



Women's Europe: for parity in the newly elected institutions of the European Union in 2014



Author: Pascale Joannin

On the occasion of Women's Day on 8th March the Robert Schuman Foundation has published a text by Pascale Joannin entitled "Women's Europe: for parity in the newly elected institutions of the European Union in 2014". 2014 is a decisive year for Europe because all of the institutions will be elected anew (Parliament, Commission, High Representative for Foreign Affairs, President of the European Council). It is an opportunity for the European Union to implement the measures set out in the treaties which provide for equality between men and women: two women out of the four as the head of the institutions and 14 commissioners out of the 28.

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Front page! :

The EPP's Study Days



The EPP's Study Days will be taking place on 6th and 7th March 2014 in Dublin. The Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation Jean-Dominique Giuliani will be speaking at the round table on the theme of "Re-establishing confidence in Europe" on 6th March; the Chairman of the Scientific Committee Jean-Paul Betbèze will be participating on 7th March on "How to revive the social market economy". This meeting will be broadcast live on www.eppgroup.eu. [Read more](#)

The Stakes of Enlargement

The Robert Schuman Foundation will be organising a conference on



12th March in partnership with the European Commission's Representation in Paris on the issues at stake in the enlargement of the European Union via debate over the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). Several European political personalities and experts on enlargement issues will be debating this question. It is obligatory to enrol... [Read more](#)

Populism and Extremism in Europe



The S&D group at the European Parliament will be organising a debate on 5th March at the European Parliament on the theme of "Far-right Populism and Extremism in Europe." Magali Balent, Project Manager at the Robert Schuman Foundation will be taking part in this event... [Read more](#)

Elections/EU :

The Socialists adopt their electoral manifesto



German Martin Schulz was elected candidate to the presidency of the European Commission on March 1st in Rome by the European Socialists. The present President of the European Parliament was elected 368 votes in support out of 404 (2 against and 34 abstentions), during the European Socialist Party's 10th Congress in which some 800 delegates were participating, including the Socialist heads of government of the European Union... [Read more](#)

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Financial Crisis :

Reduction of unemployment and public accounts surplus in Germany



Data published on 27th February 2014 by the German Labour Office shows that the number of job seekers in Germany dropped by 14,000 in February, to 2.914 million in data adjusted to seasonal variations ie a sharper drop than expected. According to gross data unemployment also remained stable in comparison with January (7.3%). Moreover Germany's public accounts were in surplus in 2013 by 300 million euro, according to a final figure published on 25th February by the Federal Statistics Office Destatis. In comparison with the GDP this implies a public surplus close to zero... [Read more](#)

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Troika gives greenlight to Portugal for the next stage towards exiting bail-out



Portugal was awarded a new satisfecit on 28th February by its international creditors for the implementation of its policy, thereby moving on to a new stage in terms of ending its financial assistance programme. The greenlight granted by troika experts (EU-ECB-IMF) opens the way to the disbursement of a further tranche of credit totalling 2.5 billion euro out of a total 78 billion plans for in the bail out set in place in May 2011. "Portugal is ending its 11th troika assessment positively. Now there is only one missing," said Deputy Prime Minister Paulo Portas as he presented the conclusions to the press... [Read more](#)

GDP contracts in Spain 2013



According to figures published on 27th February 2014 by the Spanish statistics institute (INE), the GDP growth estimate was revised downwards to 0.2% in the fourth quarter of the year 2013. Over the entire year it contracted by 1.2%... [Read more](#)

France: unemployment continues to rise in January



According to figures published on 26th February 2014 by the Employment Ministry the number of job seekers continued to rise in January with 8,900 newly unemployed registered with the national employment agency (0.3%), bringing their number up to 3.31 million. Including those with reduced activity (+23,600 in January, ie +0.5%), 4.92 million unemployed were registered at the end of February in mainland France and 5.22 million if the overseas departments are included... [Read more](#)

Publication of the 2013 annual report by the Greek Central Bank



On 27th February 2014 the governor of the Greek Central Bank G.A. Provopoulos presented the 2013 annual report. According to the governor Greece's economic situation is starting to improve and growth should return in 2014. Mr Provopoulos notably spoke of eliminating both deficits (trade balance and internal deficit), the reform of the labour market and that of the civil service. However Athens' competitiveness is still linked to the finalisation of reform in the education, healthcare, justice and especially tax sectors... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Reduction in Multilateral Interchange Fees (MIFs)



On 26th February 2014 the European Commission rendered legally binding the commitments offered by Visa Europe to significantly cut its multilateral interchange fees (MIFs) for credit card payments to a level of 0.3% of the value of the transaction (a reduction of about 40 to 60%). In particular, inter-bank fees are paid by retailers' banks (acquirers) to cardholders' banks (issuers). The reduction of these fees leads to lower costs for merchants when they receive payments by card. Since retailers normally pass on these charges to their customers through the higher prices for the goods and services they sell, consumers ultimately pay the fees that banks charge retailers. This means that a reduction of these fees is likely to benefit not only merchants, but also consumers... [Read more](#)

Winter economic forecasts 2013-2015



On 25th February 2014 the European Commission published its economic forecasts for the period 2013-2015 highlighting continued economic recovery. In the spring of 2013 Europe emerged from recession to experience three consecutive quarters of timid recovery. GDP is due to grow by 1.5% in the Union and by 1.2% in the euro zone in 2014. The Commission believes that economic growth will rise by 2% in the EU and by 1.8% in the euro zone in 2015. These forecasts are based on the hypothesis of the implementations of measures that will stimulate financial confidence and conditions, fostering economic adjustment and improving growth. The report sets out each Member State's situation... [Read more](#)

Economic confidence continues to improve



On 27th February 2014 the European Commission indicated that the economic sentiment indicator had improved in February in comparison with January 2014 for the second month running. It increased by 0.2 points in the euro zone as in the EU. The indicator lies at 101.2 points in the euro zone and 105 in the Union. Confidence also improved in Italy (+2.4 points), increased in Germany (+0.4 points) and in the Netherlands (+0.6 points), and remained stable in Spain but it declined in France (-1.6 points)... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Help for the most vulnerable: 3.5 billion euro for 2014-2020



On 25th February 2014 MEPs approved the upkeep of the European aid fund to the most vulnerable totalling 3.5 billion euro for 2014-2020 - 592 votes in support, 61 against and 31 abstentions. This programme enables the distribution of food, material goods (clothing, school materials) and the funding of insertion policies. Member States still have to accept this informal agreement... [Read more](#)

Reductions on CO2 emissions on all new cars



On 25th February 2014 MEPs adopted new measures, 499 votes in support, 107 against and 9 abstentions, to reduce CO2 emissions by 95g/km on new cars by 2020. The draft bill allows a bonification method from 2020 to 2022 which means a favourable weighting for the cleanest cars. Finally MEPs encouraged the entry into force of the Worldwide harmonized Light vehicles Test Procedure (WLTP) on private passenger cars and light transport vehicles defined by the UN... [Read more](#)

The EU must support Ukraine financially and implement targeted sanctions



MEPs adopted a resolution on 27th February 2014 calling on the European Union to support Ukraine financially whilst implementing targeted sanctions against those responsible for the violence that has occurred in the country. The Ukrainian authorities must establish dialogue between the various political forces, maintain the country's territorial integrity, counter corruption and organise free, fair, just elections... [Read more](#)

An emergency call measure in cars by 2015



MEPs adopted a regulation 485 votes in support, 151 against and 32 abstentions that makes it obligatory for new cars to be equipped with an emergency call device by 2015 - eCall - which will send out an automatic warning to the emergency services in the event of an accident. The eCall system uses the 112 emergency call technology and indicates the exact location of the accident thereby helping emergency services to arrive faster at the scene to save lives, to attenuate the severity of injuries and to reduce the cost of traffic jams... [Read more](#)

Making tobacco less attractive



On 26th February MEPs adopted a draft bill 514 votes in support, 66 against and 58 abstentions to make tobacco products less attractive to young people. A visual warning is to be put on 65% of the packet's surface and electronic cigarettes will be regulated like medicines if they help people to stop smoking. The text authorises the perfumes in water pipes but bans them in cigarettes and roll-your-own cigarettes. Member States are due to decide on 14th March 2014... [Read more](#)

Speeding up the confiscation of proceeds of crime



On 25th February 2014 MEPs adopted cross-border measures 631 votes in support and 19 against, 25 abstentions, to speed up the confiscation of the proceeds of crime such as liquidities, property and vehicles. Assets gained from drugs and arms trafficking, the trafficking of human beings or counterfeiting will be confiscated after final conviction. The draft bill still has to formally be approved by the Member States then the latter will have 30 months to transpose this directive into national law. Ireland will take part in this unlike the UK and Denmark... [Read more](#)

Rail: limited opening to competition



MEPs voted in support of competition in the sector of rail traffic on 26th February in order to give better transport services to passengers. The authorities which grant service contracts to one operator only will now have to open up to the competition or justify themselves if they do not. However two amendments, approved 439 votes in support, 207 against and 16 abstentions weaken the separation between infrastructure management and the transporter's activity. These measures enable continued flows between the rail operator and the infrastructure manager... [Read more](#)

Council :

Agreement on Posted Workers



The European Parliament's negotiators and the Council came to an agreement on 27th February 2014 on posted workers in another Union country to achieve better protection for them. The text also aims to give Member States a certain amount of room to manoeuvre. Finally the agreement clarifies matters so that a posting can be assessed correctly, defining whether it is a real posting or a bid to dodge legislation. On this issue read the study by the Robert Schuman Foundation: "The Management of posted workers in the European Union".. [Read more](#)

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Justice and Internal Affairs Council



On 3rd March 2014 the 28 EU Justice and Interior Ministers adopted a position on first reading of a draft directive that aims to bring greater harmony to EU rules on deposit guarantee schemes (DGS) and to improve depositor protection. This directive means that all banks have

to join a deposit guarantee scheme, so that all of their deposits are guaranteed ie deposits rising to 100,000 euro. Parliament with whom the agreement on the directive was made in December might adopt the latter on second reading on 14th to 17th April. Ministers also debated a proposed regulation regarding the EU's Agency for Cooperation and Training of repressive services (Europol). They will also look into the issue of migratory pressure (trends and perspectives) and were informed by the Commission of the calendar and progress in implementing operational measures as part of the task force for the Mediterranean... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Informal Foreign Affairs Meeting



The 28 EU Foreign Affairs Ministers met informally on 27th and 28th February 2014 in Athens to discuss trade issues and transatlantic cooperation. They addressed the EU's strategy and cooperation with the WTO and assessed the conclusions of the Bali Summit in December 2013. They also presented business leaders with the advantages that the EU would gain from the transatlantic trade and investment partnership (TTIP) in terms of employment and growth. Finally they discussed the situation in Ukraine and the EU's relations with Myanmar... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Franco-German Relations: "a treasure to protect" - Sarkozy



Former French President Nicolas Sarkozy was the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's guest in Berlin on 28th February 2014. He delivered a speech on Franco-German relations promoting the fact that this relation was a "treasure" and in virtue of this it should be protected. He declared that "this friendship is existential and it is the Foundation of Europe. It is our common sacred treasure. Since it is fragile we must protect it by strengthening its contours." In his speech Nicolas Sarkozy also called on Europe to refocus on the fight for democracy, peace and the rule of law which, in his opinion, are the foundations for well-being... [Read more](#)

The 3% threshold to enter the European Parliament deemed unconstitutional by Germany



The German Constitutional Court of Karlsruhe deemed on 26th February 2014 that the clause which sets the minimal number of votes to win a seat in the European Parliament at 3% was unconstitutional in view of German law. According to Andreas Voßkuhle this clause is said to go against the principles of equity for voting rights and equal opportunities between parties. In this sense the vote of every person should have a chance. There is however a threshold to be represented in the Bundestag. Each country is free to set its electoral rules in view of the European election which will be taking place in May 2014. To date 14 countries have not introduced a minimum threshold to enter the European Parliament... [Read more](#)

Spain :

Spanish MPs vote for the restriction of the universal justice principle



MPs of the Cortes Generales, the Spanish Parliament voted in a draft bill which restricts the principle of universal justice 180 votes in support, 137 against. This law enables courts to investigate crimes committed abroad. The text reduces the number of people and conditions necessary for a Spanish judge to be able to investigate a crime committed outside of Spain especially regarding matters of genocide or crimes against humanity. This bill was approved whilst a Spanish judge had issued an international arrest warrant against several Chinese personalities including former President Jiang Zemin as far of the investigation into repression undertaken in Tibet in the 1980s and 1990's... [Read more](#)

Mariano Rajoy announced tax reductions in 2015



In his annual speech on the state of the nation, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy announced that in view of Spain's economic results he would reduce taxes in 2015 on the lowest incomes (under 12,000 euros per year). This should help the country to reduce unemployment and increase its competitiveness in the European and international arena. This announcement should lead to 12 million people paying less tax. At the

same time to encourage the private sector to employ people Mariano Rajoy announced that he was going to reduce social contributions made by businesses for a 24 month period to facilitate the employment of new works - a measure he hopes will help boost employment in Spain... [Read more](#)

Agreement on the financing of the enlargement of the Panama Canal



After a two month crisis the international consortium responsible for widening the Panama Canal led by the Spanish company Sacyr and the canal's authority announced on 27th February 2014 that they had come to agreement over the financing of the extra costs incurred by the work. The crisis linked to additional costs estimated at 1.2 billion euros (1.6 billion dollars), has led to a slowing in work and a two-week interruption in February on one of the biggest civil engineering sites in the world which endangered the delivery of the widened passage in 2015... [Read more](#)

France :

Extension of the French mission in Central Africa



The French National Assembly authorised the extension of the intervention by French armed forces in Central Africa on 25th February after a declaration made by the government, followed by a debate. They voted 428 in support, 14 against and 21 abstentions. In the Senate 327 Senators voted in support, 3 against. Operation Sangaris launched in December 2013 aims to bring calm back to Central Africa. Although the first part of the mission that aimed to make Bangui safe has been achieved the French army is now trying to stabilise the rest of the country... [Read more](#)

Italy :

Italian Parliament gives vote of confidence to Renzi government



The head of the Italian government Matteo Renzi won the Senate's vote of confidence in the night of 24th and 25th February 2014, 169 votes in support, 139 against. He spoke of his reform agenda, the electoral system and justice, not forgetting a call for a net reduction in labour costs. As his predecessor Enrico Letta, Matteo Renzi is relying on the support of a centre-right coalition: the Democratic Party (PD), the New Centre Right (NCD) led by Angelino Alfano, Interior Minister and "Civic Choice" a centrist party led by Mario Monti. On 25th February he won the confidence of the Chamber of Deputies, 378 votes in support, 220 against and 1 abstention. In both chambers Mr Renzi addressed the issue of European integration and the next semester of the Italian Presidency of the Council. "European tradition represents the best part of Italy as well as the confidence it has in its future," he said... [Read more](#)

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Czech Republic :

Milos Zeman speaks of adopting the euro



On 26th February 2014 Czech President Milos Zeman spoke to the European Parliament about the adoption of the euro in his country within two to five years when the crown has stabilised against the European currency. "We need a European federation and not a unitary European state," maintained the Czech president in his speech. He said he supported defence and common tax policies. He said he also supported joint measures in social areas, environment and transport. The Czech President is the last head of State to have addressed the Parliament before the elections... [Read more](#)

Romania :

Ministerial reshuffle in Bucharest



After several weeks of negotiations the two main political parties in the coalition in office, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and the National Liberal Party (PNL), did not succeed in coming to agreement. The PNL decided to join the opposition just two months before the European elections and nine before the presidential election. Victor Ponta, the Romanian Prime Minister does still have the support of the conservatives and centrists in the National Union for the Progress of Romania (UNPR). However the social democrats will try to rally the Hungarian minority party (UDMR) in order to win back parliamentary majority. A ministerial reshuffle took place on 26th February 2014 since the liberal ministers presented their resignation together. The new list of

ministers for the interim is available on the government's site. The vote by parliament to approve the government will take place on 4th March... [Read more](#)

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UK :

[In London Angela Merkel speaks in favour of Europe](#)



German Chancellor Angela Merkel gave a speech on 27th February 2014 to both Houses of Parliament the main theme of which was Europe. "We need a strong UK with a strong voice in the European Union," said the German Chancellor to representatives. "If we have that we shall be able to undertake the necessary reform for the benefit of all..." [Read more](#)

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[UK: a 40% rise in the net annual migratory balance](#)



On 27th February 2014 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published migration figures to and from the UK between September 2012 and September 2013. According to these figures the net annual migratory balance of the UK increased by nearly 40% from 154,000 new arrivals between September 2011 and September 2012 to 212,000 between September 2012 and September 2013. The number of people leaving the UK remained stable at 343,000 for the period September 2012 and September 2013 against 343,000 the previous year. The number of entries has increased with a decline in non-European arrivals and a rise in the number of intra-European migrants... [Read more](#)

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Slovenia :

[Ministerial reshuffle in Ljubljana](#)



The Slovenian parliament approved the appointment of three new ministers on 24th February 2014, including the Economy and Healthcare Ministers two key portfolio for the recovery of the country's finances which just avoided a European bail-out in December. The appointment of Metod Dragonja as Economy Minister, Alenka Trop Skaza as Healthcare Minister and Gorazd Zmavc, the Minister for Slovenians Abroad in the government led by Alenka Bratusek was approved by 49 MPs of the 71 present... [Read more](#)

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Ukraine :

[Joint declaration by G7 on Ukraine](#)



In a joint press release published on 3rd March 2014 the heads of State and government of the G7 as well as the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso and the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy condemned the "evident contraventions of Ukraine's sovereignty" and asked Russia to settle its dispute with Ukraine via direct negotiations or by setting up a joint mediation mission under the aegis of the UN or the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). They called on all sides to show their "responsibility" in order to reduce tension and decided to "temporarily suspend" their "participation in the work linked to the preparations for the G8 summit planned to take place in Sochi in June until the atmosphere has improved for constructive discussions at the G8... [Read more](#)

[Switzerland, Austria and Liechtenstein freezes Yanukovich's assets](#)



Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein decided to look into the portfolio of deposed Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich and his family. Vienna announced on 28th February 2014 that it had frozen the assets of 18 Ukrainians suspected of infringing Human Rights and of corruption without revealing any names. The Swiss government published an order freezing the assets of 20 Ukrainian leaders mostly deposed ministers in the previous government as well as those of the impeached president Viktor Yanukovich and his son Alexandre. Liechtenstein published an identical order as Berne with the same list... [Read more](#)

[Concern expressed by NATO Defence Ministers about Ukraine](#)

The NATO Council which met on 2nd March 2014 asked for the



deployment of international observers to settle the Ukraine crisis peacefully and called on Russia to withdraw its troops. The Council indicated that NATO will continue to support the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine, as well as the "right of the Ukrainian population to decide on its own future without any external interference." The Council concluded its session indicating that it wanted to open up dialogue with Russia. The NATO Defence Ministers met on 27th February to voice their concern about Ukraine... [Read more](#)

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New government and request for IMF aid



On 28th February 2014 the Ukrainian chamber of deputies comprising 450 members approved the appointment of Arseny Yatsenyuk as Prime Minister by 371 votes. The composition of his government comprising 19 ministers (one of whom is a woman) was approved by 331 votes. The government has battles to fight on all fronts, notably economic ones. The IMF received an official request for aid on 27th February from Ukraine. "The Ukrainian authorities informed me of their request for IMF assistance. We are ready to respond," declared the IMF's Director General Christine Lagarde in a press release announcing the dispatch of a mission to the country "in the next few days.".. [Read more](#)

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Ukraine: Crimea under pro-Russian control, the EU threatens to suspend its relations with Russia



The international crisis triggered by the Russian threat of military intervention in Ukraine - the most serious between the West and Russia since the fall of the USSR - continues. The West is continuing talks started on 1st and 2nd March during which they denounced the contravention of Ukraine's territorial integrity and threatened Moscow with far-reaching isolation. On March 1st Russian President Vladimir Putin won the Russian Parliament's approval for the "use of armed forces" in Ukraine whilst the situation rapidly got worse in Crimea and other pro-Russian regions which have now been affected by separatist turbulence. The 28 EU Foreign Ministers met on 3rd March in Brussels and threatened to suspend their relations with Russia if there was no de-escalation in Ukraine. On the same day the OSCE announced that it was sending an electoral observation mission to Ukraine for the early presidential election on 25th May... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

Unemployment at 12% in the euro zone and 10.8% in the EU



On 28th February 2014 Eurostat indicated that the unemployment rate in January 2014 lay at 12% in the euro zone and at 10.8% in the EU. This represents 26,231 million men and women in the EU including 19,175 in the euro zone. The most vulnerable countries are Greece (28% in November 2013) and Spain (25.8%). The countries with the lowest unemployment rates are Austria (4.9%), Germany (5%) and Luxembourg (6.1%)... [Read more](#)

0.8% inflation in the euro zone



On 28th February Eurostat indicated that inflation in the euro zone had remained stable in February at 0.8%. The main components of inflation are food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco with an annual rate of 1.5%, services 1.3%, industrial goods energy apart at 0.6% and energy at -2.2%... [Read more](#)

Eurobarometer :

Europeans speak in support of the fight to counter climate change



According to a Eurobarometer survey on climate change published on 3rd March 2014 four European citizens in five acknowledge that climate change and an improvement in energy efficiency might boost the economy and employment. This result is slightly higher than that seen in the last survey undertaken in 2011 in which 78% of those interviewed were of this opinion... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Living Standards: European cities dominate the world ranking



Three of the five most popular cities in the world (according to an annual ranking "Quality of Living Survey" published in February) are in Europe. Vienna comes out ahead, followed by Zurich, Auckland, Munich and Vancouver. The city with the lowest ranking is Tbilisi in Georgia. Three German cities (Munich, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt) feature in the top places which makes the German Federal Republic the favourite country in the world from this point of view. "European towns enjoy excellent living standards in comparison with other regions," commented Slatin Parakatil, a senior analyst with the Mercier Institute which draws up the ranking. "Health, infrastructures, and leisure are generally of a very high quality..." [Read more](#)

Cooperation on the part of the northern countries, engine for European Defence?



In a study on European defence by Hanna Ojanen, a researcher for the Trans European Policy Studies Association, TEPSA published in February 2014 the author defends the theory whereby cooperation between countries in the north of Europe might be an engine to drive forward greater European integration in terms of defence. According to the author since countries like Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway and Iceland have created the NORDEFECO together (2009) and have come to agreement prior to the European Defence Council in December on a joint vision for 2020 this might be adapted to Europe in that the European Council had not succeeded in coming to a common vision... [Read more](#)

Publications :

"Should the UK leave the European Union?"



La Documentation Française has published a paper in its series "Réflexe Europe" by Pauline Schnapper entitled "Should the UK leave the European Union." The author looks into the possible exit by the UK of the Union if the referendum promised by Prime Minister David Cameron takes place. She firstly reviews the turbulent relations between the UK and the EU since the end of the 2nd World War to now. She also highlights the often underestimated contribution made by the UK to the EU as well as the strength of the links that it has developed with its European neighbours. Finally in the final part the author looks at pending issues, which will decide on whether the UK will leave the Union or not. She then lists the impact a possible exit by the UK would have on the Union... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Feuerbach's muses - Lagerfeld's models



The Hamburg Kunsthalle is looking into women as muses via the juxtaposition of pictures by the German 19th artists, Anselm Feuerbach and unique pictures taken by designer Karl Lagerfeld. The exhibition shows more than 40 works by Feuerbach opposite black and white photos taken by Lagerfeld. Both seek classic, eternal beauty. The exhibition is open until 15th June 2014... [Read more](#)

"Odilon Redon" in Basel



The Beyeler Foundation in Basel is running an exhibition until 18th May 2014 on the work by Odilon Redon (1840-1916). The work by this major contributor to French symbolism marks the juncture between the 19th and 20th centuries and is defined by the interaction between tradition and innovation... [Read more](#)

Carnival in Germany



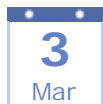
It is called "Karneval" (North Rhine-Westphalia), "Fastnacht" (Schwabia) or "Fasching" (Bavaria), and it is sacred! It starts on a Thursday called Women's Thursday. The carnival ends on Monday (Rosenmontag) just before Shrove Tuesday. The grand parades take place on that day with floats and fancy dress. In Cologne carnival is always a special occasion for sharp political satire. As of Wednesday it will be business as usual. Order will return to the world and everyone will don their working clothes. In the Christian tradition Ash Wednesday marks the end of carnival but also the start of Lent - a 40 day period of fasting in preparation for Easter... [Read more](#)

Fernand Leger: reconstructing reality



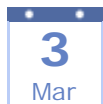
The National Museum Fernand Leger of Biot (Alpes-Maritimes) is running an exhibition until 2nd June 2014 entitled "Reconstructing Reality". From the twenties to just after World War 2 Fernand Léger combined objects in disconcerting ways, played with differences in scale, let objects float in space and used biomorphic motifs. Distinct from the Surrealist movement Fernand Leger's work is connected to the latter however. It is the link of "similitude" and "complicity" that the exhibition aims to bring to the fore... [Read more](#)

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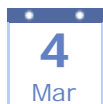


3rd March
Brussels
Environment Council

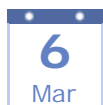
Brussels
Foreign Affairs Council



3rd and 4th March
Brussels
Justice and Internal Affairs Council



4th March
Brussels
Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council



6th March
Frankfurt/Main
Council of governors of the European Central Bank

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