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The Letter in PDF format

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Democracy, Secularity and Religious Freedom: which balance is there in France and Europe?

Author: Thierry Chopin



Democracy, secularity and religious freedom? These questions now bear a European dimension. After the terrorist attacks in several EU Member States, these events either unite or divide. Solidarity and unity must win the day but it is to be feared that these recent tragedies have heightened division even further within several countries of Europe.

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Foundation :

The Schuman Report available in French and English!



The Schuman Report 2018 on the State of the Union has just been published and is available in both French and English. This 12th edition analyses the challenges that Europe faces. With the contribution of the best experts, an exclusive interview with French President Emmanuel Macron, original maps and commented statistics, this book offers a comprehensive overview of the EU. It is available in bookshops, on our website and in digital version... [Read more](#)

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Commission :

Launch of a pan-European venture capital fund



On 10th April the Commission and the European Investment Fund (EIF) launched a pan-European venture capital fund (VentureEU). Through financing to a total of 410 million € six funds are due to raise 2.1 billion € in public and private funds... [Read more](#)

Strengthening confidence in food safety



On 11th April the European Commission unveiled proposals that aim to make the scientific assessment process in which approvals are made in terms of agri-food more transparent... [Read more](#)

Possibility of collective court action



On 11th April the European Commission opened the way to consumers being able to launch collective court action if they feel there is the need... [Read more](#)

Banning unfair trading practices in the food supply chain



On 12th April the European Commission launched action to ban unfair trade practices in the food supply chain. It targets the most damaging of these to guarantee farmers and SME's greater legal security and dispenses them in part from having to manage risks over which they have little or no control at all... [Read more](#)

Improvement in road safety in 2017



Provisional road safety statistics for 2017 highlight that 25,300 people were killed on the roads of Europe in 2017 ie 300 fewer than in 2016, (-2%) and 6,200 fewer than in 2010 (-20%). With an average of 49 victims per million inhabitants the roads of Europe remain by far the safest in the world in 2017. It will however be difficult to achieve the goal of reducing the number of killed by half by 2020... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Democracy and Fundamental Rights in Hungary: MEPs are to examine the situation



On 12th April MEPs for the European Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee debated the situation in terms of democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights in Hungary in view of a possible triggering of article 7 of the Union's treaty. The committee will give its decision on the report in June... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Conclusions on the Cohesion Policy



On 12th April the European Affairs Ministers adopted conclusions on the future of the Union's Cohesion Policy after 2020... [Read more](#)

Validation of the agreement with Parliament on the posted workers directive



On 11th April the Council approved the agreement with Parliament on the posted workers directive following the agreement on 19th March between the two institutions. The European Parliament will then have to approve the compromise before a final greenlight at the Council of Ministers for Employment... [Read more](#)

Conclusions of the Agriculture Council



In a press release published by the Council of Agriculture and Fisheries on 16th April, Europe's Agriculture Ministers announced the introduction of a directive condemning unfair practices in the agri-food industry. They are also to introduce a multi-annual programme to protect fish in Western waters. Proposals were made regarding food waste and swine fever... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

The EU, leader in terms of development aid in 2017



On 10th April the OECD's statistics revealed that the EU and its Member States remained by far the biggest donors of development aid (57%) to a total of 75.7 billion € in 2017... [Read more](#)

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Conclusions of the "Foreign Affairs" Council



On 16th April, the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the 27 Member States adopted conclusions regarding the most recent developments in Syria, disarmament and the non-proliferation of chemical weapon, malicious cyber activities and the situation in South Sudan. They also addressed the nuclear agreement with Iran and diplomatic relations with Russia in the context of the Salisbury affair... [Read more](#)

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Court of Justice :

Ban on UberPop



In a decision delivered on 11th April the judges of Europe believe that the Member States can ban transport services like UberPop. They stress that governments can legislate without having to refer to the European Commission first. This decision therefore confirms that Uber is a means of transport and not a service for the information society as it had previously maintained... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Germany: Merkel's government defines its priorities



German ministers met on 10th and 11th April to define the government's priorities. The first concern focuses on employment with the Labour and Finance Ministers wanting to continue producing good economic results and maintain full employment. This notably means taking the digital economy more on board with support being given to training and education... [Read more](#)

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Denmark :

Theresa May in Denmark



British Prime Minister Theresa May on a visit to Copenhagen on 9th April offered her Danish counterpart Lars Løkke Rasmussen mutual access to British fishing waters. The Danish Prime Minister also renewed his support to London regarding the chemical poison attack in Salisbury and the accusations brought by Ms May against Russia... [Read more](#)

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France :

Emmanuel Macron meets the three Baltic Presidents



On 9th April the French President Emmanuel Macron met the Presidents of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia in Paris. Discussions focused on questions of security and democratic values... [Read more](#)

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The Senate adopts bill on the election of representatives at the European Parliament



On 11th April the French Senate adopted the draft bill on the election of representatives at the European Parliament in one single national constituency, 181 votes against 153. A mixed parity committee with the National Assembly will be meeting on 18th April... [Read more](#)

Hungary :

Report on the Hungarian elections



In a report published on 9th April the OSCE criticised the intimidating, xenophobic rhetoric developed by Viktor Orban in a campaign that was financed in an obscure manner with the support of the media. According to observers this campaign prevented all in-depth debate and was funded by a certain amount of public money... [Read more](#)

Ireland :

20th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreements



peace... [Read more](#)

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Poland :

Commission: Vice-President Frans Timmermans in Warsaw



The Vice-President of the Commission Frans Timmermans travelled to Warsaw on 9th April on the invitation of the Foreign Affairs Minister Jacek Czaputowicz. The Commission is concerned about the most recent reforms made to the legal system in Poland, but says that it is open to dialogue. An amendment was filed on 12th April in the Diet... [Read more](#)

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Portugal :

Portuguese Prime Minister in the UK



On 10th April during a visit to London, Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa spoke with his British counterpart Theresa May. They first addressed several issues including bilateral relations post-Brexit, British tourism in Portugal and scientific cooperation... [Read more](#)

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Romania :

First meeting by the Committee for Joining the Euro



On 12th April the committee for the preparation of Romania to join the euro area met for the first time under the presidency of Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă. It includes the governor of the Central Bank, members of the administration and also civil society. The aim is to present a "National Plan for the Euro" before the end of this year... [Read more](#)

Montenegro :

Milo Djukanovic wins the presidential election in Montenegro



Milo Djukanovic won the presidential election on 15th April in Montenegro in the first round, two years after leaving his post as Prime Minister. He won 53.95% of the vote ahead of Mladen Bojanic (33.41%). The new President welcomed "victory for Montenegro's European future.".. [Read more](#)

Ukraine :

Nord Stream discussed during Germany-Ukraine meeting



On 10th April during a visit by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to Germany, Chancellor Merkel insisted on the fact that the Nord Stream project would not be possible without "clarifying" the role of Ukraine in the transit of gas... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Concern about the judicial reforms in Romania



The Group of States against Corruption at the Council of Europe (GRECO) said on 11th April that it was concerned about three laws adopted in December last in Romania. These laws which reform the legal system have to go hand in hand with more safeguards, notably in the context of procedures introduced by the anti-corruption court. This was already a focus of a formal request made by the Council of Europe... [Read more](#)

Supreme courts in 10 European countries will be able to ask for advisory opinions



The Supreme Courts of 10 countries will as of 1st August be able to ask the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) for an advisory opinion before delivering their own decisions announced the Court in a press release on 12th April. As it was the 10th country to ratify this, France has "triggered the implementation of protocol 16 in the European Convention on Human Rights."..

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UN :

Decline in number of arrivals in Europe in 2017



On 11th April the High Commissioner for Refugees at the UN published statistics showing a decline in the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe in 2017. The report notes encouraging progress in terms of resettlements in Europe last year with an increase of 54% in comparison with 2016... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Surplus in international goods trade



According to February 2018 estimates the euro zone recorded a surplus of 18.9 billion € surplus in its international goods trade with the rest of the world. That of the Union totalled 3.3 billion €... [Read more](#)

63.5 billion € current account surplus in 4th quarter 2017



On 10th April Eurostat unveiled a surplus of 63.5 billion € (1.6% of the GDP) in the EU's current account as well as a surplus of 49.7 billion € in the trade balance for the fourth quarter of 2017. The Union has recorded its main surpluses with the US, Switzerland, Brazil and its major deficits with China and Russia... [Read more](#)

Acquisitions of nationality in the EU in 2016



In 2016 the EU's Member States granted citizenship to around 995,000 people, a figure that is up in comparison with 2015 (841,000) and with 2014 (889,000). The main beneficiaries of this process come from Morocco, Albania and India... [Read more](#)

Culture :

"Ames sauvages" at the Orsay Museum



Until 15th July the Orsay Museum is running an exhibition entitled "Ames sauvages" Le symbolisme dans les pays baltes" (Wild Souls, Symbolism in the Baltic States). The exhibition offers visitors works by the Lithuanian artist Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis as well as those by Baltic artists, revealed to the public for the first time outside of their country... [Read more](#)

Albrecht Dürer at the Palazzo Reale in Milan



Until 24th June the Palazzo Reale in Milan is offering visitors an exhibition of the works of German artist Albrecht Dürer entitled "Dürer and the Renaissance, between Germany and Italy".. [Read more](#)

Grayson Perry Exhibition in Helsinki



Until 2nd September Kiasma, Finland's national gallery is running an exhibition of 50 of British artist, Grayson Perry's work - an astute commentator on contemporary society and culture. The exhibition comprises some surprising subjects such as Brexit... [Read more](#)

50th anniversary of the art fair of Brussels

ART BRUSSELS

The 50th art fair of Brussels is opening its doors to the public from 19th to 22nd April. The work of internationally renowned and also rising artists will be on show... [Read more](#)

World Press Photo



Until 22nd July the De Nieuwe Kerk Museum of Amsterdam is hosting the exhibition "World Press Photo". These award winning photographs will be on show to the public across the world in nearly 100 towns...
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Agenda :



16th April
Brussels
"Foreign Affairs" Council
"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council



16th-19th April
Strasbourg
Plenary session of the European Parliament



17th April
Luxembourg
"General Affairs" Council

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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.

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