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## Migration at the heart of the EU-Arab League Summit

Author: Jean-Pierre Garson



For the very first time an EU-Arab League summit was devoted in part to the improvement of migratory flow control cooperation. However it will take time to see whether this has facilitated its inclusion in a mid-term perspective, with precise, ambitious, realistic goals to be achieved, to strengthen international cooperation in terms of migration and development.

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#### Foundation :

##### The Permanent Atlas of the European Union



In view of the upcoming European elections the Robert Schuman Foundation has published a new version of the "Permanent Atlas of the European Union" which offers readers a full panorama of the Union, the euro zone, each of its Member States and its overseas territories. This work provides the most up to date, objective political and statistical information. It is available in paper and digital version from the Foundation's site and from bookshop.. [Read more](#)

##### European Elections: a site to understand everything you need to understand!



From 23rd to 26th May 2019, more than 300 million Europeans will be called to elect their 705 MEPs for the next five years. As in the previous elections, the Foundation is offering readers a website devoted to providing greater understanding of the election and to follow the campaign in the 27 Member States... [Read more](#)

#### Commission :

Outreach campaign regarding customs in the event of a no deal



On 18th February the European Commission launched an outreach campaign designed for the Union's businesses, notably SMEs in the area of customs and indirect taxation, like VAT. This campaign aims to prepare them for a no-deal Brexit. It invites them to assess their technical and human capacities, to plan to get various registrations and authorisations for customs purposes to facilitate their business activities, and to contact their national authorities... [Read more](#)

#### Parliament :

##### Congress and Manifesto of the European Socialist Party



During a congress in Madrid on 22nd and 23rd February the European Socialist Party adopted its manifesto for the European elections in May. This programme focuses on 7 commitments, including a freer, more democratic Europe, a plan for young people, greater gender equality and a sustainable Europe. The lead candidate of the party in the elections, Dutchman Frans Timmermans, is the present First Vice-President of the European Commission... [Read more](#)

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##### Tomorrow's Social Europe



On the initiative of the Mutualité Française, 9 other European mutual benefit societies and AIM (Association internationale de la mutualité) published a manifesto for a more social, inclusive Europe. In view of the upcoming European elections in May the signatories also launched an open questionnaire regarding the future of Europe and the theme of healthcare, as well as the "Place de la Santé" - a participative platform... [Read more](#)

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#### Council :

##### Competitiveness Council Conclusions



On 18th and 19th February Ministers responsible for Competitiveness debated the impact of artificial intelligence on the competitiveness of European industry. It stressed the need to use and develop AI in Europe. Ministers exchanged views on the role of industry in reducing CO2 emissions and on the means to take better account of competitiveness under the European Semester. They also reviewed the "Horizon Europe" programme... [Read more](#)

##### Conclusions of the General Affairs Council



European Affairs Ministers reviewed negotiations ongoing regarding the multi-annual financial framework 2021-2027. They prepared the European Council of March, which will be focused on growth, employment, climate change and preparation for an EU-China Summit on 9th April. They exchanged views on the Commission's Communication on "a sustainable Europe in 2030" published in January and on procedures against Hungary and Poland under article 7 TEU. They adopted conclusions regarding EU-Swiss relations and on measures to guarantee free, fair European elections... [Read more](#)

##### Informal Meeting of Trade Ministers



Europe's Trade Ministers who met informally in Bucharest on 21st and 22nd February discussed the reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), particularly that of the appellate body for the settlement of litigation, as well as EU-US trade relations. They agreed to continue policy discussions in order to adopt a negotiation mandate for a trade agreement with Washington... [Read more](#)

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##### Political Agreement on InvestEU



On 21st February the Council decided its position on InvestEU, a proposal put forward by the Commission to bring together under one roof 14 different financial instruments that already exist to support investment in the EU. The Council's text also provides that Member States will be able to transfer a share of the Cohesion Funds into the InvestEU, in addition to the guarantee provided by the European Union... [Read more](#)

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##### Temporary agreement on the European Defence Fund



On 20th February the Council and the Parliament came to a temporary agreement on the European Defence fund which will be operational in 2021. It will contribute to industrial development in the defence sector and to the EU's strategic autonomy. The Fund will finance, by way of subsidies, collaborative research projects and will benefit those that are part of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). The agreement must now be formally adopted by co-legislators... [Read more](#)

#### Position on the Frontex regulation



On 20th February the Council adopted its position on the regulation regarding the European border and coastguard (Frontex). The latter will be strengthened in terms of its staff (10,000 people by 2027) and technical equipment. Its remit will be widened in view of supporting the Member States' work, on reserve of their agreement, from the point of view of border protection, return and cooperation with third countries. The new rules will integrate Frontex into the European Border Surveillance system (Eurosur). Negotiations with Parliament are now going to start... [Read more](#)

#### Confirmation of the agreement on the reform of the visa code



On 20th February the Council confirmed the agreement regarding the revision of the visa code. New rules will lead to faster, clearer procedures, notably thanks to the electronic signature of forms. Visa duties will increase to 80€ to cover processing costs. The regulation introduces a new mechanism to assess the cooperation of third countries in terms of readmission of people without valid papers... [Read more](#)

#### Temporary agreement on e-commerce transparency



On 20th February the Council approved an agreement with the European Parliament on the transparency of online business activities. The draft regulation aims to make general conditions simpler and more understandable and provides for the possibility to seek redress if these rules are not respected... [Read more](#)

#### Temporary agreement to reduce heavy goods vehicle CO2 emissions



On 19th February the Council and Parliament came to a temporary agreement setting, for the very first time, binding goals to reduce CO2 emissions on heavy goods vehicles. New lorries and buses will have to reduce their CO2 emissions by 15% by 2025 and by 30% by 2030 in comparison with their 2019 levels. The agreement strengthens the incentives for zero and low emission vehicles (ZLEV), in the HGV sector. It now has to be approved by co-legislators. It will complete the regulation adopted in 2018 regarding the monitoring and declaration of HGV CO2 emissions... [Read more](#)

#### Protecting social security rights in the event of a no-deal Brexit



On 22nd February the Council approved a draft regulation on emergency measures to be implemented in the area of social security coordination in the event of a no-deal exit by the UK from the EU. These measures will enable European and British citizens to retain certain rights in terms of social security. The text now has to be examined by the European Parliament... [Read more](#)

#### Continuity of the aviation sector in the event of a no-deal Brexit



On 19th February the Council concluded a temporary agreement with Parliament on the measures to take to limit disruption in the aviation sector in the event of a no-deal Brexit. The agreement enables British transport companies holding a permit to provide basic air services between the UK and the EU. A special measure guarantees the continuity of regular flights for seven months. The regulation still has to be adopted formally by the Parliament and the Council. It will apply until the entry into force of an air transport agreement with the UK or until 30th March 2020. On 22nd February the Council also approved a draft regulation aiming to guarantee that certain air safety certificates will still be valid in the event of a no-deal Brexit... [Read more](#)

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## Diplomacy :

### Extension of the EUCAP Sahel Mali mission



On 21st February the European Union announced the extension of the EUCAP Sahel Mali mission until 14th January 2021. The latter has been allocated an additional budget of 67 million €. The mission is responsible for helping the Malian authorities implement the reform of the security sector established by the government. It provides training and strategic advice. It also trains the domestic security services. The mission was launched on 15th April 2014... [Read more](#)

### EU-Arab League Summit



Leaders of the Arab League and the EU met in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt for a summit on 24th and 25th February. They agreed on enhanced cooperation to settle current challenges such as regional conflict, security, migration and economic development. They reasserted their wish to deepen economic cooperation with a partnership based on investments and sustainable development, notably in the area of trade and energy. They discussed the situation in Syria, Libya and Yemen. They said they were "concerned" about the situation in the Gaza Strip, and asked both sides to take immediate steps to achieve fundamental change in the respect of international law... [Read more](#)

## European Agencies :

### Investigation by the European Banking Authority into the Danske Bank affair



On 19th February the European Banking Authority (EBA) launched a formal inquiry into the Danish Danske Bank, whose Estonian branch is involved in a money laundering scandal. The investigation aims to discover if the bank's Danish and Estonian financial authorities undertook the necessary inspections and whether they applied the necessary sanctions against the Estonian branch of the bank and whether exchanges of information regarding the potential risks were adequate. The investigation follows a request by the European Commission in September last, regarding the possible breaches and non-implementation of the Union's law by these two authorities... [Read more](#)

## France :

### Franco-German Manifesto for a European Industrial Policy



On 19th February in Berlin, the French and German Ministers, Bruno Le Maire and Peter Altmaier, signed a Franco-German manifesto for a 21st century European industrial strategy. They call for more ambitious projects with clear goals for 2030. They identify three pillars around which the European Commission should focus its action: investing massively in innovation, adapting the Union's regulatory framework and introducing effective measures to protect the European Union... [Read more](#)

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## Ireland :

### The government puts forward a series of measures in the event of a no-deal Brexit



On 22nd February the Irish government published a series of draft bills regarding healthcare, citizens' rights, education, industry and the electricity market in the face of a possible no-deal exit by the UK from the EU. The legislation will be debated in the lower house, the Dail on 8th March, then in the upper house the Seanad on 15th March. It will be ratified in the event of a no-deal Brexit... [Read more](#)

## Latvia :

### Announcement of reform in the Latvia financial sector



On 20th February the Latvian government announced its decision to implement significant reform in its financial sector, particular regarding the fight to counter money laundering and the financing of terrorism. It asked the Finance, Justice and Interior Ministers to draft a legislative package for 26th March at the latest. On 23rd August last MONEYVAL, the panel of experts from the Council of Europe on the evaluation on measures to counter capital laundering and the financing of terrorism asked Latvia to act in this direction... [Read more](#)

## Visit by the President of Germany



Latvia President Raimonds Vejonis visited Germany on 21st and 22nd February. During a meeting with his German counterpart, Frank-Walter Steinmeier he spoke of trade relations between the two countries. With Chancellor Angela Merkel discussions focused on Latvia's place in the Euro-Atlantic structures and on the partnership between Germany and the Baltic countries... [Read more](#)

## Romania :

### Tension with the European Commission regarding the rule of law



The European Commission, by way of its spokesperson, Margaritis Schinas, as well as the Romanian President, Klaus Iohannis, criticised the emergency decrees adopted without consultation on 19th February by the Romanian government. They deem that these rise a weakening of the role of the prosecutor's office and will strengthen the political control of the judicial system. One of the decrees defines the framework in which Romania will choose its candidates for the European Prosecutor's Office, whilst another modifies the appointment rules regarding investigating magistrates. Demonstrations were held on Sunday 24th February, mainly in the capital. Moreover the Romanian government is accusing the European Commissioners Frans Timmermans and Vera Jourova of having falsified to its disadvantage the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) report on progress and improvement made to the rule of law in the country. It is planning to take this issue to court... [Read more](#)

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## UK :

### Report on disinformation and fake news



In a report on disinformation and fake news published on 18th February the British parliament's digital, culture, media and sport committee qualified Facebook as a "digital gangster" to having "intentionally breached the laws governing data confidentiality and anti-competition laws. Insisting on threats which weigh on democracy, notably in view of the referendum on Brexit in June 2016, the committee made several recommendations especially the establishment of a "binding deontological code", the legal accountability of high tech businesses, as well as reform of the law governing electoral communications and rules regarding foreign interference in British elections... [Read more](#)

### New discussions on Brexit



British Prime Minister Theresa May and the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker met on 20th February in Brussels on the side-lines of the EU-Arab League Summit which took place at Sharm El-Sheikh on 25th February, to review their work to guarantee an orderly withdrawal of the UK from the European Union. The main point discussion was the possibility of making binding legal changes to the "backstop" to avoid the return of a physical border in Ireland. The question of a possible delay of Brexit, in the event of there being no majority for an agreement in the British Parliament, was also discussed. The two leaders agreed that their teams will continue to explore all acceptable options for Brussels and for British MPs in a "positive" frame of mind, before a vote on 12th March. On 25th February the leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn committed to supporting a second referendum in the agreement is not ratified... [Read more](#)

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## Georgia :

### Presidential visit in France and Germany



Georgian President Salomé Zourabishvili visited France and Germany. In Paris she initiated talks with Emmanuel Macron regarding real economic, trade, cultural and security projects. In Berlin Ms Zourabishvili discussed with Chancellor Merkel about German-Georgian relations as well as the situation in the Caucasus... [Read more](#)

## Moldova :

### General election results

According to initial results published by the electoral committee no party won an absolute majority in the general elections in Moldova, which took place on 24th February. The Socialist Party of pro-Russian



president Igor Dodon came out ahead with 31.4% of the vote, then came the ACUM Alliance, presented as being pro-European, with 26% of the vote. The Democratic Party in office came third with 24% of the vote. If the parties do not succeed in forming a government within the next 45 days, further elections will be convened... [Read more](#)

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#### Eurostat :

##### Inflation at 1.4% in the euro zone and 1.5% in the Union



According to Eurostat data the euro zone's annual inflation rate lay at 1.4% in January 2019, in contrast to 1.5% in December 2018; that of the EU lay at 1.5% in January 2019, against 1.6% in December. The lowest rates were noted in Greece (0.5%), in Croatia and Portugal (0.6%). The highest levels were recorded in Romania (3.2%) and Latvia (2.9%)... [Read more](#)

#### Culture :

##### ARCOmadrid 2019



From 27th February to 3rd March one of the biggest artistic and cultural events in Spain ARCO, the international fair for contemporary art in Madrid is taking place in the exhibition park IFEMA (Feria de Madrid)... [Read more](#)

##### 21st Festival of the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival



The 21st Thessaloniki Documentary Festival, the main festival of its kind in Europe will be taking place from 1st to 10th March. 178 full documentaries and 49 short ones, made by producers from all of the world will be screened... [Read more](#)

##### The Courtauld Collection in Paris



The collection of the English industrialist and patron, Samuel Courtauld, one of the biggest in terms of Impressionist art, is running until 17th June at the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris. Amongst around 100 works of art there are pictures by Manet, Seurat, Cézanne, Van Gogh and Gauguin... [Read more](#)

##### Hockney-Van Gogh: the joy of nature



From March 1st to 26th May the Van Gogh Museum of Amsterdam is running an exhibition entitled "Hockney-Van Gogh: the joy of nature" highlighting the similarities between the two artists' work, notably in their relationship with nature... [Read more](#)

##### Exhibition before work at the Kanal of Brussels



Kanal-Centre Pompidou, the future centre for Modern and Contemporary Art in Brussels is running six new exhibitions until 30th June, the date when the site, a former Citroën garage, will close for renovation work. Three of the exhibitions have been designed with the help of the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the others have been put together with the help of the Brussels Centre for Architecture (CIVA)... [Read more](#)

#### Agenda :



27  
Feb

27th February

London

Debate at the House of Commons on the withdrawal agreement from the EU

1  
Mar

1st March

Bucharest

Informal Meeting of Telecommunications Ministers

3  
Mar

3rd March

Estonia

General Elections

4  
Mar

4th March

Brussels

"Energy Council"

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