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The electoral context 2019: new and increasingly European issues

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The main concerns of Europeans as the European elections on 23rd-26th May approach are economic and social, immigration and security as well as the climate and the environment. These issues might help end the eternal question of "for or against Europe" and we might turn towards asking what must be done in Europe and by Europe to rise to these challenges.

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Contents

Elections : Elections/EU - Spain **Foundation** : Site/European Elections - Atlas/EU
Commission : Defence/VAT - Justice - Food - Loans/Farmers
Council : Sanctions/Burma **Court of Justice** : EU/Canada **Diplomacy** : EU/Japan
ECB : Protectionism **Estonia** : Government **France** : Japan - European/Seats
Romania : Justice/Corruption **UK** : Scotland **Council of Europe** : Balkans/Migration
OECD : Employment **Eurostat** : Asylum - Employment **Studies/Reports** : Opinion/EU -
Disinformation **Culture** : Armenia - Exhibition/Brussels - Exhibition/Stockholm -
Exhibition/Dublin - Exhibition/Budapest - Exhibition/Paris - Ocean

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

Elections :

A review just one month ahead of the European elections



The 9th European elections will take place from 23rd to 26th May in the 28 Member States, including in the UK, to renew the 751 members of the European Parliament. The immediate challenges will be turnout, distribution of seats between the political parties running and between men and women and the election of the European Commission... [Read more](#)

The PSOE led by Pedro Sanchez comes out ahead but without a majority



On 28th April the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) led by Pedro Sanchez won the parliamentary elections with 28.6% of the vote and 123 seats, in the lower house which comprises a total of 350 seats. The People's Party only won 66 seats, Ciudadanos won 57 and the far-right movement Vox 24. The PSOE might form a coalition with the radical left Unidas Podemos, which won 14% of the vote and 35 seats. Discussions might take place with the regionalist Basque and Catalan parties to achieve an absolute majority in Parliament. Turnout totalled 75.75%.. [Read more](#)

Foundation :

A site to find everything you need to know about the European Elections



In one month's time from 23rd to 26th May, Europeans are being called to elect their MEPs for the next five years. The Robert Schuman Foundation has designed a website dedicated to providing greater understanding of the elections and what is at stake, and also so that voters can follow the campaign in the Member States with the lists of the parties running... [Read more](#)

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 full view of the Union, the euro zone, of each of the Member States and its overseas territories. This book provides the reader with the most recent political and statistical as well as the most objective information at any moment. It is available in papier version from the Foundation's website or from bookshops... [Read more](#)

Commission :

The Commission suggests tax exemptions in the military sector



On 24th April the Commission put forward VAT exemptions on trade in goods undertaken by the armed forces in the Union's Member States, if they are purchased outside of their own Member State and if they support the common European defence effort. This VAT exemption already applies to all European forces under the framework of NATO and the Commission hopes to extend it to military activities undertaken as part of the common security and defence policy (CSDP)... [Read more](#)

2019 Justice Scoreboard



On 26th April the European Commission published the 2019 Justice Scoreboard which analyses and compares the independence, quality and efficacy of the judicial systems in the Member States so that national authorities can improve them. The results present improvements but show that justice is perceived to be less independent in comparison with 2018 in 16 Member States. For the first time this table reveals disciplinary regimes that are applicable to judges in national judicial systems and guarantees to prevent the political control of judicial decisions. The table's conclusions will be used in the recommendations given to the Member States by the Commission and the Council... [Read more](#)

Reduction in the quantity of trans fat in food



On 24th April the European Commission adopted a regulation aiming to limit the presence of trans fat in food. It set the maximum ratio at 2 grammes of trans fat in industrially manufactured foods. Businesses will also have to provide information regarding the quantity of trans fat in their products. The regulation will enter into force on 2nd April 2021... [Read more](#)

Launch of a loans programme for young farmers



On 29th April the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) launched a loans programme to a total of 1 billion € designed for young European farmers. The aim is to facilitate their access to financing whilst in 2017 27% of requests addressed to banks by young farmers were rejected. The programme will be managed at Member State level by banks and leasing companies which want to take part. These banks will also have to contribute to a total of 1 billion € and offer loans with more attractive interest rates linked to a longer period of reimbursement... [Read more](#)

Council :

Extension of sanctions against Myanmar



On 29th April the Council decided to extend for a further year, until 30th April 2020 restrictive measures against Myanmar comprising an embargo on arms and equipment that can be used for internal repression, an export ban of dual-use goods for use by the military and

border guard police, and export restrictions of equipment for monitoring communications that might be used for internal repression. It also prohibits the provision of military training to and military cooperation with the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw). The extension also includes restrictive measures against 14 people responsible for serious violations of Human Rights committed against the Rohingya population... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

The Court of Justice approves the mechanism for the settlement of disputes



On 30th April the European Court of Justice (ECJ) deemed that the mechanism for the settlement of disputes between investors and States provided for in the free trade agreement between the European Union and Canada (CETA) is compatible with the Union's law. This mechanism provides for the creation of a tribunal, an Appellate Tribunal and a multi-lateral investment tribunal. Belgium expressed doubts about the effects of the mechanism on the exclusive jurisdiction of the Court over the definitive interpretation of EU law, and therefore the autonomy of the EU legal order... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

EU-Japan Summit



On 25th April the President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, and the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk met Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, on the 26th EU-Japan Summit in Brussels. Discussions focused on the deepening and strengthening of the strategic EU/Japan partnership and the implementation of the economic partnership agreement. The three men also addressed issues like the nuclear agreement with Iran, the illegal annexation of Crimea and the Donbass conflict. Finally they looked into the free movement personal data between two economies based on strong guarantees in terms of their protection... [Read more](#)

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ECB :

Simulation of impact of trade war on the euro zone



In the event of an escalation in the trade war triggered by the USA, the impact of European activity would remain limited. This is what has been learned - based on a simulation - by economists at the European Central Bank (ECB) in a study that was published on 24th April regarding the effects of increasing protectionism, a factor that has been put forward in explanation - in part - of the recent slowing in the euro zone... [Read more](#)

Estonia :

Appointment of new government



On 24th April Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid appointed the new coalition government between the liberals, conservatives and far right led by outgoing Prime Minister Jüri Ratas. The 14 new Ministers were sworn in before Parliament on 24th April... [Read more](#)

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France :

Meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe



The President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron met the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe on 23rd April. Both countries have a great deal of responsibility in the international arena in 2019, with the presidency of the G20 for Japan and that of the G7 for France... [Read more](#)

Draft law on the number of French MEPs in the European Parliament



On 23rd April the government presented a draft bill to take on board the participation of the UK in the European elections. With the planned withdrawal of the UK, a share of the 73 British seats are due to be distributed between some of the Union's countries, including five for France. With the extension until 31st October of the Brexit deadline, "only 74 MEPs out of the 79 eligible for France will start their mandate if the UK stays in the EU," indicates the text... [Read more](#)

Romania :

Vote by the lower house regarding modifications to the penal code



On 24th April the lower house of the Romanian parliament approved modifications to the penal code which shorten the statute of limitations covering some offences and measures that will mean the end of some corruption affairs that target the Social Democratic Party in office. The text also provides for lighter sentences in the case of some offences. The opposition parties are going to challenge the draft bill before the Constitutional Court. On 25th April President Klaus Iohannis presented two questions that he will submit to referendum on 26th May. They focus on the ban on the amnesty and rehabilitation for corruption offences as well as on the recent reforms of the judicial system approved by Parliament... [Read more](#)

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UK :

Scotland: the First Minister plans a referendum on independence



In a speech to MPs in the Scottish Parliament on 24th April Scottish Prime Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced that her government would soon file a draft bill for the organisation of a second referendum on the independence of Scotland, by May 2021, if the UK leaves the EU. She believes that a "choice between Brexit and an independent, European Scotland" should be offered to the Scottish population... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :

Two western Balkan countries are still exposed to migratory flows



On 24th April the Special Envoy of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on migration and refugees, Tomáš Boček, published the report on an information mission undertaken in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. It stresses the limited access people have to asylum procedures and support services, as well as the limits of the child protection services in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which in 2018, became the main transit country for migratory flows in the Western Balkans. Croatia, its neighbour, which is responsible for managing the EU's external border also experienced an increase in arrivals... [Read more](#)

OECD :

Employment Outlook



The OECD's Employment Outlook report published on 25th April invites governments to review their approach to work and employment to reduce social and economic tension. If something is not done soon many people, notably the unqualified, will remain on the sidelines of the world of work which is now changing rapidly. However the report remains serene about the real impact of automation and artificial intelligence... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

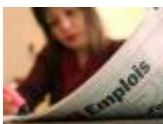
The EU granted protection to more than 300,000 asylum seekers in 2018



In 2018 the 28 Member States of the Union granted protection to around 333,000 asylum seekers. This figure is clearly down - by nearly 40% - in comparison with 2017. The main beneficiaries were Syrians (29%) of those having gained protection. They were followed by Afghans citizens (16%) and Iraqis (7%). Most people were registered in Germany (40%), then Italy and then France. Amongst these 49% were given refugee status, 30% subsidiary protection and 21% a residence permit for humanitarian reasons. According to other Eurostat figures nearly 20,000 asylum seekers asking for protection in an EU Member State in 2018 were unaccompanied minors. This figure is down by a third in comparison with 2017 (31,400)... [Read more](#)

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Increase in employment rate 20-64 year-olds



According to Eurostat figures published on 25th April the employment rate of the population aged 20 to 64 in the Union lies at 73.2% (against 72.2% in 2017) in 2018. Whilst as part of the Europe 2020 Strategy the Commission set the goal of at least 75%, 13 Member States have already achieved their national goal... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

European Parliament opinion poll



On 25th April the European Parliament published its spring Eurobarometer 2019 which shows support for the EU is at its highest level since 1989. 68% of citizens interviewed deem that all of the Member States have benefited from their Union membership; 61% deems that their country's membership is a good thing. However 50% of interviewees are pessimistic about the future of their country and the EU and only 33% knew in February/March that the European elections were being held in May 2019. Their main concerns regard the economy, unemployment, immigration and climate change. In the UK 54% of those interviewed deem that their country had benefited from EU membership, 45% would vote against Brexit in the event of a new referendum... [Read more](#)

Reports on the Code of Practice against Disinformation

FAKE NEWS

On 23rd April the Commission published the most recent reports drafted by Facebook, Google and Twitter on the introduction of measures against disinformation. The three platforms signed the Code of Practice against disinformation in September 2018 and pledged to published monthly reports on the Code's introduction, prior to the European elections in May 2019. The Commission welcomed the progress made, notably in terms of transparency, but stressed that some efforts still had to be made, particularly in regard to targeted advertising... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Day to Commemorate the Armenian Genocide



One hundred and four years after the start of the massacre which led to more than 1.5 million deaths, this official celebration marks a new victory of the Armenians in their fight to counter Turkish negationism. 24th April 2019 in France marks the first day of the commemoration of the Armenian genocide... [Read more](#)

"Behind the Curtain" in Brussels



Belgian artist Thomas Lerooy is running an exhibition until 18th August "Derrière le rideau" at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium. Paintings and sculptures will be on show, reflecting the various contrasts such as beauty and ugliness and drama and humour... [Read more](#)

"Grez-sur-Loing - Art and Relations" exhibition in Stockholm



Until 18th August the Museum Prins Eugens Waldemarsudde of Stockholm is running an exhibition "Grez-sur-Loing - Art and Relations" exhibition. A great number of European and international artists met in this French village at the end of the 19th century, forming an international artistic settlement. The exhibition is the first to promote this group, a phenomenon of European artistic life of the 19th century. More than 100 pieces of work by Swedish, Norwegian, English and even Irish artists, including landscapes or scenes from village life will be on show... [Read more](#)

Irish landscape exhibition



Until 7th July the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin is running an exhibition on landscape in Irish art "Shaping Ireland: Landscapes in Irish Art". It brings together the work by 50 artists which explore relations between men and nature, and the different uses of these spaces... [Read more](#)

Andor Weininger exhibition



On the occasion of the 100 anniversary of the birth of Bauhaus and the 100th anniversary of the artist Andor Weininger, the Magyar Nemzeti Galleria, in Budapest is devoting an exhibition to the legacy of this Bauhaus artist until 28th July... [Read more](#)

Picasso and War



The Museum of the Armed Forces and the Picasso National Museum are running an exhibition until 28th July called "Picasso and War". It covers various works by the artist, ranked chronologically and chronologically, reflecting armed conflicts such as the war in Spain and the Second World War... [Read more](#)

Ocean, an unusual dive



The new exhibition at the Jardin des Plantes museum in Paris running until 5th January 2020 takes us to the ocean floors! This territory which covers 71% of the Earth's surface is home to an immense amount of hitherto unknown biodiversity. During the exhibition you can explore unusual milieux meeting species with astonishing features. A journey below the surface of the sea invites visitors to understand and be aware of the wealth of life in the marine world and warns of the threats that human activities are bringing against it... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



2nd May 2019
UK
Local Elections



2nd-3rd May 2019
Bucharest
Informal meeting of competitiveness Ministers (internal market and industry)



4th May 2019
Brussels
European Institutions' Open Day

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