

Russia, Ukraine and international law

Author: Jean-Dominique Giuliani



Due to Russia's intervention interpreting recent events in Ukraine has led to real confusion which has far too often enabled propaganda, inaccuracy and references to the past to prevail over a rational analysis. In a bid to provide a better understanding of the issues at stake Jean-Dominique Giuliani presents a paper that restricts itself to the legal aspects only of the question, which is also an eminently political one. It does not aim to ignore Russian

resentment or the Ukrainians' will to free themselves of the tutelage of their powerful neighbour or the national interests in question, it simply analyses the impact on international law.

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Foundation :

Appeal made by Jean-Dominique Giuliani



Recalling a sentence in the Schuman Declaration of 9th May 1950 Jean-Dominique Giuliani, Chairman of the Foundation is calling for Europe to wake up so that it might face the strategic uncertainties facing Europe better... [Read more](#)

Fight/Terrorism :

Informal meeting of the European Council



The 28 heads of State and government of the European Union met in Brussels on 12th February and discussed the negotiations in Minsk and the ceasefire in Ukraine. This Council was programmed after the terrorist attacks in Paris and was due to address the fight to counter terrorism. The Member States' representatives stood firm and determined to "counter the enemies of their values" which are solidarity, the freedom of expression, democracy, tolerance and human dignity. They also defined the details that are designed to guide counter terrorism work; citizen security (rapid adoption of a directive on PNR (passenger name records), the enhancement of the Schengen

borders, operational cooperation and information exchange between police and judicial authorities in Europe), protection of values and prevention of radicalisation (communication promoting tolerance and countering terrorist ideologies, the fight to counter radicalisation in prison) and international cooperation (fight to counter crises and conflict in the Middle East, dialogue with third countries)... [Read more](#)

The European Parliament adopts a resolution to strengthen protection against terrorism



On 11th February the European Parliament adopted a resolution that aims to strengthen the EU's protection against terrorism. With this resolution, adopted 532 votes in support, 136 against and 36 abstentions MEPs are asking for the introduction of de-radicalisation programmes, the strengthening of external Schengen Area border controls and an improved exchange of information between Member States. Parliament also calls on the EU Member States to move forward on a data protection package so that negotiations over the PNR (Passenger Name Records) can also progress. MEPs have committed to do everything they can to "finalise the Union's PNR directive by the end of this year".. [Read more](#)

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Spanish-Portuguese cooperation on terrorism



On the occasion of a visit in Lisbon on 9th February Spain Interior Affairs Minister Jorge Fernandez met his Portuguese counterpart, Diaz Anabela Miranda Rodrigues. During the meeting the two ministers committed to strengthening the exchange of strategic information regarding jihadism and the trend towards violent radicalisation in both countries. They also said they wanted to maintain close communication and coordination on internal issues within the European Union. The Spanish Interior Minister then informed his Portuguese counterpart of the different measures that have been introduced by Mariano Rajoy's government to counter terrorism notably identifying the "national strategic plan to counter violent radicalisation" adopted by the Spanish Council of Ministers on 20th January... [Read more](#)

Anti-terrorism bill in Italy



The Italian Council of Ministers approved the anti-terrorism bill on 10th February. The anti-mafia and anti-terrorism Prosecutor will coordinate operations nationwide. The bill places emphasis on updating prevention measures. Now fighting abroad is a crime (previously only recruitment was deemed as such). However those who fight against Daesh are not affected. From a penal point of view, a sentence of between three to six years will be applicable to anyone who joins terrorist movements and to those who support foreign combatants. The sentence will be from five to ten years for "lone wolves". There will be greater control of the web and it will be possible to suppress sites that glorify terrorism and call for jihad... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

GDP increase of 0.4% in the EU in the fourth quarter of 2014



A Eurostat study published on 13th February estimates that the GDP is due to have grown by 0.3% in the euro zone and by 0.4% in the European Union in the fourth quarter of 2014 in comparison with the previous quarter. In comparison with the fourth quarter of 2013 the GDP is estimated to have increased by 0.9% in the euro zone and by 1.3% in the EU. Over all of 2014 the GDP in the euro zone increased by 0.9%, against 1.4% in the EU. The sharpest increases in national GDPs were seen in Estonia (+1.1%), Hungary (+0.9%), Spain (+0.7%) and Germany (+0.7%).. [Read more](#)

G20 Finance Meeting on World Growth



Meeting in Istanbul the Finance Ministers and Central Bank executives from the G20 countries - which form 85% of the world's wealth - noted on 10th February an "unequal" improvement in the world's growth prospects and stressed the need to maintain accommodating monetary policies in several economies, notably those threatened by "persistent stagnation". In their final press conference the G20 members renewed the commitments they made in Brisbane at the end of 2014 in support of stronger growth, saying that they wanted to continue the work started in terms of financial regulation and the fight to counter fiscal optimisation... [Read more](#)

A plan to counter long term unemployment in France



On 9th February the French Employment Minister François Rebsamen, put forward a plan designed to counter long term unemployment (for those unemployed for over a year). In 2014 the number of long term unemployed increased by 9.7%. Given these alarming figures the plan puts forward 20 measures to help these people, whose age, level of qualification, mobility, housing, health and childcare problems make professional insertion extremely difficult. In addition to this the State is planning to double the number of unemployed who benefit from personalised monitoring from 230,000 to 460,000 by 2017 (350,000 at the end of 2015). The introduction of a personal training account since the end of January will enable the unemployed to access vocational training much faster. Some of the professional contracts will also be oriented towards the long term unemployed. Finally to help people overcome their daily difficulties the State is to introduce aid for childcare (places in nurseries reserved for jobseekers' children) or even emergency housing... [Read more](#)

Moody's downgrades the Greek banks



Moody's ratings agency downgraded five Greek banks on 9th February: Piraeus Bank, National Bank of Greece, Alpha Bank, Eurobank e Attica Bank. All of these establishments remain under observation and could be downgraded further... [Read more](#)

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Commission :

TTIP - the Commission publishes the EU's proposal on regulatory cooperation



On 10th February the European Commission published the draft legal text on regulatory cooperation set out by the EU as part of the TTIP with the USA. This proposal which was officially presented in Brussels during the latest round of TTIP talks (2nd-6th February) can now be consulted on-line... [Read more](#)

The Commission approves 18 additional rural development programmes



On 13th February the European Commission approved 13 additional rural development programmes under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural development (EAFRD). Support to rural development, the second pillar of the common agricultural policy (CAP), aims to improve the competitiveness of the EU's agricultural sector, protect the countryside and the climate and strengthen the economic and social structure of rural communities covering the period 2014-2020. These 18 programmes will be financed by the EU budget to a total of 14.3 billion €. They will also benefit from national or regional government financing and also private funds. After the approval of 9 programmes in December 2014, those launched on 13th February bring the value of the rural development programmes approved by the 27 (out of a total of 118) to over 35 billion €... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

European Parliament creates a special committee on tax rulings



On 12th February the European Parliament approved the creation of a special parliamentary committee which will look into "tax rulings and other similar measures" implemented by the EU's 28 Member States. The introduction of a special committee on the initiative of the leaders of the political groups on 5th February follows a series of inquiries by the Commission on tax rulings of multinational companies based in Luxembourg, Ireland, Belgium and the Netherlands. The committee comprising 45 members, with an initial mandate of six months, will be chaired by Alain Lamassoure (EPP, FR). It will look into the tax ruling practices implemented since January 1st 1991, but also at the way the European Commission deals with State aid. The special committee will also be responsible for defining the negative impact of "aggressive fiscal optimisation" on government finances and will put forward a series of measures to remedy them. Its establishment was approved 612 votes in support, 19 against and 23 abstentions... [Read more](#)

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Parliament demands the launch of an inquiry into allegations of torture in the EU

MEPs approved a resolution on 11th February asking the Member States as well as the civil liberties, foreign affairs and human rights committees



to re-launch their inquiries into interrogation practices applied in the EU. This request follows the publication of the report on the CIA's detention and interrogation programme which notes torture methods used by CIA agents to obtain information from their prisoners. According to Birgit

Sippel, MEP (S&D Germany) author of the common resolution on behalf of her political group on this issue: "It is scandalous that some Member States collaborated with these criminal acts either by providing places for secret detention or by closing their eyes to the transport of prisoners via their territories. They must now launch procedures against those responsible.".. [Read more](#)

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Road offences: Parliament adopts new rules to improve European cooperation



On 11th February the European Parliament approved new rules to share cross-border data on road traffic offences. The new legislation will enable the sanction of drivers who commit offences in any EU country even if they are not citizens of the countries in question. MEPs want to ensure "equal treatment of drivers" and "improve road safety". The new rules for the exchange of cross-border national registration information in the case of most road traffic offences (alcohol and drugs, speeding etc ...). The agreement approved by Parliament now has to be formally adopted by the Council. These new rules will be extended to the UK, Ireland and Denmark within the next two years which did not apply the previous European legislation. Indeed the changes approved by the Parliament lay a new legal base (transport safety) for the exchange of data as required by the Court of Justice on 6th May 2014, which deemed the previous legal base inappropriate (police cooperation)... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Russo-Ukrainian Conflict: further sanctions against the separatists and the Russians



On 16th February the European Union confirmed its targeted sanctions against separatist and Russian personalities for their involvement in the conflict in Ukraine and published a list of 9 entities and 19 personalities targeted by an assets freeze and a ban on travelling in the EU. On this new black list of people and entities features two Russian Ministers - Arkady Bakhin and Anatoly Antonov, respectively Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy Defence Minister because they are "supporting the deployment of Russian troops in Ukraine," according the grounds published in the EU's Official Journal. The EU believes that "the Russian government's policy" as it continue to implement its military plan is "a threat to the territorial integrity, the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine." Moscow has constantly denied having sent troops to fight alongside the separatist rebels in this conflict that has now led to the death of 5,500 people in just 10 months... [Read more](#)

Greece has one week to ask for an extension of its financial assistance programme



Negotiations between the euro zone and Athens failed on 16th February in Brussels and Greece's creditors have given it a week to accept an extension of its present assistance programme. It is "quite clear that the next step must come from the Greek authorities (...) and in view of the calendar we can use this week, but that is about all," declared Eurogroup President Jeroen Dijsselbloem during a press conference after the abrupt interruption that was brought to the negotiations, when Greece refused to accept the extension of the programme. He spoke of a possible exceptional meeting of the 19 Finance ministers of the euro zone on 20th February. Mr. Dijsselboem said that an "extension" of the present programme that comes to an end at the end of February would "help the Greeks in terms of flexibility" that is provided for in the plan... [Read more](#)

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General Affairs Council Conclusions



On 10th February in Brussels the General Affairs Council discussed a revision of the EU's multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2014-2020. The aim of the revision is to allow the EU to transfer € 21.1 billion of unused commitments from 2014 to subsequent years. These commitments remained unused in 2014 because of the late adoption of EU programmes managed together by the Commission and the Member States. An agreement with the European Parliament on strengthened rules to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing was also approved. The Council adopted conclusions welcoming the Commission's 2015 work programme which sets out a number of priority initiatives broadly reflecting the Strategic Agenda, adopted by the European Council in June 2014... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Agreement after talks in Minsk



The French, Russian and Ukrainian Presidents and also the German Chancellor negotiated an agreement in Minsk regarding the situation in the East of Ukraine. After 17 hours of talks in the night of 11th to 12th February they reached agreement. A ceasefire was decided which took effect on 15th February at midnight. The latter also provides for the withdrawal of heavy arms and fighters from a new, extended buffer zone (50 to 70 km, in comparison with the 30 km provided for in the previous Minsk agreements. In a joint declaration the leaders re-iterated their commitment to the respect of Ukraine's territorial integrity. This is an important step for the introduction of sustainable peace. This agreement represents real hope for Ukraine. The separatist rebels also signed a roadmap that aims to establish peace in the zone of conflict...

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Kosovo-Serbia Dialogue: agreement signed on a judicial system



After an extremely long political stalemate in Kosovo, dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina started again on 9th February in Brussels. In spite of difficult negotiations, admitted by both sides, an agreement was found on a judicial system by the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo, Aleksandar Vučić and Isa Mustafa. Federica Mogherini, the EU's head of diplomacy welcomed the good will showed by both parties in continuing dialogue and settling other pending issues. The EU welcomes this new step towards normalising relations... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

Successful mission for the first part of the European Space Shuttle IXV



The European space shuttle prototype IXV (Intermediate eXperimental Vehicle), launched from French Guiana on 11th February splashed down successfully as planned in the Pacific Ocean just 100 minutes after take-off. The success of this mission is a first for the European Space Agency (ESA) which wanted to test its atmosphere re-entry capacity, a technology it did not master yet unlike the USA and Russia. With this success Europe now belongs the small circle of countries that can bring space vehicles safely back to Earth from space. "The mission took place as planned. It could not have been better," said Jean-Jacques Dordain, ESA's Director General... [Read more](#)

Germany :

German exports at their highest level in 2014



The German Statistics Institute, Destatis published a report on German trade in 2014 on 9th February. Exports totalled 1133.6 billion € - an increase of 3.7% in comparison with 2013, imports increased by 2% to reach 916.5 billion €. The German trade balance was in surplus by 217 billion € in 2014, which is a record for the country. More than half of the exports went to EU countries to a total of 657.3 billion (+5.4%). The share of trade with EU countries is greater still as far as imports are concerned, totalling nearly 600 billion € in imports (+3.6%) representing 65% of total imports. The greatest increase in exports was made towards European countries outside of the euro zone increasing by 10.2%. The decline in the value of the euro seems to have stimulated Germany's foreign trade... [Read more](#)

Croatia :

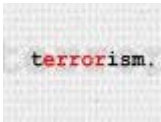
Investiture of the Croatian President



The first woman president of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic called on 15th February for national unity in order to revive the country's economy, as she took office during the investiture ceremony in Zagreb. "Only unity will enable us to build a better Croatia (...) we need national unity on strategic issues," like economic recovery, declared Ms Grabar-Kitarovic during her first speech. The new Croatian President was sworn in during a grand ceremony before an audience of several hundred people notably Serb Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic, whose presence was an encouraging sign in terms of relations between the two countries... [Read more](#)

Denmark :

Denmark suffers two terrorist attacks



On 14th February Denmark was the target of two attacks that cost the lives of two civilians and injured several others, including some policemen. The first attack targeted Copenhagen's cultural centre where a debate on the theme of "Art, Blasphemy and Freedom" was taking place. The conference notably involved Swedish artist Lars Vilks author of the 2007 caricature of Mahomet which led to death threats against him. Shots were fired killing one person outside. According to the Danish media the victim was producer Finn Norgaard. In the night shots were fired targeting a synagogue where around 80 people were taking part in a confirmation ceremony. The person guarding the building was shot dead. The presumed killer was a 22 year-old Dane known to the police for violent acts. Just a month after the attacks in Paris this new aggression is the cause of strong emotion and raises the issue of protection against terrorism once more... [Read more](#)

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France :

France commits to the security of Egypt



On 12th February the Egyptian authorities confirmed that they wanted to purchase 24 Rafale fighter planes and a multi-mission frigate as well as other equipment. This equipment will enable to Egypt to improve its security and to play a full role in maintaining regional stability. The Rafale has just therefore secured its first export contract. The contract will be signed by Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian on 16th February in Cairo... [Read more](#)

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The Netherlands :

Organic farming increasing in the Netherlands



The Bionext association announced on 11th February 2015 that exports of organic farming products had risen by 11% in the Netherlands. The organic sector comprises 3,600 businesses in this country and their exports now total 928 million euro (826€ million in 2013). The Dutch Agriculture Minister Sharon Dijksma, visited BIOFACH (11th February 2015), the world's biggest organic agricultural show in Nuremberg, to announce these figures. She said that consumer demand for better quality products that respected the environment and animal welfare was rising. The demand mainly comes from neighbouring countries, particularly Germany which represents 40% of these exports.. [Read more](#)

Romania :

Romanian President's speech to Parliament



Romanian President Klaus Yohannis spoke to Parliament on 9th February. He started by recalling that Parliament is the institutional body that provides the greatest guarantee to democracy. He then insisted on the need for institutional reform regarding local and legislative elections, the vote of the Romanian diaspora, the financing of political parties and electoral campaigns. The Romanian president emphasised the need to have greater transparency and control over the parties in order to counter corruption. Finally he said he wanted the number of MPs to be reduced in order to gain in terms of effectiveness... [Read more](#)

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Visit by Romanian President to France



On his first official visit to Europe the Romanian President Klaus Yohannis travelled to Paris on 10th February where he met his French counterpart François Hollande. During lunch they discussed Romania's entry into Schengen, the situation in Moldova, Ukraine as well as the issue of the Roma who have come to France. The French President said he was "certain" that the Romanian President's visit would lead to the development of relations between France and Romania. "On a cultural level we are planning many exchanges and projects." In 2018 modern Romania will be celebrating its centenary and France will be taking part in the celebration of this event," he announced... [Read more](#)

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IMF teams and the European Commission visit Bucharest

The IMF and European Commission teams travelled to Bucharest on 27th January and stayed until 10th February 2015 pursuing discussion on the agreements between the IMF, the Commission and Romania.



These agreements notably involve the European Commission's assistance to the Romanian balance of payments, which completes the IMF and World Bank's aid as part of the country's macro-economic programme. Although the teams agreed on a certain number of key policies that aim to achieve the European Commission's goals for Romania, some issues are still pending and will be discussed over the next few weeks... [Read more](#)

UK :

David Cameron's speech to businesses



During a speech to the London Chamber of Commerce the British Prime Minister David Cameron laid out a long term economic programme for the country, he spoke of the country's position in the world and stressed the importance of a close partnership between the government and British businesses... [Read more](#)

Ukraine :

Fragile ceasefire in Ukraine



The ceasefire decided in Minsk on 12th February officially entered into force on 15th February. The truce was being respected - more or less - according to international observers, except in the town of Debaltseve.

This town has been the focus of intense fighting for many weeks. At the time of the signature of the Minsk agreement the separatist rebels had encircled the town and they were continuing their offensive in spite of the ceasefire. This strategic town at the heart of the buffer zone is said to have been bombarded about ten times since the entry into force of the ceasefire said Anatoly Stelmach, the Ukrainian army's spokesperson. Moreover the rebels have barred OSCE representatives entering the town... [Read more](#)

G7 leaders' declaration on Ukraine



The G7, which is still concerned by the situation in the East of Ukraine, whilst the ceasefire entered into force on 15th January said it was ready to take further sanctions if the peace agreement drawn up on 12th February in Minsk was not respected. The G7 "that all sides respect the measures contained with the Minsk agreement to the letter." The G7 heads of State and government also provided their support to the agreement of principle that was found between the IMF and the Ukrainian government on 12th February regarding a programme of economic reforms that will be supported by an extended IMF credit mechanism... [Read more](#)

Petro Poroshenko attends the European Council



Donald Tusk, President of the European Council invited Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to attend the first part of the European Council on 12th February in Brussels. The Ukrainian president thanked the European leaders for their unity in their support to Ukraine. He also warned the Europeans that the separatist rebels are continuing their offensive in spite of the signature of the agreement with the ceasefire due to take effect on 15th February. Mr Poroshenko asked the Europeans to step up pressure and sanctions on Russia if the offensives continue after this date. The Ukrainian President also met British Prime Minister David Cameron, and the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker. This provided an opportunity to discuss a more advanced partnership notably with the lifting of visas for Ukrainians in Europe and greater macro-economic aid... [Read more](#)

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The IMF announces additional assistance of 15.5 billion euro to Ukraine



Christine Lagarde, the IMF General Director announced on 12th February that the IMF was prepared to provide further assistance to Ukraine. The IMF is offering Ukraine - whose economy is about the collapse - a further loan of 17.5 billion dollars (15.5 billion euro) over four years in exchange for reform. The agreement found with Kyiv still has to be approved by the IMF's executive board "I hope (...) before the end of February," indicated Ms Lagarde... [Read more](#)

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Switzerland :

New rules to manage immigration in Switzerland



Switzerland is to generalise quantitative limits on foreigners staying over four months, indicated the government on 11th February after a weekly meeting during which it adopted a negotiation mandate with Brussels regarding the free-movement agreement. Simonetta Sommaruga, President of the Helvetic Confederation says that Switzerland wants to do everything it can to resolve the issue: it wants to respect the will of the people that decided on 9th February 2014 to limit massive immigration by introducing quotas and obtain new agreement with Brussels which for the time being has rejected the idea. A draft bill was put forward to integrate the text approved in 2014 by the electorate. "Quotas will be introduced including for border-residents by 2017 and a work permit will be necessary for any stay over four months..." [Read more](#)

Swiss Leaks - a tax avoidance system unveiled



On 9th February the international inquiry by the Consortium of Investigative Journalists revealed the names of the 100,000 clients of the Swiss branch of HSBC who have hidden their money in tax havens. The journalists at the centre of the investigation revealed this major tax avoidance system, otherwise known as SwissLeaks, basing themselves on the list of undeclared bank accounts provided by Hervé Falicani, a former HSBC employee. At present the revelations about tax avoidance and large scale money laundering are the biggest indictment ever made against the Swiss banks' methods... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

Surplus of 194.8 billion € in the international goods trade in the euro zone



Eurostat's first estimates published on 16th February regarding trade in Europe notes a 194.8 billion € surplus in the international trade of goods in the euro zone and a 24.2 billion € surplus for the European Union. Lying at 24.3 billion euro in December 2014 the euro zone's international goods trade with the rest of the world has almost doubled in comparison with December 2013 (13.6 billion €)... [Read more](#)

The EU was a net investor in the rest of the world in 2013



FDI data (foreign direct investments) show that the EU had invested 4,900 billion euro in the rest of the world, whilst the stocks held by the rest of the world in the EU totalled 3,778 billion euros. The EU benefited therefore from the position of being a net investor in the rest of the world. The US is both the leading holder of European FDI's (34%, ie 1,686 billion euros) and the leading investor in Europe (1,652 billion euros, ie 44% of all FDI stocks held by the rest of the world in the EU). Switzerland, Brazil and Canada are the other main European FDI holders (14%, 6% and 5% respectively)... [Read more](#)

Eurobarometer :

Europeans concerned about the rise of cybercrime



A Eurobarometer survey reveals that internet users are increasingly worried about cybercrime. This study was published on the occasion of the Safer Internet Day that is supposed to promote a safer, more responsible use of the internet. 85% of those interviewed agreed that the danger of falling victim to cybercrime (usurpation of identity, piracy of accounts on the social network, piracy of email accounts, on-line bank fraud) is increasing. Dimitris Avramopoulos, the Commissioner for Migration and Internal Affairs declared on this occasion: "our priority is to create a safer internet for all users via the prevention and fight to counter cybercrime in whatever shape or form." A European Cybercrime Centre was established by Europol in January 2013... [Read more](#)

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Parliament Survey 2014: citizens are increasingly aware of European affairs



The 2014 Parliament Survey, which was undertaken after the European elections in May and the entry into office of the European Commission presided over by Jean-Claude Juncker, was published on 13th February by the European Parliament. Of the 27,801 European citizens interviewed 63% think that the consideration of the European election results in the election of the President of the Commission represents democratic progress, whilst 18% do not agree with this statement and

19% do not know. 54% however (+4 points) believe that belonging to the EU is positive. However according to this survey knowledge of the European institutions, notably of the Parliament, remains limited since 67% of the participants think for example that they are not well informed about the European Parliament's work... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

The Council of Europe publishes an annual report on gender equality



On 12th February the Council of Europe published a report on gender equality. The report highlights the impact of the Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 which helps Member States reduce the equality gap and increases their awareness of the importance of "taking gender equality on board in their work and activities". In 2014 the Convention on the Prevention and Fight to Counter Violence against Women and Domestic Violence entered into force and is deemed to be the absolute standard by UN Women and won the "Vision Award" 2014. There are still many challenges to overcome however such as the frequent use of gender stereotypes and sexist behaviour that prevents women from moving forward, likewise the high levels of violence still committed against them. The Council of Europe is calling therefore for greater effort to be made by the States in terms of gender equality... [Read more](#)

European Defence Agency Annual Report



On 10th February the European Defence Agency (EDA) published its annual report on its activities in 2014. The document presents the Agency's achievements over the past year and highlights the progress made in terms of "European Defence" in key programmes and projects. The report points to the achievement of the priorities set by the EU's heads of State and government in terms of Defence during the European Council of December 2013, ie the development of capabilities, military cooperation, research and technology as well as in the arms market and industry. According to this report the EDA has also put forward innovative ideas to "encourage and promote cooperation" and has maintained its work in several areas such as training and exercises, standardisation and research and technology." Finally the document also includes a wealth of updated facts and figures for 2014... [Read more](#)

The French Court of Auditors delivers its annual report 2015



On 11th February the French Court of Auditors published its annual report which highlights a series of observations and recommendations regarding the country's finances. Regarding the government debt, estimated by the government at 4.1% by the end of 2015, the Court has expressed its doubts. On the one hand the government deficit in 2014 was supposed to decline but it rose (4.1% in 2013, 4.4% in 2014). On the other hand the first president of the Court Didier Migaud believes that there is too much risk weighing over savings' forecasts (notably over the 21 billion euros in savings that have been announced) as there is over fiscal revenues (low inflation, which may minimise the amount: the financial laws for 2015 provide for inflation of 0.9% this year whilst the European Commission is now forecasting that it will be zero). Didier Migaud has therefore called for greater effort towards a rigorous management of government finance and notably a restriction on rising public spending to 1.1%, the control of healthcare spending and that of local communities... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Paul Gauguin on show at the Beyeler Foundation

FONDATION BEYELER

The Beyeler Foundation in Basel is running an exhibition devoted to French painter Paul Gauguin until 28th June. The exhibition rallies around fifty works by Gauguin from renowned museums and private collections from across the world. The exhibition grants a preponderant role to world famous paintings that Gauguin created in Tahiti: sensual women, often accompanied with symbolic animals are framed in idyllic landscapes. The artist celebrates his ideal of a perfect exotic world, associating nature and culture, mysticism and eroticism, dream and reality in perfect harmony. Together with these paintings the exhibition presents an exceptional selection of sculptures by Gauguin which bring life to an art that has long disappeared from the South Seas... [Read more](#)

Melgaard-Munch at the Munch Museum Oslo



The Munch Museum of Oslo, which is home to 1,100 Munch paintings, is hosting an exhibition until 12th April of the works of Bjarne Melgaard, a modern Norwegian artist. The exhibition aims to compare the two artist's works, which address similar themes, from ideology to social critique. Their respective and personal ways of addressing themes like sexuality, death, solitude and alienation bear witness to two different experiences of modernity. The materials used are different also - since the works of Bjarne Melgaard range from painting to video and photography. By comparing the two artists the exhibition tries to explore the way Munch's projects, like Melgaard's - although they employ different motifs and different techniques - both focus on a joint critique of modern civilisation... [Read more](#)

The World Photo Press Prize 2015



The 58th World Press Photo competition revealed its winners on 12th February. First prize went to Mads Nissen, a Danish photo-journalist for his photograph taken as part of an article devoted to discrimination against homosexuals in Russia. This competition aims to encourage photo-journalism and to link professionals with the public. For the 2015 competition 97,912 pictures were submitted by 5,692 photo-journalists from 131 countries. The 2015 prize will be presented in Amsterdam in April... [Read more](#)

65th Berlin Film Festival winner



The 65th Berlin Film Festival was awarded on 15th February by the panel. This year the Golden Bear which goes to the best film was given to dissident Iranian film-maker Jafar Pahani for "Taxi" - a film which portrays Iranian society via the journeys of a taxi driver in Teheran. This is an award whose political dimension is strong... [Read more](#)

Reims Scenes of Europe



The "Reims Scenes of Europe" festival supported by seven cultural structures in Reims will be taking place until 21st February. As each year different locations in the town are hosting around fifty artistic productions for two weeks of intense theatre, dance, music, and shows for young people. On the occasion of the centenary of the First World War the festival reviews the conflicts that traumatised Europe and brought "about the infinite desire for peace born of the ruins," another name for European integration... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



16th Februry
Brussels
Eurogroup Meeting



17th February
Brussels
Economic and Financial Affairs Council



18th February
Frankfurt
ECB Council of Governors

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