

Budget debate: the battle for the 1% threshold

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At its meeting on 12th and 13th December, the European Council will begin discussions at the highest level on the Union's budget for the period 2021-2027. While the withdrawal of the United Kingdom will reduce revenues, the 1% threshold of gross national income is again at the heart of the debate. Negotiation will start with arbitrations that will be difficult to find.

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Commission :

Commission Working Methods



The Commission chaired by Ursula von der Leyen published on 4 December the documents detailing its working methods which will serve as a basis for the new college in implementing the strategy for Europe over the next 5 years. Collegiality, transparency and efficiency are highlighted. The Commission has also introduced parity in the cabinets and announced the creation of an internal think tank called I.D.E.A... [Read more](#)

Permission to finance the European battery project



On 9 December, the Commission authorised the financing of the Important Project of Common European Interest (IIPEC) carried out by seven Member States to support research and innovation in the battery sector. Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Sweden and Belgium will contribute €3.2 billion, which is due to mobilise an additional €5 billion in private investment... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Information Mission Malta



A delegation of MEPs visited Malta on 3 and 4 December as part of a fact-finding mission following recent developments in the investigation into the murder of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia in 2017. MEPs expressed their concern that the integrity of the investigation may be threatened, while Prime Minister Joseph Muscat has announced that he will not resign until January. They welcomed the progress made but were concerned about the lack of investigations into Keith Schembri and Konrad Mizzi, two former members of the government suspected of money laundering and links to the murder. They call on the Commission to engage in a dialogue on the rule of law with Malta... [Read more](#)

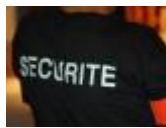
Council :

Conclusions of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council



Finance ministers meeting on 5 December supported the draft revision of the Energy Taxation Directive, approved the work plan on climate action and discussed a future agenda for sustainable finance. They called for the strengthening of measures against money laundering and terrorist financing. They set objectives for the deepening of the Capital Markets Union and guidelines for the financial architecture for development. In a joint statement with the Commission, the Council recalled the need to provide a legal framework for stable cryptomonnages. Finally, Ministers reviewed the progress of the Banking Union and took decisions on the ongoing excessive deficit procedures of Hungary and Romania... [Read more](#)

Conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council



The Justice and Home Affairs Ministers, meeting on 2 and 3 December, discussed the future of the migration and asylum policy and welcomed the Commission's intention to present a new pact on this subject. They also discussed the future of European security. The Justice Ministers adopted a position on two reform proposals on the digitisation of judicial cooperation and conclusions to improve the consideration of victims' rights. Finally, they discussed environmental crimes, in particular waste trafficking and the illegal production of hazardous products... [Read more](#)

Energy Council Conclusions



On 4 December, Energy ministers discussed intelligent sectoral integration and its role in decarbonising the economy. They exchanged views on energy policy priorities and the follow-up of Member States' preliminary energy and climate plans, to be presented to the Commission by the end of the year. The Commission informed Ministers of progress in trilateral discussions with Russia and Ukraine on gas transit, as well as progress on tyre labelling. Finally, the incoming Croatian Presidency of the Council presented its programme... [Read more](#)

Conclusions of the Telecommunications Council



On 3 December, Telecommunications Ministers stressed the economic and social importance of the 5G network and the need to mitigate the resulting security risks, as the Union plans to provide 5G coverage on all major land routes by 2025. They took stock of the proposal for rules on the protection of privacy in electronic communications. Finally, the ministers discussed how the Union could become a centre for the ethical use of data... [Read more](#)

Presidency proposal for the 2021-2027 budget



On 5 December, the Finnish Presidency of the Council presented its proposal for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework to the Member States. The total rises to €1087 billion, or 1.07% of their gross national income. The focus is on the new priorities, namely climate action, which should account for 25% of its expenditure, research and innovation and migration management. In addition, it also provides for a significant

part of the budget for cohesion policy and for agricultural support and development...
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Eurogroup Meeting



The Eurozone finance ministers meeting on 4 December assessed Greece's fourth surveillance report and decided to release a second tranche of debt relief measures worth €767 million. They assessed the post-programme monitoring reports of Cyprus and Spain and examined the draft national budgets for 2020. The Eurogroup discussed the reform of the European Stability Mechanism, the Banking Union and the budgetary instrument for convergence and competitiveness but postponed decisions until 2020... [Read more](#)

Conclusions of the Healthcare Council



Health ministers meeting on 9 December held a public debate on "welfare economics, investment in health". Emphasis was placed on mental health, ageing and the relationship between well-being and the digital society. They discussed ways to strengthen cooperation and coordination to improve access to medicines. Finally, they were informed of ongoing work on health regulation and technology. Finally, the incoming Croatian Presidency presented its work programme... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council



Foreign Ministers, meeting on 9 December, expressed their concern about the maritime and military agreements between Turkey and Libya. They discussed the situation in Ukraine, Iran, and Hong Kong. They said that 2020 will be crucial for the progress of EU-Africa relations. High Representative Josep Borell announced the launch of preparatory work for a sanctions regime against human rights violations. Ministers discussed the new European Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy (2020-2024) and the Council's working methods... [Read more](#)

Meeting on Ukraine in Paris



The leaders of the "Normandy" format - France, Germany, Ukraine, Russia - met in Paris on 9 December to try to relaunch the peace process in eastern Ukraine. French President Emmanuel Macron, who was organizing the meeting, said the discussion had made it possible to "make useful progress" on the issues of the ceasefire, prisoners and the disengagement of the armed forces. But no "miracle solution" has been found to definitively resolve the conflict... [Read more](#)

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EU-Kyrgyzstan Cooperation Council



The EU-Kyrgyzstan Cooperation Council meeting on 9 December discussed the positive progress of bilateral relations. Ministers discussed the Union's new strategy for Central Asia adopted in June 2019. The Council welcomes Kyrgyzstan's role in promoting cooperation in Central Asia, as well as its work to stabilise the Afghan situation... [Read more](#)

ECB :

First hearing of the President by the ECON Committee at the European Parliament



The President of the European Central Bank, Christine Lagarde, was heard by the European Parliament's Economic Affairs Committee on 2 December. She pointed out that the climate issue, a recurring topic at the hearing, would be included in the ECB's macroeconomic models, and in the risk assessment and supervision of banks. She announced that price stability and inflation will be at the centre of the strategic review of monetary policy... [Read more](#)

Court of Auditors :

Report on the stabilisation of farmers' revenues



According to a Court of Auditors report published on 5 December, farmers do not have access to the various tools of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) designed to strengthen their resilience. EU insurance support is little used, only a small number of farmers have benefited from it, with most of them relying on public support in the event of a crisis. Moreover, poor targeting by the Union for the application of exceptional measures and overcompensation linked to withdrawal operations are another source of this lack of effectiveness... [Read more](#)

Report on the financial management of the Union



In its annual report on the Union's financial management, published on 4 December, the European Court of Auditors considers that the Union must strengthen the legal requirements relating to the Member States' national budgetary frameworks. The auditors believe that their monitoring needs to be improved, as the Commission is not always able to verify their compliance with European expectations. They caution against inconsistencies resulting from the assessment of compliance with EU budgetary rules by both the Commission and other independent budgetary institutions, and underline their potential negative impact on the effectiveness of the Budget Committee... [Read more](#)

European Agencies :

New European Data Protection Supervisor



Wojciech Wiewiorowski of Poland was appointed European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) for a 5-year term of office by the Council on 5 December. He succeeds Giovanni Buttarelli, who died in August...

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Report on the "State of the Environment" in the Union



The European Environment Agency published a report on 4 December providing an overview of Europe's situation in terms of achieving its environmental objectives for 2020 and 2030, as well as its longer-term objectives for 2050. The Agency notes that Europe will not achieve its sustainable vision if it continues to promote economic growth by striving to manage environmental and social impacts. The report highlights the key role of governments' efforts to make a transition to sustainability, such as improving production processes...

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Entry into force of the enhanced Frontex mandate



The extended and strengthened mandate of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) entered into force on 4 December, with the aim of providing the Agency with the operational capabilities and authority to effectively support the 115 000 Member States' staff on the ground. From 2021 onwards, Frontex should be equipped with its own border guard corps, ready to be deployed at any time, and will be able to cooperate more closely with countries without immediate proximity to the Union... [Read more](#)

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Action plan for sustainable finance



On 6 December, the European Banking Authority (EBA) presented an action plan to promote the development of sustainable finance by 2025. The objective is to improve the regulatory framework and provide banking supervisors with appropriate tools to better take into account environmental, social and governance criteria... [Read more](#)

Vast operation against money laundering



Police in 31 countries have apprehended 228 people and identified more than 3,800 "financial mules" as part of a major operation against money laundering, the European Police Agency Europol announced on 4 December. The operation led to the opening of more than 1,000

criminal investigations and prevented "a total loss of €12.9 million"... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Visit by Angel Merkel of Auschwitz



German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited the former Nazi camp of Auschwitz in Poland for the first time on 6 December, accompanied by Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki. This is the 4th visit of a German leader. She expressed her "deep shame" and considered that remembering Nazi crimes was "inseparable" from Germany's national identity. The day before her visit, Angela Merkel announced the allocation of €60 million to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation to maintain the site... [Read more](#)

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Spain :

Inauguration of the 14th legislature of Parliament



On 3 December, following the elections of 10 November, the Spanish Parliament was formed to open its 14th legislature. Meritxell Batet, a member of the Socialist Party of Catalonia, was elected President of the Congress of Deputies. Prime Minister and leader of the Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), Pedro Sanchez, who has already reached an agreement with Podemos (radical left), has begun negotiations with the Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC), to try to find a majority and obtain the investiture of the Parliament. The Senate is also presided over by a woman, Maria Pilar Llop Cuenca... [Read more](#)

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Finland :

Sanna Marin, new Prime Minister



Sanna Marin, 34, was elected head of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) on 8 December, and will become Finland's youngest ever head of government. If she is sworn in by Parliament on 10 December, she will succeed Antti Rinne, who had to resign on 3 December after the Centre Party (Kesk), the SDP's main coalition partner, withdrew its trust following a critical handling of the postal strike. Finland will hold the Presidency of the Council until 31 December... [Read more](#)

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France :

Beyond 1989: Hopes and Disillusions after the Revolutions



Participating in a symposium entitled "Beyond 1989: Hopes and Disillusions after the Revolutions", the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, called on Europeans to "take up the major strategic, military and nuclear issues that directly concern their security" while stressing the importance of the transatlantic link. He also stressed that European sovereignty "does not take anything away from our national sovereignty"... [Read more](#)

Franco-German Agreement on the engine of the future fighter plane



The French Safran Aircraft Engines and the German MTU Aero Engines reached an agreement on December 3 on the details of their partnership to develop the engine for the future Franco-German fighter aircraft, SCAF (Système de Combat Aérien du Futur)... [Read more](#)

Italy :

The 5th Mediterranean Dialogue Meeting



The 5th Mediterranean Dialogues meetings, organised by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Institute for International Policy Studies, took place from 5 to 7 December in Rome in the presence of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte. On this occasion, "Weathering the storm" was published, a report of analyses and recommendations on the challenges shared by the countries around the Mediterranean... [Read more](#)

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UK :

Final debate and last polls



A few days before the early elections on 12 December, outgoing Prime Minister Boris Johnson (Conservative Party) and Jeremy Corbyn (Labour Party) clashed over Brexit, austerity policy and the public health service in a final television debate broadcast on the BBC on 6 December. The latest polls give from 41% to 46% of voting intentions for the Conservatives and 31% to 36% for the Labour Party... [Read more](#)

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Azerbaijan :

Snap election



On 5 December, Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, a member of the Eastern Partnership with the Union, signed the decree dissolving the Parliament, following the resignation of the Prime Minister in October. Early parliamentary elections have been announced for 9 February 2020... [Read more](#)

Council of Europe :

Negative opinion regarding the law on languages in Ukraine



The Venice Commission, the Council of Europe's advisory body on constitutional law, considered in an opinion published on 6 December that the Ukrainian Official Language Act "does not strike a balance between strengthening the Ukrainian language and preserving the linguistic rights of minorities" and invites the authorities to revise the

text... [Read more](#)

ECHR :

Condemnation of Portugal for the state of its prisons



The European Court of Human Rights sentenced Portugal on 3 December to pay €15,000 to a Romanian man sentenced in 2012 to 7 years in prison for theft and criminal conspiracy, who had seized it because of prison overcrowding and the insalubrity of the premises. The Court calls on Portugal to take measures concerning the state of its prisons, so that conditions of detention comply with European standards... [Read more](#)

Condemnation of Turkey for seizing electronic data from lawyers



The European Court of Human Rights condemned Turkey on 3 December for seizing electronic data from lawyers protected by professional secrecy in connection with an investigation into Abdullah Öcalan, the historic leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Turkey must pay each of the three applicants €3,500 for non-material damage, since the Court considers that the country has violated Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights concerning the right to respect for private and family life and correspondence... [Read more](#)

UN :

2019 ends the hottest decade ever recorded



2019, with its share of fires, droughts, heat waves and hurricanes, will be one of the three warmest years on record since 1850 and concludes a decade of "exceptional heat", the UN announced on 3 December at COP25 in Madrid. According to the draft World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Declaration on the State of the World Climate, "2019 marks the end of a decade of exceptional heat, ice retreat and record global sea level rise due to greenhouse gases produced by human activities". 2019 will be the second or third warmest year on record... [Read more](#)

Appeal to finance humanitarian aid for 2020

In order to finance all humanitarian aid for 2020, the United Nations (UN) launched an appeal on 4 December for an estimated €26 billion to help people affected by climate change but also by conflict: 168 million people in need, according to a report in the



Global Humanitarian Overview. "A record in the modern era" according to UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Marck Lowcock... [Read more](#)

OECD :

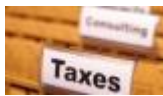
PISA Survey on pupils' school level



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The 2018 PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey of 600,000 15-year-old students in 79 countries was released on December 3 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). With regard to reading comprehension, the study reveals the difficulties faced by young people in the digital age... [Read more](#)

Tax revenues reach a plateau



According to an OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) study published on 5 December, the economies of OECD member countries reached a tax revenue plateau in 2018. No increase in the tax-to-GDP ratio has been observed since 2017, "the first since the financial crisis". The study found that the ratio averaged 34.3% in OECD member countries in 2018, virtually the same as in 2017, which was 34.2%. France (46.1%), Belgium (44.8%), Denmark (44.9%) and Sweden (43.9%) are the countries with the highest tax revenue-to-GDP ratios in 2018... [Read more](#)

NATO :

Leaders' meeting in London



On 4 December, NATO Heads of State and Government and Northern Macedonia, invited to the Summit, gathered in London to celebrate the Alliance's 70th anniversary. In the adopted declaration, they confirmed the general increase in investment to comply with the 2% of GDP threshold, the quest for a constructive relationship with Russia but also the need to adapt to strategic challenges, as well as the importance of Article 5 on collective defence... [Read more](#)

IMF :

Report on Hungary's economy



In a report published on 4 December as part of the so-called Article IV consultations, the IMF welcomed Hungary's good economic performance in accelerating income convergence towards the EU average and reducing vulnerabilities. However, it notes some difficulties such as the high level of public debt... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

GDP and rise in employment



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According to figures published by Eurostat on 5th December the GDP increased during the third quarter by 0.3% in the EU and by 0.2% in the euro zone in comparison with the previous quarter. Over the same period employment rose also by 0.1% in the euro zone and the Union...

Culture :

European Film Awards



"La Favorite" was awarded the prize for best European film at the European Film Awards in Berlin on December 7, and its director, Greek Yorgos Lanthimos, was awarded the prize for best director. The public prize went to "Cold War", by Pole Pawel Pawlikowski... [Read more](#)

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Keith Haring in Brussels



The Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, Bozar, will host a retrospective of the American artist Keith Haring, one of the symbols of New York counter-culture in the 1980s, until 20 April 2020... [Read more](#)

Cesare Zavattini beyond the borders



From 14 December, the Magnani Palace in Reggio Emilia, Italy, will be dedicating an exhibition to the Italian writer and scriptwriter Cesare Zavattini, author of the Bicycle Thief (1951), among others. The exhibition will allow visitors to grasp its role abroad, during the Cold War and ideological conflicts... [Read more](#)

Ra'anan Levy: The Mirror Test



Until March 8, 2020, the Maeght Foundation in Saint-Paul-de-Vence is dedicating its exhibition to the pictorial world of Ra'anan Levy, a contemporary artist working between Paris and Florence... [Read more](#)

Calder Exhibition in Saint-Moritz



From December 13 to February 9, 2020, the Hauser & Wirth Gallery in St. Moritz is devoting a solo exhibition to Alexander Calder. A major opportunity to rediscover the heritage of the American painter and sculptor in the Swiss Alps... [Read more](#)

Dickens Festival



On December 14 and 15, the city of Deventer in the Netherlands will host the Charles Dickens Festival as it does every year. More than 900 characters of the British novelist will come alive again in the historic Bergkwartier: from Scrooge to Oliver Twist, from Mr. Pickwick to the Christmas Carol Singers, from orphans to drunks, and more... [Read more](#)

Fines Arts Show Paris



The 2019 edition of the Salon des Beaux-Arts will be held from 12 to 15 December at the Carrousel du Louvre in Paris. The Salon will feature more than 700 contemporary works by painters, sculptors, photographers, engravers, illustrators, draftsmen, naturalists, textile and ceramic artists... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



10 December 2019

Brussels
General Affairs Council
Brussels
Employment and Social Policy Council
Brussels
EU-Tajikistan Cooperation Council



12 December 2019

Frankfurt
Meeting of the Governors' Council of the European Central Bank
UK
General Election



12-13 December 2019
Brussels
European Council

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