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Brexit: The transition period

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Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) provides for an agreement on the conditions for a Member State's withdrawal. This will be effective on the entry into force of this agreement, or two years after notification, which for the UK means 29th March 2019; the date that will enable the organisation of the European Elections at the end of May 2019, without Britain's participation, and then the appointment of a Commission comprising 27 Members. However a transition period is under study to avoid a "cliff edge". What are the conditions of this?

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Elections :

Parliamentary elections in Italy 4th March



The parliamentary elections (Assembly and Senate) will take place in Italy on 4th March following the dissolution of parliament by the Italian president on 28th December. Three groups will be running: on the right, represented by Forza Italia, the party of former President of the Council, Silvio Berlusconi, the Northern League (LN), led by Matteo Salvini, and the Brothers of Italy (Fdi) of Giorgia Meloni; the left with the Democratic Party of Matteo Renzi, and finally the 5 Stars Movement (M5S) founded by Beppe Grillo, a populist party that rejects any coalition agreement with the other parties and led by Luigi di Maio. According to the most recent poll by Tecne, published at the end of January, the 5 Stars Movement is due to come out ahead with 27.8% of the vote, then Democratic Party, 22.2% of the vote, Forza Italia, 18.3%, the Northern League 12.8% and the Brothers of Italy 5.1%... [Read more](#)

Nicos Anastasiades re-elected president of Cyprus

Outgoing head of State Nicos Anastasiades won the second round of the presidential election in Cyprus on 4th February with 55.99% of the



vote. He drew ahead of the left-wing candidate Stavros Malas who won 44%. Turnout totalled 73%... [Read more](#)



Commission :

Assessment of Healthcare Technologies



On 31st January the Commission presented a proposal aiming to foster cooperation between the Member States for the assessment of healthcare technologies. The improvement of transparency will strengthen the patients' position, who will have access to information about the clinical added value of new technologies that might be beneficial to them...

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Cleaner drinking water for all Europeans



The revised European directive put forward by the European Commission on 1st February will help improve drinking water quality and access to this via better information given to European citizens. The right of access to vital quality services, notably water is one of the main pillars of European social rights...

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100 young Europeans hosted by Tibor Navracsis



On 31st January 2018 after discussions as part of the "New Narrative on Europe" initiative, a hundred young people from across all of Europe presented their ideas on the way to guarantee Europe with a radiant future to commissioner Tibor Navracsis...

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Entry into force of a new ethical code for the members of the Commission



On 31st January the European Commission adopted the new Code of Conduct for the members of the European Commission. The new code notably extends the period of waiting to two years. During this period former members of the Commission will be obliged to inform the Commission before accepting a new function and will be subject to restrictions in certain activities...

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Parliament :

Concern about the state of the rule of law in Poland



The Commission of Civil Liberties at the European Parliament met on 29th January to express its concern about the separation of power, the independence of justice and fundamental rights in Poland. MEPs support the call to consider that the country may infringe the Union's values...

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Council :

Meeting of the Ministers responsible for "Competitiveness"



Industry and Research Ministers met in Sofia on 1st and 2nd February. It was stressed that in terms of industry the innovation framework programme will play a vital role in supporting industrial innovation. For its part innovation must be encouraged via a common approach...

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European Agencies :

100 million users of the European GPS



Galileo, the European satellite navigation system, "has nearly 100 million users", just over a year after the launch of its first services, announced the National Centre for Space Studies on February 1st. It will be 2020 before the system will be at its maximum performance across the world...

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Frontex launches a new operation in the Central Mediterranean

On 31st January the European Agency, Frontex, announced the launch



of a new joint operation in the Central Mediterranean, designed to provide Italian border guards with significant help in the monitoring of the maritime borders. Themis will replace the Triton Operation launched in 2014... [Read more](#)

Spain :

EUTM Command passes to Spain



On 31st January, after having spent 20 months at the head of the European Union Training Mission in Mali, Belgium passed the baton to Spain. Established in February 2013 the mandate of this mission is undertaken as part of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and was extended until May 2018. EUTM Mali comprises 581 staff at present... [Read more](#)

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No investiture of the President of the Region of Catalonia



The Parliament of Catalonia officially announced on 31st January that it had postponed the investiture of the President of the Generalitat of Catalonia. This follows the ban by the Spanish Constitutional Court on 27th January on investing Carles Puigdemont who is fleeing prosecution and not living in Spain... [Read more](#)

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France :

Günther Oettinger speaks on the European Union budget



On 1st February Günther Oettinger, the European Commissioner responsible for the Budget spoke to the French National Assembly's Finance Commission and the European Affairs Commission. MPs discussed the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 and its restructuring following the departure of the British... [Read more](#)

Hungary :

8 Member States accept an increase in their Union budget of 1.1%



During a meeting in Budapest on 2nd February with the Commissioner responsible for the Budget, the Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Slovakian, Slovenian, Croatian, Bulgarian and Romanian Finance Ministers said they were in favour of a 1.1% increase in their contribution to the EU's budget. This increase will be necessary following the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union... [Read more](#)

Ireland :

The referendum on abortion will take place at the end of May or beginning of June



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Latvia :

General Elections set for 6th October



Latvia's Electoral Commission (CVK) announced that general elections to renew the 100 members of the Saeima would take place on 6th October... [Read more](#)

Poland :

Adoption of a controversial bill regarding the Holocaust



On 1st February the Polish Senate approved a controversial remembrance law on the Holocaust 57 votes to 23 and 2 abstentions. The draft law would ban blaming the Polish State or nation for complicity in the Nazi crimes committed in Poland. It still has to be ratified by the president who supports it. Israel is considering the adoption of a law to counter the Polish one... [Read more](#)

Romania :**Viorica Dancila wins the government's approval**

With 282 votes against 136 and 1 abstention Viorica Dancila became the first woman to lead government in Romania on 29th January. She promised to continue the reforms desired by the majority. She will have to strengthen relations with Brussels which has repeated its concern regarding the reform of the legal system undertaken by the previous government... [Read more](#)

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UK :**European and British citizens' rights post-Brexit**

The European Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee said that the EU and the UK had made significant progress to guarantee that citizens affected by Brexit would retain all of their rights. However, some points still need to be settled, such as the implementation of the right to free movement after Brexit and the exercise of citizens' political rights. Theresa May announced a differentiation in treatment would be made between European citizens living in the country before Brexit and those arriving afterwards... [Read more](#)

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House of Lords examines the bill on Union withdrawal

The House of Lords has been examining the Withdrawal Bill since 30th January. Assimilating the exit of the EU as "an act of self-mutilation that must be stopped," Andrew Adonis, Lord and former Labour Party minister for his part defended the idea of a second referendum. For the time being both Labour and Conservatives are against the idea of another vote... [Read more](#)

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Norway :**Aid to regional cooperation projects with the Union**

The governments of Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein announced the launch of Regional Cooperation Fund based in Brussels that will be designed to support and finance regional development and cooperation projects in the Union and amongst its close neighbours. 34.5 million € have been allocated to this fund and candidates' project proposals can already be put forward... [Read more](#)

Switzerland :**The Federal Council discusses Switzerland's European Policy**

On 31st January the Federal Council undertook an in-depth discussion on Switzerland's European policy. In particular, it discussed the current situation, the medium and long-term objectives of Swiss policy on the European Union (EU), and the way to proceed. The government notably assessed new approaches to the settlement of disputes... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :**2.5% growth in 2017, the highest level in 10 years**

Eurostat published its first growth estimates on 30th January for the fourth quarter of 2017. Hence the GDP rose by 0.6%, both in the EU and the euro zone, i.e. 2.6% and 2.7% more respectively than in comparison with the fourth quarter of 2016. Over 2017 growth rose to 2.5%, i.e. its highest rate in 10 years... [Read more](#)

Unemployment at its lowest rate

Eurostat has published unemployment figures for December 2017. Unemployment lay at 7.3% in the EU, stable in comparison with November 2017 and down in comparison with 8.2% in December 2016. This is the lowest rate recorded since October 2008. In the euro zone it totals 8.7%, stable in comparison with November 2017 and down in comparison with 9.7% in December 2016. This is the lowest rate recorded in the euro zone since January 2009... [Read more](#)

Annual inflation rate of the euro zone down at 1.3%



The euro zone's annual inflation rate is estimated at 1.3% in January 2018, against 1.4% in December 2017 according to a Eurostat estimate published on 31st January... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Brexit: whatever the outcome of the negotiations, the British economy will be weakened



A British government document analyses three possible scenario for the Brexit and the conclusion is that in all events there will be damaging consequences for the British economy. If there is no agreement, growth will drop by 8%, in the event of a free-trade CETA type agreement it will drop by 5%; if the UK remains in the Single Market, there would be a drop of 2%... [Read more](#)

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Mid-term assessment of the Erasmus+ programme



On 31st January the European Commission delivered a report that aimed to review mid-term the Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020). All of the programmes assessed have proven effective. Erasmus+ is seen as being more coherent and pertinent than its predecessors... [Read more](#)

Report on the introduction of a sustainable financial system



On 31st January the Commission received a report by the group of experts on sustainable finance. This puts forward strategic recommendation for a sustainable financial system to support ecologically sustainable investments. This report is also a decisive factor in the implementation of the Paris Agreement... [Read more](#)

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European Fund for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries



On 30th January the European Commission published the report on the implementation of the Common Monitoring and Evaluation System designed for the European Maritime Affairs and Fishing Fund... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Bruno Gironcoli exhibition in Vienna



The Mumok of Vienna is running a retrospective exhibition until 27th May on the work by Bruno Gironcoli, the first to promote the painter and illustrator rather than the sculptor... [Read more](#)

Cologne Carnival



The Cologne Carnival will begin on 8th February with Weiberfastnacht, Women's Day. After the weekend's festivities, Rosenmontag - 12th February - will be the day of colourful parades and sumptuously decorated floats. The next day the traditional ball and Ash Wednesday will take place... [Read more](#)

Frida Kahlo Exhibition in Milan



The Mudec, the culture museum of Milan, is hosting an exhibition devoted to Frida Kahlo until 3rd June. Entitled "Frida Kahlo, beyond the myth", it will focus on autobiographical aspect of the Mexican realist painter... [Read more](#)

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Henri Michaux Exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao



The Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao is devoting an exhibition to the work of Henri Michaux until 13th May. It reveals the central features of the artist's working methods, highlighting his constant interest in the sciences, musicology and ethnography... [Read more](#)

"Dutch artists in Paris" exhibition at the Petit Palais



From 6th February to 13th May at the Petit Palais an exhibition is running at the Petit Palais in Paris; from traditional flower paintings to the aesthetic breaks from modernity, this exhibition highlights the extensive artistic, aesthetic and amiable exchanges between Dutch and French painters from the reign of Napoleon to the beginning of the 20th century... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



5th to 8th February

Strasbourg

Plenary Session of European Parliament

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