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## Italy: "Will there be a parliamentary majority after the election on 4th March?"

Author: Marc Lazar



The Italians are being called to renew the members of both houses of parliament on 4th March. Marc Lazar, a university professor, recalls the situation in which this election is taking place, the themes that have forged the electoral campaign, the political forces standing and the possible alliances; he explains the main issues at stake in these elections. The essence of the question is to see what the turnout rate will be and whether voters will provide a clear majority to one of the camps.

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Front page! :

The reunification of Europe under challenge?



Jean-Dominique Giuliani explores the impact of the attitude adopted by certain States in Central Europe which are increasingly focused on challenging the EU's foundations and its policies... [Read more](#)

[European Council](#) :

Informal meeting of heads of State and government

27 heads of State and government of the EU met on 23rd February in Brussels. They discussed the institutional issues linked to the next



European elections and the future multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027... [Read more](#)

**Commission :**

**Feminisation of lead positions still not at parity**



On 21st February the European Commission made some appointments in the areas of climate action, research, education, youth and culture, social affairs and employment. These strengthen the share of women in posts of Director Generals and Deputy Director Generals from 11% in 2014 to 36%. This result is due to the commitment by President Juncker to achieve the 40% mark by 31st October 2019... [Read more](#)

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**Visit by Jean-Claude Juncker to Macedonia, Albania and Serbia**

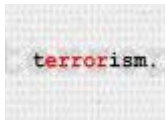


The President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker travelled to Macedonia and Albania on 25th February and to Serbia on 26th to discuss the enlargement of the Union to the Balkans. He congratulated these three countries on the reforms they have made, notably in terms of corruption and encouraged them to continue their efforts... [Read more](#)

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**Parliament :**

**Proposals to reduce the sources of financing terrorism**



On 21st February MEPs published proposals that aim to cut the sources used to finance terrorism. In their opinion, the EU's Member States must exchange information more efficiently and follow up on suspicious transactions more closely. They want to counter incomes that are made via the illegal trade of merchandise, oil and drugs... [Read more](#)

**Reform of the European budget must be in line with the Union's future ambitions**



The Budget's Commission adopted two reports on 22nd February on the spending and revenues chapters of the next multi-annual financial framework (CFP), to be implemented as of 2021... [Read more](#)

**New measures in support of Defence**



On 21st February the European Parliament's Industry, Research and Energy Committee -(ITRE)- adopted a new development programme for the defence industry in order to foster the Union's strategic autonomy... [Read more](#)

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**Council :**

**New guidelines for the 2019 budget**



The 28 Ministers of the Economy and Finance met on 20th February to assess the recommendations on sustainable finance and to adopt the guidelines for the European budget for 2019, stressing that a transparent, efficient use of the budget will strengthen the EU's credibility in the eyes of its citizens... [Read more](#)

**Belarus: extension of arms embargo**



On 22nd February the Council decided to extend restrictive measures against Belarus for one year, until 29th February 2019. These measures include an arms embargo, the ban on merchandise exports for internal repression and a freezing of assets as well as a travel ban. These decisions are linked to the unsolved disappearances of two opposition politicians, a businessman and a journalist between 1999 and 2000... [Read more](#)

**Diplomacy :**

## Strengthening of the joint G5 Sahel force



As they met in a donors' conference in Brussels with 32 heads of State and government, European leaders gave the greenlight on 23rd February to political and financial support to the military operation comprising five African countries to counter active Jihadist groups in the Sahel. The EU confirmed its decision to "double" its contribution to the joint military operation from 50 to 100 million €. In all international aid totals 414 million €. [Read more](#)

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## Call for cease-fire in East Ghouta



On 23rd February, on behalf of the Union, the High Representative Federica Mogherini called for the immediate application of the cease-fire in East Ghouta in Syria given the extreme seriousness of the population's situation in the region... [Read more](#)

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## Conclusions of the meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers



The 28 Foreign Affairs Ministers met on 26th February and adopted conclusions on Moldova, Cambodia, Myanmar and the Maldives. They also tightened sanctions against North Korea and Syria. The High Representative for European diplomacy Federica Mogherini asked for the immediate implementation of a 30 day cease-fire as demanded by the UN Security Council in Syria to enable the delivery of humanitarian aid and medical evacuations... [Read more](#)

## Court of Justice :

### Decisions over deforestation and air pollution in Poland



On 20th February the Advocate General of the Union's Court of Justice gave his opinion regarding the use of the forestry site, Natura 2000 Puszcza Białowieska in Poland. He deemed it contrary to Community law. On 22nd the Court condemned Poland for having infringed European legislation on air quality "persistently" as it has regularly gone over the thresholds of fine air particles disseminated in the atmosphere... [Read more](#)

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## ECB :

### The ECB publishes its financial statements 2017



On 22nd February the European Central Bank published its financial statements for 2017. These show a net increase in profits of 82 million €, from 1 275 million €, mainly due to the rise in net interest rate incomes of the portfolio in dollars and the portfolio comprising the asset purchase programme... [Read more](#)

## European Agencies :

### Frontex: risk analysis in 2018



According to the annual report by the agency Frontex in 2018, published on 20th February, the number of migrants having entered Europe illegally via the three main maritime migratory routes dropped in 2017 by 60% in comparison with the previous year, with the almost total closure of the Western Balkan route and a net decrease in migratory flows in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean... [Read more](#)

## Germany :

### Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Secretary General of the CDU



On 19th February German Chancellor A. Merkel introduced the new CDU Secretary General Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, leader of the Land of Sarre. The appointment is due to be approved on 26th February during the 30th congress in Berlin, which is also due to approve the coalition contract with the Social Democrats... [Read more](#)

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## Bulgaria :

### IMF Report - work to be done

"Bulgaria must do more to increase its citizens incomes." This is the conclusion made by the IMF on 22nd February. The demographic



situation in Bulgaria masks major risks for the tax system long term. Incomes there are 50% of the European average say experts. The IMF recommends investments in public healthcare and national education, stressing that often the working population's know-how does not match the requirements of the labour market... [Read more](#)

#### Resignation of the Energy Minister



The Bulgarian Energy Minister Temenoujka Petkova announced on 23rd February that she was resigning due to a suspicion of corruption linked to the sale of a business in the energy sector, whilst in Bulgaria, which holds the present six-monthly presidency of the Council, is in Brussels' sights in this area... [Read more](#)

#### Estonia :

##### 100 years of the Republic of Estonia



On 24th February Estonia celebrated its 100th anniversary as a Republic. On this occasion the President of the Republic Kersti Kaljulaid delivered a speech celebrating the deep transformations that have occurred in her country over the last century. As of 25th February many festivities have been taking place in the capital Tallinn and across the rest of the country... [Read more](#)

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#### France :

##### Draft bill on asylum and immigration



The French Minister for the Interior Gérard Collomb put forward a draft bill on 21st February on asylum and immigration. His three goals are to "reduce the time taken to process asylum requests", "to strengthen the fight to counter illegal immigration" and to "improve the reception of foreigners who are accepted on the basis of their skills and competences"... [Read more](#)

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##### European elections: return to a national list



The French National Assembly voted on 20th February on first reading the draft bill providing notably for a return to a single, national constituency for the European elections in order to raise the French electorate's interest in the 2019 elections. The text was approved 376 votes in support, 155 against and 14 abstentions. The text is now to be examined by the Senate... [Read more](#)

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#### The Netherlands :

##### Dutch MPs recognise the Armenian genocide



On 22nd February Dutch MPs voted overwhelmingly in support of a motion that Parliament speak "in clear terms of the Armenian genocide" (142 votes against 3)... [Read more](#)

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##### Angela Merkel hosts Dutch Prime Minister



Chancellor Angela Merkel hosted her Dutch counterpart, Mark Rutte on 19th February. They spoke of the future of Europe, the European elections in 2019 and the post-2020 European budget... [Read more](#)

#### Portugal :

##### Positive IMF report



On February 21st 2018, the IMF concluded the Sixth Post-Program Monitoring of Portugal. The latter is positive: the Portuguese economy has consolidated and the country has improved its access to the financial markets. However some consequences of the crisis remain leaving the country vulnerable to unpredictable increases in interest rates... [Read more](#)

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#### Romania :

## Prime Minister's visit to Brussels



Romanian Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă travelled on 20th and 21st February to Brussels to meet several high level European leaders. This visit came whilst the draft reform of the legal system, that is highly criticised on the part of Brussels is under discussion in the Romanian parliament... [Read more](#)

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## UK :

### New anti-Brexit party



A new political party, centrist and anti-Brexit, "Renew" was launched on 19th February in the UK. It aims to overthrow Brexit and revive the political centre in Britain by surfing on a public opinion that is said to be more in favour to the upkeep of EU membership... [Read more](#)

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### New British positions on the transition period



On 21st February the government published its positions on the transition period. It deems that the duration of the period should simply be decided by the time necessary for the preparation and implementation of the new processes and system that will govern the partnership with the European Union... [Read more](#)

## Armenia :

### The EU and Armenia sign an agreement on the partnership's priorities



The EU and Armenia signed an agreement on 21st February on the priorities of the partnership: strengthening the institutions and good governance; economic development and trade outlets; connectivity; energy efficiency; environment and action for the climate; mobility and contacts between people... [Read more](#)

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## Switzerland :

### Schengen/Dublin: a very positive result



On 21st February the Swiss Federal Council adopted a report on the economic and financial impact of Schengen and Dublin. The latter deems that Switzerland is benefiting from its association with the two agreements, both economically and financially, since it has helped the country save 220 million CHF since 2012. Giving them up might however cost 10 billion per year... [Read more](#)

## Eurostat :

### Annual inflation rate down



According to figures published by Eurostat on 23rd February the EU's annual inflation rate lay at 1.6% in January 2018, against 1.7% in December 2017. The euro zone's rate lay at 1.3% in January 2018 against 1.4% in December 2017... [Read more](#)

## Publications :

### Knowing about and understanding the European Union in 35 information sheets



"Knowing about and Understanding the European Union: 35 information sheets on the European Institutions" by Olivier Marty and Nicolas Dorgeret offers students a strong foundation in terms of initiating their knowledge of the roles of the EU's institutional powers. The book is prefaced by Jean-Dominique Giuliani, Chairman of the Foundation... [Read more](#)

## Culture :

### Museum Night in Brussels on 3rd March



On the occasion of "Museum Night" the 27 museums in Brussels will be open until 2 am on 3rd March. Unusual guided tours, events and various shows as well as live music will be offered to visitors... [Read more](#)

### Picasso Exhibition at the MUCEM, Marseilles



The MUCEM in Marseilles is running an exhibition until 24th June on "Picasso, imaginary voyages". It is part of an international event Picasso-Mediterranean 2017-2019 and presents the artist's work alongside objects from the MUCEM... [Read more](#)

### Egon Schiele Exhibition at the Leopold of Vienna Museum



100 years after the artist's death, the Leopold of Vienna Museum is running a retrospective of Egon Schiele's work. Until 4th November this year visitors will be able to view a unique combination of paintings, drawings as well as unique archive material... [Read more](#)

### Exhibition on Faust and Goethe's works in Munich



The Kunsthalle, Munich is organising an exhibition on one of the greatest works of German literature, Goethe's Faust. More than 150 paintings, drawings, films, music and photographs are on show until 29th July... [Read more](#)

### Basquiat Exhibition at the Schirn Museum Frankfurt



The Schirn in Frankfurt is running a major exhibition on the works of Jean-Michel Basquiat - a 20th century artist - until 27th May. This exhibition is the very first to put Basquiat's work back into a wider cultural context, highlighting his relationship with music, the written word, film and television... [Read more](#)

### Sports :

#### The EU, Olympic Champion



The Winter Olympics closed on 25th February in PyeongChange raising the EU's flag high in the medals ranking. The 28 EU Member States together won 54 gold medals, 44 silver and 28 bronze for a total of 146 medals in all. It finished far ahead of the US, China and Russia... [Read more](#)

### Agenda :



26th February  
Brussels  
"Foreign Affairs" Council



27th February  
Brussels  
"General Affairs" Council  
Brussels  
First meeting of the joint EU-Cuba council



4th March  
Italy  
Parliamentary elections (House and Senate)



5th March  
Brussels  
'Environment" Council

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