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Voting methods and issues at stake in the European Elections of May 2019

Authors: Becuwe Nicolas, Emmanuel Rivière



The next European elections will take place from 23rd to 26th May 2019 in the 27 Member States of the European Union, focusing on many political, economic and democratic themes. The present forecasts show a more complicated situation than that described of a fight between the "progressive" and "nationalist" forces.

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Foundation :

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 summarizes 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 :

Proposals to strengthen the role of the euro at international level



On 5th December the Commission presented measures to strengthen the role of the euro as an international currency of trade. It suggests completing Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), Banking Union and the Capitals Union. It hopes to strengthen the European Financial System and increase cooperation with international financial bodies. The Commission recommends using the European currency more in strategic sectors in which the EU

trades a lot like energy for example... [Read more](#)

Action plan to counter disinformation



The Commission presented its action plan on 5th December to counter disinformation. It provides for the creation of a rapid warning system between the EU and the Member States to share information, notably regarding threats, in real time. It also includes the monitoring of the implementation of a code of good conduct via the Commission's assessments of the main on-line social networks as of 2019. The Commission also hopes to strengthen the means of detection via a re-assessment of the strategic communication budget of the European External Action Service (EEAS) from 1.9 million euro in 2018 to 5 million in 2019. The plan provides for awareness raising campaigns about disinformation for the citizens of Europe... [Read more](#)

For the reform of asylum law



On 4th December the Commission published a report on the management of migratory flows which points to a 90% reduction in terms of illegal arrivals via the Eastern Mediterranean and an 80% reduction regarding the Central Mediterranean in comparison with the record of 2015. In view of these reductions the Commission deemed that it was time to lift the temporary controls on the borders of Schengen which have been introduced by certain States since 2015. It invited the Member States to adopt five of the 7 reforms on political asylum before the European elections - since the latter are almost ready for agreement. The Commission hopes that work will continue for the two other proposals which are still a matter of conflict regarding the single asylum procedure and the reform of the Dublin regulation... [Read more](#)

New action plan for artificial intelligence



On 7th December the Commission presented a plan drafted with the Member States, Norway and Switzerland to foster the development and use of artificial intelligence (AI) in Europe. The plan proposes joint measures to maximise investments thanks to public-private partnerships, the elaboration of national strategies by 2019 and a specialised investment fund. It aims to create European data areas to enable cross-border exchanges. The Commission committed to developing an ethic linked to AI which it hopes to see implemented worldwide... [Read more](#)

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Parliament :

Frans Timmermans elected to lead the S&D list



During the European Socialist Party (PSE) conference on 8th December in Lisbon, the Social Democrats elected Frans Timmermans as their lead candidate (Spitzenkandidat) for the European elections in May 2019. Addressing delegates Frans Timmermans declared that his party would try to "write a new social contract with the citizens of Europe"... [Read more](#)

Council :

Conclusions of the Economy and Finance Council



On 4th December the European Economy and Finance Ministers approved the results of the negotiation with the European Parliament over several measures that aim to reduce risks within the banking union, to improve banks' capacity to lend money and to give them a more important role on the capital markets. They adopted measures regarding VAT. They debate a new Franco-German proposal for a tax on digital services, which would take on board ad revenues of platforms to a total of 3% and would be introduced by 2021... [Read more](#)

Conclusions of the Justice and Internal Affairs Council



On 6th December the Ministers of the Interior reached a partial agreement on the proposal regarding European coast and border guards (Frontex). They also approved measures that focus on the strengthening of the fight to counter smugglers networks. They spoke of the regulation to prevent the spread of on-line terrorist content. On 7th December the Ministers of Justice adopted the strategy and action plan on the

development of e-Justice for the period 2019-2023. Ministers also agreed their position on the regulation on electronic evidence, regarding the directive on the regulatory framework governing goods sales contracts, and regarding the revision of the Brussels II bis regulation on cross-border decisions of parental responsibility and the adoption of children... [Read more](#)

Provisional agreement on the Union's 2019 budget



On 4th December the European Parliament and the Austrian Presidency of the Council came to a provisional agreement on the EU's 2019 budget. The agreement provides for 165.8 billion € in commitments (+3.17% in comparison with 2018) and 148.2 billion € in payments (+2.37%). They respect the common priorities of the Parliament and the Council: employment and growth, youth, security and migration.

The Council will formally give its decision on 11th December and Parliament will do so during its next plenary session... [Read more](#)

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Launch of membership chapters for Montenegro and Serbia



On 10th December the 12th meeting of the membership conference with Montenegro took place to open the 32nd negotiation chapter regarding the environment and climate change. Three are also closed provisionally. On the same day the 9th meeting of the membership conference with Serbia took place to open the 15th and 16th negotiation chapters on the Economic and Monetary Policy and on statistics. Two chapters are already closed provisionally for Serbia... [Read more](#)

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Conclusions of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council



On 3rd and 4th December Ministers took position over the reform of the road transport sector which notably includes the working conditions of drivers and special posting rules for international transport drivers. They also defined their position on the Connecting Europe Facility and hope to integrate the climate in addition to energy, transport and digital connectivity. They adopted a reform of the telecommunications sector enabling the total deployment of 5G. They also adopted three major themes of the Clean Energies Package that set the goal of 32% of renewable energies in the energy mix and energy efficiency at 32.5% by 2030... [Read more](#)

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Diplomacy :

125 million € for the development and security of the countries of Sahel



On 6th December during the Coordination Conference of the partners and donors of the G5 Sahel in Nouakchott (Mauritania), the Commission announced new financing of 125 million € for the countries of Sahel. It will be used to strengthen their development and security, notably by improving social cohesion in the cross-border regions and institutional resilience in the areas of justice and the protection of human rights. In all the financing from the Union for the development of these countries of the G5 Sahel totals 8 billion € covering the period 2014-2020... [Read more](#)

Extension of the European Mission in Georgia



On 3rd December the Council extended the European Observation Mission's mandate in Georgia (EUMM Georgia) until 14th December 2020. It also allocated a budget of 38.2 million euro for the period extending from 15th December 2018 to 14th December 2020. The EUMM Georgia is a civilian mission deployed in September 2008 following the six point agreement made under the aegis of the EU, which brought the August war between Russia and Georgia to an end. It helps towards stabilisation, normalisation and the establishment of a climate of confidence between the two sides that were involved in this conflict... [Read more](#)

Conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council



On 10th December the Foreign Affairs Ministers adopted a strategy for enhanced, widened cooperation on the part of the European Union with India for next few years. They assessed the implementation of the agreement on nuclear issues with Iran, particularly the European efforts to maintain financial channels with Iran and to continue legitimate trade relations with the country despite the reintroduction of American sanctions. They also reasserted the

Union's commitment to the European prospects of the Western Balkans... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Article 50 can be revoked unilaterally



Following the case that was brought before the Court of Justice on 27th November to know whether the UK could revoke unilaterally its notification of its withdrawal from the EU and thereby cancel Brexit, the Court deemed that article 50 effectively allows for this - but on certain conditions. It has to be done before the entry into force of the withdrawal agreement (or before the expiry period of 2 years which might be extended). It has to be decided according to national constitutional rules and be communicated in writing to the European Council. A decision like this puts an end to the withdrawal procedure. The Court deems that the decision to remain in the Union is not expressly ruled out by article 50 and is a sovereign decision... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer takes over from Angela Merkel as head of the CDU



The 1001 CDU delegates appointed Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer on 7th December as the successor to Angela Merkel as head of the German conservative party (CDU). During her last speech as leader of the CDU over the last 18 years, the Chancellor asked her party to defend Christian and democratic values in a European and world context marked by nationalism and populism. Paul Ziemiak was elected Secretary General of the party in the place of Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer... [Read more](#)

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Belgium :

The Flemish nationalists leave the government



Following deep disagreement regarding the Marrakesh Pact, a UN text for safe, orderly, regular migration which was signed on 10th December the Ministers of the N-Va, a Flemish nationalist party, resigned from government. King Philippe accepted their resignation on 9th December. Prime Minister Charles Michel gave the vacant posts (Defence, Migration, Finance and Internal Affairs) to the three remaining parties in the coalition (MR, Open Vld and CD&V). The new government, without the support of the N-VA is in the minority in Parliament... [Read more](#)

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Croatia :

Central European Initiative Meeting



The leaders of 18 countries of the Central European Initiative and the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Johannes Hahn met on 3rd and 4th December in Zagreb, since Croatia is ensuring the organisation's annual presidency. They discussed the means to overcome security problems linked to illegal immigration, the brain-drain and climate change. The initiative is one of the oldest intergovernmental forums for regional cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe and was founded in 1989... [Read more](#)

Greece :

Visit by the Prime Minister to Russia



Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras travelled to Moscow on 7th December for a working visit on the 190th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries - the first in three years. His meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Dimitri Medvedev aim to revive bilateral cooperation between the two countries that were upset by the expulsion of Russian diplomats from Greece in the summer. Trade, economic cooperation, energy projects, including the transport of gas as well as regional and international issues were on the agenda... [Read more](#)

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Hungary :

Central European University forced to quit Hungary



The Central European University (CEU) founded by American billionaire George Soros announced on 3rd December that it had been forced to leave Hungary due to an "arbitrary eviction" that violates academic freedoms. In a press release the CEU which had been present in

Hungary over the last thirty years said that it was going to open up a new establishment in Vienna, the Austrian capital... [Read more](#)

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Luxembourg :

Xavier Bettel's new government takes office



The new Luxembourg coalition was sworn in on 5th December by the Grand Duke. One month and a half after the elections of 14th October it is a similar coalition to the previous one - between the Luxembourg Socialist Workers Party (POSL), the Democratic Party (PD, Liberal) and the Greens led by Xavier Bettel (PD) which officially took up its function... [Read more](#)

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Portugal :

Visit by Chinese President



On 4th December Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa hosted Chinese President Xi Jinping. The latter declared that relations between China and Portugal were entering "their best period of all time", and that this partnership was also going to deepen that with the EU. Chinese investments are significant in Portugal, particularly in the areas of energy, banking, insurance and healthcare... [Read more](#)

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UK :

Debate over the agreement on Brexit in Parliament



As the vote over the UK's withdrawal agreement from the EU draws closer Prime Minister Theresa May faced rising tension across the entire political spectre, with the risk of an overwhelming defeat in Parliament. Whilst her cabinet is insisting on the fact that there is no alternative the present agreement, Ms May has been pushed into a minority position by the MPs in the House of Commons who deemed on 4th December that the government was in "contempt" of Parliament as it had not published all of the government's legal opinion. On 10th December Ms May announced that the vote on the ratification of the withdrawal of the UK from the EU of 11th December would be postponed. She explained that the text "would be rejected by a significant margin" and that she was going to hold talks with the leaders of Europe and the European Commission during the Council of Europe on 13th and 14th December in a bid to obtain changes to the agreement... [Read more](#)

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Sweden :

Difficulties in forming a government



The leader of the Swedish Parliament gave Stefan Löfven (Social Democrat) until 10th December to form a government. Coalition negotiations failed once again. The Social Democrats and the Centre Party will not work together, declared Annie Lööf, leader of the Centre Party... [Read more](#)

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Armenia :

Results of the snap election



The electoral "My Step Alliance" led by outgoing Prime Minister and leader of the party Civilian Contract, Nikol Pashinyan won the snap election on 9th December with 70.4% of the vote according to results communicated by the Electoral Committee. The opposition party "Prosperous Armenia" won more than 5% of the vote, the threshold necessary to make its entry into Parliament, and the Republican Party of former president Serge Sarkissian only won 4.7% of the vote. The elections were convened by Mr Pashinyan to consolidate his power after he took office in the wake of a popular uprising... [Read more](#)

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UN :

Approval of the World Pact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

On 10th December during the conference on migration in Marrakesh, more than 150 UN Member countries formally approved the World Pact for Safe, Orderly, Regular Migration. The day before UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres asked the leaders of the world to "give the pact life". Of the 258 million migrants across the world, 50 million are



children... [Read more](#)

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OECD :

Tax revenues taken in advanced economies continue to rise



According to an OECD report published on 5th December France is placed first in the world in terms of fiscal pressure: in 2017 obligatory contributions totalled 46.2% of the GDP ie +0.7 points in comparison with 2016. France pulls ahead of Denmark whose obligatory contribution rate decreased by 0.2 points (46% in 2017)... [Read more](#)

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Culture :

Re-opening of Africa Museum in Brussels



The former Royal Museum of Central Africa, now the Africa Museum, which had been under renovation since 2013, opened its doors once more on 9th December in Brussels. The permanent exhibition which dated back to the 1950's was redesigned to adopt a critical vision of the Belgium's colonial past... [Read more](#)

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Jean Dubuffet at the Magnani Palace in Reggio d'Emilia



More than 140 works by the French painter, sculptor and artist of the 20th century Jean Dubuffet are on show at the Magnani Palace in Reggio Emilia until 3rd March 2019. The exhibition "L'arte in gioco: materio e spirito 1943-1985" explores the many cycles in the artist's creative life, his research and innovative, surprising and original technical experiments,.. [Read more](#)

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Oskar Kokoschka in Zurich



From 14th December 2018 to 10th March 2019 the Kunsthaus in Zurich is showing the work of Austrian painter and artist Oskar Kokoschka and had devoted a first major retrospective in 30 years to him in Switzerland, exhibiting over 200 pieces of work... [Read more](#)

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The European Film Prize



On 15th December in Sevilla the European Film Prizes will be awarded by the European Film Academy to directors, scriptwriters and even actors from the continent. The five favourites in this 31st edition are "Cold War", "Dogman", "Happy as Lazzaro", "Border" and "Girl"... [Read more](#)

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Caravaggio and the Flemish Golden Age



The Central Museum of Utrecht is devoting an exhibition from 16th December 2018 to 24th March 2019 to Caravaggio and his influence over painting at the start of the Flemish Golden Age... [Read more](#)

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Agenda :



10th December
Brussels
"Foreign Affairs" Council



10th to 13th December

10
Dec

Strasbourg
Plenary Session of the European Parliament

11
Dec

11th December
Brussels
"General Affairs" Council

13
Dec

13th and 14th December
Brussels
European Council

14
Dec

13th and 14th December
Brussels
Euro Zone Summit

17
Dec

17th December
Brussels
EU-Ukraine Association Council

17
Dec

17th and 18th December
Brussels
"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council

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