



Ascension of populist parties but relative stability of political balance in the European elections



Author: Corinne Deloy

Nearly 170 million voters from 28 countries of the European Union voted between 22nd and 25th May and elected 751 MEPs to the Parliament of Strasbourg. The first surprise in this election: turnout was maintained and even rose slightly in comparison with the previous election on 4th-7th June 2009. Moreover the expected ascension of the populist parties was significant in some Member States, but weaker and almost non-existent in others. However there is a stability in the balance of power between the different political groups in Parliament.

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Front page! :

The elective principle in the European Union



The Robert Schuman Centre at the Robert Schuman House together with the Centre for Research at the University of Caen and the CVCE of Luxembourg are organising a seminar entitled "The elective principle in the European Union" on 5th and 6th June at the Robert Schuman House in Scy-Chazelles. Thierry Chopin Studies Director at the Robert Schuman Foundation will be taking part in work and debate. It is obligatory to enrol... [Read more](#)

European Elections :

Results - European Elections

Look at the results of how the European Parliament will be set out in the 8th legislature on our "Elections" site - as well as the results in the



28 Member States. The political groups will start to fall into place this week... [Read more](#)

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[Our interventions in the media on the European election results](#)



Commenting on the European election results and especially providing an analysis of the probable follow-up to events in Europe, the Chairman of the Foundation and his main collaborators were invited many times in the media. Consult our latest media interventions... [Read more](#)

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[Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission](#)



On 27th May 2014 the heads of the political groups in the European Parliament asked the leaders of the EU to allow EPP candidate Jean-Claude Juncker to try and find a majority of 376 votes in order to be appointed as President of the European Commission. "The Leaders' Conference met and asked the Council (EU leaders) to provide Jean-Claude Juncker, the EPP's candidate - the biggest political group in Parliament - with a mandate to start negotiations with other political groups," explained the outgoing leader of the socialist group, Austrian Hannes Swoboda in a press release... [Read more](#)

[Change Europe - now](#)



The German (BDA and BDI), Spanish (Spanish Business Confederation), Italian (Cofindustria), Polish (Lewiathan) and French (MEDEF) employers' organisations have published a column demanding that heads of State and government and the European institutions take clear, rapid, real steps in response to the alarm bell that was set off by the breakthrough of the populist parties in this European election. According to these organisations the time has come to take some political decisions for greater integration that aim towards the convergence of economies "notably in the budgetary and fiscal areas" which will give greater citizen involvement in the globalised economy. Their message is clear "The Union, its businesses, its citizens are expecting renewed leadership: after Sunday's vote it is time to move on from words to acts..." [Read more](#)

[Andrus Ansip, Commissioner](#)



Estonia is offering former Prime Minister Andrus Ansip as candidate for the position of European Commissioner - he was the craftsman of the austerity cure during the economic crisis 2008-2009. Mr Ansip resigned from his post as Prime Minister in March after being head of government for 9 months... [Read more](#)

[Poland wants the highest post](#)



Poland will put forward its Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski for the position of head of European diplomacy in the new European Commission said Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk. "Poland has acquired major influence over the EU's foreign policy to the point that the position of High Representative is one of the things we are interested in," declared the head of the Polish government on 29th May 2014 in an article in the daily Gazeta Wyborcza. "Radoslaw Sikorski is the natural candidate," he maintained... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

[Euro zone: economic confidence improves](#)



Confidence in the economy improved slightly in the euro zone in May in comparison with April according to statistics published on 28th May 2014 by the European Commission. However France is an exception once more with confidence on the decline. The confidence index lay at 102.7 points in April recovering its peak level of two and a half years ago... [Read more](#)

Markit Manufacturing Industry Index declining



According to a Markit study published on 2nd June 2014 the recovery of the manufacturing sector in the euro zone declined in May with France's industry weakening further whilst growth is slowing in Germany, Italy, Austria and Greece. The PMI Index for the euro zone's manufacturing industry lay at 52.2 in May. Production growth slowed in all countries except in the Netherlands. At the same time the volume of new orders has diminished in France. Sales prices have been increasing for the first time in three months... [Read more](#)

Decline of merchandise trade in the major OECD economies



On 27th May the OECD published international merchandise trade figures for the first quarter of 2014. It emerges that merchandise trade has declined in the major OECD economies: hence "merchandise export in all of the G7 countries and the BRICS has decreased by 2.6% over the first quarter of 2014, in comparison with the previous quarter." "Import for their part have stagnated with growth at only 0.1% over the same period (mainly due to continuous import of crude oil and fuels)... [Read more](#)

Cyprus lifts the last restrictions on movements of capital within its territory



On 30th May 2014 Cyprus lifted the last restriction in place on the movement of capital within its territory thereby allowing citizens to open new bank accounts. These restrictions were set in place one year ago during negotiations over an international loan of 10 billion euros for the island which was on the verge of bankruptcy. Fear of a wave of banking panic led the Cypriot government to close all of the country's banks in March 2013 for a two week period and to implement a series of draconian checks on their re-opening. Amongst the restrictions: Cypriots were not allowed to withdraw more than 300 euro per day, businesses 500; cheques could not be exchanged over the counter against cash but had to be deposited on an account and transfers of funds from one bank to another were monitored... [Read more](#)

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Conclusions of the IMF observation mission in Spain



Experts from the International Monetary Fund concluded their observation mission to Spain and published their conclusions on 27th May 2014. They stressed that Spain had turned over a new leaf in terms of the economic crisis indicating that growth had started again in the 3rd quarter of 2013 and continued until the first quarter of 2014 at a higher rate than in 2008. The experts believe that although growth reflects the work invested by Spanish society as a whole, the damage caused by the economic crisis has not yet been repaired, as illustrated by the country's high unemployment rate. Experts recommend that measures continue with the aim of recovering growth and re-establishing market confidence to support investments and the country's businesses and thereby create jobs... [Read more](#)

The number of job seekers up by 0.4% in April



According to data provided by Dares the statistics department at the Employment Ministry on 28th May 2014 the number of job seekers rose by 0.4% in France in April marking a further rise after remaining stable in March. The number of unemployed with the Employment Agency increased by 14,800 in comparison with March 2014 to lie at 3,364,100 people... [Read more](#)

Conclusion of the 5th IMF observation mission in Greece



The International Monetary Fund concluded its 5th observation mission undertaken as part of a rescue plan which Greece has been part of due to the economic crisis ongoing since 2008. The 5th mission enabled the country to receive 3,41 million additional euros, bringing the total amount of aid given to the country since the start of the crisis to 11.58 billion euro. The mission stressed that the country had made a major effort that moved towards stabilising the country's economy. It does point out though that major steps still have to be undertaken in the fiscal area to re-establish sustainable growth. Experts noted that the country's exports are still weak and that policies must be made to settle this problem. Finally the mission recalled the rescue plan's goal for 2022 i.e the reduction of government debt below the 110% GDP mark... [Read more](#)

The Portuguese Constitutional Court invalidates three 2014 budget measures



The Constitutional Court invalidated three savings measures that were part of the 2014 budget on 30th May 2014 - this included a major reduction in civil servants' wages which was to enable the government to continue its work in terms of budgetary recovery after its exit from the international rescue plan on 17th May. "The government will not hurry to respond to this situation because it is complicated and there is no simple solution. We shall announce the way we shall overcome this enormous setback when the time is right," declared the Portuguese Prime Minister Passos Coelho... [Read more](#)

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European Council :

Conclusions of the informal dinner between EU heads of State and government



The informal dinner of EU heads of State and government took place on 27th May 2014 following the European elections. Over dinner the group discussed the election results and the fact that the European Council should provide clear guidance to the Union. Mr Van Rompuy will consult the leaders of the Parliament's political groups about the future President of the European Commission. He repeated the importance of settling the financial crisis, maintaining growth, competitiveness and employment, and also of facing the challenge of climate change. The heads of State also discussed the Ukrainian situation acknowledging that the elections went off smoothly on 25th May with Mr Poroshenko emerging as the victor. They all expressed their willingness to work with him... [Read more](#)

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Commission :

Building growth: recommendation per country in 2014



As part of its macro-economic recommendations to EU Member States the European Commission suggested on 2nd June 2014 that six countries be removed from the excessive debt procedure (countries whose government debt is beyond 3% of the GDP): Belgium, Austria, Netherlands, Slovakia, Denmark, Czech Republic. The number of countries whose deficits are deemed excessive in view of European criteria would drop from 17 to 11 if the Commission's recommendations are validated by the Council. Amongst the 11 States are France - which is supposed to bring its deficit below the 3% mark in 2015, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and the UK. One country, Malta, has to do it this year and four others have until 2016 (Cyprus, Greece, Spain and Croatia). No procedure for excessive deficit has been opened against Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Romania or Sweden... [Read more](#)

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Energy Security: global strategy to strengthen supply security



On 28th May 2014 in response to the present geopolitical situation and the EU's energy dependency, the European Commission advocated an energy security strategy focused on diversification of external supply sources, the modernisation of infrastructures, the completion of the internal energy market and energy saving. The strategy highlights the need to coordinate decisions taken as part of national energy policies and the importance of speaking with one voice during negotiations with external partners. It is based on the progress already noted since the gas crisis of 2009. The Commission's proposals will be assessed by the European Council on 26th and 27th June... [Read more](#)

Lack of financial resources hinders the marketing of innovations



on 27th May 2014 the European Commission published the Innobarometer 2014 survey to understand the views and attitudes of EU enterprises towards the role of public support in the marketing of innovations. The survey highlighted that the main hurdle to the marketing of innovative goods or services is the lack of financial resources. The results of the Innobarometer are in line with the Innovation Union Scoreboard 2014 which confirmed that the EU is still lagging behind global leaders... [Read more](#)

Water quality excellent at most of Europe's bathing sites

The annual bathing water quality report by the European Environment



Agency (EEA) tracks the water quality at 22,000 bathing sites across the EU, Switzerland and, for the first time, Albania. The water at Europe's beaches, rivers and lakes was generally of high quality in 2013, with more than 95 % of these sites meeting minimum requirements. Coastal areas performed slightly better than inland bathing waters, the data shows. All the bathing sites in Cyprus and Luxembourg were deemed 'excellent'. These countries were followed by Malta (99 % excellent), Croatia (95 %) and Greece (93 %). At the other end of the scale, European Union Member States with the highest proportion of sites with a 'poor' status were Estonia (6 %), the Netherlands (5 %), Belgium (4 %), France (3 %), Spain (3 %) and Ireland (3 %)...

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The use of internet increasing in the EU, especially among disadvantaged



New data published on 28th May 2014 shows the Commission is on track to complete 95 of its 101 digital actions by 2015, which shows good progress. European Union citizens and businesses are going online more, shopping more and they have greater confidence and skills in ICT. However, they often lack the high speed broadband - especially in rural areas - to satisfy this digital appetite; and the looming digital skills gap is still a big problem... [Read more](#)

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Ukraine and Russia: gas



Ukraine made a first payment to Russia to settle its gas debt according to several leaders on 30th May 2014 opening the way to new discussions between the two capitals to avoid gas cuts next week. "We haven't found a solution yet but we are making progress," declared the European Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger in Berlin after negotiations with the Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak, his Ukrainian counterpart Yuri Prodan and the directors of the Russian supplier Gazprom and the Ukrainian company Naftogaz. These talks, which followed several other rounds of discussion over the last few weeks, were vital because Gazprom was threatening to close the tap to Kiev, thereby endangering the EU's supply and poisoning a situation that is already explosive between the two countries... [Read more](#)

Council :

EU economic sanctions extended until 1st June 2015



The Council of the European Union agreed on 28th May 2014 to renew the restrictive measures against the Syrian regime, on the basis of a review of the original decision taken on 31st May 2013. The measures will apply until 1st June 2015 and include a number of export and import bans, e.g. an oil embargo, as well as restrictions on investments, financial activity and the transport sector. Two people and one entity have been removed from the original list of people and entities subject to the restrictive measures. This leaves 179 people associated with the violent repression in Syria targeted with an asset freeze and a travel ban... [Read more](#)

Informal General Affairs Council



The 28 European Affairs Ministers met on 30th May 2014 in Athens. During this meeting ministers discussed the "Prospects for an inter-institutional agreement on relations between the Council, Parliament, and the Commission: content and procedures", more especially focus was placed on issues linked to cooperation between the various institutions. They mentioned the strengthening of the role of the General Affairs Council in the Union. Many ministers also stressed the need to draft a new policy for the European institutions, taking into account the message sent by European citizens via their vote last week... [Read more](#)

ECB :

ECB: progress in strengthening banks and sovereign funds



Euro area financial system stress has remained moderate over the last half-year, according to the European Central Bank's (ECB) new Financial Stability Review released on 28th May 2014. Investor concerns regarding the global financial crisis have continued to diminish, amid on-going action to address "legacy" risks of past crises for both banks and sovereign funds. Euro area banks have accelerated the clean-up and

strengthened of their balance sheets since the third quarter of 2013, when discussions about the ECB's comprehensive assessment intensified. Sovereign risk has improved with the implementation of fiscal consolidation and structural reforms, although progress has been uneven... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Angela Merkel meets the Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian heads of government



On 28th May 2014 German Chancellor Angela Merkel met the heads of government of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to discuss the situation in this region which is suffering due to the Ukrainian crisis. During the meeting it was decided that Georgia and Moldova would sign an association agreement with the European Union on 27th June 2014. The leaders placed particular emphasis on each State's ability to decide independent of any external constraints and pressure regarding its own development. The Chancellor welcoming the organisation of free elections in Ukraine and was thanked for Germany's support in Ukraine as well as for that given to Georgia and Moldova... [Read more](#)

Wolfgang Schäuble wants to re-organise the Commission around "Super Commissioners"



Work by the Robert Schuman Foundation advocates a reform of the European Commission without changing the treaties - this has been taken up by the German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble. He is campaigning in support of a re-organisation of the European Commission with a focus on a handful of Commissioners responsible for major axes of competence. He talks of this in an article published on 30th May 2014 in the German daily 'Die Welt'. "We can organise the Commission more effectively," explained Mr Schäuble. "For example we should look into the bringing areas of responsibility under a restricted number of Vice-Presidents of the Commission and subordinate these to other commissioners." This suggestion was also mentioned during the European election campaign by the ALDE leader Guy Verhofstadt... [Read more](#)

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Herman Van Rompuy win the Charlemagne Prize



On 29th May 2014, Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, received the International Charlemagne Prize in Aachen. This award is given to individuals working for European unification. In his speech, Van Rompuy stressed that citizens see Europe as a reason for why they feel powerless whilst the Union was conceived to make them stronger. Everything has been done from the beginning to remove the borders in all areas to create a large common area. But Europe has not been seen as a shelter, he said, hence the current problems. The Danish travel project "Our Europe" won the Charlemagne Youth Prize. The team spent one year travelling across 24 EU countries. They stayed in European youth hostels and made long interviews about living conditions, education and work. Films, interviews and photos are available on their site... [Read more](#)

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Belgium :

Belgium: resignation of the government; Bart de Wever becomes point of contact



On 26th May 2014 Elio Di Rupo, Belgian Prime Minister, presented the resignation of his government to King Philip after the parliamentary elections that saw victory for the Flemish nationalists in Flanders. On 27th May 2014, the king asked Bart de Wever, leader of the Flemish separatist party N-VA, to look into how a government might be formed quickly which the latter accepted. He will report back to the King on progress made on 3rd June 2014. Winner of the elections of 25th May in Belgium, Bart de Wever finds himself in the position of being a point of contact and at the same time he has started a series talks to establish a Flemish government... [Read more](#)

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Spain :

King Juan Carlos abdicates

King Juan Carlos of Spain abdicated on 2nd June 2014 39 years after he came to the throne. Prince Felipe, aged 46, is due to succeed him. The abdication was announced by the head of government Mariano Rajoy who declared that a succession process was to be started. In this sense an



organic law has to be approved he said. An exceptional council of ministers was convened on 3rd June.

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Italy :

Matteo Renzi calls on the EU to address reform



Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, who won in the most recent European elections has called on the EU to address reform of which it is said Italy is the leader, and not to get lost in disputes over power. "Before debating names, let's agree on a programme," he declared in an interview granted to several major European newspapers including La Stampa on 31st May 2014. Interviewed about European Commission candidate Juncker Matteo Renzi declared that the labour market interested him more than positions of power. Renzi said that Italy would follow the reforms set within the EU, adding that his country had already started work... [Read more](#)

Turkey :

Turkish Constitutional Court lifts the block on YouTube



The Turkish Constitutional Court deemed on 29th May 2014 that the decision to block YouTube had infringed user rights and freedom of expression. The Turkish Constitutional Court assessed three different appeals regarding the ban imposed by the government on 27th March. One of the appeals was lodged by the company itself whilst the others were lodged by the leader of the Lawyers Union of Turkey (TBB) Metin Feyzioglu... [Read more](#)

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Hungary :

Male only government in Hungary!



Former Hungarian Justice Minister Tibor Navracsics was appointed Foreign Minister on 29th May 2014 by Prime Minister Viktor Orban - who was re-elected for a four year mandate after the general election on 6th April. Tibor Navracsics will replace Janos Martonyi, who had been Foreign Minister since 2010. Mr Navracsics will also take over the External Economic Affairs portfolio. He has been replaced in his position as Justice Minister by Laszlo Trocsanyi, former Ambassador to Hungary in France. Former government spokesperson, Hanos Lazar has been promoted to run the Prime Minister's office. This entirely male government comprises 9 ministers. This is a regression. The only woman member of the previous government Zsuzsanna Nemeth gave up her Development portfolio to Miklos Sesztak. Hungarian President Janos Ader is due to approve this government, which will then be presented to the Hungarian parliament on 6th June... [Read more](#)

UK :

Launch of the campaign for referendum on independence in Scotland



The campaign for the referendum on independence for Scotland officially started on 30th May 2014 just 16 weeks before the historic vote over the region's future and that of the UK. The official launch set specific rules notably regarding the amount of money spent on the campaign - with neither side allowed to go beyond £1.5 million. Whilst the campaign for the "yes" seems to have caught up since the spring the most recent polls show slight progress for the "no"... [Read more](#)

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Slovenia :

General elections in Slovenia on 13th July



Slovenians will be voting on 13th July to elect a new parliament. This decision was taken by President Borut Pahor on 1st June 2014 - and was made necessary by the resignation in May of Prime Minister Alenka Bratusek. Mr Pahor formally dissolved the National Assembly elected at the end of 2011, and hope that a government will be formed towards mid-September thereby avoiding a long period of political paralysis. The Slovenian economy is convalescing after the country only just avoided having to turn to international aid last winter. Alenka Bratusek, head of the coalition that came to

office in March 2013 gave up on 5th May after having lost the leadership of the Slovenia Positive party (PS) to the benefit of Zoran Jankovic, the party's founder and Mayor of Ljubljana. The latter previously had to leave the party amid accusations of tax fraud and corruption... [Read more](#)

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Ukraine :

Successful Presidential election and continued anti-terrorist operation in Ukraine



Pyotr Poroshenko won the presidential election organised on 25th May in Ukraine and he has set it a priority to bring the war with the separatist East to an end in which the election barely took place and to take his country towards European integration. He will be sworn in on 7th June next. He gave details of the first steps he will take as Head of State: he will travel to the regions of Donbass which are in the grip of a pro-Russian armed rebellion "bring peace to Ukraine" and convene early general elections this year. He maintains that he will never acknowledge the referendum undertaken in March in Crimea. World boxing champion, Vitaly Klichko, who was one of the leaders of the pro-Western uprising, was elected Mayor of Kiev. At the same time the interim government announced the continued anti-terrorist operation in the east, notably concerning the retaking of the airport of Donetsk. The battle still rages... [Read more](#)

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World Bank pays 750 million dollars to Ukraine



On 29th May 2014 the World Bank paid 750 million dollars to Ukraine - the first tranche of aid of 3.5 billion set aside for the country which is battling to avoid bankruptcy, announced the Finance Ministry. These funds "will be used to make strategic, institutional reforms" notably in view of "stabilising the country's economic and financial situation," said the ministry. Some of the credit should enable the support of "extremely important" reform in the country which is fighting corruption and by reforming an "unfair" system of energy price subsidies and yet provide protection to the poorest... [Read more](#)

ECHR :

Hungary condemned by the ECHR



The Council of Europe's Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has condemned Hungary for the dismissal of the President of the Supreme Court of Hungary. The complainant Mr Baka was dismissed from office on January 1st 2012, three and a half years before the end of his mandate. Mr Baka could not appeal against this decision, which in his opinion, was due to the criticism he had made about the constitutional reforms undertaken in Hungary... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

One quarter of Europeans have used an illegal drug during their lifetime



New synthetic, particularly powerful drugs, a rise in overdoses in some countries, more highly dosed substances: the drugs used in Europe are increasingly dangerous for health warned the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) in its annual report. More than 80 million Europeans i.e one quarter of the adult population has used an illegal drug at some time in their life... [Read more](#)

Vocational Training in Germany



In his paper published in May 2014 René Lasserre addresses vocational training in Germany and assesses its "socio-economic and ability to adapt". Beyond recurrent economic indicators, Germany's competitiveness and economic performance is based on a pillar of its social system: dual vocational training. Indeed training in Germany comprises a theoretical part and the acquisition of practical experience within a company. The dual system now faces two major challenges. The first is demographic due to the low birth rate in Germany. The second challenge is sociological: longer, university courses are increasingly the preference of young people... [Read more](#)

Publications :

European Values - Developments and Divides



Armand Colin publishing have released a book written under the management of Pierre Bréchon and Frédéric Gonthier entitled "Les Valeurs des Européens - évolutions et clivages". Based on the idea that "globalisation will lead to a uniformisation of values" and that "countries will be increasingly interdependent, forced to adopt the same ways of living and thinking" all of this supported by European integration "will erase specific features inherited from the past" - the authors have explored this idea and show that these claims are false. In their opinion since 1981 "we have not seen any mass rapprochement: differences are still great between the north and the south, and also between the east and the west of Europe." Beyond this the authors stress that "the map of values is not frozen though" because "everywhere we can see the rise of values of individualisation..." [Read more](#)

Culture :

1564-2014 Michael Angelo



On the occasion of the 450th anniversary of the birth of artist Michael Angelo Buonarroti, the Capitoline Museum of Rome is running an exhibition providing a panorama of the artist's work. A series of "thematic contrasts" is on show to visitors with the aim of highlighting the complexity of the artist's work. The exhibition brings together drawings, paintings and sculptures and also poems and letters written by Michael Angelo... [Read more](#)

Guillaume Gallienne plays Lucretia Borgia at the Comédie Française



Lucretia Borgia is back at the Comédie Française from 24th May to 20th July 2014. Lucretia - the incestuous, poisoner, the monster is haunting the theatre once more. There have been no less than four successive productions with stars in the leading role - one of the most flamboyant in the repertoire: after Marina Hands (under the management of Lucie Berelowitsch) and Nathalie Richard (under the management of Jean-Louis Benoît) and before Béatrice Dalle who will be playing at the castle of Grignan in a production by David Bobée, Guillaume Gallienne is playing at the Comédie Française at present... [Read more](#)

Fourvière Nights



Theatre, music, dance, opera, circus, cinema - the Fourvière Nights are devoted to the theatrical arts and since 1946 have involved all disciplines. From 3rd June to 2nd August the festival is showing nearly 60 acts to an audience of over 130,000... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



3rd-4th June
Brussels
Meeting of NATO Members' Defence Ministers



4th-5th June
Brussels
G7 Summit



5th June
Frankfurt am Main
ECB Governors Council



5th-6th June
Luxembourg
Justice and Internal Affairs Council
Brussels



6th June
Normandy
70th anniversary of D-Day

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