



Ukraine: after the Geneva Conference, the issue of sanctions remains



Author: Olivier Marty

The situation in Ukraine is still unstable and could – in the event of a clear non-respect of the commitments made in Geneva by those involved – lead to further sanctions. Although the USA have been on the offensive since the beginning on this issue, the European countries will in all likelihood adopt a more cautious approach due to their many and varying economic interests. European aid to Ukraine in the financial and gas sectors are still significant however.

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Front page! :

Order the Schuman Report on Europe, the State of the Union 2014!



2014 a turning point for Europe? The European elections and the election of all of the Union's political institutions anew offer an exceptional opportunity to analyse the European Union and how it is developing. These issues form the core of the Schuman Report 2014 - a work of reference on Europe. This 8th edition includes an exclusive interview with French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, who gives his view of what is at stake in terms of European defence. This book has been published by Lignes de Repères. It is available in all book shops and on the Foundation's site in paper format - the digital version (for e-readers and tablets) will soon be available... [Read more](#)

European Elections :

The European People's Party (EPP) ahead in the polls



The PollWatch2014.eu site which follows the polls undertaken in the EU Member States for the European election for the European Parliament published its most recent estimation on 16th April concerning the final

results. According to its forecasts the EPP is due to win 222 seats out of 751 (up by 53 seats) and the S&D is due to win 209 (against 194 at present). Moreover the liberals in the ALDE are due to win 60 seats (in comparison with 85 at present), the Greens are due to win 38 seats (56 at present) and the European Left 53 seats (35 at present). As for the rightwing eurosceptics the ECR is due to win 42 seats (58 at present), the ELD, 34 seats (32 at present) and the non-attached are due to win 93 seats against 31 at present. PoliWatch recalls that amongst the non-attached are all of those who have not declared an affiliation to any European group... [Read more](#)

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[Lists of candidates in the 28 Member States in the European elections and new app](#)



The Robert Schuman Foundation has added information to its European election site and placed on-line the names of the candidates running in the European elections in each of the 28 Member States. Also take a look at our new app "European Elections" available on Google Play and follow the campaign in real time... [Read more](#)

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[In Poland, security is now the most important topic in the European elections](#)



With the Ukrainian crisis Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk's party, Civic Platform (PO) is now directing its European elections campaign towards security. "Tusk is highlighting the question of Poland's security that is anchored in a strong and united Europe", says political analyst Edmund Wnuk-Lipinski. This strategy seems to be helping the PO, which is now doing better in the polls compared to its rival, Law and Justice (PiS). In a country where people still remember 50 years of Soviet occupation, the advantages of this strategy are such that Eryk Mistewicz concludes in an AFP brief: "The more complicated and difficult the situation in Ukraine, the better the PO's result will be"... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

[Berlin forecasts sustained growth in 2014 and 2015](#)



"Germany is experiencing strong recovery," maintained Sigmar Gabriel on 15th April 2014. The Economy and Energy Minister and German Vice-Chancellor announced that Germany was maintaining its growth forecasts. It is counting on GDP growth of 1.8% in 2014 and 2% in 2015. Berlin is also counting on significant growth in purchasing power over the next few months. Another source of growth is investment which is also on the rise. Finally German growth continues to be driven along by exports... [Read more](#)

[Further measures in Croatia to reduce the budgetary deficit](#)



The Croatian government adopted further measures on 17th April 2014 aiming to reduce its budgetary deficit in respect of a request made by Brussels. It reduced its growth forecast to 0% for 2014. The new measures, including new taxes on oil and telecommunications should reduce the deficit by an additional 0.4% indicated the Croatian Finance Minister Slavko Linic. At present the deficit lies at 4.5% of the GDP... [Read more](#)

[Measures announced for savings in France](#)



Whilst Brussels refused to grant France any further time for it to reduce its deficit to within the 3% allowed by the treaties, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls laid out a savings plan on 16th April 2014 which will be introduced in order to save 50 billion euro and fall in line with European rules. The government intends to cut into the State's budget to a total of 18 billion euro, likewise that of local communities to a total of 11 billion euros, health insurance to a total of 10 billion euro and social protection to a total of 11 billion. According to the government these measures should enable the French economy to recover its strength, encourage businesses, support growth and therefore create jobs... [Read more](#)

[The Italian Government gives details of its savings plan](#)

The President of the Council Matteo Renzi gave details on 18th April 2014 of the measures to be taken to "stimulate" growth and to "bring confidence" back to the Italians. There will be tax relief of 80 euro for modest families (people earning between 8000 and 26,000 euro per



year), a 10% reduction in labour charges, a "sobriety" cure in the state sector. Amongst the savings measures he spoke of cuts of 2.10 billion euro from the budgets of local, regional and ministerial institutions. Part of the state's fleet of cars will be sold off and preferential postal tariffs for political parties will be abolished. A halt will be brought to space wasting in public offices, and the salaries of CEO's of state companies will be capped at 240,000 euro/annum, the provinces will also be abolished. The government intends to save 300 million euro by countering tax evasion. This series of measures is estimated at "6.9 billion euro in 2014 and between 15 to 17 billion in 2015".. [Read more](#)

Portugal: new savings plan of 1.4 billion euro and further IMF disbursement



The Portuguese government adopted a new series of savings measures on 15th April 2014 to a total of 1.4 billion € in a bid to bring the country's public deficit down to 2.5% of the GDP in 2015 and to satisfy the requirements of its creditors. These measures especially comprise a reduction of administrative spending in the ministries and public companies, "without asking for any additional sacrifices" of the Portuguese said Finance Minister Maria Luis Albuquerque to the press. On 17th April 2014 the IMF disbursed a further loan of 851 million euro to Portugal, the penultimate before the end of the international bail out of the country launched in May 2011... [Read more](#)

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OECD: Employment increases in the euro zone and the EU



The employment rate in the euro zone increased slightly in the fourth quarter of 2013 to lie at 63.6% (+0.1 points) according to figures published on April 15th 2014 by the OECD. This rise is due to a significant increase in employment of the 55-64 year olds (50.7%, +0.4 pts), which compensates for the decline amongst the 15-24 year olds (31.1%, -0.2 pts). The 18 euro zone countries are recovering their employment rates of the third quarter of 2012 after three quarters of stagnation at 63.5%. The OECD defines the employment rate as "the share of people of working age" (15-64 years) who have a job." This rate is also slightly up (+0,1 pt) in the EU to 64.2% thanks to a marked improvement in the employment of the 55-64 year olds (50.9%, +0.5 pts)... [Read more](#)

Rise of public finance deficit in Poland



Poland's public finance deficit 2013 totalled 4.3% of the GDP in comparison with 3.9% in 2012 announced the National Statistics Office on 16th April 2014. In 2014 the Polish government is forecasting a deficit of 3.6% and it hopes to bring it below the 3% in 2015 as demanded by the Maastricht Treaty. Poland's public debt rose in 2013 to 57% of the GDP in comparison with 55.6% in 2012 said the Statistics Office... [Read more](#)

Unemployment fell in UK below the 7% mark in February



Unemployment fell below the 7% mark in February to lie at its lowest level in five years. It lay at 6.9% over a three month period ending in February, announced the Office for National Statistics on 16th April 2014. This is a clear drop in comparison with the 7.2% recorded at the end of the January and greater than expected by economists who had forecast 7.1%... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Letter from José Manuel Barroso to Vladimir Putin on gas



Whilst Russia is threatening to cut gas supplies to Ukraine the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso sent a letter to Russian President Putin on 17th April confirming the EU's wish to open up dialogue. "The EU accepts your proposals for talks with the Federation of Russia and Ukraine regarding the security of gas and transit supplies," declared the President of the European Commission before adding that "it is in our joint interest to start talks rapidly and including Ukraine." Mr Barroso also indicated that the European Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger was prepared to meet with his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts immediately to discuss all

issues related to gas supplies in Europe... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

"Made-in" labelling



"Made-in" labelling should be made mandatory for non-food products sold on the single market, Members of the Parliament (MEPs) decided in a vote on 15th April 2014. MEPs also want tougher penalties for firms selling non-compliant or potentially dangerous products. MEPs voted on first reading to ensure that the work done during this mandate can be taken up by the new Parliament and used as a basis for further negotiations with European Union Member States... [Read more](#)

Protecting small investors



New European Union rules on the information that small investors must be given before they sign a contract were approved by European Parliament, 637 votes in support, 26 against and 16 abstentions on 15th April 2014. This information will be set out in a mandatory, three-page A4 Key Information Document (KID). The new rules still have to be officially endorsed by the Member States. They would then take effect within two years... [Read more](#)

New rules for posted workers



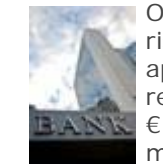
On 16th April 2014 MEPs approved 474 votes in support, 158 against and 39 abstentions rules to counter legal loopholes linked to European workers posted to a country other than their own, which involves around one million employees. At the beginning of December the States agreed after bitter negotiation, for an improved management of the measure governing posted workers that there would be more monitoring of the main businesses and subsidiaries involved in breaches of the law, which are rife in the building industry. Parliament has made some changes so that "the difference can be made more easily between real situations and bids to try and slip through the legal net." Notably a definition of false independents has been introduced since some employers play on the fact that independent workers are not subject to the same laws governing working conditions... [Read more](#)

Fishing Policy



On 16th April 2014 operating rules for European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) designed to help fishermen to comply with new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) requirements were endorsed by MEPs 473 votes in support, 52 against and 40 abstentions . EMFF aid will help fishermen to observe the discard ban, e.g. by buying more selective fishing gear, but will also be used to improve safety and working conditions, data collection and port infrastructure. The EMFF regulation is the last of the three pieces of legislation in the CFP reform package, which is now complete. The other two, (both already in force) are the basic regulations for the CFP reform and the regulation on the common organisation of the markets in fishery and aquaculture products... [Read more](#)

Further steps towards Banking Union



On 15th April 2014, three measures to ensure that banks shoulder the risks of failure rather than relying on tax payers to bail them out were approved by the European Parliament. Two of these measures deal with restructuring one ensures that banks guarantee deposits under €100,000. These measures complete the single bank supervision mechanism, thereby taking the European Union one steps further towards banking union. Parliament won substantial concessions from finance ministers, especially on the rules establishing the single bank resolution mechanism and its related €55 billion bank-financed fund. The Ferreira Report was adopted 570 votes in support, 88 against and 13 abstentions, the Hökmark Report was approved 584 votes in support, 80 against and 10 abstentions... [Read more](#)

Basic bank accounts for all

Under a new law passed by the European Parliament, 603 votes in support, 21 against and 51 abstentions on 15th April 2014, anyone



legally residing in the EU would have the right to open a basic payment account, and no-one could be denied this right on grounds of nationality or place of residence. This law should also ensure that fees and rules for all payment accounts are transparent and comparable and make it easy to switch to another payment account that offers better terms... [Read more](#)

Sanctions against Russia stepped up



On 17th April a resolution adopted by 437 votes in support, 49 against and 85 abstentions by MEPs expresses their extreme concern about the worsening situation in Ukraine. They have asked the Union to step up sanctions targeting certain Russian personalities and to prepare to inflict economic sanctions on Russia. They are calling for measures to be taken against Russian businesses and their subsidiaries, especially in the energy sector and also against Russian assets... [Read more](#)

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Retirement: rights acquired in an EU country are upheld



European Union workers moving to a different European Union country will be able to take their full pension rights with them thanks to a draft law passed by Members of the European Parliament on 15th April 2014. Formal approval is still required of the Council. Current European Union rules ensure that workers moving to another EU country do not lose their statutory pension rights, i.e. those provided by the state. However, no such European Union wide rules existed for supplementary pension schemes, financed or co-financed by employers. So people who moved between Member States risked losing entitlements built up over a period that was deemed too short by their new place of residence... [Read more](#)

Migrants: rescue rules to prevent deaths at sea



Members of European Parliament approved on 16th April 2014, 528 votes in support, 46 against and 88 abstentions new search and rescue rules to clarify how border guards serving in Frontex sea operations should deal with migrants and where they should disembark them. The regulation, already informally agreed by Parliament and Council negotiators, should enter into force before this summer. The draft regulation still needs to be formally approved by the European Union Council of Ministers... [Read more](#)

Faster aid for disaster-stricken countries within the Union



On 16th April 2014, MEPs approved, 525 votes in support, 12 against and 41 abstentions, measures for European Union aid to European Union and European Union candidate countries hit by flooding or other natural disasters to be delivered faster and more efficiently thanks to EU Solidarity Fund (EUSF) rule changes. These changes, already agreed with EU ministers, include extending the deadline for applying for natural disaster aid from 10 to 12 weeks, paying 10% of the aid in advance, and simplifying aid approval criteria for smaller, "regional", disasters... [Read more](#)

France :

Male/Female Equality in the Army



The French Defence Minister was given a report on 15th April 2014 on specific situations involving discrimination and sexual, as well as moral harassment in the army. He announced on this occasion that an action plan would be introduced to prevent this type of problem occurring in the French army, which counts the most women amongst its ranks in Europe. One of the most emblematic measures: the navy announced that submarine service would now be open on an experimental basis to women... [Read more](#)

Italy :

Appointment of CEO's of state companies including three women

On 14th April 2014 the Italian government appointed the CEO's of the four state-owned companies - Eni, Enel, Finmeccanica and the Post



which included three women. In a press release the government announced the appointment of Patrizia Grieco, who was the head of IT company Olivetti to date, as the CEO of the electricity and gas supplier Enel. To head the hydrocarbon giant Eni the government chose Emma Marcegaglia, former CEO of Confindustria. The Italian post office - a business which is 100% state owned, will have a woman as its head - Luisa Todini, who is at present on the board of the RAI, the Italian State TV channel. Finally Gianni de Gennaro, chair of Finmeccanica, the Italian giant of the aerospace and defence industry, will remain in post. He will be seconded by Mauro Moretti, who headed the Ferrovie dello State, the state-run railway company... [Read more](#)

Lithuania :

Lithuania wants to join the euro zone in 2015



Lithuania adopted a law on 17th April 2014 87 votes in support, 7 against and 13 abstentions which focuses on its accession to the euro zone in 2015. This will strengthen its integration with the European Union. The law defines exchange methods and how prices will be displayed during the operation. "Greater integration enhances the country's security, increases Lithuania's political weight in Europe and the international arena," declared Lithuanian Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevicius... [Read more](#)

Poland :

A united Europe might bring Russia's energy threat to an end



The Robert Schuman Foundation has released an article by Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk that was originally published in the "Financial Times". In a bid to find a solution to the Ukrainian crisis Donald Tusk is putting forward ideas that might be taken on board in the preparation of a new EU policy in the face of its eastern neighbours... [Read more](#)

Moldova :

The President of Moldova visits Warsaw



The Moldovan President Nicolae Timoftim met Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk on 14th April in Warsaw to discuss amongst other matters the European prospects of Moldova. Nicolae Timoftim thanked his Polish counterpart for the support Poland has given to Moldova in its relation to the European Union - a rapprochement he deems to be irreversible. President Komorowski and Prime Minister Tusk repeated the support Poland would give Moldova in this regard. The issue of economic ties between the two countries were also addressed as well as the region's geopolitical stability in the wake of events in Ukraine... [Read more](#)

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Ukraine :

Geneva Agreement to defuse the Russian-Ukrainian Crisis



The EU, the USA, Russia and Ukraine came to an agreement on 17th April 2014 in Geneva on a rapid means to defuse tension in Ukraine. This agreement notably plans for the disarmament of illegal armed groups and the evacuation of occupied buildings. It remains to be seen whether it will be implemented warned Barack Obama who says he has "no certainty" of this. "All illegal armed groups must be disarmed, all illegally seized buildings must be returned to their legal occupants, all streets, all squares and other public places in Ukrainian towns must be cleared," indicates the document. The OSCE's observation mission will be responsible for helping the Ukrainian authorities to implement these measures... [Read more](#)

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Further NATO measures given the escalation in the Russian-Ukrainian Crisis



NATO dispatched a strong message to Russia by stepping up the defence of the countries of Eastern Europe which are increasingly concerned about the escalation in the Ukrainian crisis. "We are sending more planes into the skies and more ships to sea and we are preparing our land armies," announced NATO's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, as he unveiled a series of military measures on 16th April 2014 which

had been decided upon by the member states. NATO will now increase flights by planes over the Baltic countries whilst ships will be deployed in the Baltic Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. It will also step up common manoeuvres and exercises...
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Tatar leader banned from Crimea by Moscow



On 22nd April 2014 the leader of the Tatars of Crimea, Mustafa Djemilev was banned access to this Ukrainian territory illegally and unilaterally annexed in March by Russia for five years announced the Medjlis, the Assembly of the Tatars of Crimea. Leaving Crimea for Kiev on the same morning Mr Djemilev was given a document by border guards which bans him from entering Russia until 19th April 2019. On the same day the Russian head of State Vladimir Putin signed a decree on the rehabilitation of the Tatars of Crimea and other minorities living on the peninsula... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

The Human Rights Situation in Europe



According to a report published on 16th April 2014 by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjorn Jagland, serious infringements of human rights continue in Europe, including corruption, human trafficking, racism and discrimination. In many countries unemployment and poverty are feeding extremism and conflict. This report is the first consolidated analysis of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe, based on the observations of the Council of Europe's monitoring bodies. Regarding the crisis in Ukraine and the Russian military intervention in Crimea Mr Jagland warned against the occurrence of other similar conflicts in Europe: "The lack of democratic counterweights, free media and independent justice is the source of endemic corruption and abuse of power..." [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Unemployment in the EU Regions



According to figures published by Eurostat on 15th April 2014 in 2013 regional unemployment rates varied widely across the 272 regions of the European Union in 2013, with the lowest rates recorded in the regions of Upper Bavaria (Oberbayern) in Germany (2.6%), Freiburg in Germany and Salzburg in Austria (both 2.9%), Tübingen in Germany and Tyrol in Austria (both 3.0%), while the highest rates were registered in five Spanish regions: Andalucía (36.3%), Ceuta (35.6%), Melilla (34.4%), Canarias (34.1%) and Extremadura (33.7%)... [Read more](#)

Euro zone: international goods trade surplus



According to Eurostat figures published on 15th April 2014 the first estimate for the euro area's goods trade balance with the rest of the world in February 2014 resulted in a 13.6 billion euro surplus, compared with +9.8 bn in February 2013. In February 2014 compared with January 2014, seasonally adjusted exports rose by 1.2% and imports by 0.6%. The February 2014 extra-European Union trade balance was a 4.4 bn euro surplus, compared with +1.2 bn in February 2013. In February 2014 compared with January 2014, seasonally adjusted exports rose by 0.9% while imports fell by 0.5%... [Read more](#)

Euro zone: inflation rate at 0.5%



Euro area annual inflation was 0.5% in March 2014, down from 0.7% in February. A year earlier the rate was 1.7%. Monthly inflation was 0.9% in March 2014. European Union annual inflation was 0.6% in March 2014, down from 0.8% in February. A year earlier the rate was 1.9%. Monthly inflation was 0.7% in March 2014. In March 2014, negative annual rates were observed in Bulgaria (-2.0%), Greece (-1.5%), Cyprus (-0.9%), Portugal and Sweden (both -0.4%), Spain and Slovakia (both -0.2%) and Croatia (-0.1%). The highest annual rates were recorded in the United Kingdom (1.6%), Malta and Austria (both 1.4%). Compared with February 2014, annual inflation fell in nineteen Member States, remained stable in three and rose in six... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Older people must be encouraged to work longer



The OECD published a study on 16th April 2014 entitled: "Working Better With Age in the Netherlands" in which it invites the Netherlands to take more steps to encourage older people to work longer before taking their retirement. This would enable the country to rise to the challenges of an ageing population and high social spending. According to the authors of this report the reforms undertaken over the last ten years, notably raising the age of retirement, have already produced results: the share of 55-64 years olds in work has risen sharply to slightly over 60% in 2013, against an OECD average of 55%. However the Netherlands still lags behind the most efficient OECD countries since they only lie 16th out of 34 countries in terms of employment rates of the 55-64 year olds... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe launches a human rights guide for internet users



On 17th March, the Council of Europe launched a guide for internet users to help them better understand their human rights online and what they can do when these rights are challenged. The creation of the Guide was triggered by the need to empower users to exercise their human rights online. Generally, their rights are set out in the terms of service of Internet companies, which are mostly lengthy legal contractual conditions, seldom read and even more seldom fully understood... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Franco-German Journalism Prize



The nominees for the Franco-German Journalism Prize 2014 were announced on 15th April. Articles that aim to improve the understanding of the Franco-German relationship are awarded prizes. The winners will be announced during the award ceremony on 2nd July in the offices of Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) Berlin. The ceremony will end this year with a forum of experts who will discuss topical issues. This additional event which will now be managed by the PFAJ will be organised in cooperation with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik (DGAP) and the Robert Schuman Foundation... [Read more](#)

The official collection of the Cannes Festival 2014



On 17th April the organisers of the 67th Cannes Festival, the most important film festival in the world unveiled the selection of films to be shown between 14th to 25th May on the Croisette. Around 20 films from the world over are running in the competition. This year Jane Campion, the only film director to have won a "Palme d'Or" for the "Piano Lesson" in 1993 will take over from Steven Spielberg as President of the Jury. 18 films have been selected for the Cannes Festival, including the latest by Jean-Luc Godard "Adieu au langage".. [Read more](#)

Josephine at the Luxembourg Museum



The Luxembourg Museum in Paris is running an exhibition until 29th June on Empress Josephine. On the occasion of the bicentenary of her death the exhibition takes visitors into Josephine's private life, from her Caribbean origins to her life as Empress then a divorced woman. Her passion-travels, gardens, music - are an occasion to bring together works from her private collections alongside her personal effects... [Read more](#)

Hogarth, Reynolds and Turner - tribute in Rome



The Rome Foundation (Fondazione Roma) is running an exhibition together with the Special Superintendence for Historical, Artistic and Ethno-Anthropological Heritage and for the Museums of Rome. It is devoted especially to Hogarth, Reynolds and Turner. Open from 15th April to 20th July 2014 the exhibition reviews the artistic and social development in the 18th century and the role played by Britain in politics, the economy and history. It brings together works from British and Italian collections showing paintings by Hogarth, Reynolds, Gainsborough, Wright of Derby, Stubbs, Füssli, Constable and Turner whose work reflects the specific nature of English art... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



24th April
Prague
EU Eastern Partnership Summit



27th April
Presidential Election (2nd round) and General elections in Macedonia (FYROM)

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