

— I support the Robert Schuman Foundation —

Protecting European citizens in an ultra-connected world

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On 3rd April the Robert Schuman Foundation organised a conference on the theme of "The Protection of European Citizens in an Ultra-Connected World" in Luxembourg with the Max Planck Institute. We are continuing the publication of the report with the contributions made by two other participants. Silvio Mascagna, a member of the cabinet of Julian King, European Commissioner for Security explains how the Commission is developing the interoperability of databases in the fight to counter terrorism. Seyda Emek, advisor to the

European coordinator for the fight to counter terrorism, Gilles de Kerchove, illustrates the need to retain data to facilitate investigations.

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Elections :

General election results in Finland



The Social Democratic Party (SDP) won the general elections on 14th April, winning 40 seats with 17.7% of the vote. It is running ahead by a short margin of the True Finns (17.5% of the vote and 39 seats). The Conservative Assembly (KOK) follows these two parties with 17% and 38 seats (+1). The Centrist Party of outgoing Prime Minister Juha Sipilä lost 18 seats and only won 13.8% of the vote. The head of the Social Democratic Party, Antti Rinne declared that he intended to form a government by the end of May. But with which coalition? Finland is preparing to take over the six monthly presidency of the Council of the Union on 1st July... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

European Day in Prague

The High School for the Economy in Prague is organising its 11th



European Day on 17th April on the theme of 15 years of the Czech Republic's membership of the European Union. Eric Maurice, the manager of the Foundation's Brussels office, is taking part in a roundtable on the future of the European Union... [Read more](#)

European Council :

Delay of Brexit until 31st October 2019



On 10th April the European Council accepted a proposal to extend the UK's exit of the EU by six months so that the ratification of the withdrawal agreement can be completed. This extension will not go beyond 31st October and if the agreement is ratified by both sides before this date, withdrawal will occur on the first day of the following month. If the UK is still a Union member between 23rd and 26th May it will have to take part in the European Parliament election or withdrawal will occur on 1st June. The European Council stressed that the extension could not be used to start negotiations over a future relationship... [Read more](#)

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Commission :

Strengthening confidence in artificial intelligence focused on the human factor



On 8th April the Commission presented a communication on artificial intelligence (AI). It wants to check that the guidelines set by a group of independent experts in terms of ethics, regarding AI are compatible with practice. Seven factors were deemed vital for an AI that can be trusted, for example non-discrimination or the respect of private life, and they will now be assessed by actors in the sector (industry, public authorities, research institutes). These new developments are part of the strategy that aims to increase investments in this area... [Read more](#)

Entry into force of the regulation on the screening of foreign investments



The EU's new framework to assess foreign direct investments entered into force on 10th April. It is based on the proposal made by the European Commission in September 2017 and will help to protect security and public order in Europe regarding foreign direct investments in the Union... [Read more](#)

Council :

Mandate for the trade negotiations with the USA



On 15th April the Council gave the Commission a mandate to launch negotiations with the USA regarding two trade agreements. The first will focus on the elimination of customs duties on industrial goods. The second will involve the assessment of compliance in view of lifting non-tariff obstacles to trade, thereby enabling businesses to prove that their products respect technical standards both in the USA and in the EU. The mandate rules out any discussions regarding agriculture and states that the social and environmental impact will be taken into consideration by the EU... [Read more](#)

Final agreement on the copyright directive



On 15th April the Council finally approved the directive reforming the copyright directive. 19 State voted in support of the text that had already been approved by Parliament, six voted against and three others abstained. The directive which is due to enter into force within the next two years aims to adapt European copyright law in the digital age. Supported by both media and artists, it caused the opposition of the main American platforms and the supporters of freedom on the net... [Read more](#)

Conclusions of the General Affairs Council



On 9th April the European Affairs Ministers discussed the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (2021-2027). They adopted conclusions regarding the implementation by the Union of the UN sustainable development programme by 2030 and exchanged view points on the procedures launched against Hungary and Poland in virtue of article 7. Finally ministers adopted several regulations including the regulation of the ECJ's procedure to introduce an appeals screening mechanism designed to relieve the Court in view of

the increase in the number of cases brought before it... [Read more](#)

Informal "Employment, social policy, healthcare and consumer" Council



During the informal meeting of the "Employment, social policy, healthcare and consumer" Council on 10th and 11th April in Bucharest Ministers addressed the question of gender related gaps on the labour market and expressed their desire to invest in the development of skills. They also debated digitisation and its impact on the labour market and on social protection systems... [Read more](#)

"Agriculture and Fisheries" Council



On 15th April the Agriculture and Fisheries Ministers discussed the post-2020 reform package of the Common Agricultural Policy -CAP- which aims to ensure sustainable food security by integration aspects like the quality of water and the protection of the fauna and flora. Ministers also debated six recommendations pinpointed in the final report by the Task Force for Rural Africa, published on 7th March in preparation for the Ministerial conference on agriculture which will be jointly organised by the Commission and the African Union on 21st June... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

EU-China Summit Conclusions



Meeting in Brussels on 9th April for a 21st Summit the Presidents of the European Council and the Commission, Donald Tusk and Jean-Claude Juncker, along with Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang discussed trade relations between the EU and China as well as world governance - they asserted the importance of strengthening the role played by the WTO. In a joint declaration they mentioned that any forced transfer of technology should be avoided. They expressed their support to the work of the G20 and to the Paris Climate Agreement. The situation in Iran, Afghanistan and in the Korean peninsula were discussed... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Conclusions of the Advocate General on justice in Poland



The European Court of Justice's Advocate General concluded on 11th April that Poland had infringed Union law with the reform that lowered the age of retirement of judges from the Supreme Court to 65 years of age. The magistrate deemed that the reform which aimed to place 27 judges (out of 72) in retirement infringed the principle of irremovability and diminished the independence of the legal system. The ECJ was addressed by the European Commission which is due to deliver its decision in several weeks; it is not obliged to follow the opinion of the Advocate General... [Read more](#)

ECB :

Meeting of the Council of Governors



The Council of Governors of the ECB decided on 10th April to leave the bank's interest rates on its main refinancing operations unchanged. It deems that the key rates will remain at their present levels for at least until the end of 2019. The ECB will continue its quantitative easing policy, for as long as necessary, to achieve its inflation goal and assesses the probability of a recession in the euro zone as "low". Peter Praet, the ECB's chief economist took pace in his last monetary policy meeting, since his mandate will come to an end on 31st May. He will be replaced by Irishman Philip Lane... [Read more](#)

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European Agencies :

Guillaume Faury, the Airbus CEO



On 10th April shareholders from the Airbus group who met in Amsterdam in a General Assembly appointed Guillaume Faury, former Airbus Helicopters and Airbus Commercial Aircraft director as the CEO of the Airbus group for a duration of three years. He takes over from Tom Enders, whose contract was terminated by the General Assembly in December 2017... [Read more](#)

EU funded scientists unveil the very first picture of a black hole



On 10th April the first picture of a black hole taken by the Event Horizon Telescope was unveiled. It was the result of joint work across the globe including scientists who had received EU funding. By providing visual proof of the existence of black holes this event has pushed back even further the bounds of modern science... [Read more](#)

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Croatia :

"16+1" Summit between China and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe



The 8th "16+1" Summit bringing China, represented by its Prime Minister Li Keqiang and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe together took place on 12th April in Dubrovnik, Croatia, just a few days after the EU-China Summit. Greece joined this format for the very first time, with its Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras speaking of the need to turn the page on the economic crisis by developing international cooperation. The "16+1" format is a platform for the development of "new Chinese Silk Roads" in Europe... [Read more](#)

France :

Tax on digital services approved by the National Assembly



On 9th April the National Assembly adopted a draft law put forward by French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire, regarding the creation of a tax on digital services provided by the major businesses in the sector like Google, Facebook and Amazon. It also focuses on the modification of the trajectory to reduce corporate tax in 2019. The text is due to be assessed by the Senate... [Read more](#)

Economic Study on France



In a study on France's economy published on 9th April the OECD stresses the need for reform for growth, the viability of public finances and social cohesion. The organisation forecasts 1.3% growth in 2019, which is not enough to reduce unemployment or to improve public finances. The OECD recommends for the "effects of redistribution to be a priority for economic reform" to guarantee sustainable, inclusive growth and to increase well-being. This must go hand in hand with a reform of the labour market, a revision of public spending targets and investments for a greener economy... [Read more](#)

European and International Support to the Reconstruction of Notre-Dame of Paris



After the fire at the cathedral of Notre-Dame of Paris on 15th April the President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron announced the launch of a national and international subscription for the reconstruction of this symbol of world heritage. The President of the European Council, Donald Tusk called on all Member States to take part in the effort. European Commissioner for Culture Tibor Navracsics declared that he was studying the possibilities of using European funds to help France. The President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani called on MEPs to make a donation of one day from their salary... [Read more](#)

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Ukraine :

Petro Poroshenko meets A Merkel and E Macron



On 12th April Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko met German Chancellor Angela Merkel then French President Emmanuel Macron. Apart from discussions regarding the conflict in the Donbass and the Presidential Election in Ukraine, the three leaders recalled their commitment in the Minsk II agreements to establish a "stable ceasefire" and as part of the "Normandy Format" negotiations, which brings together Ukraine Russia, France and Germany... [Read more](#)

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ECHR :

Navalny Affair: condemnation of Russia

In a decision delivered on 9th April, the European Court of Human Rights condemned Russia for the house-arrest of Alexei Navalny, Vladimir Putin's political opponent, which it deems a breach of articles



5, 10 and 18 of the European Convention of Human Rights which protects the right to freedom, safety and the freedom of expression. The Court deems that the house-arrest "aimed to restrict his public activities" and condemned Russia to pay the complainant 20,000€ in compensation... [Read more](#)

UN :

Report on the global impact of a no-deal Brexit



A no-deal Brexit would largely benefit China and the USA whilst the EU and some other of the UK's trade partners, including Turkey would lose out enormously, said the UN in a report published on 9th April. A brutal divorce between London and the EU would "affect the conditions of access to the British market significantly for developing and also developed countries" deems the UN Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in this study... [Read more](#)

IMF :

World Economy Outlook



On 9th April the IMF clearly reduced its growth forecasts for the euro zone, which has witnessed the German "motor" illustrating serious signs of weakness, whilst Italy seems to be destined to stagnation. Its GDP is due to grow by only 1.3% this year, after 1.8% last year, whilst the IMF was expecting a more modest deceleration down to 1.6% in its last forecast in January. World growth is due to slow again in 2019 to

3.3%... [Read more](#)

Joint Spring Meeting with the World Bank



The Spring Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF took place in Washington on 8th to 14th April. They brought together the Finance Ministers of 22 countries. This year the theme of these meetings focused on the "importance of wage inequality: how to ensure that economic growth benefits the greatest number?".. [Read more](#)

Eurobarometer :

Survey on the perception of the competition policy



The third Eurobarometer survey on the perception of the impact of the competition policy was published on 11th April. It emerges that European citizens have a positive image of the latter: 78% of those interviewed (against 74% in 2014) say that the competition policy had a positive impact on their life as consumers. European citizens assimilate competition to goods and services of better quality (74%), more innovation (85%) and more consumer choice (87%). 26% of respondents (against 18% in 2014) believe that the telecommunications sector suffers the most from a lack of competition... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Report in Energy Union



On 9th April the Commission published the fourth report on the energy union which reviews its energy strategy since 2014. The report maintains that the internal energy market has been strengthened, likewise energy security in the Union. New smart structures, particular of a cross-border nature have benefited from investments. The report reviews the introduction of a new legislative framework for the energy union, particularly focused on transition towards a carbon neutral economy. The Commission calls for the continuation of thought into this area, notably regarding a European energy tax... [Read more](#)

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Report on the re-integration of the long-term unemployed

On 11th April the Commission published a report on progress made by the Member States in the re-integration of the long-term unemployed. The report indicates that the Member States have introduced support



measures for the long-term unemployed, whose number has fallen by more than 2.5 million since the adoption of the recommendation. The hardest work has been achieved by the Member States which initially had a weak system of support to this category which enabled convergence in policy approaches at European level... [Read more](#)

Report on the facility in support of refugees in Turkey



On 12th April the Commission published its third annual report on the implementation of the Union's facility for refugees in Turkey. According to this report, real, vital aid was provided to refugees and their host communities, for example 5 million healthcare consultations were organised. 45 humanitarian aid projects have been set up including an emergency social security net, which took on board monthly cash transfers for more than 1.5 million people. The facility for refugees in Turkey was introduced in 2015 and has a total budget of 6 billion € covering the period 2016-2019... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Emil Nolde, German artist under the Nazi regime



Until 15th September the Museum for Contemporary Art in Berlin is showing more than 100 works by Expressionist artist Emil Nolde, which were created under the censorship of National-Socialism. Deemed a "degenerate artist", he was however a member of the NSDAP. The exhibition explores for the first time the ambiguity of Emil Nolde and the link between the Nazi regime and his art... [Read more](#)

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Giacometti at the Prado



Until 7th July the National Museum Prado in Madrid is devoting an exhibition to Alberto Giacometti on the occasion of the museum's bicentenary. These works are on show together with his preferred artists like Goya, Velazquez and El Greco... [Read more](#)

Edvard Munch at the British Museum



Until 21st July the British Museum in London is showing an exhibition "Edvard Munch. Love and Angst." It will be showing the relationship between the artist's work and his personal experience in a developing Europe before the First World War... [Read more](#)

"Tutankamun, Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh" Exhibition - Paris



Until 15th September the "Tutankamun, the Treasures of the Golden Pharaoh" exhibition is being presented at the Grande Halle de la Villette by the Egyptian Ministry for Antiquities. There are nearly 150 objects on show for the first time in Paris... [Read more](#)

Johan Maurits Exhibition



Until 7th July the Mauritshuis in The Hague is running an exhibition "Shifting Image - in Search of Johan Maurits". It explores the different images that accompany Johan Maurits (1604-1679) throughout his life... [Read more](#)

Leonardo da Vinci. Exhibitions in Turin and Venice



From 16th April to 14th July, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci, the Royal Museums of Turin are hosting more than 50 pieces of research and works by the Italian artist. The Gallery of the Academy of Venice is presenting the exhibition "Leonardo Da Vinci. The model man of the world". Both exhibitions focused on autographs and drawings by the artists, which illustrate the

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Luxembourg
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Bucharest
Informal Meeting of Culture Ministers

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Strasbourg
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Ukraine
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