers they represented for food safety. The RASFF that was launched nearly 30 years ago plays a decisive role in guaranteeing European citizens a high level of food safety by facilitating the cross-border movement of information between the competent national authorities... [Read more](#)

Culture :

The cultural exception in non-negotiable



On the initiative of Commissioner Karel de Gucht the European Commission adopted a draft negotiation mandate that integrates the audiovisual and cinematographic services in the trade talks that are about to start with the USA. On France's request, which has rallied 14 countries to the cause, the European Parliament has asked that cultural goods and services not be part of the negotiation mandate with Washington as put forward by the European Commission. From 18th April to 5th June 2013 a petition entitled "the cultural exception is non-negotiable" was launched. It has been addressed to the European Commission and comprises 6,882 signatures so far... [Read more](#)

Art Fair in Basel



From 13th to 16th 2013 300 galleries from the world over are presenting the contemporary art fair of Basel including works of art by over 4000 artists. All types of art are represented: from paintings to videos, photography, theatre, sculptures and installations. Moreover seminars, films and debates between artists are being organised daily... [Read more](#)

20th International Theatre Festival Sibiu



The 20th international theatre festival of Sibiu is taking place until 16th June 2013. On this occasion 25,000 artists from 50 countries will be presenting over 300 cultural events in around 60 different venues in the town, (churches, historical sites, theatres). The festival named as the "third most important in Europe" by the European Commission (after the Festival of Edinburgh and Avignon) will focus this year on the theme of "dialogue"... [Read more](#)

The "Grand Atelier du Midi"

The exhibition "Le Grand Atelier du Midi", launched as part of the Marseilles-Provence 2013 European Capital of Culture, will be taking



place from 13th June to 13th October 2013. Designed in two parts this exhibition is being presented at the Longchamp Palace in Marseilles and at the Granet Museum of Aix-en-Provence. The exhibition in Aix has been designed around Paul Cezanne and the one in Marseilles focuses on the influence of Vincent van Gogh. Nearly 200 works are on show, with artists as diverse as Paul Signac, Georges Braque, Claude Monet and Henri Matisse, which try to show how the "Midi" was a fabulous laboratory for the conception of modern painting... [Read more](#)

"Only what is not is possible"



From 8th June to 28th July 2013 the Folkwang Museum of Essen is inviting artists to create new works that go beyond the limits set by the framework of the picture and which modify the perception of the exhibition area. This work is marked by an opening of mind and thought. Franz Ackermann, Cornelia Baltes and Niele Toroni are amongst the artists on show... [Read more](#)

Giuseppe Penone in Versailles



For its annual contemporary art event the Château of Versailles will be hosting Giuseppe Penone from 11th June to 30th October 2013. His sculptures, some of which have been especially created for the exhibition in Versailles are mainly on show to the public along the Great Perspective and in the Star Grove. The artist, the leader of the Arte Povera, has set the pace in the gardens of Le Nôtre with his sculptures of trees in which plant and mineral mix to reveal their essence... [Read more](#)

"Moments in History - 1930-1946"



Until September 1st 2013 the "Kunstfoyer" of Munich is devoting an exhibition to the work of Margaret Bourke-White, one of the pioneers of photography. The exhibition entitled "Moments in History - 1930-1946" brings together more than 150 photographs, letters, publications and magazines a great share of which were made during the 1930's and 40's in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Germany , the UK and Italy... [Read more](#)

Chagall before the Mirror



As part of the 40th anniversary of the national Marc Chagall Museum of Nice is devoting an exhibition to the artist entitled "Chagall devant le miroir, autoportraits, couples et apparitions". From 16th June to 7th October 2013 this exhibition, totally devoted to the artist on the theme of the self-portrait, brings together nearly one hundred pieces of work, paintings and drawings including many unique pieces. This exhibition enables an approach to all aspects of this work which is significant primarily because of its volume. It enables an understanding of how Chagall aimed to assert his difference as a religious artist. It raises the question of how the self-portrait can be a means to privileged access to the real artist and the meaning of his work... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



10th June
Luxembourg
Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council



10th to 13th June
Strasbourg

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Jun

European Parliament Plenary Session

14
Jun

14th June
Luxembourg
Foreign Affairs Council

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Jun

17th and 18th June
Lough Erne
G8 Summit

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