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Competition Policy and Industrial Policy: For a reform of European law

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The failures of certain merger projects like Alstom/Siemens call into question the inadequacy, or even obsolescence, of European competition law and its place in relation to other public policy objectives. Other challenges arise: on the one hand, the existing law faces the challenges raised by the digital economy; on the other hand, European competition law does not take sufficient account of international competition. Should a rebalancing not be carried out between competition policy and industrial policy so that the objectives of the latter can be deployed?

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Contents

Commission : Green Deal - Social - DiscoverEU - Budget/Portugal - Aid/Humanitarian - Law/Poland **Parliament** : Future/Europe - Defence - Hungary/Poland - Green Deal - EU-UK **Council** : Eurogroup **Diplomacy** : Libya - Iran - EU/World **Court of Justice** : Anti-terrorism - Hungary **Germany** : Energy **France** : G5/Sahel **Ireland** : Elections - Future/EU **Malta** : Government **Czech Republic** : Austria **UK** : Scotland **Council of Europe** : Poland/Justice - Italy/Women - Kazakhstan **IMF** : Growth **WTO** : Subsidy/Industry **Eurobarometer** : Transport/Passengers **Eurostat** : Trade - Inflation **Studies/Reports** : China/EU **Culture** : Mozart/Salzburg - Art/London - Exhibition/Basel - Fair/Brussels

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

Commission :

Presentation of the Green Deal financing plan



The Commission presented on 14 January its Green Deal for Europe investment plan to raise €1000 billion over the next 10 years for climate transition. In particular, the plan includes a Just Transition Mechanism (JTM), which includes €7.5 billion of new EU funds, a facility to mobilise up to €45 billion of investment, and a European Investment Bank (EIB) public sector lending facility, supported by the Union's budget, to mobilise €25-30 billion of investment... [Read more](#)

Programme for a Social Europe



On 14 January, the Commissioner for Employment and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit, presented the initiatives that the Commission wishes to launch in the field of social policy in 2020. The Commission plans to develop a strategy for gender equality, a European unemployment reinsurance scheme and a Green Paper on ageing. The Commission also

calls on the Member States to act within the framework of the Social Pillar adopted in 2017... [Read more](#)

Nearly 20,000 young people will explore Europe in 2020



Nearly 20 000 young Europeans aged 18 were selected for the fourth and final session of DiscoverEU, a Union initiative giving young people the opportunity to discover the Member States mainly by train. They will receive a ticket allowing them to travel from April 2020 onwards, and will be invited to share their experience both on social networks and at the various DiscoverEU meetings organised throughout the summer... [Read more](#)

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Rejection of the draft Portuguese budget



The Commission considered on 15 January that the 2020 budget presented by Portugal presents a risk of non-compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact. It calls on the Portuguese government to take the necessary measures to achieve a balanced budget in 2020... [Read more](#)

The Union's Humanitarian Aid in 2020



On 20 January, the Commission adopted the EU's annual humanitarian budget for 2020, amounting to €900 million. The European Union is the world's biggest provider of humanitarian aid and helps people in more than 80 countries. The Foundation published a study on 13 January on this issue... [Read more](#)

[Other link](#)

Referral to the European Court of Justice to protect Polish judges



On 14 January, the Commission applied to the European Court of Justice for the suspension of the activity of the Disciplinary Chamber of the Polish Supreme Court established in 2018. This is in the context of the ongoing infringement procedure concerning the new disciplinary regime in Poland, which does not provide the necessary safeguards to protect judges from potential political control. The ECJ had already asked the Polish Courts to look into the independence of this chamber in November 2019, but no action was taken on this request... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Vision of the Conference on the future of Europe



On 15 January, MEPs adopted a resolution by 494 votes to 147, setting out their vision for the Conference on the Future of Europe which is due to open this year. They called for active citizen participation, including the setting up of thematic citizens' agoras made up of citizens' representatives selected by drawing lots. They consider that the system of lead candidates and transnational lists should be discussed during the Conference and ask that the Council and the Commission commit themselves to a possible amendment of the Treaty... [Read more](#)

Report on the implement of the common security and defence policy



On 15 January MEPs approved by 364 votes to 266 and 77 abstentions the annual report on the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). European defence is far from reaching a consensus and rapporteur Arnaud Danjean (EPP, FR) had to fight hard to defend the idea of "strategic autonomy" for the EU, especially vis-à-vis the US... [Read more](#)

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Rule of Law in Poland and Hungary



MEPs adopted a resolution on 16 January urging the Council to conduct more regular and structured hearings with Hungary and Poland under Article 7 TEU on measures to be taken in the event of a breach of fundamental values. MEPs call on the Council to make concrete recommendations to the countries concerned and expressed their wish to be formally involved in the hearings with the national authorities. They also stressed the "absolute necessity" of setting up a mechanism on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights... [Read more](#)

Call for greater ambition regarding the climate



In a resolution adopted on 15 January, MEPs gave their support to the European Green Deal tabled by the Commission. They call for an accelerated reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% in 2030 compared to 1990, while the Commission proposes "at least 50% and towards a target of 55%... [Read more](#)

Resolution on citizens' rights post Brexit



In a resolution adopted on 15 January, MEPs expressed their concern about the arrangements for obtaining permanent resident status for EU citizens living in the UK after leaving the EU. They stress that their vote on approving the withdrawal arrangement, scheduled for 29 January, will take account of "experience gained and assurances given" on citizens' rights. They encourage the establishment of joint scrutiny between the European and UK Parliaments on this issue... [Read more](#)

Council :

Eurogroup Conclusions



The Eurogroup, which met on 20 January, discussed the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conclusions on the euro area and the Commission's draft recommendations for 2020. The 19 ministers called on Portugal to revise its draft budget plan by addressing the risks identified by the Commission and exchanged views on the deepening of the economic and monetary area. The new finance ministers of Spain, Finland and Austria presented their priorities... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Conference on Libya in Berlin



A conference on the situation in Libya brought together 12 countries, including Germany, France, Russia, Turkey, China and the United States, as well as the European Union, the United Nations and the African Union, on 19 January in Berlin. The participants pledged not to intervene in the Libyan civil conflict and to respect the arms embargo. They called for the disarmament of the forces involved. But no ceasefire was agreed... [Read more](#)

Iranian nuclear deal: declaration and meeting



In view of the multiple breaches of the 2015 Iranian nuclear agreement, the foreign ministers of France, the United Kingdom and Germany announced in a statement issued on January 14 their decision to appeal to the dispute settlement mechanism under the JCPoA to bring Iran into compliance with its obligations under the agreement. European diplomatic chief Josep Borell and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif agreed at a January 16 meeting in New Delhi to maintain close contact in the coming weeks and to continue their commitment to preserve the agreement... [Read more](#)

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Conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council



Foreign Ministers meeting on 20 January were briefed on the outcome of the Berlin Conference on Libya held the day before, and discussed the Union's role in improving the implementation of the ceasefire and the UN arms embargo. They expressed their wish to renew and deepen the "Sahel Strategy" following the recent deterioration of security in the region, and stressed the need to intensify climate awareness activities with third countries. Finally, they discussed the situation in the Near and Middle East and expressed their support for the President of the National Assembly of Venezuela, Juan Guaido... [Read more](#)

Court of Justice :

Opinion of the Advocate General regarding counter terrorist methods

In his Opinion delivered on 15 January, the Advocate General of the European Court of Justice ruled that the ePrivacy Directive applies where service providers are obliged by law to retain subscriber data and to provide public authorities with access to it, and that the means and



methods of combating terrorism must meet the requirements of the rule of law. It recognises the usefulness of an obligation to retain data in order to safeguard national security and combat crime. He therefore advocates limited and differentiated retention and limited access to such data... [Read more](#)

Opinion of the Advocate General regarding Hungarian NGO law



In an opinion published on 14 January, the Advocate General of the Court of Justice denounced the stigmatising effect of restrictions imposed in Hungary on the funding of NGOs from abroad. He considers that the law violates a number of the Union's fundamental rights, in that the publication of data constitutes an interference with the rights to protection of privacy and personal data and to freedom of association... [Read more](#)

Germany :

National Strategy for the Bioeconomy



On 15 January, the German government presented its National Strategy for the Bioeconomy, which sets the framework for the sustainable development and use of biological resources, as well as ecological and nature-friendly production methods in all economic sectors... [Read more](#)

France :

G5 Sahel in Pau



The presidents of the G5 Sahel countries (France, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Mali) met in Pau on 13 January. They signed a declaration expressing their desire to continue "France's military commitment in the Sahel". The French President announced the dispatch of 220 additional troops to the region to support Operation Barkhane troops (currently 4,500 strong). A group of European special forces, called "Task Force Takuba", is planned. An EU-Sahel summit is due to take place in conjunction with the European Council in March... [Read more](#)

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Ireland :

Dissolution of Parliament and snap election on 8th February



Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar announced on 14 January the dissolution of Parliament and the holding of early parliamentary elections on 8 February, just after Brexit and the opening of negotiations on the future of relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union... [Read more](#)

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Ursula von der Leyen's Visit



On 15 January Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar welcomed the President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, on her first official visit to the Republic of Ireland. The two leaders discussed the Brexit negotiations, the new CAP and the financing of the Peace Plus programme for Northern Ireland and the border counties... [Read more](#)

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Malta :

New Maltese Government



The new Maltese Prime Minister Robert Abela presented his government on 15 January. It comprises 17 ministers, two of whom are women. The environment and planning are combined in a single portfolio, as well as foreign and European affairs... [Read more](#)

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Czech Republic :

Meeting between the countries of the Visegrad Group and Austria



On 16 January, the Prime Ministers of the Visegrád Group (Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia) and the Austrian Chancellor met in Prague. They discussed migration, border security, competitiveness, enlargement, climate change and the EU's multi-

annual budget... [Read more](#)

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UK :

Boris Johnson rejects a referendum on the independence of Scotland



British Prime Minister Boris Johnson sent a letter to the Head of the Scottish Government Nicola Sturgeon in which he responded negatively to her request, made on 19 December, for a transfer of power for the organisation of a new referendum on self-determination in Scotland. In 2014 the Scots voted 55% to remain in the United Kingdom. The Scottish government cannot hold a referendum without London's permission... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Venice Commission opinion on Polish judicial reforms



The Venice Commission, the Council of Europe's rule of law body, issued on 16 January an urgent opinion on the draft law currently under discussion in Poland which aims to allow the sanctioning of judges. It considered that the new law "further undermines judicial independence", in particular the new disciplinary offences thus created, which are open to subjective interpretation. It also stressed that the influence of the Minister of Justice on disciplinary proceedings would be increased if the law was adopted. On 17 January, the Polish Senate rejected the bill, which must now be returned to the Sejm... [Read more](#)

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Report on violence against women in Italy



In a report published on 13 January, the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action to Combat Violence against Women (GREVIO) calls on Italy to take more action to protect women against violence. It welcomes the laws put in place on harassment, but deplores the strong resistance to gender equality initiatives. It calls on the authorities to develop a co-ordinated inter-agency approach to combat it, as well as to improve the provision of specialised support services and the establishment of crisis centres for victims of sexual violence... [Read more](#)

Kazakhstan becomes the 50th GRECO Member State



Since 1 January, Kazakhstan has been an official member of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), becoming its 50th member. The GRECO now comprises the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, as well as the United States, Belarus and Kazakhstan... [Read more](#)

IMF :

World Economic Outlook



The International Monetary Fund released its Global Economic Outlook for 2020 on 20 January. World growth, estimated at 2.9% for 2019, is expected to rise to 3.3% during the year and then to 3.4% in 2021, less than forecast in the outlook published last October. Despite the many political and commercial uncertainties, the IMF nevertheless points to the appearance of signs of stabilisation in world growth, notably thanks to the adoption of monetary easing measures in 2019... [Read more](#)

WTO :

Common EU-US-Japan position on industrial subsidies



The European Union, the United States and Japan agreed on 14 January on proposals to strengthen the fight against market-distorting industrial subsidies within the World Trade Organisation (WTO). They jointly call for stricter rules as part of a reform of the WTO... [Read more](#)

Eurobarometer :

Survey on passenger rights

According to a Eurobarometer survey published on 13 January, 43% of European citizens who have travelled by air, or who have travelled a



long distance by road, sea or rail in the last 12 months, are aware that passenger rights exist at European level. The results of this survey will feed into the two legislative procedures on rail and air passenger rights launched by the Commission to step up these rights and make them better known to citizens... [Read more](#)

Eurostat :

Trade Surplus



The euro area recorded a surplus of €20.7 billion in international trade in goods with the rest of the world in November 2019, up from €18.2 billion in November 2018, according to figures released by Eurostat on 15 January. The European Union recorded a surplus of €2.6 billion in international trade in goods with the rest of the world... [Read more](#)

Increase in Inflation



According to Eurostat figures released on 17 January, annual inflation in the European Union was 1.6% in December 2019, up from 1.3% in November and in the euro area it was 1.3%, up from 1% the previous month... [Read more](#)

Studies/Reports :

Report on European businesses and the new Chinese Silk Routes



According to a study published on 16 January by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, European companies remain lukewarm about China's pharaonic New Silk Roads project, whose opacity they fear. Out of 132 companies that took part in the study, only 20 submitted bids for projects related to this initiative. The Silk Roads are criticized for their lack of transparency and suspected of encouraging developing countries to incur excessive debt for projects with no economic benefit... [Read more](#)

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Culture :

Mozart Week in Salzburg



Salzburg is honouring its best-known composer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, from January 23 to February 2. The best international artists will be present to take part in more than fifty musical events... [Read more](#)

London Art Fair



From 22 to 25 January, the 32nd London Art Fair, the largest contemporary art fair in the United Kingdom, takes place at the Business Design Centre in London. An opportunity to discover the great names in modern art as well as emerging talents in contemporary art... [Read more](#)

Edward Hopper in Basel



From 26 January to 17 May, the Beyeler Foundation presents a retrospective of the works of the American painter Edward Hopper. Bringing together watercolours and oil paintings, the exhibition's main theme is the urban landscapes of the United States at the beginning of the 20th century... [Read more](#)

Art and Antiquities Fair in Brussels



The Brussels Art Fair (BRAFA), one of the most prestigious fairs for modern and contemporary art, design and antiques in Europe, takes place from 26 January to 2 February at the Tour & Taxis site in Brussels... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



21 January 2020
Brussels
Economic and Financial Affairs Council



23 January 2020
Frankfurt
Meeting of the Council of Governors of the European Central Bank



23-24 January 2020
Zagreb
Informal meeting of Justice and Internal Affairs Ministers



27 January 2020
Brussels
Agriculture and Fisheries Council

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