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Review of the 8th Legislature of the European Parliament

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The European Parliament that was elected in 2014 held its last plenary session in Strasbourg just a few weeks before the European elections that are due to take place between 23rd and 26th May. The legislature now ending was marked by greater political fragmentation and the end of the agreement between the two main parties. MEPs whilst legislating on many issues raised by current events, tried to increase their political and institutional role.

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Front page! :

Europe: what the candidates will not tell you



Just as the European campaign is starting in the Member States for the election on 23rd-26th May next, Jean-Dominique Giuliani recalls the EU's advantages which are greater in number than one might think... [Read more](#)

Elections :

Presidential election in Lithuania



Lithuanians are being called to ballot on 12th May next for the first round of the presidential election. The vote will appoint the successor to the outgoing President of the Republic, Dalia Grybauskaitė, in office since 2009, who is completing her second and final term in office at head of Lithuania. She cannot run again since the Constitution bans running for more than two consecutive mandates. Nine people are standing. If none of the candidates wins more than half of the votes cast, a second round will taken place on 26th May, the day of the European elections... [Read more](#)

Foundation :**A site with all the information you need on the European elections**

In a month's time from 23rd to 26th May Europeans are being invited to elect their MEPs for the next five years. The Robert Schuman Foundation offers its readers a dedicated website providing a greater understanding of the election and the issues at stake - you can follow the campaign in the Member States with the lists of candidates running for office...

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Commission :**Debate over the Union's social policy**

On 16th April the Commission announced that it was launching debate over the Union's social policy and the means to make decision making more efficient in this area. One of the planned changes is the increased use of the qualified majority vote for social policy to enable faster decision making. This might first involve the fight to counter discrimination and to extend this later to other social security areas and worker protection. For these changes to enter into force the European Council has to approve them unanimously, then the national parliaments and the European Parliament have to give their agreement... [Read more](#)

Latina America and Caribbean: join forces for a common future

On 16th April the Commission published a press release on relations between the EU and Latin America and Caribbean. In the wider Atlantic area the Union hopes to extend its cooperation and strengthen its partnerships with Latin America and the Caribbean by focusing on four priorities - prosperity, democracy, resilience and efficient world governance - for a common future... [Read more](#)

Up to 12 billion \$ in taxes in response in the USA

On 17th April the EU unveiled a list of manufactured goods in the USA which might be taxed to a total of 12 billion \$ ranging from ketchup to car parts, in the guise of "counter-measures" to American subsidies made to Boeing. The EU is targeting customs duties "equivalent to the estimated damage caused to Airbus via the US government aid granted to Boeing," explained the European Commission in a press release... [Read more](#)

Glyphosate assessment mission

For countries, France, Hungary, the Netherlands and Sweden were appointed on 15th April by the Union as Member States responsible for an assessment of Glyphosate. The permit for this controversial pesticide was renewed by the Union in December 2017, for a period of five years. Its short authorisation runs until December 2022 and businesses that want to continue selling it beyond that time will have to place a request to renew it for three years before the end of this period, by the end of the year. The new assessment group will have to study these requests and prepare a draft report submitted to the European food safety agency (EFSA)... [Read more](#)

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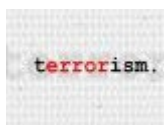
Parliament :**Ban on electric pulse fishing**

MEPs confirmed on 16th April 571 votes in support, 60 against and 20 abstentions the ban on electric pulse fishing in the Union as of 1st July 2021 thereby leaving the possibility for Member States to anticipate the implementation of this in their territorial waters... [Read more](#)

New legislation strengthening the European border and coastguard

MEPs adopted a regulation strengthening the European Border and Coastguard Agency (Frontex). A new permanent corps will be created to support Member States in the control of the EU's outer borders, with the deployment of 5000 people in 2021. The corps is due to be fully operational by 2027 with 10,000 agents. Frontex will also support return procedures in the Member States and will step up cooperation with third countries... [Read more](#)

New rules to strengthen the fight to counter terrorism



On 17th April MEPs voted in support of a regulation on the withdrawal of terrorist on-line content within the hour. To counter radicalisation, digital businesses will have to withdraw this content within an hour of having received an injunction to do so on the part of the authorities. The businesses which do not respect the law systematically might have to pay sanctions of up to 4% of their world turnover. On 16th April MEPs adopted a regulation aiming to update the rules governing the use and sale of chemical products that can be used to make homemade bombs... [Read more](#)

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Partial agreement on the European Defence Fund



On 18th April MEPs approved a partial agreement on the creation of a European Defence Fund designed to foster technological innovation and cooperation between Member States. MEPs advocated a budget of 11.5 billion € for the period 2021-2027 which still has to be negotiated under the discussions of the Union's multi-annual budget... [Read more](#)

Strengthening of the Union's financial watchdogs



MEPs adopted a regulation on 16th April to strengthen the Union's financial supervision. The aim is both to protect consumers better and to counter the laundering of capital. The European Security and Markets Authority (ESMA) will now be able to supervise certain financial sectors directly and the European Banking Authority (EBA) will be able to adopt measures to counter capital laundering and the financing of terrorism... [Read more](#)

Workers' rights enhanced



On 16th April MEPs approved minimal rights for workers who are employed in unstable conditions. This covers domestic workers, on-demand workers, intermittent workers, voucher based-workers, platform workers, trainees and apprentices. They will enjoy a series of minimal rights and conditions which are more transparent and more predictable on condition that they work more than 3 hours per week and 12 hours per month on average... [Read more](#)

New rule to protect whistle-blowers



On 16th April MEPs adopted a directive establishing new European standards to protect whistle-blowers who alert authorities of breaches in the Union's legislation. Whistle-blowers will be able to decide between an internal or external reporting, either to a legal body or directly to the national competent authorities or the EU organisations in question. If no adequate response is provided the whistle-blowers will be able to reveal publicly the information he holds and still receive protection. The directive explicitly bans all types of reprisal... [Read more](#)

Better protection for consumers



MEPs voted on 17th April in support of a new law that updates consumer rights in the digital age, guaranteeing them more information regarding the functioning of on-line rankings, notably to find out whether they are the result of fee-paying positions. The revised rules also aim to make the use of on-line assessments and the personalised tariffication of them more transparent for consumers... [Read more](#)

Vote in support of the investment programme InvestEU



MEPs adopted a regulation on 18th April regarding InvestEU, a programme to support investment that will replace the current European Fund for Strategic Investments. MEPs made several amendments to the Commission's proposal, by increasing the EU's guarantee from 38 to 40.8 billion € to trigger 698 billion € in investments instead of 650. 55% of investments under the framework programme will also be devoted to sustainable infrastructures... [Read more](#)

Improved prevention and detection of terrorist, serious criminal offences



On 16th April MEPs adopted rules to strengthen the interoperability of the Union's information systems in the area of police and judicial cooperation, asylum and immigration, borders and visas with the aim of contributing to the prevention and detection of terrorist offences and other serious criminal offences as well as providing greater protection to citizens by facilitating the exchange of information between national authorities responsible for security... [Read more](#)

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Most recent seats forecast



On 18th April Parliament published the third and last seats forecast for the next Parliament, which is based on a national survey sample undertaken in the 28 Member States. Figures were updated and readjusted with data on the UK to take on board the country's possible participation in the election. The forecast provides 180 seats out of 751 for the EPP group (right), 149 S&D (left), 76 ALDE (liberals), 66 ECR (conservatives), 62 ENF (far right), 46 GUE/NGL (radical left), 57 Greens/EFA and 45 EFDD (Eurosceptics). 62 were ranked in "other" parties or new political movements which have not yet declared their intentions... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

Organised crime the main threat to the security of Europe



The increased in violence brought by organised crime is a greater threat for the security of Europe, far ahead of terrorism and migration announced Europol on 16th April. Mafia groups from Italy, Albania and Eastern Europe as well as biker gangs are the main agents of this violence announced the organisation's executives during a conference in the Hague... [Read more](#)

The Crisis in Venezuela is leading to a sharp rise in asylum requests in the EU



The political crisis in Venezuela led to a 50% increase in asylum requests from Venezuelans in Europe in February, with this nationality rising to take over Afghans in the leading trio, announced the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) on 15th April. Behind the Syrians, Venezuelans follow in terms of asylum request figures (nearly 4,000) in the countries of the Union, Switzerland and Norway said a press release by the organisation whose base is in Valletta, which also notes a rise in requests from Colombians and Nicaraguans... [Read more](#)

Estonia :

Jüri Ratas asked to form a government



Outgoing Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas, of the Centre Party (KESK) won the confidence of the Riikigoku (Parliament) on 17th April by 55 votes out of 101. He formed a coalition which apart from his own party (25 seats), comprises the People's Conservative Party (far right), EKRE (19 seats) and the Conservative Party Isamaa (12 seats). He was asked on 16th April by President Kersti Kaljulaid to form the government after Kaja Kallas, of the Reform Party (ER) failed to win a majority in Parliament... [Read more](#)

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Latvia :

Debate over the future of the Union with the Latvian Prime Minister



The European Union must strengthen its foundations, declared the Latvian Prime Minister Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš, on 17th April during the 20th and last debate regarding the future of Europe in the European Parliament. He suggested four areas in which the Union must act: completion of the single market, the control of the external borders, smart transition towards clean energy and an improvement in security... [Read more](#)

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Czech Republic :

Prosecution of the Czech Prime Minister recommended by the police



On 17th April the Czech police recommended the prosecution of Prime Minister Andrej Babis for his involvement in a fraud involving European subsidies to a total of 2 million €. The prosecutor will need "several weeks, and even several months" to decide regarding the indictment. Andrej Babis

was indicted in 2017 in an embezzlement scandal involving European funds in 2007-2008, which were also linked to a hotel complex developed by one of his businesses. He risks a prison sentence of 5 to 10 years... [Read more](#)

Romania :

Dismissal of the Justice Minister



The Justice Minister Tudorel Toader was dismissed from government on 17th April. He is accused of preventing the relaxation of the penal code which, according to the opposition, benefits the head of the Social Democratic Party in office, Liviu Dragnea, sentenced to prison for three and a half years for abuse of power and two years suspended sentence for electoral fraud. The amendments reduce the time limit and repeal the measure regarding the abuse of power. The European Commission deems that the reform would create "systemic impunity for high ranking political officials found guilty of corruption." On 15th April MEPs debate the state of the rule of law in Romania... [Read more](#)

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Ukraine :

Volodymyr Zelensky elected President



Actor Volodymyr Zelensky, 41, was elected President of Ukraine on 21st April with 73.1% of the vote in the second round of voting in the presidential election against outgoing President Petro Poroshenko... [Read more](#)

North Macedonia :

First round of presidential election



On 21st April Macedonian voters went to ballot in the first round of the presidential election. The Social Democratic candidate, supported by the party in office, Stevo Pendarovski won 42.84% of the vote, followed closely by the opposition candidate, Gordana Siljanovska Davkova, 42.24%. This election is marked by the lowest turnout rate (41.79%) since independence in 1991. The second round will take place on 5th May... [Read more](#)

ECHR :

Condemnation of Turkey for the detention of a magistrate



On 16th April the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) condemned Turkey for the detention, deemed illegal, of a high ranking magistrate, arrested after the failed putsch in 2016. This imprisonment is based on the suspicion of membership of a criminal organisation and for the Court was an infringement of the measures regarding the right to freedom and safety included in the European Convention of Human Rights. Turkey will have to pay 10,000€ to the magistrate for moral damages... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Inflation down in the euro zone, stable in the Union



According to figures published by Eurostat on 17th April - annual inflation rate of the euro zone lay at 1.4% in March 2019, a figure down in comparison in February 2019 (1.5%). The annual inflation rate of the European Union lay at 1.6%. The lowest rates were noted in Portugal (0.8%) and in Greece (1.0%), whilst the highest were in Romania (4.2%), Hungary (3.8%) and the Netherlands (2.9%)... [Read more](#)

Public debt and deficit down



The public deficit and debt decreased from a relative point of view in 2018 in comparison with 2017, both in the EU and the euro zone. The public deficit/GDP ratio declined in the EU by 1% in 2017 to 0.6% in 2018 and in the euro zone by 1% to 0.5%. The public debt/GDP ratio declined in the EU by 81.7% in 2017 to 80% in 2018 and in the euro zone from 87.1% to 85.1%... [Read more](#)

European export figures



According to Eurostat figures published on 17th April the exports of goods from the euro zone to the rest of the world in February 2019 increased by 4.4% in comparison with February 2018 (183.4 billion € in comparison with 175.6 billion). Imports from the rest of the world increased by 4% in comparison with February 2018 (165.5 billion € against 159 billion). As a consequence the euro zone recorded a surplus of 17.9 billion € in its international trade of goods with the rest of the world in February 2019, in comparison with 16.5 billion in January 2018. Finally intra-zone euro trade increased by 3.4%. The European Union has a deficit of 2.7 billion €... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Study on the cost of non-Europe



The research department of the European Parliament published a report on 18th April entitled "Assessing the costs of non-Europe" for the period 2019-2024. The goal is to measure the financial gains - real and potential - resulting from European integration. The report identifies and analyses the absence of gains in sectors and domains in which progress still has to be made, like the internal market, the environment, transport and the Union's foreign policy. The report maintains that if the European institutions and the Member States set up various measures presented Parliament, the economy of Europe might make gains of 2,213 billion €... [Read more](#)

Report on better regulation



On 15th April the European Commission published a report on the work completed since 2014 to make European policy more open, more transparent. The report states that this work has been successful and recalls that the OECD ranked the EU's policy of being amongst the best in terms of regulation in 2018. The report notably reviews the organisation of public consultations, the use of impact analyses and initiatives towards administrative simplification. In 2015 the Commission adopted its better lawmaking regulation, the main aim of which was that the Commission would only intervene in areas where the EU provided added-value... [Read more](#)

Culture :

37th Art Brussels fair

ART BRUSSELS The 37th Art Brussels Fair is taking place from 25th to 28th April and is hosting more than 145 galleries and will attract around 25,000 visitors. In 2019 the galleries will be organised on three themes: Discovery (promising, innovative and unestablished artists), Prime (established artists at international level) and Rediscovery (galleries representing under represented or forgotten 20th century artists)... [Read more](#)

Off Camera Festival Krakow



From 26th April to 5th May the independent Off Camera cinema festival is taking place, dedicated to Polish and international film makers. More than one hundred films will be screened during the festival... [Read more](#)

The satirical art of Maurizio Cattelan



From 25th April to 6th October the Kunsthistorischesmuseum of Vienna is showing the Temple of Theseus, by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan, a master in satire, humour and controversy... [Read more](#)

The Van Gogh Museum finds two stolen paintings



Until 15th September the Van Gogh Museum of Amsterdam is showing two paintings by Vincent Van Gogh: "View of the sea at Scheveningen" and the "Congregation leaving the reformed church of Nuenen". The two paintings were returned to the museum 16 years after being stolen from a museum in Amsterdam... [Read more](#)

Circulation, the festival of youth photography



Until 30th June the Centquatre in Paris is hosting Circulation, the festival devoted to European youth photography. A true discovery the festival provides an opportunity for the public to meet 37 young European artists selected by a jury of professionals... [Read more](#)

Andy Warhol and Eduardo Paolozzi in Edinburgh



Until 2nd June the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh is showing pop art by Andy Warhol and Eduardo Paolozzi. Photos, adverts, collages and silk-screen prints promote the industrialisation and serialisation of art... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



25th April 2019
Brussels
EU-Japan Summit



28th April 2019
Spain
Parliamentary Elections (legislative and senatorial)

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