

SHOULD THE UK WITHDRAW FROM THE EU: LEGAL ASPECTS AND EFFECTS OF POSSIBLE OPTIONS

Author: Jean-Claude Piris



The hypothesis whereby the UK might leave the European Union still seems unlikely in the eyes of most. It has become plausible however. Indeed British Prime Minister David Cameron has promised that if his party remains in office after the general elections on 7th May, a referendum will be organised on the possible Brexit by the end of 2017 at the latest. Jean-Claude Piris gives a detailed legal analysis of the various possible options and their consequences for the UK and the European Union.

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Front page! :

65th anniversary of Robert Schuman's declaration



On 9th May next we shall be celebrating the 65th anniversary of the declaration made by Robert Schuman and with that Europe Day across the continent. Many European towns and regions are organising festivities in various shape and form (concerts, conferences, visits, exhibitions etc ...). Europe Day was introduced in 1985 by the European Council to commemorate this declaration, symbolising Franco-German reconciliation, which laid the foundations for the European project. The Robert Schuman Foundation will notably be present at the European Parliament in Brussels on the occasion of the Open Doors day and also in Warsaw. The Robert Schuman House in Scy-Chazelles will also be the venue of many events between 3rd and 10th May. Watch out for an event near you!.. [Read more](#)

Foundation :

Schuman Report on Europe, State of the Union 2015

The 9th edition of the (6th in English) of the Schuman Report on the State of the Union has just been published offering an opportunity to understand



current issues: the strengthening of the euro zone, growth and employment, investments, Energy Union, immigration, terrorism, European defence and security challenges in the East and the South, transatlantic issues etc ... The most eminent personalities including Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, as well as the best experts have chosen to contribute articles. The Schuman Report 2015 on the State of the Union is available in bookshops, on the Foundation's site and in digital format. Order your copy!.. [Read more](#)

What kind of recovery for Europe?



On 6th May 2015 Jean-Dominique Giuliani, Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation will be the main guest at a public conference organised by the European Movement Var entitled "Quelle relance pour l'Europe?" (What kind of recovery for Europe?). This conference, organised as part of the celebrations for "Europe Day", will begin at 17:30 in the Mozart Room, Toulon... [Read more](#)

Financial Crisis :

Stabilisation of economic sentiment in the euro zone



Economic sentiment remained almost unchanged in April 2015 in the euro zone after three months of improvement said the European Commission on 29th April. Stabilisation may be linked to the Greek crisis which continues to weigh over the region. The sentiment index lay at 103.7 points, i.e. 0.2 points less than in March. Although confidence improved in services, it deteriorated at the same time in construction and amongst consumers... [Read more](#)

Unemployment rises in France



According to figures published on 27th April by the French Employment Ministry the number of job seekers without any work at all registered with the Employment Agency rose by 15,400 (+0.4%) in March to lie at 3.5 million in mainland France... [Read more](#)

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Moody's takes Greece's rating down a notch



On 29th April the agency Moody's took Greece's rating down a notch from Caa1 to Caa2 with a negative outlook quoting the "high uncertainty" regarding the country's ability to reach an agreement with its creditors over its debt in time. Simultaneously the Greek economy remains in a difficult situation with "severe liquidity restrictions", declining wages and taxes and the State's doubtful ability to finance its spending and to repay its debt... [Read more](#)

Rise of 0.3% in UK GDP in the 1st quarter



The UK's GDP rose by 0.3% between the fourth quarter of 2014 and the first quarter of 2015 according to an estimate published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) on 28th April. British economic growth has slowed significantly however in comparison with the 0.6% registered in the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2014... [Read more](#)

Commission :

New European Security Programme



On 28th April the European Commission adopted a new European security programme 2015-2020 which should improve cooperation between Member States in the fight to counter terrorism, organised crime and cybercrime. This programme sets out measures and real tools to be used by all participants in order to guarantee security and to rise more effectively to three threats which are of particular concern. Although it is mainly up to the Member States to guarantee their own domestic security, the cross-border nature of this type of crime dooms single efforts made by the latter to failure. This makes EU level action necessary to strengthen confidence and to facilitate cooperation, the exchange of information and a joint effort... [Read more](#)

EU aid to Ukrainian SMEs and entrepreneurs



On 28th April 2015 the European Commission announced that it had adopted a special measure for the development of the private sector to a total of 70 million euro - as part of the 11 billion euro package of aid to Ukraine. The amount allocated comes under the European programme that aims to help economic recovery and development in Ukraine and will target SMEs and entrepreneurs in particular. This specific measure will be completed by a loan guarantee facility totalling 40 million euro. These sums will especially be directed towards SMEs and entrepreneurs in the regions affected by the conflict...

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The Commission presents its new Human Rights action plan



The EU's High Representative Federica Mogherini put forward a new action plan for Human Rights and Democracy on 29th April covering the period 2015-2019. She recalled that Human Rights were one of her mandate's main priorities. This plan sets out five strategic areas of action: the strengthening of the role of local players, addressing major challenges to Human Rights, the introduction of a global approach to Human Rights in conflicts and crises, the coherence of policies undertaken and the development of a new culture in terms of addressing human rights based on effectiveness and the quest for results. This plan is due to be adopted by the Council before the summer... [Read more](#)

The Commission encourages the use of alcohol interlock devices



On 27th April the Commission adopted a new directive that aims to improve road safety in Europe. It has decided to facilitate the introduction of interlock alcohol devices in some cars. Drunk driving is indeed one of the four causes behind 75% of road deaths (along with speeding, riding over red lights and not wearing a seat belt). The interlock devices which prevent the car from starting if there is alcohol in the bloodstream might be introduced in several member States to prevent a person's driving licence from being withdrawn completely if they have been caught previously for drunk driving. This will enable them to maintain the right to drive but only in cars that are equipped with the devices... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

The European Parliament releases a billion euro for youth employment



On 29th April MEPs accepted the early release of one billion euro designed to pre-finance projects to counter youth unemployment (632 votes in support, 30 against and 31 abstentions) in countries where youth unemployment figures are over 25%. This vote provides the greenlight to a recent Commission proposal that would like to speed up the launch of projects for employment and training of the under 25's across the Member States. The availability of one billion euro as of 2015 does not imply a new injection of funds since these had already been set aside for the Youth Employment Initiative. But the envelope is being made available earlier than planned... [Read more](#)

Migration-the European Parliament demands urgent measures to save lives



On 29th April 2015 MEPs adopted a resolution on emergency measures to be implemented in terms of immigration. They asked for an extension and clarification of operation Triton's mandate so that "search and rescue" operations on an EU level would be included, the establishment of a binding quota regarding the distribution of asylum seekers between all of the countries in the EU, an increase in contributions to re-settlement programmes, the implementation of better cooperation with third countries as well as the implementation of stricter sanctions to be taken against traffickers. This resolution followed a speech delivered by Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission to the European Parliament on the same day... [Read more](#)

The end of plastic bags?



MEPs adopted a directive on 28th April whereby the Member States will have to reduce their use of plastic bags to a total of 90 bags/person per year by 2019 or make consumers pay for them. Indeed each European uses around 200 plastic bags per year which are particularly damaging for

the environment. Their consumption has risen exponentially over the last 50 years, whilst they usually end up in the dustbin 90% of the time. 740 million euro might be saved estimates the European Commission. In France single-use plastic bags will be banned as of next year... [Read more](#)

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[Adoption of regulation on automatic emergency call systems in cars](#)



On 28th April 2015 the European Parliament, which met in plenary in Strasbourg, adopted a regulation on automatic emergency call systems in cars, thereby finalising the legislative procedure on this text. By 31st March 2018 all new cars and utility vehicles will be equipped with eCall devices which will automatically alert the emergency services in the event of car accidents. This will help these services to intervene faster and more effectively. In 2014, 25,700 people were killed in road accidents in the EU. This new device might reduce the figure by 10% per year. Within a three year time span, after the spring of 2018, the eCall device will be assessed by the European Commission, to see whether the device is to be extended to all types of vehicles... [Read more](#)

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[European Parliament approves a legislative bill on the transition towards advanced biofuels](#)



On 28th April the European Parliament approved a project regarding the cap on crop-derived biofuel production. This text aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (production of traditional biofuels has led to an increasing use of agricultural land), as well as an increase in the production of advanced biofuels. European legislation demands that the share of renewable energies in the transport sector reach 10% by 2020. The text that has been approved states that crop-derived biofuels should only represent 7% of final energy consumption in this sector by 2020. The new legislation is due to be adopted by the Member States by 2017... [Read more](#)

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[Refusal to approve the Council and European Council's spending 2013](#)



On 29th April 2015 MEPs decide to postpone the approval of the 2013 spending by the European Council and the Council of Ministers, the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT) and two EU/private new technology partnerships (ARTEMIS and ENIAC). Parliament's refusal to approve the European Council and the Council of Minister's spending is due to their persistent failure to supply the necessary figures. The bodies targeted have until the autumn to provide the necessary information, the date when the European Parliament will take a final decision. All of the other EU bodies' spending was approved, such as the European Commission which was however the focus of criticism regarding its mistakes in terms of the agricultural, regional and employment policies... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

[Euro-American Symposium on Security and Defence](#)



On 29th April the fourth Euro-American Symposium on Security and Defence was held in Washington. On this occasion Federica Mogherini, the EU's High Representative recalled the issues at stake in terms of the world's geopolitical situation to which the EU has to respond. Hence after highlighting the present geopolitical challenges (humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean, rise of terrorism, conflict in Ukraine etc ...), she said that the EU needed to step up its security and defence capabilities which would imply strengthening the European Security and Defence Policy. Finally she recalled the importance of the work undertaken by the EU and the USA together as seen in American aid provided to EU missions... [Read more](#)

Germany :

[Angela Merkel meets the scientific community ahead of the G7](#)



The heads of the national academies of science of the G7 countries presented their research projects on 29th April to Angela Merkel whose country is chairing the G7 from 2014-2015. The German Chancellor explained that it is absolutely vital to involve the scientific community in the political process (G7, UN, etc ...) in the defence of the environment and the fight to counter disease. She hopes to take advantage of the G7 chairmanship to take two UN projects forward: a global agreement on climate under the Cop21 and an international agenda for sustainable development. This meeting also allowed the Chancellor to promote certain issues that she believes important such as the fight to

counter tropical disease and infectious illnesses, as well as the protection of the oceans... [Read more](#)

German demography forecast to decline by 2060



Germany is due to lose around 10 million inhabitants and its population will lie between 68 and 73 million by 2060 according to demographic forecasts presented on 28th April in Berlin by the German statistics institute (Destatis). The decline in the population is the result of a decreasing fertility rate and even high immigration rates will not be able to compensate for this decrease. However the decline will be less pronounced than forecast in the last study of this type published in 2009. At the time Destatis forecast between 65 to 70 million inhabitants in 2060... [Read more](#)

France is Germany's leading trade partner



The German statistics office Destatis published the trade figures for Germany on 27th April. Sales of French merchandise in Germany reached a record 67.4 billion euro in 2014, up by 5.4% in comparison with 2013. Germany's exports to France totalled 102 billion euro. Trade between the two countries totalled 169.4 billion € in 2014. The Netherlands were Germany's second most important trade partners and China its 3rd... [Read more](#)

Cyprus :

GRECO Report on corruption in Cyprus



On 29th April the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) published a report on the situation of the fight to counter corruption in Cyprus. It especially deplores the slow progress made in terms of projects designed to increase the transparency of the financing of political parties. Noting all of the work achieved since 2011 GRECO observes that two of its recommendations out of eight have still not been implemented... [Read more](#)

Denmark :

Angela Merkel meets Helle Thorning-Schmidt



German Chancellor Angela Merkel travelled to Denmark on 28th April to meet her Danish counterpart Helle Thorning-Schmidt. Before going to the University of Copenhagen for a conference on Europe with students they discussed current international affairs and bilateral cooperation. Discussions mainly focused on the building of the 18km Fehmarnbelt tunnel which will be one of the longest covered tunnels open to rail and road traffic between Denmark and Germany... [Read more](#)

Spain :

National Reform Plan 2015-2019 presented by the Spanish government



The Spanish Council of Ministers met on 30th April to submit its Stability programme 2015-2019 to the European Commission. This programme bears witness to the most recent developments in the Spanish economy but also to progress achieved in terms of reform in line with the recommendations made by the Commission in June 2014: the government has established growth forecasts of 2.5% for 2015 as well as the potential creation of 500,000 jobs yearly as of this year. The 3% threshold of the government debt should also be achieved by 2016 and Spain hopes to achieve budgetary balance (0.3% of the GDP) by 2018... [Read more](#)

Finland :

Resignation of the Finnish Prime Minister



On 28th April Alexander Stubb presented his resignation to the Finnish president following the results of the general election on 19th April. He was asked to undertake current affairs until the appointment of his successor which is due to happen mid-May. Moreover as of 29th April Finland will be taking charge of the EU's consular cooperation in Nepal. Around 9000 European citizens are in Nepal at the moment after the earthquake on 25th April. Just over one thousand of them have not yet been found... [Read more](#)

France :

3.8 billion additional € for the French Defence Budget

On 29th April after the Defence Council French President François Hollande announced that 3.8 billion additional euro would be granted to the defence budget over the period 2014-2019. Hence the French government will maintain 18,500 jobs of the 34,000 that were due to be destroyed by 2019 within the armed forces in order to meet security requirements. Operation Sentinelle, that was created following the events in January will be extended leading to the permanent integration of 7000 soldiers... [Read more](#)

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France sells 24 Rafale fighter planes to Qatar

French President François Hollande travelled to Doha on 4th May on the occasion of the signature of a contract between Dassault Aviation and the State of Qatar for the sale of 24 Rafale fighter planes. An intergovernmental agreement for the training of 36 pilots and mechanics is also due to be signed to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two States. The French President will attend the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (CCASG) on 5th May... [Read more](#)

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Italy :

UN Secretary General visits Italy

On 27th April UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon travelled to Rome. He met the President of the Italian Council, Matteo Renzi and the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini notably to discuss the issue of immigration in the Mediterranean. In Sicily they went on board an Italian ship to observe work in the field. Ban Ki-moon believes that "we are facing one of the worst humanitarian crises since the Second World War." He believes that the priority lies in halting and preventing human trafficking by addressing the deep set causes of the crisis, notably by finding a political solution in Libya for example... [Read more](#)

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Poland :

German/Polish consultations in Warsaw

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Polish Prime Minister Eva Kopacz met on 27th April in Warsaw. They celebrated the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and stressed the close links between the two countries in recent European history. They also paid tribute to Polish statesman and former Foreign Minister, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, who died on 24th April aged 93 and who fought for the reconciliation of both countries. The two leaders finally discussed EU-Russian relations, the issue of Mediterranean migrants and the strengthening of bilateral cooperation... [Read more](#)

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Portugal :

Meeting of Spanish, French, Portuguese and Moroccan Home Affairs Ministers

The third G4 Home Affairs Ministers' Meeting including Morocco, Portugal, Spain and France took place in Lisbon on 28th April. They notably discussed three main areas of action, ie illegal immigration, terrorism and drug trafficking. They addressed issues linked with migratory flows that imply a strengthening in cooperation in terms of border management and control, the training of personnel and the exchange of information... [Read more](#)

UK :

Electoral Debate in the UK

The most recent televised debate before the UK general elections took place on 30th April and brought together outgoing Prime Minister David Cameron, Labour leader Ed Miliband and LibDem Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg. The three pretenders to the title of Prime Minister answered questions put by the audience. According to an ICM/Guardian poll David Cameron is said to have done better according to 44% of viewers whilst Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg were said to have convinced 38% and 19% of the public. David Cameron's policy was notably to address the issue of budgetary cuts in social aid, and Ed Miliband, who re-called his pro-European commitment, was asked about

his credibility in terms of governing the country... [Read more](#)

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Construction of a nuclear power plant in the UK



On 28th April the European Commission gave the greenlight to EDF to build a nuclear power plant at Hinkley Point for a total value of 31 billion €. The French company will be guaranteed a loan on the part of the British State and a high price will also be guaranteed on the energy produced for 35 years, whilst this measure is usually reserved for renewable energy alone. This project is contested by ecologist MPs, environmental defence organisations and several EU Member States such as Austria and Luxembourg... [Read more](#)

Ukraine :

17th summit between the EU and Ukraine



The 17th summit between EU-Ukraine was held on 27th April in Kyiv. The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker and the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk met Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko during a first summit as part of the association agreement between the EU and Ukraine. Europe's leaders complimented Ukraine on the work it had undertaken so far but called for acceleration in terms of implementing reform. They also called on all Member States to ratify the association agreement. All participants recalled their attachment to the ceasefire as set out in the Minsk II protocol, declaring that this was the best solution to end the crisis with Russia. The EU supports supervision of the truce by the OSCE and hopes for a total halt to fighting as well as transparency regarding the movement of heavy arms... [Read more](#)

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The World Bank forecasts a GDP decline of 7.5% in 2015 in Ukraine



Ukraine is due to suffer a GDP decline of 7.5% in 2015, which is sharper than last year and also more than forecast by the Ukrainian authorities deemed the World Bank on 29th April. The Ukrainian government, likewise the IMF, are forecasting a contraction of 7.5% this year after -6.8% last year. According to the World Bank the conflict in the East opposing the pro-Russian rebels and the Ukrainian army, which has led to more than 6,100 deaths this year, are the main reasons behind the GDP contraction. "Ukraine has significant potential but to realise this the situation in the east needs to stabilise", indicates the World Bank's report... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Council of Europe Report on Human Rights in Ukraine



The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) published a report on 29th April in which it denounces the situation of Human Rights in Ukraine. It assesses the cases of poor treatment of prisoners inflicted by the police force during Maidan events and the conditions of imprisonment within the context of the fight to counter terrorism. At the beginning of 2015 the CPT already declared that it was "extremely concerned" about the poor treatment of prisoners by prison staff, major corruption and a general climate of intimidation. The Ukrainian authorities have announced that criminal investigations have now been launched into these issues... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe Secretary General in Bosnia-Herzegovina



Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe travelled to Sarajevo on 27th April to meet Denis Zvizdić, President of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and other government members. Discussions focused on the upcoming presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the fight to counter terrorism... [Read more](#)

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Eurostat :

Unemployment down in Europe since last year



According to a Eurostat study published on 30th April the unemployment rate in the euro zone lay at 11.3% in March 2015 and 9.8% in the EU. In the euro zone as in the EU the unemployment rate remained stable in comparison with February 2015 but declined slightly

in comparison with last year, when figures lay at 11.7% and 10.4% respectively in March 2014. The lowest unemployment rates were recorded in Germany (4.7%), whilst Greece (25.7% in January 2015) and Spain (23%) recorded the highest figures. France is amongst the countries with the sharpest rises in unemployment on a national level (+0.5%), likewise Croatia (+0.9%), Finland (+0.7%) and Italy (+0.6%)... [Read more](#)

Inflation reaches 0% in the euro zone



The annual inflation rate in the euro zone rose in April 2015 according to a Eurostat study published on 30th April. It totalled 0%, against -0.1% in March, -0.3% in February and -0.6% in January 2015. Services and the food industry, alcohol and tobacco experienced the sharpest inflation increases (0.9% each against 1% and 0.6% in March), whilst the energy sector remained negative in terms of the inflation rate (-5.8% in April, against -6% in March)... [Read more](#)

Real household income up slightly in the fourth quarter of 2014



According to a Eurostat study dated 30th April, real household income per capita rose slightly (+0.1%) in the euro zone and in the EU in the fourth quarter of 2014, although the increase was not as sharp as in the third quarter, with real income growth rates at +0.6% and +0.3% respectively. Real consumption per capita also rose slightly (+0.1%) over the same period, again in the euro zone and the EU... [Read more](#)

Publications :

European Google Fund for the Press



On 28th April Google and eight European newspapers including Les Echos, The Guardian, El Pais and Die Zeit launched a fund totalling 150 million euro over three years to "support quality journalism" via "technology and innovation". This new tool called Digital News Initiative (DNI), is due to start within the next few months. It will replace the fund for digital press innovation (FINP), initiated in France at the beginning of 2013... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Aquae Venezia 2015



Aquae is the grand universal exhibition devoted to water. It is the only official event linked to Expo 2015 in Milan that focuses on food and nutrition. The Venetian exhibition will run until 31st October 2015... [Read more](#)

Napolitan art at the Compton Verney in Warwickshire



From 9th May to 21st June the Compton Verney art gallery in Warwickshire is hosting the works of the National Gallery of London as part of the "Masterpiece Tour for 2015" that will take works by the greatest painters on tour around the UK. The exhibition will contrast the famous "Regatta on the Canal" by Venetian artist, Canaletto on show in London, with the Napolitan art of the 17th and 18th century on show at the Compton Verney, notably the work "Posillipo with the Palazzo Donn'Anna of c.1701" by Vanvitelli. This is an exhibition that will promote the various approaches and techniques used by both artists and their passion for the Bay of Naples... [Read more](#)

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Tracey Emin-Egon Schiele Exhibition



The Leopold of Vienna Museum is running an exhibition until 14th September 2015 of over 80 works by British artist Tracey Emin, a major figure amongst the "Young British Artists." Entitled "Where I want to go" this exhibition also provides an opportunity to discover a selection of drawings by Austrian artist Egon Schiele (1890-1918), chosen by the British artist... [Read more](#)

"Keys to a passion" at the Louis Vuitton Foundation

The Louis Vuitton Foundation is running an exceptional exhibition until 6th July 2015, "Keys to a Passion" with sixty 20th century works of art



borrowed from around 40 institutions notably including the "The Scream" by Munch, "The Dance" by Matisse, "The Walking Man" by Giacometti. These emblematic works are normally only loaned on rare occasions - "The Scream" for example has not left the Munch Museum in Oslo since

2006... [Read more](#)

El Greco exhibition in London



"The Crucifixion", an altarpiece by El Greco, will be on loan from the Louvre to the National Gallery of London on the occasion of the temporary exhibition that is running until 2nd August 2015. Another work by El Greco "Agony in the Garden" belonging to a private collection, will be on loan and on show for the first time in 25 years...

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The Arab Institute follows the tracks of Hip-Hop



The Arab Institute of Paris is organising an exhibition/event until 26th July 2015 under the artistic guidance of rapper Akhenaton which will be devoted to the Hip-Hop movement. Via archive photos, manuscripts, videos and original graffiti the Arab Institute reviews the journey of the contest movement born in the USA before it came to France and the Arab world. In an approach which is historically, geographically and artistically transversal the unique works by JonOne, Evol, Jay One, Meen One and Yazan Halwani together with sound tracks by Thierry Planelle will be created on this occasion... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



7th May
Brussels
"Foreign Affairs" Council (Trade)

General Elections - UK



9th May
Europe Day



10th May
Presidential Election - Poland - (1st Round)



11th May
Brussels
Eurogroup Meeting



11th and 12th May
Brussels
"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council

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