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European Union-Western Balkans: for a revised membership negotiation framework

Author: Pierre Mirel



On 15th October the Union is to declare its intent regarding the opening of membership negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia. Despite the Union's re-engagement in the Western Balkans, divisions remain deep and reconciliation is waning. Given the fragile stability of these countries, which are now being wooed by third parties, the time has come for a new approach in the interest of the security of Europe.

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Front page! :

Chirac, France and Europe



Former French President Jacques Chirac, who passed away on 26th September, "did not hold the faith, but he rallied to European integration," writes Jean-Dominique Giuliani in an editorial. In this, Jacques Chirac embodied a European, uncertain and hesitant France but one which was always committed to developments in Europe, because its national interests were at stake... [Read more](#)

Elections :

The ÖVP easily pulls ahead in the Austrian general election



According to still incomplete results, the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) came out ahead in the general elections on 29th September, with 37.5% of the vote ahead of the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) which won 21.2%. The (far right) Freedom Party suffered a heavy loss in comparison with the last elections in 2017, winning 16.2%. The Greens won 13.8% of

the vote ahead of the liberals of Neos (8.1%). The leader of the ÖVP and outgoing Chancellor Sebastian Kurz will have to form a coalition in order to hold a majority in Parliament... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

The Big Shift-the European 21st Century



In the "Big Shift", published by Ecole de Guerre, contrary to popular discourse Jean-Dominique Giuliani shows that the European Union has the means to address the new challenges of the 21st century. Europe has succeeded beyond the expectations of its founding fathers. It can still succeed in guaranteeing its place among the three greatest powers in the world by the end of the century. The book is available in both French and

English... [Read more](#)

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Commission :

Partnership with Japan on connectivity and relations with Asia



On 27th September the President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe signed a partnership for sustainable connectivity and quality infrastructures between the Union and Japan, whose aim it is to foster cooperation and investment in these areas. The partnership is part of the "Linking Europe to Asia" strategy adopted by the Commission, the Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of Regions and the European Investment Bank in 2018... [Read more](#)

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Start of EU-US negotiations over electronic evidence



On 27th September the EU and the US launched negotiations to facilitate access to electronic evidence in cross-border criminal investigations. Electronic evidence is necessary in 85% of criminal investigations and in 2/3 of the cases, evidence is held by a service provider in another country... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Young people voted most in the European elections



The high turnout in the European elections in May (50.6%) was mainly due to the numbers of under 25s going to ballot (+14 points in comparison with the election in 2014) as well as that of the 25-39 year olds (+12 points) according to a Eurobarometer survey published on 24th September by parliament. The survey shows that the sense of civic duty, the feeling that their voice might change things and greater support to the EU motivated these groups to go and vote... [Read more](#)

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European Prosecutor's Office: agreement on the appointment of Laura Codruta Köves



Negotiators at the Parliament and Council came to an agreement on 24th September on the appointment of Romanian Laura Codruta Köves as the future Chief European Prosecutor. The decision now has to be formally approved by the Parliament and the Council... [Read more](#)

The JURI Committee rejects two Commissioners designate



On 30th September the Judicial Affairs Committee at the Parliament (JURI) decided to reject the candidature of two commissioners designate, Rovana Plumb (S&D, RO), responsible for Transport and Laszlo Trocsanyi (PPE, HU) for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement. It deemed that the two Commissioneres were in a situation of a conflict of interest and were therefore not able to fulfill their office. The new President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen asked Romania and Hungary to put forward new candidates. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban suggest Hungarian Ambassador to the EU, Oliver Varhelyi. The hearings of the other Commissioners designate will be taking place until 8th October... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Conclusions of the Energy Council

Energy Ministers who met on 24th September discussed the national draft energy and climate plans that aim to achieve the EU's goals for



2030. They also assessed how the sector might achieve carbon neutrality... [Read more](#)

Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council



On 26th and 27th September Competitiveness Ministers discussed Europe's long term strategy for sustainable growth and agreed on the need for an integrated approach. They exchanged views on the Union's external aspect of competitiveness, the strategy for sustainable growth and possible interactions between Horizon Europe and other European programmes... [Read more](#)

Informal Meeting of Agriculture Ministers



Agriculture Ministers who met on 24th September in Helsinki discussed the capture of CO2 as a method to reduce the carbon print of European agriculture and the way to support it as part of the Common Agricultural Policy... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Economic priorities on the future agreement with the ACP countries



On 28th September the EU came to an agreement over the economic framework of its future relations with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) after 2020. This involves negotiations regarding the future EU-ACP partnership agreement which is to take over from the Cotonou Agreement expiring in 2020... [Read more](#)

EU-Moldova Association Council



The EU-Moldova Association Council, which met on 30th September, reviewed the progress recorded recently in terms of the implementation of the reforms requested of the Moldovan authorities by the EU in various areas: electoral system, media pluralism and the freedom of expression, fight to counter corruption, justice, economy and finance... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Judgments regarding Fiat and Starbucks



On 24th September the Union's General Court of Justice delivered two judgments on decisions made by the Commission regarding tax measures in support of multinationals. In the first judgment the Court confirmed the Commission's decision taken in 2015 asking Luxembourg to recover State aid that was granted in the shape of a tax ruling to Fiat Chrysler. In a second decision the Court cancelled the Commission's decision, also taken in 2015, asking the Netherlands to recover what it deemed to be unduly paid aid in the shape of a tax ruling from Starbucks... [Read more](#)

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New judges and a president of the EU's General Court



On 26th September the EU's General Court made a partial renewal with the appointment of fourteen new judges. On this occasion Dutchman Marc van der Woude was elected President of the General Court for a three year mandate. A judge at the Court since 2010 he has been its Vice-President since 2016... [Read more](#)

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ECB :

Resignation of a German member of the board



German Sabine Lautenschläger, a member of the ECB's board, announced on 25th September that she would be resigning from office on 31st October, the day prior to the entry into office of Christine Lagarde as the institution's President... [Read more](#)

Belgium :

Agreement on a new Flemish government



Nationalists of the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), the liberals of Open Vld and the Christian Democrats & Flemish (CD&V) came to an agreement on 30th September to form a regional government in Flanders after the elections on 26th May. The government agreement of around 300 pages focuses on migration and integration as a priority. The formation of a government in Flanders after Wallonia and the region Brussels-Capitale, might lead to negotiations over a federal government... [Read more](#)

France :

Draft Finance Law 2020



The 2020 draft budget presented by the government on 27th September plans for a decrease in income tax for the middle classes and a reduction in public spending (-1.6 GDP points between 2017 and 2020 i.e -40 billion €) and obligatory contributions (-30 billions € between 2017 and 2020)... [Read more](#)

Google circumnavigates the copyright directive



On 25th September Google announced the imminent modification of the way it displays articles and press pictures on its search engine in France to avoid the new copyright law which aims to remunerate agencies and press editors in exchange for the publication of their work. The search engine will no longer publish excerpts of texts, only the titles with an URL link. The media will have to choose whether they want the content to be accessible (or not). France is the first country to introduce this measure as part of the European directive on copyright adopted in the spring of this year... [Read more](#)

Greece :

IMF Report



In a report published on 27th September the IMF recommended that Greece should step up efforts for a faster recovery in terms of competitiveness in the Monetary Union, that it should reduce its debt and achieve inclusive growth. It suggests that Greece should accentuate tax reform and that the EU should relax the country's budgetary goals in return... [Read more](#)

Portugal :

Polls 7 days before the election



The general elections in Portugal are taking place on 6th October. The most recent polls place the Socialist Party led by outgoing Prime Minister Antonio Costa ahead with 38% of the voting intentions, a figure that has decreased slightly. The (centre-right) Social Democratic Party, has gained nearly five points in two weeks, to reach 27% of the voting intentions... [Read more](#)

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UK :

Debate in Parliament resumes



British MPs took up their seats again in Parliament on 25th September after the Supreme Court invalidated the government's decision to suspend Parliament, a decision declared unlawful, void and of no effect... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Award of the Vaclav Havel Prize



On 30th September the imprisoned Uyghur intellectual Ilham Tohti and the Youth Initiative for Human Rights which is working for reconciliation in the Western Balkans were joint recipients of the Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize 2019 which is awarded by the Council of Europe... [Read more](#)

ECHR :

Portugal condemned after a breach of the freedom of expression



On 24th September the European Court of Human Rights declared Portugal guilty of breaching the freedom of expression. A Portuguese journalist and a doctor were condemned to pay compensation following their criticism of political leaders. They lodged their complaint with the Court in 2013... [Read more](#)

IMF :

Kristalina Georgieva appointed Manager Director



Bulgarian Kristalina Georgieva, the candidate put forward by the EU was appointed Managing Director of the IMF on 25th September by the institution's board for a five year term in office that will begin on 1st October. Her immediate priority will be to help countries reduce to a minimum the risks of crisis and to be prepared to face world economic slowing, trade tension and record levels of debt... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Decline of Unemployment



Unemployment in the EU lay at 6.2% in August slightly down in comparison with July (6.3%). In the euro zone it declined in August to 7.4%, in comparison with 7.5% in July, i.e. its lowest level since May 2008 announced Eurostat on 30th September... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Global Warming: IPCC calls for rapid action to protect the oceans



In a report published on 25th September the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) stressed how urgent it is for us resolutely, rapidly, sustainably and in a coordinated manner to prevent the deterioration of the oceans and the cryosphere. It indicates our dependency on the high seas, the Arctic and Antarctic and stresses the direct and indirect impact on a way of life... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Giorgio de Chirico in Milan



The Palazzo Reale of Milan is offering visitors "a journey through the enigma and mysteries of the painting of Giorgio de Chirico" until 19th January 2020... [Read more](#)

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Degas at the opera



Through the work by Edgard Degas, the portrait of the Paris Opera in the 19th century is seen through a magnifying glass. The exhibition runs until 19th January 2020 at the Orsay Museum, Paris... [Read more](#)

Contemporary art in Budapest



The contemporary art festival, Café Budapest is taking place from 2nd to 18th October. The event comprises concerts, operas, theatre plays and artistic installations... [Read more](#)

Brueghel in Madrid



From 7th October to 12th April 2020 the Gavia Palace of Madrid is running a Brueghel exhibition: The Wonders of Flamenco Art. It shows around 100 emblematic pieces of work by this dynasty of painters who marked the history of European art in the 16th and 17th centuries... [Read more](#)

Gauguin Portraits in London



From 7th October to 26th January the National Gallery in London is running the first exhibition devoted to French artist Paul Gauguin and his portraits, bringing together around 50 pieces of his work... [Read more](#)

Free entry to the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum



Following the death of Jacques Chirac the government announced on 27th September free entry to the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum until 11th October. The public will be able to learn of his passion for the arts via an exhibition entitled "20 years", that will run until 26th January next... [Read more](#)

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White Night



As of 5th October the "White Night" will be taking place in several cities in Europe. Although the idea began in Paris in 2002, now Brussels, Madrid, Leeds, Rome, Kosice and Malaga are organising a yearly artistic event that takes place at night, thereby privileging contemporary art that is free of charge to all... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



30th September 2019
Brussels
EU-Moldova Association Council



30th September-8th October
Brussels
Auditions of Commissioners designate at the European Parliament



4th October
Luxembourg
Environment Council



6th October
Portugal
General Elections



7th-8th October
Luxembourg
Justice and Internal Affairs Council

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