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The German Energy Transition: ambitions under the test of reality

Author: Gilles Lepesant



In recent years, Germany has embarked on a bold energy transition designed both to follow on from the Fukushima nuclear accident and to respond to global warming. So far, the results have been mixed. While the strong growth in renewable energies has made up for the loss of capacity in nuclear and coal, Germany remains the leading greenhouse gas-emitting country in Europe, in particular due to transport.

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Front page! :

Nuclear in Europe: Trump or Macron, you have to choose!



Following the French President's speech on 7 February on nuclear policy, in which he called on Europeans to take part in an in-depth dialogue and joint exercises on deterrence, with a view to greater European strategic autonomy, Jean-Dominique Giuliani appealed to Europeans: Trump or Macron, you have to choose... [Read more](#)

Elections :

Sinn Fein comes out ahead in the general elections



Three parties emerged from a tightly contested general election in Ireland on 8 February. Sinn Fein (SF) (Ourselves), a radical left-wing party led by Mary Lou McDonad, created a surprise and made an impressive breakthrough by winning 24.5% of the vote. The Fianna Fail (FF) (Soldiers of Destiny), led by Micheal Martin, won 22.2% of the votes. Finally, Fine Gael (FG) (Clan of the Gaels), the party of outgoing Prime Minister Leo Varadkar,

obtained 20.9% of the votes. The formation of a future government will undoubtedly be a difficult exercise. Fine Gael and Fianna Fail have each ruled out joining forces with Sinn Fein, notably due to its links with the Irish Republican Army (IRA)... [Read more](#)

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Foundation :

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



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. Should a rebalancing not be carried out between competition policy and industrial policy so that the objectives of the latter can be deployed? On behalf of the Foundation, Bruno Deffains, Olivier d'Ormesson and Thomas Perroud propose several avenues for reform... [Read more](#)

The Enlargement of the European Union to the East



On 18 February, the Senate is organising a conference on the theme: "Enlargement of the European Union towards the East, 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall". Joachim Bitterlich, a member of the Foundation's Scientific Committee, and Andi Mustafaj, an expert with the Foundation, will take part... [Read more](#)

Commission :

Reassessment of economic governance



On 5 February the Commission presented its report on the review of the Union's economic governance. It considers that the "six-pack" and "two-pack" legislative packages have been successful in correcting existing macroeconomic imbalances and reducing public debt, while leading to closer coordination of budgetary policies within the euro area and promoting economic convergence. However, it recognises that the fiscal framework has become "excessively complicated" and less likely to win political support. It will launch a consultation on how to strengthen the economic governance framework... [Read more](#)

Proposal for the reform of the accession process



On 5 February, the Commission presented a reform of the EU accession process to make it "more credible, dynamic, predictable and political". In particular, it proposes to link the integration of candidate countries into the Union's policies, market and programmes to progress in the reforms required. The negotiating chapters would be grouped into six thematic groups which would be open globally and subject to political guidance from the Member States... [Read more](#)

Launch of the BlueInvest Fund



The European Commission and the European Investment Fund, part of the European Investment Bank (EIB), launched the BlueInvest Fund on February 4. The €75 million Fund is expected to provide capital to underlying investment funds that will strategically support the innovative blue economy, i.e. economic activities related to oceans, seas and coasts... [Read more](#)

Parliament :

Debate over the reform of the ECB's policy



The President of the European Central Bank (ECB) Christine Lagarde was at the hearing of Parliament's Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee on 6 February. She explained that the profound structural changes in the world economy made it necessary to review the ECB's 16-year old monetary policy. She also stressed the need for the ECB to communicate better in order to make its action more effective... [Read more](#)

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Council :

Standards for safe, drinking water



On 5 February, the Council confirmed the provisional agreement reached on 18 December 2019 with the Parliament on the revision of the drinking water directive. The aim of the revision is to improve water quality and further protect human health by avoiding contamination. This paves the way for the final adoption of the text... [Read more](#)

Informal meeting of competitiveness ministers



Meeting in Zagreb on 3 and 4 February, the ministers responsible for competitiveness discussed the mobility of talent in order to balance opportunities in the Union. They also discussed the future European Research Area, identifying obstacles and measures to be taken to create a real labour market for researchers... [Read more](#)

Diplomacy :

Report on the EU-Georgia Association Agreement



In the fourth report on the implementation of the Association Agreement with Georgia, published on 7 February, the Union notes the Georgian authorities' willingness to continue reforms in the electoral and judicial fields despite growing political divisions. The Union stresses that the coming months will be decisive... [Read more](#)

Court of Auditors :

Report on the use of pesticides



On 5 February, the European Court of Auditors published a report on the sustainable use of plant protection products. Deploring the limited progress made over the last 10 years in reducing the use of pesticides in the EU, it notes that farmers do not have sufficient incentives to reduce their dependence on pesticides and regrets that the principle of integrated pest management is not a precondition for CAP payments... [Read more](#)

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European Agencies :

Launch of Solar Orbiter



On the night of February 9, the European-American Solar Orbiter probe took off from Florida towards the centre of the solar system. Its cruise will last a little less than 2 years and its scientific mission between 5 and 9 years. The purpose of the probe is to explore the solar wind and to understand the activity of our star... [Read more](#)

Germany :

Political earthquake after the elections in the Land of Thuringia



New elections are due to be held in Thuringia after the resignation of Thomas Kemmerich (Liberal Democratic Party, FDP) on 8 February, three days after his election as Minister-President with the support of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, against the outgoing Minister-President (left-wing party, Die Linke), Bodo Ramelow. Chancellor Angela Merkel called this alliance "unforgivable" and dismissed her State Secretary for the Eastern Länder, Christian Hirte, who had welcomed it. On 10 February, CDU Chairwoman Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer announced her resignation from the party and will therefore not be a candidate for the chancellery in 2021... [Read more](#)

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Bulgaria :

Legislative amendment in preparation to join the euro



On 6 February, the Bulgarian Parliament adopted an amendment to set the exchange rate of the lev, the national currency with the euro area countries, in preparation for entry into the European Exchange Rate

Mechanism (ERM II). This is the first step in the euro accession process which Bulgaria wishes to conclude in 2023... [Read more](#)

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Cyprus :

Purchase of European Missiles



MBDA, the European missile company, signed two contracts with Cyprus on 6 February for the supply of Mistral surface-to-air missiles and a coastal battery equipped with Exocet anti-ship missiles. For several months Cyprus has faced Turkish manoeuvres as part of drilling operations off its coast which have been condemned by the European Union... [Read more](#)

France :

Speech on defence and deterrence



In a speech delivered at the Ecole de Guerre on 7 February, French President Emmanuel Macron called on Europeans to define together their security interests and establish "a renewed international agenda for arms control", in order to reduce the risks of undermining existing arms control and reduction treaties. He also proposed to France's European partners a dialogue on the role of French nuclear deterrence in Europe's collective security... [Read more](#)

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Visit by Emmanuel Macron to Poland



French President Emmanuel Macron paid an official visit to Poland on 3 and 4 February. In a joint declaration, France and Poland undertook to strengthen their cooperation on defence and economic, fiscal and industrial policy at the European level. They stressed the importance of the social dimension of climate transition and the right of Member States to decide on their energy mix. In a speech at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, E. Macron stressed that Poland could not take part in the EU while "distancing itself from its fundamental values"... [Read more](#)

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Hungary :

Visit by Viktor Orban to Berlin



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban met Chancellor Angela Merkel on 10th February in Berlin. They mainly discussed the upcoming EU multiannual budget, enlargement to the Western Balkans and Europe's economic competitiveness... [Read more](#)

Poland :

Promulgation of controversial law against judges



On 4 February, Polish President Andrzej Duda promulgated the law introducing sanctions against Polish judges who denounce attacks on the independence of the judiciary. The text had been adopted by Parliament on 23 January despite the Union's warnings... [Read more](#)

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Romania :

Vote of no-confidence against the government



On 5 February, the Romanian Parliament overthrew the government of Ludovic Orban (National Liberal Party - PNL), who had been in office for three months. A vote of no-confidence, tabled by the Social Democratic Party, was adopted by 261 out of 465 deputies. This political crisis stemmed from a draft amendment that would have reformed the electoral law to restore a two-round voting system in the parliamentary elections. Romanian President Klaus Iohannis announced on 6 February that he was reappointing Ludovic Orban as Prime Minister to form a new government. Early parliamentary elections could be held in May... [Read more](#)

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Council of Europe :

Visit by the Secretary General to the Union's institutions



During a working visit to Brussels on 6 February, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejcinovic Buric, met in particular the President of the Parliament David Sassoli and the Commission's Executive Vice-President in charge of climate change Frans Timmermans. She stressed the importance of multilateralism and the need to cooperate against climate change... [Read more](#)

Report on police detention and prisons in Catalonia



On 4 February, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) published a report on its ad hoc visit to Catalonia in September 2018. The report focuses on the situation of detainees in special closed regime units, women prisoners and the effectiveness of the guarantees afforded to persons deprived of their liberty in several police stations, the manner in which they are treated and the conditions of detention... [Read more](#)

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GRECO Report on Montenegro



On 6 February, GRECO, the Council of Europe's anti-corruption body, published its second compliance report on Montenegro on the prevention of corruption of parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors. It notes that Montenegro has satisfactorily implemented 8 of the 11 recommendations addressed to it... [Read more](#)

OECD :

Report on Belgium



According to an OECD economic survey published on 3 February, tax, labour, pension and education reforms in Belgium have improved the prospects for stronger and more sustainable long-term growth. However, economic growth remains below the levels observed in the euro area and productivity growth has stagnated. Future reforms regarding public support and the reduction of public debt are advisable to reduce future obstacles to employment... [Read more](#)

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Publications :

A certain idea about Europe



Franco-American philosopher and literary critic George Steiner died on February 4 at the age of 90 in Cambridge where he was teaching. A thinker on subjects such as religion, music, art and history, in 2004 he wrote the essay "A certain idea of Europe", in which he discusses what it is in history, culture and mentalities that gives rise to and maintains the feeling of being European... [Read more](#)

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Robert Schuman Prize 2020



On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Declaration of 9 May 1950, the Robert Schuman European Centre is launching its call for contributions for the Robert Schuman Prizes, awarded to texts which propose a future or new action for the Union for the next 70 years. The first prize is €15 000. The deadline for submitting proposals for texts is 15 March... [Read more](#)

Culture :

Georges de la Tour, Europe of Light



Until 7th June, the "Georges de la Tour. Europe of Light" exhibition, at the Royal Palace in Milan is paying tribute to French painter and spiritual heir of Caravaggio... [Read more](#)

[William Kentridge in Villeneuve d'Ascq](#)



Until 5 July, the Museum of Modern Art of Lille-Métropole (LAM) in Villeneuve d'Ascq, in collaboration with the Kunstmuseum Basel, is devoting an unpublished retrospective to William Kentridge, a South African artist renowned for his work on the problems of decolonisation and apartheid... [Read more](#)

Art Fair in Karlsruhe



The 17th edition of the International Modern and Contemporary Art Fair, Art Karlsruhe is taking place from 13 to 16 February. The event brings together more than 200 galleries from 15 different countries. This year's focus is on the collection of Hans-Peter Haas, one of the most important private collections in Europe... [Read more](#)

Art Capital at the Grand Palais



Art Capital is taking place from 12 to 16 February at the Grand Palais in Paris. This event, which aims to make art accessible to as many people as possible, brings together a variety of practices and artists from all walks of life. Young visitors will be able to discover the exhibition and the Nave through the eyes of the sculptor Rémy Teulier... [Read more](#)

Olafur Eliasson at the Guggenheim Bilbao



From February 14 to June 21, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is hosting an exhibition devoted to Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson. Some thirty works created since 1990 are on display: sculptures, photographs, paintings and installations that play with reflections and colours and question the way we perceive our environment... [Read more](#)

Agenda :



10-13 February 2020
Strasbourg
Plenary Session of the European Parliament



13 February 2020
Brussels
Employment, social policy, healthcare and consumer Council



16 February 2020
Brussels
Informal EU-Western Balkans Summit



17th February 2020
Brussels
Eurogroup Meeting
Brussels
Foreign Affairs Council

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