



Tuesday 12th May 2015

issue 670

The Letter in PDF format

The Foundation on





The foundation application available on Appstore and Google Play

Upholding the Rule of Law in the EU: On the Commission's 'Pre-Article 7 Procedure' as a Timid Step in the Right Direction

Authors: Dimitry Kochenov, Laurent Pech



The rule of law is one of the fundamental values on which the European Union is based according to article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union. In the face of what is sometimes described as the resurgence of "rule of law crises" the Commission put forward a new European framework last year that was designed to strengthen the respect of the rule of law across the Member States. The goal set out by the Commission is to be able to deal more effectively with

any situation in which there is a "systemic threat to the rule of law" in any of the Member States

Read more

Contents

Front page!: Europe/Day Elections: Poland - UK Foundation: Editorial - Environment Financial Crisis: Forecasts - Euro zone - Cyprus - Spain Commission: Digital - e-Trade - Defence - Arbitration/TTIP Parliament: Transparency Council: Trade Court of Justice: Patents European Agencies: Frontex Germany: Russia - Czech Republic Denmark: Russia Estonia: Visit/Brussels Finland: Coalition France: Europe - Defence Greece: Euro - Finance Hungary: Ukraine - Tax/Advertising Italy: Electoral Law Portugal: Italy Czech Republic: Europe UK: Government Sweden: Education Eurostat: Employment Eurobarometer: Civil Protection - Euro Studies/Reports: UK - Rights Culture: Dante/750 years - Museum/Night - Cannes/Festival - Exhibition/Berlin

Agenda | Other issues | Contact

Front page! :

Europe Day



On 9th May last Europe Day celebrated the 65th anniversary of the Robert Schuman declaration, the founding text of the European project. On this occasion various tributes were made to him. Hence Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, recalled the pertinence that Robert Schuman's words delivered on 9th May 1950 still have today notably stating that "65 years on (the Schuman Declaration) is still a accurate,

topical appeal to European nations to pool their talents, their resources and to unite in diversity." The European Council also published a joint declaration signed by the 28 Member States... Read more

Other link

Elections:

Outgoing President outrun in the first round of the presidential election in Poland

Opposition candidate Andrzej Duda (Law and Justice PiS) was the source of surprise in the first round of the presidential election on 10th May in Poland, as he won 34.5% of the vote ahead of outgoing



President Bronislaw Komorowski (Civic Platform PO) who won 33.1%. Pavel Kukiz, a rock singer took third place with 20.5% of the vote. Janusz Korwin-Mikke won 5.3% of the vote. Magdalena Ogorek (SLD)

won 2.4% of the vote. The six other candidates won less than 2% of the vote. Turnout fell by 6.14 points in comparison with the first round of the previous presidential election on 20th June 2010 to lie at 48.80%. Bronislaw Komorowski and Andrzej Duda will now face each other in a second round that will take place on 24th May next... Read more

Victory for David Cameron's Conservative Party in the UK elections



On 7th May 2015 UK Prime Minister David Cameron unexpectedly won the general elections guaranteeing him a new mandate as head of the country. The Conservatives won an absolute majority with 331 seats. Labour lagged behind winning just 232 seats. Another major result in this election is that the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) snatched 56 of the 59 seats available to them. The LibDems won 8 seats only, coming equal with the Northern

Irish party, the DUP. Sinn Fein won 4 seats, Plaid Cymru (Wales) 3 seats just like the SDLP, the Ulster Union Party won 2 seats, the Greens and UKIP 1 seat each. The Conservative victory now means that there will be a referendum on EU membership in 2017... Read more

Foundation:

British Lessons



Jean-Dominique Giuliani, Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation published an editorial on his site on 10th May drawing the first lessons of the UK General Election that took place on 7th May... Read more

COP21 Conference with Nicolas Hulot



On 13th May in Brussels the Robert Schuman Foundation and the Permanent Representation of France at the European Union are organising a conference entitled "COP21 and the solutions agenda" and will be hosting Nicolas Hulot, the special envoy of the President of the French Republic for the protection of the planet. If you would like to take part in the event it is obligatory to enrol... Read more

Financial Crisis:

Economic forecasts - growth recovering supported by favourable conditions



In 2015 and 2016 the euro zone and the EU are due to experience significant economic growth due to favourable economic conditions suggest forecasts published on 5th May by the European Commission. The EU should witness its real GDP grow by 1.8% in 2015 and 2.1% in 2016; the euro zone should grow by 1.5% in 2015 and 1.9% in 2016.

Regarding annual inflation the latter is due to rise by 0.1% in 2015 and by 1.5% in 2016. Unemployment is due to decline to 9.6% in the EU and 11% in the euro zone in 2015, and then to 9.2% in the EU and 10.5% in the euro zone in 2016. Finally regarding government deficit ratios the latter are due to decline to total 2.5% in 2015 and 2% in 2016 in the EU and 2% in 2015 and 1.7% in 2016 in the euro zone. The government debt ratio is due to lie at 88% of the GDP in the EU and 94% in the euro zone in 2016... Read more

Growth continues in the euro zone supported by an overall increase in activity



Economic activity continued to grow at a constant pace in April in the euro zone said the consultancy Markit on 6th May. The euro zone's composite PMI lay at 53.9 against 54 in March and 53.5 in a previous estimate. Activity continued to increase in the two sectors covered by

the survey, industry and services, and also in four major euro zone economies even though France is still lagging behind its partners... Read more

European Commission, ECB and IMF visit to Cyprus



Representatives of the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were in Nicosia from 28th April to 8th May to assess progress achieved in terms of economic reform. The Cypriot reform programme plans for the support of recovery of growth and the creation of jobs via the

restoration of stability in the financial sector and by strengthening government finances. The team of experts congratulated the Cypriot authorities on their reform programme, notably the improvements that have been made to government finances and the adoption of the law on "insolvency and foreclosure"... Read more

Decrease of unemployment in Spain



On 5th May the Spanish Labour Ministry published new unemployment figures. The number of unemployed fell by 118,923 in April. This is the sharpest decrease in 7 years. The total number of unemployed registered is 4,333,016 people, i.e. -89 343 in comparison with 2011... Read more

Commission:

Strategy for a single digital market in Europe



On 6th May the European Commission presented its strategy for the European single digital market. The latter comprises 16 actions and is based on three pillars: access to digital goods and services across all of Europe for consumers and businesses, the creation of a development friendly environment for innovative digital networks and the

friendly environment for innovative digital networks and the maximisation of the growth potential of the digital economy. This notably means facilitating cross-border trade, ensuring consumer protection and the introduction of the free movement of data in the EU and even the reduction of package delivery costs on orders made over the internet. An operational single digital market might represent an additional 415 billion euro per year to the European economy and the creation of hundreds of thousands of new jobs... Read more

Competition-European survey on e-trade



The European Commission launched a vast sectoral survey on 6th May involving disloyal practices in the e-trade sector within the EU, in a bid to pinpoint obstacles to cross-border trade set in place by some businesses. The survey was announced in March by the Competition

Commissioner Margrethe Vestager and concerns goods as well as digital content, which places American internet giants like Amazon and Google uppermost in the line of fire. "European citizens are encountering too many obstacles when they try to access goods and services sold from abroad on-line," commented Ms Vestager. The announcement of this survey completes the action launched under the strategy for a single digital market adopted on the same day by the European Commission, which aims to remove obstacles, notably of a regulatory nature that are impeding cross-border e-trade... Read more

Other link

New impetus in European defence and security cooperation



On 8th May 2015 the European Commission as well as the EU's High Representative, Federica Mogherini delivered two reports to the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk in a bid to provide new impetus to European defence and security cooperation. This new boost

is part of the Juncker Commission's strategy and takes on board the challenges that the EU is facing (growing security threats, a changing strategic context, inadequate investment in security and defence capabilities). The two reports offer a summary of the action undertaken by the Union regarding the common defence and security policy since 2013, which also illustrates the major role played by the EU as a facilitator of cooperation in this area in support of Member States in developing their capabilities... Read more

Other link | Other link

Arbitration mechanisms in trade agreements



The DG Trade published a paper on 5th May with new proposals to improve the arbitration mechanisms between investors and the States under the TTIP, the transatlantic trade and investment partnership between the USA and the EU as well as under any future trade

agreements that the Union might make. On 6th May Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström debated these proposals with MEPs from the International Trade

Committee (INTA). The INTA committee welcomed the commissioner's proposal to create a permanent international investment court to provide long term solutions... Read more

Other link | Other link

Parliament:

More transparent, better managed rules governing managers' remuneration



On 7th May 2015 the Legal Affairs Committee adopted a draft bill allowing shareholders to have their say over the remuneration of company managers at least three times a year in order to guarantee adequate transparency as well as improving the balance between

salaries to results achieved. Moreover with this project big companies will be obliged to publish, country by country, information on fiscal rulings, taxes paid as well as government subsidies received in order to ensure true fiscal transparency. The draft bill also contains measures that aim to encourage "long term" shareholdership notably via the introduction of additional voting rights for long term shareholders. Informal negotiations with the Council in view of reaching a first reading agreement will now be able to start... Read more

Council:

Conclusions of the Trade Council



European Ministers responsible for Trade met on 7th May and notably discussed the transatlantic partnership (TTIP). They addressed measures regarding the arbitration court to settle disputes between investors and States, on which the committee delivered an opinion on 6th May. They also prepared the 10th Ministerial Conference of the

World Trade Organisation (WTO) that will take place in December this year in Nairobi and they especially spoke of environmental measures. The EU's eastern trade partnerships were also discussed in view of the Summit that will take place in Riga on 21st and 22nd May... Read more

Other link

Court of Justice:

European Justice confirms the single European patent in three languages



On 5th May the European Court of Justice rejected two actions taken out against the single European patent which argued that its translation into three languages only would be damaging to businesses. The ECJ rejected the various arguments put forward by Spain. It deems that this patent "aims to achieve uniform protection of intellectual property" and that "the simplified, uniform translation system" which Spain is

against "makes it easier, cheaper and legally more secure in terms of access" to the patent. This guaranteed "a uniform protection" of inventions in Europe "notably for SMEs" added the Court... Read more

European Agencies :

Frontex steps up its operations in the Mediterranean



Frontex, the European agency responsible for the surveillance of the EU's external borders declared on 4th May that it had stepped up its operations in the Mediterranean where more than 5,800 people have been saved recently. Several hundred migrants mainly Africans but

also many Syrians, departing from Libya, where chaos is leaving traffickers with a free hand, arrive daily on the Italian coast... Read more

Germany:

Visit by the German Chancellor to Moscow



On 10th May 2015 German Chancellor Angela Merkel travelled to Moscow to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin. The Ukrainian situation was the focus of discussions between the two leaders who stressed the importance of implementing the measures set out in the

Minsk Agreements. Moreover discussions focused on the state of economic and trade relations between Russia and Germany, which have been slowing, notably since the start of the Ukrainian crisis. Finally Vladimir Putin announced that a Russian delegation would travel to Brussels from 17th to 19th May to exchange views on the Kremlin's position regarding the EU's association agreement with Ukraine... Read more

Other link



Road and rail connections, Czech oil in Germany and the German minimum wage which affects the lives of Czech and Polish road hauliers were the focus of discussion between the Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on 4th May in

Berlin. They notably discussed the upkeep of navigation on the Elbe, a strategic issue for the Czech Republic... Read more

Denmark:

Declaration by Nordic and Baltic countries on a common communication strategy



The Foreign Ministers of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden (NB8) met on 6th May regarding the present, ongoing Russian propaganda campaign in order to set up a common approach to defend the independence of the media. The

Ministers approved the initiatives to provide alternative information sources to Russian-speakers and stressed the importance of coordinating their work to develop a common communication strategy across Europe... Read more

Estonia:

Estonian Prime Minister Taavi Rõivas meets Jean-Claude Juncker and Donald Tusk



On 5th May Taavi Rõivas, the Estonian Prime Minister travelled to Brussels to meet Jean-Claude Juncker and Donald Tusk to discuss present security issues, energy, the digital market and the challenges facing the euro zone. Regarding the implementation of the Minsk agreements Taavi Rõivas said he supported maintaining sanctions

against Russia and strengthening the European neighbourhood policy with Ukraine and Georgia. He also recalled the absolute need to bring energy dependency on the part of the Baltic States with Russia to an end whilst commending the Commission's support to many energy projects such as the Balticconnector. He presented his government's priorities... Read more

Finland:

Launch of negotiations to form the next government coalition



Negotiations to form a new government coalition in Finland started on 8th May. The Chairman of the KESK (Centre Party), Juha Sipilä is heading these discussions after his victory in the general elections on 19th April (21.1% of the vote, 49/200 seats). The coalition will unite

three parties: the Centre Party, the National Coalition (KOKOOMUS) and for the first time the True Finns (PS) which took second place in the election... Read more

France

France's European Project



Three days before Europe Day on 9th May Manuel Valls, the French Prime Minister presented a communication on France's European project. This focuses on three areas: a Europe of growth, a Europe that protects and a Europe that assumes its interests and values. He recalled the three pillars in Europe's economic strategy, ie the revival

of investment, fiscal consolidation and structural reform. The priority is to implement the 315 billion \in Juncker plan as quickly as possible and to seek the means to maximise the impact of the latter... Read more

Tribute to Europe at the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Lorient



French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian commemorated the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Lorient on 10th May alongside his German, Polish and Spanish counterparts. Lorient was one of the last pockets of resistance of the Wehrmacht in Europe, and was liberated two days after the German capitulation on 10th May 1945. The French

Defence Minister, who comes from the town and who was also its mayor from 1981 to 1998, declared during the ceremony, "the return of war to our continent on the doorsteps of the EU is an unacceptable prospect, it reminds us that peace should never be taken for granted." He also stressed the role played by the European defence policy: "Today the battle is that of European Defence.".. Read more

Most Greeks want to stay in the euro zone



According to a poll undertaken by the Research Institute of the University of Macedonia, published on 5th May most Greeks want the country to stay in the euro zone. 66.5% of the Greeks against 27% prefer to retain the euro rather than return to the drachma, even if this

means signing a new agreement on a rescue plan with foreign creditors. Greek ministers were negotiating with the European creditors (European Commission, ECB) to find a solution by the next Eurogroup meeting on 11th May... Read more

Greece reimburses 200 million euro to the IMF



On 6th May and as planned Greece reimbursed 200 million euro in interest to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The next major deadline for Greece is the reimbursement of 750 million euro to the IMF on 12th May. Given the budgetary difficulties encountered by Greece and its lack of liquidities the ECB has raised the ceiling on the ELA (Emergency Liquidity Assistance) as well as giving the greenlight

for the purchase of Treasury bills by Greece so that the country can honour the upcoming deadlines... Read more

Hungary:

Hungary's support of the EU's common position on Ukraine and Russia



On 5th May in Prague after an interview with the Czech Foreign Minister Lubomir Zaoralek, his Hungarian counterpart Péter Szijjártó declared that Hungary intends to join the EU's common position in opposition to Russia. Péter Szijjártó added that only a peaceful solution to the Ukrainian crisis is acceptable. Two cooperation agreements were

signed by the two ministers at the Czech Ministry for Trade and Industry... Read more

Hungary: tax on advertising reduced from 50% to 5.3%



Hungary is to reduce its super-tax on media advertising revenues from the present 50% down to 5.3% said the government on 7th May, after criticism on the part of the European Commission regarding this measure deemed as discriminatory. A draft bill on this will be submitted to Parliament next week. This tax affected companies

making more than 20 billion forints (65 million euro) in annual advertising revenues...

Italy:

Italy approves a new electoral law



On 4th May the Italian electoral law (Italicum), approved by the Senate on 27th January, was finally approved by the Chamber of Deputies 334 votes out of 630. By engaging the government's responsibility the President of the Italian Council Matteo Renzi aimed to push the opposition into a corner - which is calling this the end of

democracy - likewise the left wing of the Democratic Party which is denouncing the head of government's "authoritarian excesses". The law is due to enter into force on 1st July 2016. It aims to end the chronic political instability affecting Italy as it introduces a strong two round majority vote with a majority bonus and fixed lists. The party that comes out ahead in the first round (with more than 40% of the vote) wins a majority bonus which automatically guarantees it 340 seats out of a total 630... Read more

Other link

Portugal:

Meeting between the Italian and Portuguese Prime Ministers



After his speech at the event organised on the occasion of Europe Day in Florence entitled "The State of the Union", President of the Italian Council Matteo Renzi met his Portuguese counterpart Pedro Passos Coelho on 8th May. The central theme of the meeting was the European Union, as the two leaders stressed the importance of the

European project and the need to continue working towards greater integration... Read more

Other link

Czech Republic:



On 6th May 2015 the Czech government approved the country's strategy regarding the European Union. "The Czech Strategy in the European Union: an active, intelligible Czech Republic in a United Europe" is based on a new approach that aims to provide a dynamic dimension to the Czech Republic's membership of the EU. The new

strategy includes four general integration goals as well as five priorities, i.e. a common operational security and defence policy, deepening of the Single Market, an effective use of investment and structural funds, joint action against tax evasion and preparation for membership of the euro zone... Read more

UK:

First appointments in the British government



Following the general elections that took place in the UK on 7th May 2015, which witnessed the victory of the Conservative Party with 331 seats - thereby enabling the party to rule alone, David Cameron has announced a series of appointments to various posts in the new government. Hence George Osborne - apart from being given the

honorary title of First Secretary of State, was re-appointed as head of Finance and of the Treasury. Theresa May remains as Secretary of State for Home Affairs, as does Michael Fallon, as Secretary of State for Defence. Philip Hammond will also remain as Minister of Foreign Affairs... Read more

Sweden:

OECD - decline of education in Sweden



On 4th May the OECD published a report noting an urgent need for school reform in Sweden. The Director of Education for the OECD, Andreas Schleicher declared that the Swedish system, although exemplary in the past, has been declining since the 2000's. The results of Swedish students in an international test given to 15 year olds have

dropped to "below average" over the last few years. The document highlights that no other country has experienced such a sharp decline in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in terms of following up the "acquis" of OECD students. During the most recent test in 2012 Sweden came 28th out of 34 in maths, 27th in reading and 27th in sciences... Read more

Eurostat:

Increase in Employment levels in the European Union



In 2014 employment rates amongst the 20 to 64 year olds in the European Union rose to total 69.2% says Eurostat. Even though this figure does not reach the 70.3% seen during the peak of 2008 this increase is a first since the start of the financial crisis. Unlike

employment amongst men - although having risen to total 75% in 2014, still below its 2008 level - employment amongst women has risen constantly since 2010 to total 63.5% in 2014 thereby rising above the 62.8% seen in 2008. As a reminder the Europe 2020 Strategy aims to reach a total employment figure of at least 75% amongst the 20-64 year olds in the EU by 2020... Read more

Eurobarometer:

Clear European support for the EU's civil protection policy



According to a Eurobarometer published on 7th May 2015 88% of Europeans maintain that they support the EU's civil protection policy due to the cross-border nature of catastrophes. Most Europeans (80%) believe that civil protection should be coordinated across the entire Union. Moreover 87% of Europeans believe that the EU should provide

help to all countries affected by a catastrophe, everywhere in the world. Finally 90% of those interviewed during the poll expect other Member States to provide their aid to their country in the event of a catastrophe... Read more

Other link

The citizens of four countries support the adoption of the euro



A Eurobarometer study published on 8th May shows that the new EU Member States would support their country's adoption of the euro. This survey, undertaken in seven States that do not belong to the euro zone (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania,

Sweden), noted that the majority of citizens of four of these county were in support of the adoption of the euro (Romania 68%, Hungary 60%, Bulgaria 55% and Croatia

53%). However the Czech, Swedish and Polish citizens would prefer not to adopt the single currency by 70%, 66% and 53% respectively... Read more

Studies/Reports:

Information report on "the UK's place in the EU"



On 5th May Fabienne Keller, Senator of the Bas-Rhin presented a report entitled "The UK's place in the EU" in which she highlights the unusual nature of the UK's approach to present European integration, which in its opinion should not go beyond a simple economic project.

In response to the request by the UK to reform the EU in order to achieve a special status, Fabienne Keller sets out various possible scenarios in terms of rethinking Britain's place within the EU. Finally the Senator reviews the unlikely situation of a Brexit whilst admitting that the uncertain election on 7th May would be decisive for the country... Read more

Publication of the 2014 report on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights



On 8th May the European Commission published its report on 2014 on the application of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights. The latter has been legally binding for the last five years and the report notes the way that the Charter has been implemented to protect people's fundamental rights and to strengthen the legal avenues open to

Member States' citizens. The 2014 report is particularly representative of the respect of fundamental rights in that it includes digital fundamental rights, notably via the protection of personal data... Read more

Other link

Culture:

750th anniversary of Dante



On 4th May the Italian Senate celebrated the 750th anniversary of Dante Alighieri, one of the greatest poets in history. Special guest was Italian actor, Roberto Benigni who gave a rendition of the 33rd Song of Paradise from the Divine Comedy. Pope Francis also sent a message on the occasion of the "Poeta's" birthday - defining him as a "prophet of

hope.".. Read more

Other link | Other link

Museum Open Night



The 11th European Museum Night will be taking place on Saturday 16th May in 33 European countries. In France some 1,300 museums will be opening their doors free of charge and nearly 3,400 museums will be taking part in this event across all of Europe. It is taking place

on the Saturday closest to 18th May, International Museum Day, and is also linked to Europe Day celebrated on the occasion of the Schuman Declaration on 9th May 1950. In the UK the European Museum Night often coincides with the Museums at Night weekend which contributes to Europe and the European Council's drive to make the month of May one that is devoted to museums and culture... Read more

Cannes Film Festival



The 68th Festival of Cinematographic Art in Cannes will be taking place from 13th to 24th May. The event can be followed in real time thanks to the multi-media coverage of the "Quotidien" on line and on TV Festival. The Chairman of the Board is Pierre Lescure who has taken over from Gilles Jacob, now President of Honour and who was the festival's director for 37 years... Read more

Exhibition on Rainer Werner Fassbinder at the Martin Gropius Bau



On 31st May on the occasion of the 70th birthday of Rainer Werner Fassbinder the Deutsches Filmmuseum of Frankfurt-am-Main is running an exhibition "Fassbinder-NOW" until 23rd August 2015 in nine rooms at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin. Not only does the exhibition offer an illustration of the film-maker's work but it also shows the coherence of this work in the cinema and his influence over the art of production... Read

more

Agenda:

May

11th May Brussels **Eurogroup Meeting**



11th and 12th May

Brussels

May

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council

May

12th May

Brussels

"Economic and Financial Affairs" Council

May

18th May

Brussels

Foreign Affairs (Defence) Council

May

18th and 19th May

Brussels

"Education, Youth, Culture and Sport" Council

May

18th to 21st May

Strasbourg

Plenary Session at the European Parliament

The Letter is also available in:









I love the Robert Schuman Foundation's Letter

The Letter's Editorial Team:

Charles de Marcilly, Helen Levy ; Marion Attia, Leslie Biaggi, Romain Denninger, Noémie Rossi, Francesca Tortorella, Matthias Touillon

Chief Editor: Charles de Marcilly Publishing Director: Pascale Joannin

> Contact/Suggestions info@robert-schuman.eu

The Robert Schuman Foundation, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France, Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani.

You no longer wish to receive our letters. {LINK}