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## The Social Dimension: at the heart of Europe

Author: Marianne Thyssen



A year after the Social Summit of Göteborg, the construction of social Europe still has a long way to go. The European Commission has launched several areas of work it would like to complete before the end of the legislature and is preparing the introduction of the European Labour Authority. Marianne Thyssen, European Commissioner lays out in detail what Europe is doing from the social point of view and employment.

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#### Foundation :

##### Is the new EU's multiannual financial framework adapted to the next decade?



The Foundation and the Martens Centre are organising a debate on 21st November in Brussels devoted to the future Union's multi-annual financial framework notably with Alain Lamassoure, MEP in attendance... [Read more](#)

##### European elections 2019: for whom, for what are we going to vote?



On the invitation of the Decere Association, Jean-Dominique Giuliani is going to be in Strasbourg on 22nd November to speak about the issues at stake in the European elections of May 2019. He will notably speak of whether reconciliation and solidarity are still values that inspire political programmes in view of the elections whilst populism and nationalism is on the rise in Europe... [Read more](#)

## Permanent Atlas of the European Union



In view of the next European elections, the Robert Schuman Foundation has published the Permanent Atlas of the European Union. Unique in its genre, written by the Foundation's experts, it offers a full, accessible panorama of the Union, the euro zone and each of its 28 Member States. It summaries the vital elements of the Union's history and its political and statistical realities, and offers readers more than 50 physical and geopolitical maps of Europe..... [Read more](#)

## Commission :

### Draft Agreement on Brexit between the EU and the UK



After one and a half years of negotiations, the EU and the UK came to a draft agreement on 14th November on the terms of the UK's exit, covering citizens rights, financial regulations and the issue of the Irish border in particular, as well as a draft political declaration that sets the main outline of the future relationship between the Union and the UK. The texts were approved by the British government on 15th November and validated by the Council on 19th November. They will be approved by the heads of State and government during an extraordinary summit on 25th November. The agreement and declaration then have to be approved by the British parliament and the European parliament... [Read more](#)

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### Reports on the judicial reforms in Bulgaria and Romania



On 13th November the Commission published a report on the progress made since January 2017 by Bulgaria and Romania in the areas of justice, the fight to counter corruption and organised crime. Bulgaria should be able to fulfil the 17 recommendations made by the Commission by the end of 2019. However the Commission decided to revise its positive opinion issued in January 2017 following the recent developments in Romania regarding high level corruption and the independence of the justice. As a result the Commission added 8 more recommendations to the initial 12 of 2017... [Read more](#)

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### Preparations in the event of a "no deal"



Parallel to the negotiations over a Brexit agreement on 13th November the Commission published a communication describing a number of emergency actions that could be implemented in priority in areas (visa, finance; air travel ...) if there is no deal for Brexit. It also provided detailed information regarding the changes affecting people travelling between the EU and the UK in the event of a no deal... [Read more](#)

## Parliament :

### For a more ambitious budget



Parliament deemed in an interim report adopted by 429 votes (207 against and 40 abstentions), that the Commission's proposal for the 2021-2027 multi-annual budget is just a starting point if the Union aims to achieve its political commitments. MEPs hope to increase the budget of the research programme, Horizon Europe, the Juncker Plan, the Cohesion and Agriculture policies and measures to counter climate change. They hope to introduce new source of funding thanks to corporate tax, the emissions quota system and a tax on plastic... [Read more](#)

### Parliament approves ambitious energy goals for Europe



MEPs confirmed on 13th November the provisional agreement made with the Council in June regarding energy efficiency, the Union's governance of energy and renewable energies. The three texts aim to increase energy efficiency by 32.5% by 2030, and bring renewable energy up to 32% of the final consumption and the use of biofuels up to 14% by 2030. The Council now has to approve these agreements formally... [Read more](#)

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### Deep concern about the situation in Romania

In a resolution adopted on 13th November MEPs expressed their "deep concern" regarding the reform of the legal system in Romania which



threatens the separation of power and the fight to counter corruption. Adopted 473 votes in support (151 against and 40 abstentions), the text calls on the Romanian government to introduce protective measures for the re-establishment of the balance of power... [Read more](#)

#### Greater protection for rail travellers?



On 15th November MEPs adopted their position regarding the update of the rules regarding rail passengers. They hope that compensation for delays of over one hour will rise from 25% to 50% of the ticket price. They are asking for better assistance for people with reduced mobility and easier access for cyclists... [Read more](#)

#### Capping of cost of telephone calls in the Union



On 14th November parliament approved the provisional agreement concluded with the Council in June regarding the telecommunication's package. It will lead to a cap on intra-EU telephone calls as of 15th May 2019 and a more sophisticated encryption of information exchanged on online messages like Whatsapp and Skype. It provides for a 5G network by 2020 in at least one large city in every Member State and the creation of a European warning system to alert citizens by SMS or via an app of emergencies or catastrophes... [Read more](#)

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#### Angela Merkel's speech to the European Parliament



German Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 13th November as part of a debate over the future of Europe. Given geopolitical developments, she called for the creation of a European army and a European Security Council. She insisted on the balance between responsibility and solidarity in the reform of the euro zone and declared that she preferred a world digital tax rather than a European one... [Read more](#)

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#### Czech MEP Jan Zahradil heads the ECR list



The Group of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) in the European Parliament appointed Czech MEP Jan Zahradil on 13th November as its lead candidate in the European elections in May 2019 and the candidate for the Presidency of the European Commission. Mr Zahradil of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), want to be "the voice of a pro-European but anti-federalist political force..." [Read more](#)

### Council :

#### Final adoption of the reform of the Schengen Information System



On 19th November the Council finally adopted three regulations on the use of the Schengen Information System (SIS). They introduce the additional warning categories to prevent the abduction of a child by his parents or regarding return procedures of foreign illegally resident citizens. From now on Europol will have total access to SIS and Frontex will have partial access... [Read more](#)

#### Franco-German proposal for a euro zone budget



On 16th November the French and German Finance Ministers, Bruno Le Maire and Olaf Scholz agreed on a project to create a euro zone budget, presented during a Eurogroup meeting on 19th November. The budget would be integrated into the Union's general budget with the aim of encouraging the competitiveness, convergence and stability of the euro zone... [Read more](#)

#### Agriculture and Fisheries



The Agriculture and Fisheries Council approved the total admissible catches (TAC) regarding certain stocks of deep-water fish in the seas around the EU and in the international waters of the North East Atlantic for 2019 and 2020. Most of the TACs were reduced given the vulnerability of the species to protect fishing resources and the fishing sector. The

regulation will apply as of 1st January 2019. Regarding agriculture, Ministers discussed the difficult situation in the dairy and pork market. They exchanged views regarding the reform of the CAP post 2020, EU-Africa relations in the area of rural development and the protection of fauna... [Read more](#)

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#### Conclusions of the Defence Council



Europe's Defence Ministers met on 19th November and adopted 17 new projects in addition to the existing 17 underway as part of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). They also adopted a pact that aims to strengthen the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) which includes some strategic guidelines and 22 political commitments to improve the civilian CSDP response capabilities. Ministers also discussed defence cooperation and planning tools, such as the European Defence Fund and the European Peace Facility... [Read more](#)

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#### Conclusions of the Eurogroup



The Eurogroup met as 27 to debate the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and to prepare the December euro zone summit. Ministers discussed progress made regarding the reduction of risks under Banking Union and issues linked to the Single Resolution Mechanism, notably regarding the end of the transition period in 2024. They also exchanged views regarding the reform of the European Stability Mechanism, as well as suggested stabilisation and convergence mechanisms, particularly the draft Franco-German euro zone budget... [Read more](#)

#### Failure of 2019 budget discussions



The Council and the Parliament, which had until midnight to come to an agreement over the Union's 2019 budget failed to come to a compromise. Discussions will begin again when the Commission has put a new proposal forward. The Austrian presidency of the Council hopes to come an agreement before the end of the year... [Read more](#)

#### Draft Agreement with the UK and the 2021-2027 budget



European Affairs Ministers discussed on 12th November the multi-annual financial agreement on 12th November and the Commission's working programme for 2019. They reviewed the situation in Poland and Hungary regarding the article 7 procedure on the rule of law. On 19th November they gave their greenlight to the draft agreement on Brexit... [Read more](#)

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#### Diplomacy :

##### EU-South Africa Summit



During the EU-South Africa on 15th November the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, the President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker and the President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa confirmed their joint support to democracy and multi-lateralism. They stressed that South Africa, which is to sit as non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 2019 and 2020, will have a particular role to play. They hope to deepen their cooperation for the climate, the management of migratory flows and the respect of human rights... [Read more](#)

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#### Foreign Affairs Ministers' Meeting



On 19th November the European Foreign Affairs Ministers reasserted the support to the Iranian nuclear agreement despite the re-introduction of American sanctions on 5th November. They also discussed the particularly difficult situations in Yemen and Gaza. They deemed that the "elections" on 11th November in the two regions occupied by Russian in the East of Ukraine were "illegal and illegitimate" and that the EU is prepared to take "targeted, appropriate measures". They also prepared the 14th EU-Asia ministerial meeting that will take place on 23rd November in Brussels... [Read more](#)

#### European Agencies :

## Spain, the main port of entry for illegal immigration in Europe



Illegal migrant entries into Europe decreased by 31% in 2018 to reach a total of 118,900 in October since January, ie the lowest level since 2013. Although the Balkan Route in the East and the Mediterranean Sea are not being used as much, migrants are now moving west of Europe. Spain takes 60% of the entries which makes it the main port of entry in terms of illegal immigration into Europe... [Read more](#)

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## The USA allows the use of Galileo on its territory



The American Federal Communications Committee announced on 15th November that private parties and American businesses will now be able to access certain Galileo satellite signals, the European satellite navigation system... [Read more](#)

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## Cyprus :

### Cyprus: opening of two new crossing points



On 12th November, two new crossing points were opened between the Republic of Cyprus and the northern part of the island occupied by Turkey - at Dherynia and Lefka-Apliki. There are now nine crossing points. The decision taken by the leaders of both Greek and Turkish communities is designed to create a climate of trust to revive negotiations over reunification... [Read more](#)

## France :

### Emmanuel Macron delivers a speech at the Bundestag



French President Emmanuel Macron travelled to Berlin on 18th November on the occasion of the annual ceremony in honour of the victims of the all wars and tyranny. He met German Chancellor Angela Merkel then spoke to the Bundestag. In his speech the President maintained that it was Europe and the Franco-German couple's duty not to let the world sink into chaos..." [Read more](#)

### Towards the creation of a Franco-German Assembly



The leaders of the French National Assembly, Richard Ferrand, and of the German Bundestag, Wolfgang Schäuble, presented a draft agreement on 14th November for the creation of a joint assembly comprising members of both houses of parliament. One of its missions will be to "draw up proposals on every issue that is of interest to Franco-German relations in view of moving towards a convergence of the laws of both countries". The two leaders hope to adopt the project by 22nd January 2019 at the latest on the occasion of the anniversary of the Elysée Treaty... [Read more](#)

## Italy :

### The government requests flexibility regarding its budget



The Italian government presented a new draft budget for 2019 on 13th November. The Commission had invalidated its previous proposal which did not respect the country's commitments. The coalition between the 5 Stars Movement and the Lega decided not to change its initial proposal and requested flexibility deeming that the country faced "exceptional" circumstances: the collapse of the Genoa bridge in August, floods in the south of the peninsula mid-October and at the start of November... [Read more](#)

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## Romania :

### Appointment of a new European Affairs Minister



On 13th November a new European Affairs Minister, George Ciamba, who was formerly the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was appointed. Just a few weeks before the Romanian presidency of the Council of the European Union - as of 1st January - the government of Viorica Dancila is trying to show that it is ready to fulfil its future task. This was just as the European Parliament voted a resolution denouncing the reforms being made to the legal system and the methods to combat corruption undertaken by the government... [Read more](#)

UK :

### Theresa May faces internal opposition over Brexit



British Prime Minister Theresa May won the government's approval on 15th November regarding the draft Brexit agreement. But whilst she has to achieve a majority in Parliament to ratify the agreement, she also has had to face to the resignation of several ministers and Secretaries of State, including Brexit Minister, Dominic Raab, as well as the threat of a motion of no confidence by the supporters of a hard Brexit. In Parliament and during a televised speech she guaranteed that the draft agreement was "in the national interest" and that it respected the will of the British people to leave the Union... [Read more](#)

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Sweden :

### Annie Lööf asked to form a government



Annie Lööf, the leader of the Centre Party was asked to try and form a government on 15th November by the leader of Parliament. The Centre Party only came fourth in the general elections on 9th September but the attempts by the other parties to form a coalition have all failed to date... [Read more](#)

Albania :

### Stabilisation and Association Council EU-Albania



During the 10th Stabilisation and Association Council between the EU and Albania on 14th November the Union reasserted the need for Albania to continue its reforms, notably in the areas of justice and the fight to counter corruption in order to achieve the launch of membership negotiations in June 2019. The Union pointed positively to the work undertaken by Albania to counter organised crime. It also acknowledged the active, constructive role played by Albania in the region, notably in the support it is giving to European positions in terms of foreign policy... [Read more](#)

ECHR :

### Russia condemned for the repeated arrests of Navalny



The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) unanimously condemned Russia on 15th November for the arrests (7 times) of Alexei Navalny, an opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The Court deemed that two of these arrests aimed in fact to "suffocate political pluralism", thereby infringing article 18 of the European Convention of Human Rights. It also concluded that article 11 of the said Convention had also been violated, deeming that two arrests were "void of any legitimate aim" and the five others "were not necessary in a democratic society.".. [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

### Inflation at 2.2%



According to the most recent estimates made by Eurostat, published on 16th November the euro zone's annual inflation rate and that of the EU lay at 2.2% in October 2018 against 2.1% in September 2018. Energy, services and foodstuffs (including tobacco and alcohol) are the main factors in inflation... [Read more](#)

### Employment up



According to the most recent figures published by Eurostat on 14th November the employment rate increased by 0.2% in the euro zone and in the EU in the third quarter of 2018 in comparison with the previous quarter. This is not as strong as in the last quarter since employment rose by 0.4% at that time... [Read more](#)

### Slowing of growth confirmed in the third quarter



Economic growth in the euro zone slowed sharply in the third quarter with the GDP rising by 0.2% in comparison with the previous quarter indicated Eurostat on 14th November, thereby confirming its first estimation. This slowing marks a break with the first two quarters of the year in which the GDP progressed by 0.4% consecutively... [Read](#)

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### International goods trade



According to Eurostat's estimates published on 15th November the international goods trade balance in the euro zone was in surplus by 13.1 billion € in September. At the same time the EU was in deficit by 1.8 billion €... [Read more](#)



### Culture :

#### Icelandic film "Woman at War" wins Parliament's Lux Prize



The film "Woman at War" by Icelandic film director Benedikt Erlingsson won the Parliament's Lux cinema prize on 14th November. An Icelandic-Franco-Ukrainian film, "Woman at War" relates the story of a woman who is against the local aluminium industry... [Read more](#)



#### London Jazz Festival



The Jazz Festival London is offering a rich programme of jazz concerts in many venues across the British capital until 25th November... [Read more](#)



#### Rodin drawings



The Rodin Museum in Paris is running an exhibition until 24th February called "Rodin, Cut-Outs", bringing together 250 silhouette drawings and assembled by the sculptor... [Read more](#)



#### Fernand Léger Exhibition in Liverpool



The Tate Liverpool is devoting an exhibition to the artist of the "mechanical age" Fernand Léger (1881-1955). More than forty of his paintings, photographs and videos are to be seen from 23rd November 2018 to 17th March 2019... [Read more](#)



#### International surrealism in Coimbra



Until 17th January the mobile exhibition "International surrealism now" is stopping off in Coimbra, Portugal. Drawings, paintings, digital works and sculptures by 107 artists from 45 countries are on show... [Read more](#)



### Agenda :



19th November

Brussels  
"Foreign Affairs" Council  
"Agriculture-Fisheries" Council  
"General Affairs" Council (Article 50)  
Brussels  
Eurogroup Meeting



20th November

Brussels  
"Defence" Council  
"European Economic Area" Council



25th November

Brussels

25  
Nov

Extraordinary meeting of the European Council

26  
Nov

26th November  
Brussels  
"Development" Council

26  
Nov

26th and 27th November  
Brussels  
"Education, Youth, Culture and Sport" Council

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