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What lessons are to be learnt from the last regional elections in Germany's east ?

Author: Frank Baasner



The elections in the Länder of Saxony and Brandenburg on 1st September illustrated the loss of confidence in the two government parties, the CDU and the SPD, noted over the last few years. This is undoubtedly linked to the feeling of stagnation on Germany's part in a changing world.

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Elections :

The Law and Justice Party might be re-elected to office



On 13th October next the Poles will be renewing the members of both houses of Parliament (460 MPs and 100 Senators). According to the most recent polls, Law and Justice (PiS) presently in office is due to win 42.4% of the vote, ahead of the Civic Coalition (KO) with 22.7%, Lewica (The Left), 13.1%; the Polish Coalition, 5.6%. However the electoral campaign might yet change the situation. One thing is certain

however: the PiS must take care not to believe that victory is guarantee already...
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Commission :

EU-US Meeting regarding data protection



On 12th and 13th September the Commission and the American Administration made their third joint annual review of the EU-US Privacy Shield. Since the implementation of the agreement on 1st August 2016, more than 5000 businesses have made public and legally binding pledges to protect data transferred from the Union. The

Commission will publish a report on the functioning of the Shield by the end of the year... [Read more](#)

Composition of the new European Commission and programme of hearings



The President elect of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen presented her team and the structure of the new college on 10th September. The Commission will comprise 14 men and 13 women as well as three Executive Vice-Presidents and 5 Vice-Presidents. Its priorities are: the European Green Deal, a Europe fit for the digital age, an economy that works for people, which protects our European mode of life, a stronger Europe in the world and a new dynamic for European democracy. The Commissioners designate will appear before the European Parliament as of 30th September according to a timetable adopted on 12th September... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Eurogroup Meeting



The Euro Zone's Finance Ministers met in Helsinki on 13th September to discuss the quality of public finances in the euro zone and exchanged views of good practice and the management of public goods to strengthen the effectiveness of public investments. They assessed the initiatives regarding the Eurogroup's transparency. In regular format with all of the Union's Finance Ministers, they discussed the Budgetary Instrument for Convergence and Competitiveness and the revision of the text of the treaty establishing the European Stability Mechanism... [Read more](#)

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War in Ukraine: extension of European sanctions



On 12th September the Council extended the sanctions for a further six months until 15th March 2020 due to breaches or threats made to Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. These measures comprise the freezing of assets and travel restrictions. They are presently applicable to 170 people and 44 entities... [Read more](#)

Informal meeting of Economy and Finance Ministers



During an informal meeting in Helsinki on 13th and 14th September the European Finance Ministers discussed the way to protect the financial system from hybrid threats and to strengthen the fight to counter climate change, particularly via a reform of taxes on energy... [Read more](#)

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Position on the control of arms exports



The Council of the EU adopted a common position on 16th September as well as a guide to greater control over the export of military technology and equipment. This involves the strengthening of cooperation and convergence as part of the common foreign and security policy, to trade arms responsibly via accountability and preventing exports for the purpose of repression, international aggression and regional instability... [Read more](#)

Declaration over the agreement with Iran



In a joint declaration on 13th September the French, German and British Foreign Ministers and the High Representative for the European Union declared that they were "concerned" about the future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) regarding the Iranian nuclear agreement. They call for a resumption of diplomatic dialogue between the US and Iran and continue to support the Plan. They have exhorted Iran to cancel all activities or new measures that do not comply with its commitments and have asked it to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency... [Read more](#)

Rule of Law in Hungary and Financial Outlook 2021-2027



In a meeting on 16th September European Affairs Ministers debated the way to improve the respect of the rule of Law in the Union. There was a hearing with the Hungarian Justice Minister Judit Varga regarding the situation in her country. The Council also reviewed the negotiation over the multi-annual budget 2021-2027 and the preparation for the October European Council... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Cancellation of a Commission decision regarding Gazprom



On 10th September the Union's Court of Justice cancelled an exemption regime granted by the European Commission enabling Gazprom to increase the volume of gas supplied by the Opal pipeline. Opal connects the Nord Stream gas pipeline in the North of Germany to the Czech Republic, thereby circumnavigating Ukraine and Poland. The Court agreed with Poland which deems that the Commission's decision breached the principle of energy solidarity... [Read more](#)

Court of Auditors :

Klaus-Heiner Lehne's presidency renewed



Klaus-Heiner Lehne was re-elected on 12th September as President of the European Court of Auditors by the institution's college, for a second mandate of 3 years which will start on 1st October. A German lawyer and former MEP he has led the Court, the guardian of the Union's finances since 2016... [Read more](#)

ECB :

The ECB resumes its purchase of assets and reduces its deposit rate



The European Central Bank decided on 12th September to reduce the rate of its deposit facility (-0.5%) and to reactivate its asset purchase programme on the secondary markets (also called quantitative easing) to a total of 20 billion € per month as of 1st November. The aim is to encourage banks to lend more to businesses and to private parties and to counter inflation that is too low in the euro zone... [Read more](#)

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Belgium :

New government in Wallonia



The new government of Wallonia that resulted after the elections on 26th May was sworn in on 13th September. Led by Elio di Rupo (PS) it comprises 8 members, including three women, from the Socialist Party, the Reform Movement (liberals) and Ecolo. An agreement was found between the three parties for the formation of a government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation led by Pierre-Yves Jeholet (MR)... [Read more](#)

Investigations into the tax regime of 39 multi-nationals



On 16th September the Commission launched in-depth investigations into the tax exemptions granted by Belgium to 39 multi-national companies, to decide whether this regime provided an undue advantage that was contrary to European rules on State aid. It also lodged an appeal with the EU Court of Justice to achieve greater clarity regarding the existence of a regime of State aid such as this. In February 2019 the EU's General Court cancelled the Commission's initial decision deeming that it had not established the existence of a specific regime for 39 companies... [Read more](#)

France :

Google Tax Agreement



The French courts approved an agreement between the tax authorities and Google, which will pay a fine of 500 million € and 465 million € in taxes. This ends a four year process. The American giant, whose European HQ is in Ireland was accused of fraud because did not declare the turnover it had in France for the purpose of corporate tax and VAT, arguing that it did not have a stable establishment in the country... [Read more](#)

Visit by the President to Andorra



French President Emmanuel Macron visited the Principality of Andorra, of which he is the "co-prince" on 13th September. Whilst negotiations over an Association Agreement with the Union are ongoing, Mr Macron encouraged the Andorrans to "choose Europe, and the future". The

French President's visit follows the summer implementation of a new border line agreed in 2012... [Read more](#)

Italy :

Vote of confidence for the Italian Prime Minister



On 9th September the President of Italian Council, Giuseppe Conte won the confidence of 343 MPs of the 606 who voted. He promised to commit his country to a "new era of reform" with a "political and social pact" in line with the majority agreement concluded between the 5 Stars Movement and the Democratic Party. He is counting on the support of the EU in terms of immigration, as well as on the flexible implementation of the Stability Pact so as not to impact work to revive growth in Italy. The Italian Senators voted in support of the government on 10th September 169 votes out of the possible 307... [Read more](#)

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Czech Republic :

The Visegrad group calls for the integration of the Western Balkans



In a declaration published on 10th September the countries of the Visegrad group - Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia - say they support the accession of the Western Balkan countries to the European Union. In their opinion the integration of the Balkans would enable a upkeep of political and economic stability that will benefit the Union... [Read more](#)

UK :

The government publishes several scenario of a no-deal Brexit



On 11th September, under the pressure of the House of Commons, the British government published a document describing the most extreme scenarios in the event of a no-deal. The file called "Operation Yellowhammer", unveils the lack of the UK's preparedness in the event of a hard Brexit on 31st October: shortages, inflation, social tension are some of the consequences mentioned... [Read more](#)

Suspension of British Parliament: illegal according to the Scottish Court of Appeal



On 11th September three Scottish judges deemed the decision taken by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to suspend parliament illegal. Referred to on this issue the British Supreme Court in London will hold hearings as of 17th September. If its decision falls in line with the Scottish position, then Parliament will be able to sit again... [Read more](#)

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Final parliamentary debates in the UK



On 10th September during its last sessions prior to its suspension until 14th October, the House of Commons approved 311 votes against 302 in support of a text obliging the government to publish confidential documents regarding the impact of a no-deal Brexit. A second motion, launched by the government to request for the organisation of a snap election was rejected by MPs. Prime Minister Boris Johnson declared that he would go to Brussels on 17th October to negotiate Brexit with a deal for an exit on 31st October but that he would oppose a further postponement... [Read more](#)

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Northern Ireland: support to the unification of Ireland



A majority of Northern Irish, 51% against 49% support the idea of joining the Republic of Ireland, according to a poll published on 11th September. The 18-24 year olds are the most in favour, totalling 60%, whilst only the 65's and over would prefer to keep the region in the

UK... [Read more](#)

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Meeting between the British Prime Minister and the President of the Commission



Outgoing President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker hosted British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on 16th September in Luxembourg to discuss Brexit. Mr Johnson maintained his opposition to a possible postponement of Brexit, for his part, Mr Juncker recalled his British guest that he yet to put forward a viable plan to replace the backstop regarding the Irish border. Mr Johnson also met Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel who

encouraged him to take action... [Read more](#)

Sweden :

New Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministers



Ann Linde, the Swedish Foreign Trade and Nordic Cooperation Minister was appointed Foreign Affairs Minister on 10th September in replacement of Margot Wallström, who resigned on 6th September for family reasons. Anna Hallberg will be taking up Ann Linde's portfolio... [Read more](#)

Georgia :

New government



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After the resignation of the former Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze on 2nd September the Georgian Parliament approved the new government led by Giorgui Gakharia on 8th September by 98 votes. This government notably includes two women Deputy Prime Ministers...

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Moldova :

Positive report on democratic reforms



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Since the change in government in June Moldova has "resolutely" advanced in the reforms to counter a downturn in democracy and the rule of the law in the country, deemed the Union in a report published on 12th September, in view of the EU-Moldova Association Council that will take place on 30th September... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Belgium makes progress in the fight to counter corruption



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In a report published on 11th September the anti-corruption working group at the Council of Europe (GRECO) deemed that Belgium had achieved "some progress" in the implementation of its recommendations to prevent the corruption of MPs, judges and prosecutors. It does note however that two of the 15 recommendations had been implemented "satisfactorily or addressed in a satisfactory manner" and that "12 had been partially implemented."

Call for greater efforts to counter laundering in Malta



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Moneyval, the Council of Europe's anti-laundering entity published a report on 12th September regarding the policies introduced by Malta. It calls on the Maltese authorities effectively to implement measures to counter the financing of terrorism. It deems that "Malta should investigate and launch prosecution procedures in cases of money laundering with greater determination and strengthen its supervisory system" of the development of new technologies and the use of cash... [Read more](#)

UN :

Global Vaccination Summit



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On 12th September in Brussels the European Commission and the World Health Organisation (WHO) organised the World Vaccination Summit. The aim was to step up global action to counter the spread of diseases and to advocate against the dissemination of false information about vaccines... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Foreign Trade Figures



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The euro zone recorded a trade surplus in July 2019 totalling 24.8 billion €, in contrast to +16.9 billion in July 2018, according to the first estimates published by Eurostat on 13th September. The European Union recorded a deficit of 0.1 billion €, in contrast to a surplus of 0.2 billion in July 2018... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Assessment of European budgetary rules



The European Fiscal Board assessed Europe's fiscal rules on the request of the President of the Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker. In its report published on 11th September it recommends that the rules be simplified and for the governance of the budgetary framework to be improved... [Read more](#)

Auditors' Court Analysis of European Defence



In an analysis published on 12th September the European Court of Auditors deemed that the recent European Defence projects and the increase in funding "were not without risk in terms of results". It notes that several requirements have not yet been met regarding the existence of an effective planning process at EU level, the participation of the Member States, the effect on real capability requirements, and the governance framework as well as accountability... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Biennale of Contemporary Art-Lyon



The 15th Contemporary Art Biennale of Lyon is taking place from 18th September to 5th January 2020 with a selection of 55 artists. It is taking place for the first time in the former factory of Fagor in Gerland, as well as in the MAC Lyon and in many other venues... [Read more](#)

Albrecht Dürer in the Albertina



The Albertina Museum of Vienna is running an exhibition of around 100 drawings, a dozen pictures and personal drafts, as well as other rare documents in the works of Albrecht Dürer from 20th September 2019 to 6th January 2020... [Read more](#)

Classical Music Festival in Bucharest



The Bucharest Classical Music Festival George Enescu, created in 1958 in tribute to the Romanian composer is taking place until 22nd September... [Read more](#)

European Heritage Days



During the month of September, especially from 13th until 22nd September, the European Heritage Days will be taking place in 50 signatory countries of the European Cultural Convention. Launched in 1985 these open days allow the general public to discover Europe's cultural wealth and raise awareness about the protection of cultural heritage. The 36th year highlights European "Arts and Amusements"... [Read more](#)

"Dreams and Magic" by Chagall in Bologna



From 20th September to 1st March 2020, the Palazzo Albergati of Bologna is running an exhibition devoted to Marc Chagall. Around 160 works - paintings, drawings, water colours and prints - map out his poetic and magical sensitivity... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



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Sep

16th September 2019
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General Affairs Council

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Sep

16th-19th September
Strasbourg
Plenary Session of the European Parliament

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Sep

17th September
New York
Inauguration of the 74th session of the UN's General Assembly

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20th September
Brussels
Transport Council

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The Letter's Editorial Team :

Stefanie Buzmaniuk, Helen Levy ;
Zélie Barbet, Cindy Schweitzer
Editor-in-chief: Eric Maurice
Publishing Director: Pascale Joannin

Contact/Suggestions
info@robert-schuman.eu

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