

With Ursula von der Leyen, the Commission of "New Opportunity"

Author: Eric Maurice



The new Commission entered into office on 1st December. Its president is promising "a transformation process that will impact all of the components of our society and our economy", in a time when the Union wants to play a leading role in the world. With a team that reflects the new political situation in Europe, Ursula von der Leyen will have to work to provide the Union with the means of her ambitions.

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Front page! :

Europe: the responsibility of the Member States



Six months after the elections, the European institutions are in place. Both Parliament and Commission have indicated their priorities and commitment to try and respond to high expectations on the part of the Europeans. We are now expecting our governments to set the example with real cooperation, writes Jean-Dominique Giuliani in his editorial... [Read more](#)

Foundation :

Freedom of the Press in Europe



The Association of European Journalists is organising a conference on 6th December in UNESCO in Paris regarding the freedom of the press in Europe, of which the Foundation is a partner. Eric Maurice, the manager of the Foundation's Brussels office is taking part in a roundtable entitled

"Is an informed public debate possible in an era of disinformation?".. [Read more](#)

European Council :

Entry into office of Charles Michel



Charles Michel took office as President of the European Council on 1st December. During the handover of power with his predecessor Donald Tusk on 29th November, he call on Europe to be "more confident regarding the world" and to "raise its voice for our beliefs and values."..

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Commission :

Entry into office of the Commission



On 1st December the Commission presided over by Ursula von der Leyen entered into office. "Europe is changing fast. Our responsibility is to support this change", declared the president during the inauguration ceremony of her mandate and the ten year anniversary of the Lisbon Treaty. She called on Europeans to have "the strength to look to the future with confidence.".. [Read more](#)

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Parliament :

Adoption of the Union's 2020 budget



MEPs adopted the Union's 2020 budget on 27th November. They were happy to have achieved an increase in revenues of 850 million € during negotiations with the Council and the Commission, to finance the climate, research, investment in infrastructures and youth. The budget was adopted by the Council on 25th November... [Read more](#)

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Award of the Sakharov Prize to Oleg Sentsov



President of Parliament David Sassoli gave the Sakharov Prize 2018 to Ukrainian film-maker Oleg Sentsov on 26th November in Strasbourg. Mr Sentsov had not been able to receive the prize when he was awarded it because he was imprisoned in Russia for having protested against the annexation of his native Crimea. He was freed in September 2019 as part of an exchange of prisoners between Russia and Ukraine after having spent five years in prison... [Read more](#)

Resolution to declare the climate emergency



MEPs adopted a resolution on 28th November 429 votes against 225 declaring the climate and environmental emergency in Europe and across the world. They call on the Union to reduce its emissions by 55% by 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. They are also asking for the progressive abolition of direct and indirect subsidies made in support of fossil fuels by 2020... [Read more](#)

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Selection of the candidate for the post of European data protection watchdog



The Committee for Civil Liberties at the European Parliament selected Pole Wojciech Wiewiorowski on 26th November to be the candidate for the post of European Data Protection Supervisor, whose mission it is to guarantee coherence in terms of personal data and private life protection. The Supervisor's term in office is five years... [Read more](#)

Approval of the Commission

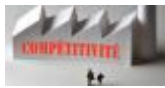


MEPs approved the Commission presided over by Ursula von der Leyen on 27th November in Strasbourg 461 votes against 157 and 89 abstentions. In a speech given to MEPs the President called on the Union to "be a force of peace and positive change" and to commit to a "transformation process which will impact all components of our society and our economy.".. [Read more](#)

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Council :

Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council



The ministers responsible for competitiveness, who met on 28th and 29th November adopted a position on the directive that aims to provide legal tools to European consumers to defend their rights collectively. They encouraged the collaboration of entities responsible for the Copernicus programme with the European Global Navigation Satellite System to contribute towards a sustainable Arctic and adopted conclusions regarding the updated strategy for the bioeconomy... [Read more](#)

Position on non-performing loans



As part of the Union's strategy to counter bad loans, the Council approved its position on the introduction of an out-of-court enforcement mechanism to recover the value of guaranteed loans when the borrower cannot pay back. The aim is to prevent the accumulation of non-performing loans, by providing legal instruments to banks whilst maintaining a balance between the interests of the creditor and borrower. Negotiations with Parliament regarding the directive will start as soon as the latter has decided on its position... [Read more](#)

Conclusions of the Transport and Telecommunications Council



Ministers responsible for transport who met on 2nd December adopted the Council's position aiming to strengthen travellers rights, particularly those with reduced mobility or the handicapped. They also adopted a position on permit-granting measures as part of the completion of the transeuropean transport network (RTE-T). Finally, ministers discussed "digital transport services for people, the future of the European Single Sky, as well as the promotion of substitute fuels... [Read more](#)

Conclusions of the Council on Migration and Security



The Interior Ministers who met on 2nd December discussed the future of the EU's migration and asylum policy based on a report prepared by the Finnish presidency. They received the Commission's intention to present a new, more global pact on migration and asylum positively. They also discussed the future of the Union's internal security as part of the next legislative cycle (2019-2024)... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Six European States join INSTEX



Six countries: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden - joined INSTEX, on 30th November. The support instrument for trade transactions is the financial vehicle introduced by the EU to enable European businesses to trade with Iran despite the American sanctions under the Iranian nuclear agreement... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

250th Ariane flight



Just hours before the inauguration of the European Space Agency's Ministerial Conference, Ariane 5 completed its mission perfectly on 26th November from the Guianese Space Centre as it launched two telecoms satellites into orbit: TIBA-1 developed by Thales Alenia Space (TAS) and Airbus Defence and Space for the Egyptian government and GX5, built by TAS for Inmarsat. This was the 250th launch by the Ariane launcher series, of which 105 by Ariane 5. Ariane will celebrate its 40th anniversary on 24th December... [Read more](#)

Budget increase for the European Space Agency

The ministers of the 22 member countries of the European Space Agency (ESA), met in Sevilla adopted a 14.4 billion € budget on 28th November to finance new



programmes over the next five years, such as LISA, the first space observatory of gravitational waves, the first entirely flexible satellite systems, designed to be integrated into the 5G networks, or the "optique fibre in space." The previous budget adopted in 2016 totalled 10 billion €. Ministers were also told that the transition with the next generation of launchers - Ariane 6 and Vega C - will occur smoothly and they gave their green light to continuing the Space Rider project - ESA's reusable spaceship... [Read more](#)



Germany :

Debate over the 2020 budget at the Bundestag



On 27th November the German Chancellor Angela Merkel gave a speech during a general debate over the 2020 budget at the Bundestag. She stressed the importance of investments, without incurring any further debt. "We have not yet had a budget with this level of investment or one that is as high," she declared. She addressed questions regarding foreign policy, particularly NATO, European policy vis-à-vis China, the climate policy and the governance of the freedom of expression... [Read more](#)



New tandemn at the SPD: a shift to the left



By electing Saskia Esken and Norbert Walter-Borjans as their leaders on 30th November the 425,000 members of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), clearly chose to take a turn to the left, the direct impact of which might be the collapse of the "grand coalition" in office in Berlin...

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Finland :

Resignation of Prime Minister Antti Rinne



On 3rd December Finnish Prime Minister Antti Rinne (Social Democratic Party) the coalition leader announced his resignation after his party's main partner, the Centre Party (KESK) expressed its lack of confidence after Rinne's much criticised management of a strike. The Vice-President of the SDP and Transport Minister Sanna Marin was asked to form a new government. If she does not succeed in forming a coalition, new general elections will be organised. Finland is chairing the Council of the EU until 31st December... [Read more](#)



France :

Joint Franco-German project for the future of the Union



France and Germany have submitted to their partners a joint project to reform the way the EU functions as well as its policies, in order to quell concern caused by the disagreement between their leaders. Their proposals focus on the organisation of a Conference on the Future of Europe which is due to be launched in 2020... [Read more](#)



Meeting with NATO's Secretary General

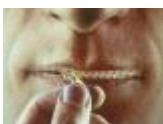


On 28th November French President Emmanuel Macron hosted NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in preparation for the Alliance's summit on 3rd and 4th December in London. His previous comments about the NATO's "state of brain death" had been a warning. The priority is to think about strategic outcomes and goals. After the death of 13 French soldiers in Mali the two leaders called for greater involvement by the Allies in Sahel to counter terrorism... [Read more](#)



Malta :

Government crisis linked to the murder of a journalist



On 1st December the Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, suspected of interfering in the investigation into the murder of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia announced that she would resign in January. A few days ago the Minister of Tourism as well as the head of Muscat's cabinet resigned whilst the Minister for the Economy was dismissed

from government. The European Parliament sent an emergency investigative mission... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Towards the launch of an observatory for the teaching of history in Europe



The ministers of Education of the 47 members of the Council of Europe gave their support on 26th November, regarding the French proposals to create an observatory for the teaching of history in Europe. The role of the observatory would be to make a neutral, objective review of the way European history is taught across the continent in order to share good practice and foster the strengthening of a common European conscience. It is a recommendation on the part of Alain Lamassoure, a former MEP and the President of the Foundation's Scientific Committee, after an evaluation mission... [Read more](#)

ECHR :

Russia condemned in the Limonov affair



On 26th November the ECHR condemned Russia for having infringed the freedom of expression of the writer and regime opponent Edward Limonov. The latter was sentenced in 2007 in a diffamation scandal for things he said on the radio against the then Mayor of Moscow. His right to leave Russia was then permanently restricted and his appeals were constantly rejected. The ECHR deemed that what he said "focused on issues of general common interest" in the "exercise of his political rights" regarding the "functioning of the judicial authorities". Russia was condemned to pay him 19,500€... [Read more](#)

OECD :

Report on the fight to counter tax fraud



During the 10th anniversary of the World Forum on Transparency and the Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes that took place on 26th and 27th November in Paris, the international community said it was pleased with the significant progress being made in the fight to counter tax fraud since the announcement of the end of bank secrecy by the G20 in 2009. According to the study the volume of bank deposits in international finance centres (IFCs) held by non-residents of the latter dropped by 24% between 2008 and 2019... [Read more](#)

Report on the financing of climate goals



In a report published on 27th November the OECD encouraged donor countries not to ignore their climate goals in their financing of development. The organisation points to the fact that only 20% of development aid was targeted at climate change between 2013 and 2017. Despite progress in this area, Secretary General Angel Gurría calls for a "total abolition of donations to fossil fuels" given the urgency of the situation... [Read more](#)

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Eurobarometer :

76% of Europeans support the euro



According to a Eurobarometer study published on 29th November, 76% of European citizens support the euro, the highest rate since it was put into circulation in 2002 and a two-point increase in comparison with 2018. The single currency is supported by a majority of citizens in each of the 19 member countries of the euro zone. Likewise, a 65% majority of them believe that the euro, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year is beneficial to their country... [Read more](#)

The Europeans want more measures for air quality

According to a Eurobarometer survey published on 27th November more than 2/3 of Europeans believe that the EU should put forward more measures to improve the quality of air. More than half of the 27,000 people interviewed think that households,



car manufacturers, energy producers and public authorities are not doing enough for air quality. The survey also highlights an expectation for better communication regarding the quality of the air at national level, notably more awareness raising work and programmes... [Read more](#)

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Studies/Reports :

2019 EIB report on investment



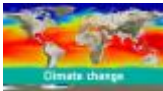
According to the 2019 EIB report on investment published on 26th November, European businesses are increasingly pessimistic about their economic outlook. The report highlights the downturn in the Union's economy as well as the possible slowing in investments on the part of European businesses in 2020. Moreover, climate related investments are stagnating and are below those being made in the US and China. Finally the EIB deems that Europe is not taking advantage of the digital transformation and should step up the adoption of digital technologies in order to remain competitive... [Read more](#)

Consumer Conditions Scoreboard 2019



On 28th November the Commission published the 2019 Consumer Conditions Scoreboard. Whilst the latter in the West of the Union are declining (confidence, respect of legislation, settlement of disputes), they continue to improve in the South and East, with a reduction in the gap in terms of the European average. Moreover, a growing share of consumers now take into account the environmental impact of their purchases. Finally rules concerning consumer protection are leading to confidence in the markets amongst more than 70% of the former... [Read more](#)

Climate: report for the major energy consuming industries



On 28th November the Commission published recommendations by a group of experts for the contribution by industry in terms of the climate issue. These recommendations will contribute to the future European new green deal drafted by the Commission as well as the Union's industrial strategy. The Commission will now have to present them to the Member States, to the Competitiveness Council as well as the European Parliament at the beginning of next year... [Read more](#)

Report on health in Europe



On 28th November the European Commission published its annual report on healthcare systems in the 28 Member States, as well as those in Norway and Iceland, which provides an in-depth analysis via the assessment of the health of the population and certain major risk factors, as well as the effectiveness, accessibility and resilience of these systems in each State... [Read more](#)

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Publications :

Song to Kill a Giant



In "Song to Kill a Giant" Sandra Kalniete MEP and member of the Foundation's board, tells the story of men and women who took part in the Baltic revolution by "singing" during the mass democratic movements from 1988 to 1990 from Tallinn to Riga and Vilnius, leading to the dismantling of the Soviet Union in 1991... [Read more](#)

Culture :

LUX European Cinema Prize



On 27th November the European Parliament awarded the European Cinema Prize Lux to the film "God exists and her name is Petrunya" by North Macedonian film director Teona Mitevaska. A co-production between North Macedonia, Belgium, Slovenia, Croatia and France the film tells the story of a young woman who succeeds in opening up a religious tradition

that is only open to men. According to the Parliament it contributes towards the feminist cause and to the fight to counter conservative societies... [Read more](#)

Modigliani Centenary in Livourne



Until 16th February 2020 around thirty of Amedeo Modigliani's works are on show at the Livourne Museum (Italy). It is an occasion to celebrate the centenary of the death of the Italian painter and sculptor in his home town... [Read more](#)

Goya's drawings at the Prado Museum



In an exceptional exhibition at the Prado Museum in Madrid more than 300 drawings by the Spanish painter Francisco de Goya are on show until 16th February 2020... [Read more](#)

Pierre and Gilles at the Paris Philharmonic



Until 23rd February 2020 the musical and visual exhibition "Pierre and Gilles" is running at the Paris Philharmonic. This is an occasion to rediscover two major photographers of the 1980's who sublimed the portraits of the stars of numerous generations... [Read more](#)

Eva Grubiner at the Belvedere



Austrian contemporary artist Eva Grubinger is showing at the Belvedere in Vienna until 13th April 2020. In her installation "Malady of the Infinite" she explores the fundamental human impulses such as power, cupidity and desire... [Read more](#)

The place of the car in our societies



Until 19th April 2020 the Sainsbury Gallery in London (V&A Museum) looks back over the history of the car and how this revolutionary invention transformed our societies, via many models and various objects... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



3rd December 2019
Brussels
Telecommunications Council
Brussels
Justice Council



3rd-4th December 2019
London
NATO leaders meeting



4th December 2019
Brussels
Eurogroup Meeting
Brussels
Energy Council



5th December 2019
Brussels
Economic and Financial Affairs Council

Dec



9th December 2019

Brussels
Foreign Affairs Council



9th-10th December 2019

Brussels
Employment, Social Policy, Healthcare and Consumer Council

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Zélie Barbet, Camille Boulat, Myriam Benallaoua
Editor-in-chief: Eric Maurice
Publishing Director: Pascale Joannin

Contact/Suggestions
info@robert-schuman.eu

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