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## The People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) led by outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte easily pulls ahead in the general elections in the Netherlands

Author: Corinne Deloy



In spite of the victory of the head of government's party, the outgoing government coalition suffered a defeat, notably due to the collapse of the social democrats of the Labour Party (PvdA), led by Lodewijk Asscher, who won 5.7% of the vote and 9 seats (-29). "A dramatic loss" stressed the latter. The slow death of social-democracy is a strong trend across all of Europe.

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**Front page!** :

**The Schuman Report on Europe, State of the Union 2017 has now been published**



The 11th edition of the "Schuman Report on the State of the Union" has just been published by Lignes de Repères". You can purchase this book that is vital in order to understand Europe from bookshops and on the Foundation's site. Order it?.. [Read more](#)

**Elections** :

Janos Ader re-elected as President of Hungary



Outgoing head of State Janos Ader, supported by the Alliance of Young Democrats-Civic Union (FIDESZ-MPP), the party of the Prime Minister Viktor Orban, was re-elected as President of Hungary by the Orszaggyules, the only chamber in Parliament, on 13th March in the second round of voting... [Read more](#)



**Foundation :**

**"A new wave" after the French elections**



The Martens Centre and the Foundation are organising a conference on 22nd March on the issues at stake in the French presidential election: "A new wave" after the French elections? Enrol now!.. [Read more](#)



**Commission :**

**Towards a common market in the Balkans**



On 16th March the European Commission encouraged the Western Balkans to create a regional common market during a meeting with the Prime Ministers of the six countries in Sarajevo... [Read more](#)



**New action plan to counter drug trafficking**



On 15th March the European Commission put forward a new EU plan of action regarding drugs over the period 2017-2020... [Read more](#)



**Parliament :**

**Budgetary Priorities 2018**



Growth and employment, particularly for young people must remain budgetary priorities just like migration and climate change, declare MEPs in the budgetary guidelines 2018 adopted on 15th March... [Read more](#)



**Lifting obstacles to the freedom of movement and work**



On 15th March MEPs adopted a text on free movement workers in the Union. They are worried about practices which infringe this right after the expiry of work contracts... [Read more](#)



**Strengthening of shareholders' rights**



According to a resolution approved by MEPs on 14th March shareholders will have their word to say about the payment of leaders and businesses to facilitate the identification of their shareholders... [Read more](#)



**Update of 1991 directive on fire arms**



Stricter controls on arms as well as the obligation on the part of Member States to introduce a system to assess the delivery and renewal of permits are part of measures adopted on 14th March by MEPs... [Read more](#)



**Protection of the Arctic**



Climate change is leading to new environmental and security challenges in the Arctic because the ice-cap is opening up new navigation and fishing paths and competition for its natural resources

is growing maintained MEPs in a resolution that was approved on 16th March... [Read more](#)

#### Council :

##### Eurogroup Meeting



During the Eurogroup Meeting on 20th March Ministers deemed that discussions between Greek and its creditors were going to gather pace over the next few day in order to come to an agreement on progress on the aid plan... [Read more](#)

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#### Diplomacy :

##### Declarations on Crimea



Three years after the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the town of Sebastopol by the Russian Federation, the European Union is still firmly attached to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine... [Read more](#)

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##### European Union Strategy for Syria: consolidating peace work



[more](#)

The European Commission and the Vice-President Federica Mogherini, the EU's High Representative for foreign affairs and security policy adopted a joint communication on 14th March proposing an EU strategy regarding a Syria that is oriented towards the future... [Read more](#)

#### Court of Justice :

##### Decision on the display religious symbols at work



On 14th March the Court of Justice delivered an opinion which stipulates "an internal regulation of a business banning the display of all political, philosophical and religious symbols was not direct discrimination.".. [Read more](#)

#### Germany :

##### Meeting between Angela Merkel and Donald Trump



Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor and Donald Trump, the American President met on 17th March in the USA to discuss trade relations, their role in NATO, their position regarding Russia as well as the EU... [Read more](#)

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##### Angela Merkel and Shinzo Abe inaugurate CEBIT



On 19th March German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe advocated "free-trade" and "free, open markets" during the inauguration of the CEBIT fair in Hannover... [Read more](#)

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##### Meeting between the Finance Ministers of the G20



On 17th and 18th March the Finance Ministers of the G20, who were meeting in Baden Baden spoke of the future and looked in greater depth into the issues of climate change, trade and fate of the free-trade agreements... [Read more](#)

##### Frank-Walter Steinmeier takes office as Federal President

On 18th March Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the new German President elected on 12th February took office officially as he succeeded Joachim



Gauk... [Read more](#)

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**Spain :**

**Economic Study of Spain by the OECD forecasts growth of 2%**



According to an economic study of Spain by the OECD on 14th March, growth will be over 2% covering the period 2017-2018... [Read more](#)

**France :**

**List of candidates in the presidential election**



The official list of candidates in the French presidential election was decided by the Constitutional Council on 18th March. 11 candidates will be standing... [Read more](#)

**Meeting between Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel**



The candidate in the French presidential election, Emmanuel Macron travelled to Berlin on 16th March to meet German Chancellor Angela Merkel. They discussed relations between France and Germany and of the future of the European project... [Read more](#)

**Ireland :**

**Constitutional referendum in view**



On 12th March the Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny announced that a referendum would be organised to amend the Constitution to allow Irish citizens living outside of its territory including in Northern Ireland, to vote in the presidential election... [Read more](#)

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**Italy :**

**Meeting of EU Parliaments in Rome**



On 17th March the leaders of the national parliaments of the Union's Member States met in Rome to discuss the future of Europe... [Read more](#)

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**UK :**

**The Scottish First Minister announces a referendum for independence**



On 13th March the Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced that she would ask to organise a referendum on Scotland's independence between the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2019 whilst the launch of Brexit is imminent... [Read more](#)

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**The British Parliament gives the greenlight to trigger article 50**



On 16th March British Secretary of State for Brexit David Davis announced that Queen Elizabeth II had given her greenlight to the draft bill on article 50. On 20th March the British government announced the triggering of article 50 on 29th March thereby opening the official procedure to the UK's exit of the European Union... [Read more](#)

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## Sweden :

### The Swedish government unveils its priorities for the EU



On 15th March the Swedish government published a report on which it highlights its three priorities for the EU: employment and growth, a more ambitious climate, energy and environment policy and a policy regarding migrants and refugees based on solidarity... [Read more](#)

## Iceland :

### Lifting of the control of capital



On 12th March Iceland announced that it was doing away with capital controls which had been introduced during the financial crisis in 2008 to stabilise the currency and the economy... [Read more](#)

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## Ukraine :

### Payment of 600 million € to Ukraine



[more](#)

On 16th March the European Commission approved a payment of 600 million € in aid to Ukraine. This brings the total amount of assistance granted by the EU to Ukraine to 2.81 billion € ie the biggest amount ever granted by the Union to a third country in this context... [Read more](#)

### Ratification of the free-trade agreement between Canada and Ukraine



The Ukrainian Parliament ratified the free-trade agreement concluded with Canada on 15th March. This agreement should enable the removal of customs duties within the next 7 years... [Read more](#)

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## Migration :

### Requests for Asylum in 2016



According to a study by Eurostat on 16th March 1,204,300 primo-asylum seekers lodged a request for international protection in the Member States of the European Union in 2016... [Read more](#)

### Provision of emergency aid



On 15th March the Commission delivered a report on progress and the path to follow regarding humanitarian aid logistics notably granted to Greece to manage the influx of refugees... [Read more](#)

## NATO :

### Annual Report



On 13th March NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg published his annual report which describes the new measures adopted by NATO in 2016 to ensure the security of citizens and member states... [Read more](#)

## Studies/Reports :

### General report on the EU's activities

The General Report on the Activities of the European Union presented on 15th March provides an overview of the major events and the main initiatives in the Union in 2016... [Read more](#)



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### Report on the Representation of women in politics



Published on 15th March the UN-Women report and Parliamentary Union's report indicates that the number of women present in the executive branches of government and in parliament is stagnating across the world... [Read more](#)

### Fewer dangerous products thanks to the rapid alert system



On 16th March the European Commission presented its report on the rapid alert system regarding dangerous products. With this system, more dangerous products were withdrawn from sale, notably from on-line sales sites... [Read more](#)

## Eurostat :

### Annual inflation rising



According to a Eurostat study on 16th March the annual inflation rate of the euro zone lay at 2% in February 2017, against 1.8% in January, that of the EU lay at 1.9% in February 2017 against 1.7% in January... [Read more](#)

### Employment rising



The number of people in work increased by 0.3% in the euro zone and by 0.2% in the Union European in the 4th quarter 2016 in comparison with the previous quarter according to estimates published by Eurostat on 15th March... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### "Francophonie" Week



Until 26th March Francophonie Week (focused on the French language) is taking place. Many events are being organised across the work as part of this 22nd event... [Read more](#)

### International Church Music Festival in Oslo



Until 26th March the city of Oslo in Norway is hosting the international church music festival where national and international choirs and musicians perform... [Read more](#)

### Exhibition of French paintings in Copenhagen



Until 31st December the Glyptoteket Museum in Copenhagen is hosting an exhibition of French paintings covering the period 1809-1950... [Read more](#)

### Ai Weiwei Exhibition in Prague



Chinese artist Ai Weiwei unveiled his biggest work of art to date in the grand gallery of the Palace of Veletzrni in Prague. "The Law of the Journey" represents a giant boat of refugees, devoted to recent migratory events. It is on show until 7th January 2018... [Read more](#)



### Exhibition "Pissarro in Eragny"



Until 9th July the Museum of Luxembourg in Paris is hosting the exhibition "Pissarro in Eragny: Nature Regained", comprising around 100 pictures, drawings and prints made by the painter in the village of Eragny between 1884 and 1903... [Read more](#)

### Monstra Festival in Lisbon



The 16th edition of the Monstra Cartoon Film Festival is taking place in Lisbon until 26th March... [Read more](#)

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### Paris Book Fair



From 24th to 27th March Paris is hosting the 37th edition of the Book Fair which brings together French and international editors and authors and more than 150,000 visitors... [Read more](#)

### International exhibition of flowers in the Netherlands



From 23rd March to 21st May the floral park, the Keukenhof in the Netherlands is hosting thousands of visitors who come to admire the immense floral exhibition... [Read more](#)

### Agenda :



20th March  
Brussels  
Eurogroup Meeting



21st March  
Brussels  
Economic and Monetary Council



25th March  
Rome  
European Council - 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties



26th March  
Bulgaria  
General Elections



27th and 28th March  
Brussels  
Justice and Internal Affairs Council

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### The Letter's Editorial Team :

Charles de Marcilly, Helen Levy ;  
Laurent Boulay, Hanna Létang, Béatrice Manole,  
Elise Mathevon, Lorène Weber.

**Editor-in-chief: Charles de Marcilly**  
**Publishing Director: Pascale Joannin**

Contact/Suggestions  
[info@robert-schuman.eu](mailto:info@robert-schuman.eu)

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