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The Letter in PDF format

The Foundation on  and 

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## The failure of the referendum in Italy illustrates the problems that exist in reforming Europe although Matteo Renzi did make some mistakes

Author: Marc Lazar



Interview on the Italian constitutional referendum with Marc Lazar, Professor of Political History and Sociology. He is the directeur of the Centre for History at Sciences Po and Chairman of the School of Administration of the University of Luiss, Rome.

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#### Elections :

##### Rejection of the constitutional referendum in Italy



A large majority of the Italians said "no" (59.11%) to the draft reform of the Constitution that had been put to them by the President of the Council Matteo Renzi (Democratic Party PD), which aimed to strengthen the country's political stability and to facilitate decision making... [Read more](#)

Alexander van der Bellen, elected President of the Republic of Austria



On 4th December Alexander van der Bellen won the second round of the Presidential election in Austria. The ecologist candidate (Greens, DG) won 51.7% of the vote against 48.3% which went to his rival, populist candidate Norbert Hofer (Liberal Party, FPÖ). Turnout totalled 64.6% ie 8.10 points less in comparison with the previous round (invalidated) on 22nd May last. He will take office on 26th January next... [Read more](#)

#### Commission :

##### "Clean Energy for all Europeans" Package



On 30th November the European Commission presented measures that aim to prioritize energy efficiency, achieve the lead position in the world in terms of renewable energies and offer fair conditions to consumers... [Read more](#)

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##### New rules on VAT for online businesses



On 1st December the European Commission put forward measures that aim to improve the conditions governing VAT for online traders in the EU. Its proposals will enable consumers and businesses to buy and sell online goods and services more easily... [Read more](#)

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##### European Defence Action Plan



On 30th November the European Commission put forward the creation of a European Defence Fund which matches the call made by President Jean-Claude Juncker for a strong Europe that can defend and protect its citizens... [Read more](#)

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#### Parliament :

##### MEPs approve the 2017 Budget



Following the Council's approval, in turn MEPs approved the 2017 budget, 438 votes in support, 194 against and 7 abstentions. It provides support to young unemployed, SMEs, transport infrastructure projects, research and student mobility via Erasmus+... [Read more](#)

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##### Transatlantic agreement on the exchange of data between repressive authorities



On 1st December MEPs gave the green light to an agreement negotiated between the EU and the US in order to provide better guarantees regarding personal data exchanged between US and European police and judicial authorities... [Read more](#)

##### European Commission code of conduct



On 1st December MEPs asked for an extension from 18 to 36 months minimum regarding the "transition" period before former Commissioners can take up a position in a private sector in their area of expertise... [Read more](#)

##### Presidency of the Parliament



The next session of Parliament will be taking place from 12th to 15th December. It will be an opportunity for the groups to appoint their candidate for the Presidency of the European Parliament (voting will take place on 17th January). The Franco/German candidate Alain Lamassoure has a good chance of winning on behalf of the leading group, the EPP... [Read more](#)

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#### Council :

### Conclusions on Competitiveness



On 28th and 29th November the 28 Ministers responsible for competitiveness reached agreement on the new rules that aim to stimulate e-trade. They mentioned the new space strategy and took steps designed to help young researchers and to strengthen the attractiveness of scientific careers... [Read more](#)

### Conclusions on Development



On 28th November the 28 Development Ministers discussed future relations between the EU and the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) and the follow-up to be given to the summit in La Valette... [Read more](#)

### EU-Georgia Association Council



On 2nd December the European Union and Georgia noted the significant progress made by the latter in view of its European aspirations and the joint goal of continuing to build a democratic, stable, prosperous country... [Read more](#)

### Transport and Telecommunications Decisions



[more](#)

On 1st December Transport Ministers adopted new civil aviation rules which will also apply to drones. On 2nd December ministers responsible for telecommunications opened the way for the total suppression of roaming fees applicable to consumers in 2017... [Read more](#)

### Eurogroup Meeting



In a press release published after their meeting on 5th December the Euro Zone Finance Ministers noted that Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands could "use their favourable fiscal situation to strengthen their domestic demand and their growth potential, depending on the situation of each one and according to their own national rules and obligations." According the president of the Eurogroup Jeroen Dijsselbloem, the Euro Zone Finance Ministers might grant Greece relief in terms of its debt but they will not launch a major "alleviation" operation... [Read more](#)

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### Energy Council Conclusions



On 5th December the Council held a debate on the draft regulation on measures to guarantee gas supplies. A compromise was found on the main issues: regional cooperation, information exchange regarding commercial gas contracts and solidarity... [Read more](#)

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### Diplomacy :

#### Moldovan Prime Minister visits Brussels



Moldovan Prime Minister Pavel Filip visited Brussels on 28th November. He met the main EU leaders in order to strengthen the partnership with his country. NATO Secretary General NATO Jens Stoltenberg announced the opening of a "liaison bureau" in Moldova... [Read more](#)

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#### Visit by the Tunisian President



On 1st December the Tunisian President met the Presidents of the Parliament, the Council and the Commission in Brussels. They maintained the need to strengthen the EU's support to Tunisian democracy... [Read more](#)

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### ECB :

### Mario Draghi speaks to MEPs of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee



On 28th November Mario Draghi, President of the European Central Bank (ECB) took part in the ECON meeting at the European Parliament. He notably addressed the challenges faced by the euro zone and the implications of the Brexit on the Single Market... [Read more](#)

### European Agencies :

#### Frontex organises the European coastguard



On 30th November Frontex called on the 28 EU countries to provide sailors and policemen to form the first multi-national teams to be deployed at the beginning of 2017, a crucial stage in the transformation of the European agency into a true coast/border guard... [Read more](#)

#### Adoption of the European Space Agency's budget



On 2nd December the 22 Member States of the European Space Agency came to agreement on the Europe's future space programmes and adopted a 10.3 billion € budget covering the period 2017-2021... [Read more](#)

#### Counterfeiting-Europol announces the closure of 4,500 web sites



The European Police Office, Europol, announced on 28th November that more than 4,500 websites specialised in the trade of counterfeits had been seized by the authorities of 27 mainly European countries. Europol announced the same day the launch of a campaign which aims to prevent specialised sites from selling counterfeits on the web... [Read more](#)

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### Germany :

#### Start of the Germany presidency of the G20



Until 30th November 2017 Germany will be presiding over the G20 and intends to consolidate and stabilise the world's economy. It will also devote time to energy and climate issues. This presidency will culminate on 7th and 8th July 2017 with a summit of heads of State and government in Hamburg... [Read more](#)

### Cyprus :

#### Negotiations to start again on 9th January



Espen Barth Eide, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy, together with the Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and the leader of the northern part of the island, Mustafa Akinci came to agreement on starting negotiations again over the reunification of the island on 9th January 2017... [Read more](#)

### France :

#### François Hollande will not stand for presidency again



For the first time under the V Republic a president in office has decided not to stand for a second term in office. "I have decided not to be candidate in the Presidential election to renew my mandate," declared French President François Hollande on 1st December as he spoke from the Elysée Palace... [Read more](#)

#### Tribute paid to André Marie and Robert Schuman in the French National Assembly



On 30th November the leader of the National Assembly Claude Bartolone together with his Luxembourg counterpart Mars di Bartolomeo, unveiled a commemorative plaque in the hemicycle in

tribute to André Marie and Robert Schuman.. [Read more](#)

## Lithuania :

### Lithuania-new government



On 29th November the President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė signed the decree appointing the coalition government between the Green and Farmers Union and the Social Democratic Party led by Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis. It comprises 14 ministers, 2 of whom are women... [Read more](#)

## Poland :

### Theresa May meets her Polish counterpart Beata Szydlo



On 28th November Theresa May, the British Prime Minister hosted her Polish counterpart Beata Szydlo in London. They announced that they wanted to deepen their economic, university and military partnership (deployment of 150 British troops, upkeep of sanctions against

Russia)... [Read more](#)

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### Meeting on the Balkans



On 29th November the heads of diplomacy of 15 countries of Central Europe and the Western Balkans met in Warsaw together with the High Representative Federica Mogherini. They re-iterated the wish to see the Balkan countries integrate the EU... [Read more](#)

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## Montenegro :

### Montenegro-parliament approves the government



On 28th November the Montenegrin Parliament approved 41 votes out of 81 the formation of a government led by Dusko Markovic, former head of the Information Services. The latter announced that he wanted his country to join NATO by the end of next year... [Read more](#)

## Ukraine :

### Failure of the Normandy Format meeting on Ukraine



On 29th November a meeting took place in Minsk between the Foreign Ministers of the Normandy Format (Germany, France, Russia, Ukraine) regarding the situation in the East of Ukraine and the application of the Minsk Agreements with the participation of the OSCE. None of those involved came to an agreement... [Read more](#)

## NATO :

### Extension of the Atalanta Mission



On 28th November the European Union decided to continue its naval mission Atalanta (EU NAVFOR Somalia) off the Somalian coasts, which is also fighting maritime piracy... [Read more](#)

## WTO :

### The WTO deems that Boeing benefits from a tax advantage

On 28th November the WTO deemed the tax advantage granted to Boeing by the State of Washington regarding the development of its 777X model as illegal in a complaint lodged by the European Union... [Read more](#)



## OECD :

### OECD publishes its World Economic Outlook



On 28th November the OECD published its "World Economic Outlook". It notably called for "more active use of fiscal levers to boost growth and reduce inequality without compromising debt levels..." [Read more](#)

## Eurostat :

### Unemployment at 8.3% in the EU and at 9.8% in the euro zone



According to a study by Eurostat published on 1st December the unemployment rate in the EU lay at 8.3% in October 2016, ie its lowest rate since February 2009, and at 9.8% in October 2016 in the euro zone... [Read more](#)

### Euro Zone annual inflation up to 0.6%



The euro zone's annual inflation rate was estimated at 0.6% in November 2016 against 0.5% in October according to a flash estimate by Eurostat on 30th November... [Read more](#)

## Studies/Reports :

### Investment plan for Europe: what improvements can be made?



On 29th November the Commission published a communication bringing together the conclusions of three assessments of the European funds for strategic investments. The shortcomings stressed (use by cohesion countries; improvement in sectoral and geographical cover) are to be palliated by the proposal to revise the EFSI. The States will vote on this on 6th December... [Read more](#)

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### China's Global Rise: can the EU and the US pursue a coordinated strategy?



The emergence of China as a world economic power and its integration in the world order is one of the major challenges faced by Europe and the US at the start of this, the 21st century. This is one of the themes focused on in the report by Philippe Le Corre and Jonathan D. Pollack published by Brookings... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### Festival of Light in Lyon



From 8th to 10th December the Festival of Light will be taking place in Lyon. For three days monuments and streets in the city will be decorated in various colours... [Read more](#)

### Ice Sculpture Festival in the Netherlands



From 10th December 2016 to 5th February 2017 the Ice Sculpture Festival is taking place in Amsterdam. It is one of the most spectacular winter events in the Netherlands. More than 550,000 kg of ice and snow are transformed into an icy landscape... [Read more](#)



### Exhibition "Nightfall" in Geneva



From 2nd December 2016 to 19th March 2017 an exhibition entitled "Nightfall" devoted to the Gothic world since Frankenstein is running at the Rath Museum of Geneva. There will also be a book, a seminar as well as screenings focused on the character Frankenstein... [Read more](#)

### Milan Craftman's Fair



The Craftsman's Fair is taking place in Milan until 11th December where it will be possible to buy, see and touch handmade products from the world over. On this occasion musical events, dance performances as well as cooking demonstrations will also be organised... [Read more](#)

### Agenda :



6th December  
Brussels  
"Economic and Financial Affairs" Council



8th December  
Frankfurt  
ECB Council of Governors  
Brussels  
"Employment, social policy, health and consumers"



8th and 9th December  
Brussels  
"Justice and Internal Affairs" Council



11th December  
Romania  
Parliamentary elections (renewal of the two chambers)



12th December  
Brussels  
"Foreign Affairs" Council



12th and 13th December  
Brussels  
"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council



12th to 15th December  
Strasbourg  
Plenary Session of European Parliament

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