

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2019

issue 842

The Letter in PDF format

The Foundation on  and 

The foundation application available on [Appstore](#) and [Google Play](#)

— I support the Robert Schuman Foundation —

## Protecting European citizens in an ultra-connected world

Author: François Molins



The European Union which has a particularly complete legal corpus aims to guarantee its citizens demanding, effective protection of the personal data via the GDPR, of e-Privacy and via the jurisprudence of its Court of Justice. The Union must however be able to respond to the terrorist threat and organised crime via access to electronic evidence. The balance between the protection of private life and the prevention of infringements to public order must be the focus of European dialogue, deems the Prosecutor General of the Appeal

Court.  
[Read more](#)

### Contents

**Foundation** : Site/elections **Commission** : Poland - Investments - Cars  
**Parliament** : Schengen - Family - Security - Future/EU - Elections - Gas - Road transport  
**Council** : Eurogroup - Economy/Finance - Brexit **Diplomacy** : ACP - Azerbaijan - Council  
**European Agencies** : Espace - Cybersecurity **Germany** : Ireland  
**France** : G7 **Greece** : Reconciliation **Ireland** : France **Italy** : Visit/Juncker  
**Luxembourg** : Benelux **Malta** : President **Romania** : Justice **UK** : Brexit/Delay - Visas  
**Council of Europe** : Prison - Malta/Corruption **ECHR** : President **Eurostat** : Trade - Inflation - Unemployment  
**Studies/Reports** : Road safety - Famine - Protection/Consumers **Culture** : Exhibition/Berlin - Exhibition/Paris - Music/Aix - Music/Salzburg - Music/Baden-Baden - Exhibition/Bilbao

[Agenda](#) | [Other issues](#) | [Contact](#)

#### Foundation :

##### European Elections: a site to understand all



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 Robert Schuman Foundation is offering its readers an internet site devoted to providing a greater understanding of the election and to follow the campaign in the 27 Member States with the political parties which are running... [Read more](#)

#### Commission :

##### Rule of Law: infringement procedure against Poland

On 3rd April the European Commission launched an infringement procedure against Poland regarding the new disciplinary regime for judges. The Polish government has two months to respond the letter of formal notice. The Vice-President of the Commission, Frans



Timmermans, also warned Romania about its own reforms of the judicial system. At the same time the Commission launched a reflection process regarding the implementation of the rule of law in the Union. It has identified three priorities: greater promotion of the rule of law, prevention of risks and tailored response to counter shortfalls in the law and the provision of effective response in the event of infringements. In June it will publish its conclusions and proposals... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

#### 4 billion € in investments for infrastructures



As part of the European cohesion policy, the Commission adopted an investment programme of 4 billion € on 2nd April; the latter will be allocated to infrastructure projects in 10 Member States. These projects cover various areas, from healthcare to energy and research. Within the Cohesion Policy from 2014 and 2020 258 major infrastructures were granted EU financing, to a total of 32 billion €... [Read more](#)

#### Procedure against BMW, Daimler and VW



On 5th April the Commission concluded that BMW, Daimler and VW (Volkswagen, Audi, Porsche) impeded competition rules between 2006 and 2014 by agreeing to restrict competition in the area of technologies enabling the reduction of emissions from private new cars sold in the European Economic Area. The Commission's investigation is limited to the alleged infringement of the competition law and does not focus on any possible breaches of the environment legislation. The manufacturers will be able to respond in writing and ask to be interviewed, but if the Commission concludes that there is enough evidence to prove that the rules have been infringed, it will be able to set a fine that could total up to 10% of their global annual turnover... [Read more](#)

### Parliament :

#### Vote to modify the Schengen Code



MEPs voted on 4th February in support of the modification of the Schengen border code to establish new limits and conditions on the temporary re-introduction of internal border controls in the Schengen area by the Member States. The text that was adopted stipulates that the initial period for border controls will decrease from six to two months and the maximum extension period will be brought down from two to one year. The vote ended Parliament's first reading; the Council for its part still has to vote... [Read more](#)

#### Better balance between private and professional life



On 4th April MEPs adopted a directive on the balance between professional and private life. New rules regarding parental leave set minimal requirements across the entire EU: paid paternity leave of at least 10 working days for fathers or equivalent second parents, the right to two month's non-transferable paid parental leave. Working parents should also be able to ask to adapt their mode of work, via distance-working or flexi-hours. The specific needs of the parents of handicapped children must also now be taken into account as far as their mode of working is concerned... [Read more](#)

#### New rules regarding ID security



On 4th April MEPs adopted a new regulation strengthening the security of ID papers and residence documents in the EU. All ID papers issued in the EU over the next two years will now have to comply with harmonised security standards. The proposal was already the focus of a provisional agreement with the Council and must now be formally adopted... [Read more](#)

#### Debate over the future of the Union with the Swedish Prime Minister

The Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven debated the future of the European Union on 3rd April in Strasbourg with the Parliament. He maintained that the Union should strengthen the defence of its fundamental values. In his opinion the best means to defend these



values is to protect democracy, learn from Brexit, establish a European pillar of social rights, cooperate in terms of migration and counter climate change...  
[Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

#### Launch of a site for the European elections



On 5th April the European Parliament launched an interactive website giving past results and also present ones in the European elections which is available in all of the Union's official languages. The site will be updated on 26th May with the election results and the national distribution of seats, as the details are communicated by the national authorities...  
[Read more](#)

#### Extension of European rules to third countries gas pipelines



On 4th April MEPs adopted an amendment to the gas market rules to extend them to all gas pipelines entering the EU from third countries. The aim is to create a more competitive European gas market, by guaranteeing that the ownership of gas pipelines entering the Union is discrete from gas supply ownership. Just like European gas pipelines, those from third countries should therefore become accessible to other operators. These new rules provide the Union with exclusive competence in terms of agreements regarding new gas pipelines with third countries. After the formal adoption of this amendment the Member States will have nine months to transpose the directive into their national legislation... [Read more](#)

#### Adoption of the revised road transport rules



MEPs voted on 4th April in support of the revised road transport rules as part of the Mobility Package. This revision aims to improve the working conditions of drivers and to counter illegal practices and the distortion of competition created by road hauliers who use letter-box companies. Negotiations will then take place with the Council regarding modified proposals for posted drivers, their rest-time and an improved application of cabotage rules... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#) | [Other link](#)

### Council :

#### Eurogroup Meeting



Euro zone Finance Ministers met on 5th April in Bucharest, welcomed the progress achieved by Greece, which should enable the release of a first round of measures to alleviate the debt. Greece is due to receive 970 million € from interests raised by the Central Banks when loans were granted to the country. Ministers also exchanged views over the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union, notably on the budgetary instrument for convergence and competitiveness and its governance. They welcomed Luxembourg's amended draft budget in 2019 and spoke of banking union in the euro zone as well as preparation for Brexit... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

#### Informal meeting of the Economy and Finance Ministers



On 6th April during an informal meeting in Bucharest, Economy and Finance Ministers addressed the issue of posted workers and their social and economic impact. Ministers then debated taxation in the Union and stressed the need to adopt a joint approach in this matter. Finally they worked on preparations for the G20 - which will take place in April - and the meetings of the IMF... [Read more](#)

#### Conclusions of the General Affairs Council (Article 50)



On 9th April the Union's negotiator in chief, Michel Barnier, presented ministers with the state of progress in terms of discussions over Brexit. On the eve of the extraordinary Council during which the heads of State and government will debate the request for an extension requested by the British Prime Minister Theresa May, ministers recalled their attachment to the withdrawal agreement that has already been negotiated. They also insisted on the need to continue preparations in the event of a no-deal Brexit... [Read](#)

more

## Diplomacy :

### A new partnership with the ACP countries



The European Union and the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) completed a second round of negotiations on 4th April in view of a new partnership. New cooperation pillars are due to be created for each region, adapted to the specific challenges of each partnership. The Cotonou Agreement governs relations at present between the EU and the ACP countries but will come to an end in 2020. The negotiations in view of a new partnership were launched in September 2018... [Read more](#)

### EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council



The EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation Council met for the 16th time on 4th April. Participants spoke of an increase of pace in their relations, with notably the launch in 2017 negotiations in view of a bilateral agreement. The EU welcomed the pardoning of 400 prisoners in Azerbaijan, which included members of the opposition, NGO representatives and journalists. The Cooperation Council also debated cooperation development in the transport and energy sectors... [Read more](#)

### Conclusion of the Foreign Affairs Council



On 9th April the Foreign Affairs Ministers who met in Luxembourg spoke of the situation in Libya and called for a humanitarian truce. They expressed their opposition to the new penal code introduced in Brunei, which provides amongst other things lapidation as a punishment for homosexuality and adultery. Ministers also discussed the situation in Afghanistan and repeated their determination to see negotiations start as soon as possible. The tenth anniversary of the eastern partnership and the situation in Venezuela were also the focus of discussions... [Read more](#)

## European Agencies :

### Launch of Soyuz by Arianespace



On 4th April Arianespace succeeded its fourth launch since the beginning of the year: a Soyuz VS22 launcher took off from the Guiana Space Centre in Kourou with four satellites on board belonging to the O3B constellation by the satellite telecommunications services supplier SES. It is the 9th successful launch by Arianespace in the last six months, and the 22nd successful mission for the Russian Soyuz team... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

### The Member States test their resilience against cyber attacks



On 5th April the European Parliament, the Member States, the European Commission and the European Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) organised an exercise to test the Member States' response and resilience capabilities in the event of a cyberattack that might affect the European elections. This test is part of the Action Plan to counter Disinformation, presented by the Commission in December 2018 the aim of which is to strengthen cooperation between Member States and the European institutions to respond as effectively as possible to the threats set by disinformation... [Read more](#)

## Germany :

### Angela Merkel visits Ireland



On 4th April Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar hosted his German counterpart Angela Merkel to discuss the future of the European Union and of Ireland in the face of Brexit. After having met citizens on the Northern Irish border, Angela Merkel said that the "Good Friday Agreements must absolutely continue to apply". Leo Varadkar indicated that "in the event of a hard Brexit, Ireland must not become a service door for the single market." The two leaders recalled their solidarity and their hopes to see an "orderly Brexit"... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

## France :

## Meeting of the G7 Foreign Affairs Ministers



The Foreign Affairs Ministers of the G7 met in Dinard on 5th and 6th April. They repeated the importance of an international order founded on rules. They discussed the establishment of standards for cyberspace, the prevention of trafficking in the Sahel and the prevention of sexual violence in conflicts... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

## Greece :

### Visit by the Prime Minister to North Macedonia



On 2nd April the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras travelled to North Macedonia for the first time to meet his Macedonian counterpart, Zoran Zaev. The two leaders chaired the High Cooperation Council between the two countries and signed the action plan that aims to improve their relations following the Prespa agreement which settled the issue of the name of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia... [Read more](#)

## Ireland :

### Prime Minister visits France



On 2nd April Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar travelled to France to meet French President Emmanuel Macron. The two leaders exchanged regarding various Brexit scenarios prior to the European Council's extraordinary meeting on 10th April... [Read more](#)

## Italy :

### Meeting between Giuseppe Conte and Jean-Claude Juncker



Giuseppe Conte, the Italian Prime Minister, and Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, met in Rome on 2nd April. J-C Juncker said he was concerned about Italy's economic situation and the increase in the government debt. G. Conte indicated that steps will be taken to revive growth. On 1st April the OECD published a report on the need for "major reform" for the recovery of the economy in Italy... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#) | [Other link](#)

## Luxembourg :

### Benelux Summit



On 2nd April Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel hosted his Belgian and Dutch counterparts, Charles Michel and Mark Rutte on the occasion of the Luxembourg Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Benelux Union. The leaders recalled their environmental ambitions such as the creation of a Benelux platform on the climate to limit global warming. They also received the Minister President of North Rhine Westphalia, Armin Laschet, with the aim of stepping up cooperation between the Benelux Union and the German Land... [Read more](#)

## Malta :

### George Vella, new president of the Republic



On 4th April George Vella took office as the 10th president of the Republic of Malta for a five year term in office. His appointment by Prime Minister Joseph Muscat was approved by the House of Representatives on 2nd April. G. Vella, who was formerly Foreign Minister succeeds Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, the second woman to have occupied this post... [Read more](#)

## Romania :

### Lifting of judicial control for Laura Codruta Kövesi



On 4th April the Romanian judicial system lifted the judicial control it has imposed on the former head of the Romanian anti-corruption court, Laura Codruta Kövesi, after her indictment on 28th March for corruption. This decision allows her to leave Romania and to continue her campaign for the post of head of the future European Prosecutor's Office. A few hours before that the President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani demanded that the Romanian authorities stop impeding the candidacy of Ms

Kövesi, who has the Parliament's support... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

**UK :**

#### Theresa May asks for a further Brexit delay



In a letter addressed to the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, on 5th April, British Prime Minister Theresa May asked the EU to delay the UK's withdrawal until 30th June so that she can have as much time as possible to gain an agreement in the British Parliament. On 3rd April she met the leader of the opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, and negotiations were initiated. On 5th April Donald Tusk suggested a 'flexible' delay of up to 12 months. The decision will be taken by the heads of State and government at the summit on 10th April... [Read more](#)

#### Visa exemption for British citizens



On 4th April MEPs approved the project regarding visa exemptions for British citizens 502 votes in support, 81 against and 29 abstentions. For any visits of under 90 days out of a 180 day period, British citizens will be exempt of visa obligations in all Member States and those associated to the Schengen area. This exemption will only be granted if the UK guarantees the same rules to EU citizens. It will be applicable the day following the UK's withdrawal from the Union... [Read more](#)

**Council of Europe :**

#### Report on prison population in Europe



According to a Council of Europe study that was published on 2nd April the imprisonment rate dropped by 6.6% in Europe between 2016 and 2018. However 8 countries still have "serious problems of prison overpopulation"... [Read more](#)

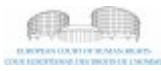
#### Malta must counter corruption more effectively



In a report published on 3rd April the Group of States against Corruption 'GRECO', a body of the Council of Europe, deems that the Maltese public institutions responsible for the surveillance and balance of power were ineffectual in terms of corruption. GRECO accuses them of their lack of disciplinary or criminal response to facts of which some Maltese ministers or police officers are suspected. In 2021 the body will assess the 23 recommendations that it has established in its report... [Read more](#)

**ECHR :**

#### Linos-Alexandre Sicilianos elected President



On 1st April Linos-Alexandre Sicilianos was elected President of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), of which he was the Vice-President (as of January 1st 2017). He takes over from Italian Guido Raimondi and will preside over the institution that guarantees the fundamental rights of the 48 Members of the Council of Europe for a three year term in office as of 5th May next... [Read more](#)

**Eurostat :**

#### EU current account trade surplus



In the fourth quarter of 2018 the EU's current account recorded a surplus of 38.6 billion € against 36.2 billion in the third quarter of 2018, according to figures published by Eurostat on 5th April. The services balance recorded a surplus of 42.2 billion € against 47 billion in the third quarter of 2018. In the fourth quarter of 2018 the EU recorded current account surpluses with the USA, Switzerland, Canada, Brazil, Hong-Kong, India and Japan whilst there were deficits with China and Russia... [Read more](#)

#### Decrease in euro zone inflation rate

According to Eurostat figures published on 1st April the euro zone's annual inflation rate was down at 1.4% in March 2019 against 1.5% in February... [Read more](#)



### Unemployment at 6.5% in the EU and 7.8% in the euro zone



According to Eurostat figures published on 1st April the unemployment rate in the EU lay at 6.5% in February 2019, which is the lowest rate since January 2000. In the euro zone it lay at 7.8% in February 2019, which is stable in comparison with January 2009 and down in comparison with February 2018 (8.5%). It is the lowest rate recorded in the euro zone since October 2008... [Read more](#)

### Studies/Reports :

#### Annual report on road safety



On 4th April the European Union the figures on road safety in 2018 were published. Although the number of people who died in road accidents has fallen by 21% between 2010-2018, Member States may not reach the goal of the Valetta Declaration to halve the number of those killed by 2020. As part of the Commission's "Europe on the Move" package, the long term goal is to reduce the number of deaths and seriously injured on the roads to a level near zero by 2050... [Read more](#)

#### Report on food crises



On 2nd April the EU, the UN for food and agriculture as well as the World Food Programme jointly published a report on food crises in 2019. This report notes that 113 million people in 53 countries suffered food insecurity in 2018, in comparison with 124 million in 2017. It also takes into account the impact of climate change and natural catastrophes on food security and advocates a united approach to these issues by the international community... [Read more](#)

#### Report on Dangerous Products



On 5th April the European Commission published its 2018 report on the rapid warning system regarding dangerous non-food products. According to this report, in 2018 the European warning system led to the flagging of more than 2,200 dangerous products, especially toys (31%), cars (19%) and clothes (10%). More than half of these products came from China... [Read more](#)

### Culture :

#### Caspar D. Friedrich in virtual reality



The Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin together with Arte and the Beertz Filmproduktion brothers are running an exhibition until 30th June - an immersion of virtual reality in the famous, recently restored painting "At the Beach with the Monk" by Caspar David Friedrich... [Read more](#)

#### Young European Artists in Paris



The Cartier Foundation for Contemporary Art is presenting the "Metamorphosis. Art in Europe now" until 16th June, in an exhibition which brings 21 artists from 16 countries together, a new generation of creators embodying the face of Europe... [Read more](#)

#### Aix-en-Provence Easter Festival



From 13th to 28th April, the town of Aix-en-Provence is hosting the Easter Festival, a major event in the world of classical music which brings together 925 artists and 8 symphonic orchestras for around thirty concerts reproducing the works of major classical composers... [Read more](#)

### Easter Festival Salzburg



From 13th to 21st April, the Eastern Festival of Salzburg is focusing on the opera of German composer Richard Wagner "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg". The musical festival is also presenting a musical theatre play "Thérèse" by German composer Philipp Maintz, taken from the novel by Emile Zola "Thérèse Raquin"... [Read more](#)

### The Easter Festival of Baden-Baden



From 13th to 22nd April the town of Baden-Baden is hosting the Philharmonic Orchestra of Berlin as part of the Easter Festival celebrating opera and classical music. A new version of Verdi's Othello is heading this year's list of events... [Read more](#)

### Giorgio Morandi at the Guggenheim Bilbao



From 12th April to 6th October, the exhibition "A Backward Glance" at the Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao is devoted to the prints and paintings of Giorgio Morandi. From his Cubist works and the influence of the former masters of the 16th to the 18th century, the Italian artist embodies everyday art in quest of purity and sobriety... [Read more](#)

### Agenda :



8th April  
Luxembourg  
"Foreign Affairs" Council



9th April  
Luxembourg  
General Affairs Council  
Brussels  
EU-China Summit



10th April  
Brussels  
Extraordinary meeting of the European Council (article 50)  
Frankfurt  
Meeting of the Council of the Governors of the European Central Bank



10th-11th April  
Bucharest  
Informal Meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers



11th-12th April  
Bucharest  
Informal Meeting of Cohesion Policy Ministers



14th April  
Finland  
Finnish General Elections

The Letter is also available in:



I love the Robert Schuman Foundation's Letter

The Letter's Editorial Team :



Stefanie Buzmaniuk, Helen Levy ;  
Cléa Agosta, Delphine Bougassas-Gaullier, Clément Liénard, Magali Menneteau, Marion Paronian  
**Editor-in-chief: Eric Maurice**  
**Publishing Director: Pascale Joannin**

Contact/Suggestions  
[info@robert-schuman.eu](mailto:info@robert-schuman.eu)

---

**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.

You no longer wish to receive our letters. [{LINK}](#)